Making Sense of Everyday Spaces:
A Tendency in Contemporary British Cinema

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Sheffield
Faculty of Arts and Humanities
School of English Literature

September 2017

Abstract

It has been argued that British cinema is undergoing something of a renaissance in the 2010s. Directors such as Andrea Arnold, Clio Barnard, Andrew Haigh and Steve McQueen have frequently been singled out as practitioners of a 'new' British cinema. However, the precise originality of these films has been troubling to critics who do not quite know how to position them: for some, they are a revitalization of Britain's longstanding tradition of social realism; others view them as a new form of realism; whilst others believe they could be positioned with traditions in other world cinemas.

This thesis then analyses the precise textual idiosyncrasies of these films by utilizing textual analysis, theoretical material on British cinema history and theories of contemporary global cinemas, as well as interviews with practitioners of contemporary British cinema.

Through this methodology, this thesis finds that this tendency in contemporary British film has a sensory mode of address which evokes the everyday world of their protagonists. They quite literally *make sense* of a vast range of contemporary British everydays, exploring how different genders, sexual orientations, classes, ages and ethnicities experience their *everydays*. In doing so, they also utilize a range of different forms: this is not merely social realism, but also documentary, drama and the spaces in-between.

This thesis ultimately argues that this tendency in contemporary British cinema can be aligned with other contemporary forms of global art cinema in privileging an attention to the sensory and subjectivity. Thus, these films mark a departure for British cinema which has now been superseded by global art forms, thus this tendency can now be deemed products of a post-national cinema. However, the national still persists in the evocation of a particularly British world and, particularly, British spaces and places – the literal geographical dimensions of nationhood.

Acknowledgments

Writing this thesis has been both a privilege and a pleasure and, thanks to many people, these three years have been amongst the best in my life. For that, I'd like to thank The University of Sheffield for their funding, as well as providing the infrastructure and staff which has made this possible. Many people, in different ways, supported me throughout this process, a few of whom I'd like to mention here.

Firstly, it has been a joy to work with Dr. David Forrest and Dr. Jonathan Rayner on this project. Their expert guidance, careful consideration and, most importantly, their friendly encouragement, has meant that the past few years have been relatively stress free. They have been the perfect team and I can't express my gratitude enough.

Thanks goes to my family whose move to France provided me with enough sunshine and peace when I needed to escape my own everyday spaces. Thanks especially to Penny, who showed me that a PhD isn't stressful unless you're also working and bringing up some pre-teen twins, as well as for encouraging my interest in cinema from a young age by our frequent cinema trips. Katie, too, for your constant stimulating conversation: our chats about Indian cinema have been more instructive than you might think. Dad, who's always been on-hand for any practical problems I have had. And Amy, whose PhD experience, I hope, will be just as enjoyable as mine.

There's been a lot of people who've either put me up or put up with me over the past few years. Big thanks to the boys in Streatham – Daniel Hall, Ben Harper, Jim Whiteside – who provided me with a second home. Also to Rebecca Boyle, Rachel Coope, Helen Cortvriend, Ashleigh Dolan, Richard Jones, Dan Monaghan, Laura Morris, Rosie Morrison, Katy Olly and Tom Wardak.

Finally, these past few years would've been unmanageable without my best friends. Sarah Craddock, whose company in Sheffield and the roof over my head as I type this, I couldn't have done without – thanks so much. James McIlwaine, whose frequent trips up, nights out, holidays, loans, all-round generosity and patience have been essential. Richar

d Bryant, my pocket friend and best judy, who has been there every second of every day since I moved. And thanks to ol' twinny Harry Cortvriend for all the pints and gigs – I may not have a trophy but this'll have to do.

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Introduction

Andrea Arnold: A Product of Social Realism?

In 2009, a debate began in the British film magazine, *Sight & Sound*, concerning what constitutes a (social) realist film in contemporary Britain. In what would prove to be a provocative article, 'Do We Know Where We're Going?', Nick Roddick (2009, p.19) argued that:

> At first glance, *Fish Tank* (2009) - like Andrea Arnold's previous *Red Road* (2006) - belongs right in the middle of the dominant mode of British cinema: social realism. But the film's impact, thanks to its unwavering point of view, is much greater than the lessons in deprivation and brutalisation that first appear to be the focus of its narrative.

Subsequently, Roddick touched on the dichotomy between fantasy and realism which has pervaded accounts of British cinema history, and concluded that many contemporary British films (*Happy-Go-Lucky* (2008)*, Hunger* (2009), *Control* (2007)*, Soi Cowboy* (2008)*, Katalin Varga* (2009)*, The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus* (2009)*,* and *Fish Tank*) 'have an almost adversarial relationship with the real, determined to see what lies beyond' (ibid). This appeared in the same issue in which Lisa Mullen (2009) described Arnold as a successor of Ken Loach. The juxtaposition of these two contrasting positions caused readers to reflect on what social realism means today – the debate continued throughout the letters section in *Sight & Sound* for months. In an oft-quoted letter, Michael Pattison (2009) argued:

> Since when has 'social realism' been used to describe character portraits consciously steeped in unaccounted-for misery? *Fish Tank* […] offers little insight into social relations, precisely because it isn't grounded in reality.

This fierce debate crossed over the Atlantic to *The New York Times*, as Graham Fuller (2010) mentioned Pattison's response to Arnold who defended her approach to writing and directing in the first-person:

> I hear filmmakers saying, 'I wanted to make a film about this issue, or this
> theme,' but I never start like that […] I always think from the image or from
> the character outwards. And usually the image has got a character that I can
> then go and explore.

Thus, Arnold purposely does not interrogate the social but is more interested in individual characters. In the same article in which this interview appeared, the editor of *Sight & Sound*, Nick James (in ibid), aligned himself with Mullen, rather than Roddick and Pattison, by arguing that Arnold's films are a product of social realism. This assertion, though, came with a caveat: 'it's a more semi-poetic strain arguably than that explored by Loach, who is nonetheless the godfather of Arnold's generation of British filmmakers' (ibid.).

It was not long before similar arguments found their way into academic discourse, often referencing the above debate. Tanya Horeck (2011, p.171), for example, in response to Pattison, argues that 'it is precisely through their poetic, affective moments that Arnold's films offer insight into social relations.' She posits that the primal sex scenes in *Red Road* and *Fish Tank* suggest 'how such an arresting reworking of a realist, kitchen sink aesthetic relates to the "cinema of sensation" (Beugnet 2007), where films 'exist first and foremost as affective, sensory experience[s]' (ibid, p. 179). The vague terminology of the 'poetic' in 'poetic social realism', for Horeck, is located in Arnold's sensual, experiential project.

In fact, this notion of the poetic has been adopted widely in writing about contemporary British cinema. One of the first interventions to define and situate Arnold's work came from David Forrest (2010, p. 32) who identified filmmakers such as Arnold, as well as Duane Hopkins, Shane Meadows, Lynne Ramsay, Pawel Pawlikowski, Joanna Hogg, and Steve McQueen as practitioners of 'new British realism':

> Placing socio-political impulses as the backdrop rather than the catalyst for
> their work, these early stirrings of a new British realism are united by a
> poetic and aesthetically bold approach to their subject matter, which merges
> traditional thematic concerns with expressive art cinema templates.

His article contrasts *Better Things* (2008) with the films of social-realist Ken Loach and concludes that: 'Where expressions of style and form are subordinated to the revelation of socio-political processes and injustices in the films of Loach, in a film like *Better Things* the process is reversed' (ibid, p. 41). Indeed, Forrest argues that it is more appropriate to compare Hopkins with French realist maestro Bruno Dumont. In doing so, Forrest suggests a shift from the national mode of social realism to a realism indebted to broader arthouse forms. Comparisons of this type will be woven through this thesis, suggesting that it is more productive to think of contemporary British cinema alongside global art cinema rather than attempting to locate it within historical trends of British cinema.

Clare Monk's (2012) study of Pawlikowski has much in common with Forrest's definition of New British Realism by arguing that socio-political impulses are retained, but not foregrounded as heavily, in the emergent poetic style of British realism. She argues that:

> On the one hand, both *Last Resort* (2000) and *My Summer of Love* (2004) are
> characterised by deliberate, stylised choices of framing, composition, colour
> and cinematography that produce a 'poetic' effect: a distinctive blend of the
> dreamlike, absurdist and super-real. On the other, they are strongly attuned
> to the *specifics* – as much as the poetics – of both place and human
> circumstance, and Pawlikowski clearly *understands* the socio-economics of
> both, while choosing to express these only indirectly (ibid, p. 483).

The poetic, for Monk, distinguishes itself from Horeck's definition, demonstrating the problematic, slippery nature of this terminology. Puzzlingly, in the same study, Monk has taken issue with Forrest's account of New British Realism by suggesting that he creates a binary between the 'poetic' and socio-political themes. This is a misreading of Forrest's work because he does not construct them as mutually exclusive but, like Monk, suggests that their bold aesthetic is merged with traditional socio-political impulses. They are, in fact, identifying the same tendency in contemporary British film: the foregrounding of heightened aesthetics

against a backdrop common to British social realism, thus interrogating social issues or problems indirectly (common to Arnold's character-first approach).

Others have criticized such approaches to these films. For example, writing on *Fish Tank* and *The Selfish Giant* (2013), Clive James Nwonka (2014, p. 220) claims that the films':

> Working-class existence emerges not with any specificity of detail or political alignment but through the conceptualization of a particular depolitical reading, where the protagonist's immoral acts appear more clearly defined in the texts examined than the actual politics of their environment.

Nwonka's point of departure, that British realist films must be products of *social* realism, points to the confusion within academic discourse about how, and where, to place these directors. Indeed, his confusion of Forrest's term 'New British Realism' with 'New British *Social* Realism' encapsulates his troubling position in misrecognising what Forrest and Monk claim to be 'new' about post-2000 British filmmaking. The suggestion that realist texts must engage with the socio-political, precisely because of their antecedents – Nwonka points to comparisons between Loach, Arnold and Clio Barnard – demonstrates the difficulty of thinking about a national cinema in a post-national context.

Here it is worth quoting at length Jonathan Murray's (2016, p. 196) critique of such attempts to categorise Arnold's filmmaking and, by extension, her contemporaries:

> The intense commentary that her work has attracted to date can be understood in terms of a collectively felt need to place Arnold's films within a wider cinematic context (or contexts) – along with a pronounced uncertainty about what the latter might be. […] Here is an indication of a fluid set of critical equations-cum-definitions – social realism *and*, social realism *but*, social realism *or* – that circulate around Arnold's movies. These works have been seen, variously, as British social realism in the conventionally understood sense – 'more than a touch of Ken Loach' (Kemp 2009: 59); an incremental evolution of that cinematic tradition – 'poetic social realist art cinema' (Horeck 2011: 170); a superseding of the same – 'post-social realist

abstraction' (Fuller 2012: 77); or a calculated, cosmopolitan circumvention of it altogether – 'art film being deliberately manufactured for the international film festival circuit' (Martin-Jones 2009: 224). Numerous critics have little difficulty in agreeing that Arnold's films resonate: far less consensus exists, however, about where the latter reside in cultural or historical terms.

Thus, whilst these aforementioned studies are instructive in thinking about what, precisely, these filmmakers are doing that is 'new,' the desire to group and contextualise them seems reductive. Attempts to categorise these filmmakers within the lineage of British cinema may be worthwhile in the future but, first, we need to precisely locate the textual idiosyncrasies which compose their form: this endeavour will constitute the basis of this thesis.

Therefore, to begin thinking about contemporary British cinema, it is useful to not as Nwonka does, have a fixed preconception about what British cinema is, or should be, doing. All the aforementioned studies attempt to situate contemporary British cinema in terms of realism(s) but what will become clear through my analysis is how many of these films are generically mutable and are concerned with seeing 'what lies beyond realism' (Roddick, 2009). I will, for example, analyse the thriller elements in *Red Road, Bypass* (2014) and *Shifty* (2008); the use of science-fiction in *Under the Skin* (2013); horror film tropes in *For Those in Peril* (2013); the subversion of the heritage film in *Bright Star* (2009) and *Wuthering Heights* (2011); the ethnographical documentary in s*leep furiously* (2008) and *Two Years at Sea* (2012); and the trail/road movie in *Slow West* (2015) and *American Honey* (2016). Rather than considering these films in terms of a 'movement' or a 'new wave' it is more useful, instead, to think of a tendency.

In this way, the most similar position to my own comes from Brian Hoyle and Paul Newland (2016) in their introduction to a special issue of the *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, entitled 'Post-Millennial British Art Cinema'. Immediately, this label, as opposed to New British Realism, is much more inclusive, allowing for non-realist or quasi-realist films to be situated alongside more realistically inclined methods of filmmaking. Hoyle and Newland claim that the

films they survey: 'show that the work of contemporary artists working with film in Britain does not always sit comfortably within most extant histories of British national cinema or film genre, including art cinema' (ibid, p. 233). Hoyle and Newland's conception of contemporary British art cinema can be summarised by the following quotation which will be continually examined throughout this thesis:

> Post-millennial British art cinema is not easily definable or classifiable, but is instead characterised by industrial and formal fluidity, and, often, by an ambivalence towards borders, be they generic, formal, aesthetic, cultural, industrial, technological or, indeed, national (ibid.)

This is precisely the gap in scholarship which will come to form the basis of my thesis: contemporary British filmmakers destabilize traditional notions of formal, ideological and presumed conditions of British cinema. Indeed, this is a mutable cinema which is not a formal movement but reflects contemporary British cinema's intermedial and culturally intermediate status. The emphasis on blurred borders is key to understanding the films. Throughout this thesis, I will, like Hoyle and Newland, demonstrate the liminality of these films in terms of: their production background; their stylistic and generic registers; the spaces and places they represent; the adaptability between forms (many filmmakers move between the gallery and the arthouse, between film and television, between documentary and fiction films); and (particularly in Chapter Four) their fluctuating expression of and (dis-)attachment to the national. In addition to Hoyle and Newland's argument, I will also demonstrate that an investment in everyday phenomena is key to understanding contemporary British art cinema.

The Everyday & Nationhood

Roddick's (2009) suggestion that these films seek to find 'what lies beyond realism' is pertinent here. The films I analyse are invested in the real – everyday phenomena, quotidian lives – but are not necessarily real*ist*. Indeed, Forrest (2010, p. 38) suggests that Hopkins, Ramsay and

Arnold '[push] the limits of artistic reflections of reality, using the everyday as a cinematic canvas that houses rich cinematic potentials'. Many of the films in this thesis use forms and styles beyond realism – the performative documentary, the thriller and science-fiction – yet they all remain interested in the notion of the (nationally-specific) everyday. As such, these films go beyond what Forrest terms New British Realism (though this is still a useful tag for some films within the tendency I identify).

In this way, much of this thesis will build on Tim Edensor's (2002; 2015) analysis of the link between everyday life, space, national identity and its reproduction in the cultural realm. He has repeatedly argued that 'national identity is grounded in the everyday, in the mundane details of social interaction, habits, routines and practical knowledge' (2002, p. 17) which is unreflexively apprehended. Primarily theorising everyday life and national culture, his work also extends to British film and television including, again, the work of Andrea Arnold. In his article 'Sensing National Spaces', he outlines the scenography of *Fish Tank* – including motorways, housing estates, high streets and the edgelands – which would be unreflexively recognisable to any British viewer, and:

> Though they certainly convey a sense of grittiness, this is not merely symbolic but is embedded in the ways in which such environments are felt and sensed, and chimes with prior experiences of actual space (Edensor 2015, 70).

His emphasis on the way in which we can *sense* banal spaces will be returned to but what I want to take up here is Edensor's articulation of everyday spaces which is confined to the under- or working-class settings in his four examples: *Fish Tank, This is England* (2006), *Coronation Street* and *EastEnders*. Elsewhere, he has termed everyday spaces as those that include: (red) telephone boxes and post boxes, grids, fire hydrants, street lighting, guttering, telegraph poles and pylons, signs and artefacts belonging to roadscapes. This narrow definition of everyday spaces diverges from my own more widely inclusive word of the term which will become apparent over the course of my thesis, with the first three chapters structured into

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the ways in which everyday space is multiple: across rural, urban, suburban and edgeland. Indeed, Ben Highmore (2002, p.1) demonstrates the difficulty in defining the everyday as he argues that:

> Everyday life is a vague and problematic phrase. Any assumption that it is simply 'out there', as a palpable reality to be gathered up and described, should face an immediate question: whose everyday life?

It is more useful, then, to think of *everydays* as opposed to the 'everyday' which is often understood through working-class or suburban spaces.

This is echoed by theorists of the everyday working in film studies: Ivone Margulies (1996, p. 26), for example, asserts that 'the very attempt to frame the everyday brushes against the conventional sense of everydayness as repetitious routine'. These routines can be multiple, found in more familiar, or, rather, more populated (sub-)urban spaces, or, perhaps less populous spaces – this will be analysed in my discussion of *sleep furiously* and *Two Years at Sea*, both taking place in isolated rural locations. What we can see emerging through the structure of my thesis, then, is a tendency to represent multiple spaces, lives and everyday routines within contemporary British cinema. Margulies continues:

> The quotidian stands, then, both for material reality and for the impossibility to fully account for it, to represent it. Hence the desire to represent materiality either concretely, by exacerbating cinematic elements, or thematically, by inscribing the signs of this reality (banal events, mundane gestures, actions irrelevant to the plot), becomes the trademark of a realist impulse (ibid).

Most of the films I analyse throughout this thesis use the former category, representing the everyday concretely through heightened style, what Margulies terms 'hyperrealism.' Many films' heightening of the everyday, as we will see in examples ranging from *Under the Skin* to *Two Years at Sea*, defamiliarize quotidian phenomena which results in a heightened acknowledgment of the world around us.

Sensory Realism & Subjectivity

Everyday phenomena are then evoked through heightened elements of film style within this mode of contemporary British cinema and, throughout this thesis, I argue that this is reinforced by a sensory mode of address which is attentive to the characters' subjectivity and the way they see the world.

Over the past two decades there has been an increase in scholars discussing theories of cinematic embodiment. Although these can be split into two distinctive theoretical schools – the phenomenological approach of Vivian Sobchack (1985; 2004) and Jennifer Barker (2009), who frequently draw upon Maurice Merleau-Ponty, versus the Deleuzean approach of Laura Marks (2000) and Steven Shaviro (1989) – these theorists can be linked by the ways in which a subject (whether a viewer or a character) senses the world. Many of these studies focus on the cinematic experience and on corporeal affect. Sobchack, for example, in her polemical book *The Address of the Eye* (1985, p. 191), argues for the reversibility of the cinematic experience which 'results in the constitution of a *reversibly perceptive and expressive text* and in *intersubjective* communication'. Here, Sobchack argues for a viewer's reversible contact with the screen, in which film, screen and viewer are in constant exchange. Elsewhere, Laura Marks (2000, p. xi) suggests that the title of her monograph, *The Skin of the Film*:

> offers a metaphor to emphasize the way film signifies through its materiality
> […] it also suggests the way vision itself can be tactile, as though one were
> touching a film with one's own eyes: I term this haptic visuality.

Whilst these studies provide fascinating accounts of film-philosophy, stressing a deeply theoretical approach, they provide little (objective) elucidation of specific films. Lucia Nagib (2011, p.25) pertinently argues for the problematic phenomenological approach of such thinkers:

> In their thrust to delegitimize all purely objective criticism, they often fall
> back into its reverse, that is, pure subjectivism through which the films
> themselves are almost entirely eclipsed. Take for instance these lines by

Sobchack, describing how Jane Campion's *The Piano* (1993) 'moved me deeply, stirring my bodily senses and my sense of my body' and '"sensitized" the very surfaces of my skin - as well as its own - to touch' (2004, p. 61.). For all the author's intellectual sophistication, does this not sound purely impressionistic? How many spectators feel the same way, and in any case what does this say about the film itself?

Following Nagib, Tiago de Luca (2014) uses textual analysis of three auteurs – Gus Van Sant, Tsang Ming Liang and Carlos Reygades – who demonstrate a tendency in world cinema which he terms 'sensory realism'. The arguments he puts forward in his monograph take André Bazin's overlooked phenomenological impetus as a point of departure. In his work, de Luca persistently demonstrates how the long-take and intricate sound design function in contemporary world cinema to root us in the materiality of the world(s) that are represented on-screen. He argues that:

> Fascinated by landscapes and cityscapes, bodies and faces, animate and inanimate matter, these cinemas are driven by a materialist impetus through which the facticity of things and beings take precedence over representational categories and functions (ibid, p. 12).

Many of these features can be found in contemporary British cinema. It is the stress on materiality (or, indeed, a material-reality) which aligns his conception with film phenomenology, yet his work can be precluded from Nagib's criticism of a subjective critical position by arguing not for his own, or an 'ideal viewer's', response to a given film or scene, but for the sensory mode of address which he justifies through textual analysis of the auteurs he studies. He concludes by suggesting that:

> *More than representations of social issues*, these films are sensory explorations of realities yet to be properly understood. Averse to didacticism and univocal messages, they reveal the bewildering complexity of local and global events while producing unexpected configurations of the sensible that convene the logic of the world and that of fiction. In so doing, they affirm the *new*. (ibid, p. 240, my italics).

Indeed, the revelation that these films are 'more than representations of social issues' brings us back to Roddick's, Forrest's and Monk's assertions that New British Realism is not primarily invested in the social. Therefore, what is new about sensory realism is also what is 'new' about contemporary British realism or, what I would assert, is a tendency in British cinema which is broader than realism. Furthermore, de Luca tantalisingly begins to think about the concept of global and local, themes which will emerge through this thesis as I use de Luca's conception of sensory realism to situate contemporary British cinema as a product of global world art cinemas.

De Luca's work often goes some way to thinking about subjectivity and sensory realism, particularly in his analysis of Van Sant, but I would go further: it is my assertion that these two approaches are inextricably linked within this tendency of contemporary British cinema. Just as Arnold begins with an image or character and works outwards, other filmmakers also emphasise the consciousness of their characters. Here we might think of Andrew Haigh's focus on a single character in *Weekend* (2011) and *45 Years* (2015) which, as we will see, is negotiated when he moves into the flexi-narrative of television in *Looking*, or *Kelly + Victor's* (2012) dual first-person approach. More than merely using point-of-view shots or first-person narration, these films use other elements of film style and narrative to evoke their characters' consciousness and the way they see and make-sense-of the world. In this way, these filmmakers take a phenomenological approach to their filmmaking: evoking a subject's 'being-in-the-world' (Heidegger 1967), the phenomena they encounter in their everyday lives, and the drift of their consciousness. This commingling of the sensory and subjectivity also constructs an intensely empathetic realism in which the viewer is invited to identify with a protagonist's consciousness.

Antecedents and Beginnings

This emphasis on consciousness and the sensory within British film has been taken up particularly in relation to Lynne Ramsay. Lucy Bolton (2015, pp. 148-9) demonstrates that, in

Ramsay's *Morvern Callar* (UK, 2002), 'the spectator is encouraged to share Morvern's experiences, both physical and emotional, through a cinematic style that privileges her sensory point of view'. Elsewhere, Tina Kendall (2010, p. 180) argues that her earlier film, *Ratcatcher* (1999), 'displays a strong investment in capturing the minutiae of physical existence and in the objects, sensations and small details of everyday reality'. Ewa Mazierska and Laura Rascaroli (2006, p. 196)) argue that Morvern's 'experience of places and landscapes, both at home and abroad is multi-sensory. She inhabits space in a sensual way and makes it her own, particularly through touch and hearing'. These three quotations demonstrate how Ramsay's attention to the minutiae of everyday life encourages the viewer to empathise with her protagonists' everyday consciousness. In this way, it can be argued that Ramsay is a key antecedent for this new tendency in British cinema.

Pawel Pawlikowski, who emigrated from Poland to England as a teenager, is also a key antecedent to contemporary British filmmakers. Cited by Monk (2012) and Forrest (2010) as a key practitioner of New British Realism, his films demonstrate a keen attention to British space and landscape, and exhibit an abstract lyricism rarely associated with the lives of marginalised characters. He followed the aforementioned British films, *Last Resort* and *My Summer of Love*, with *The Woman in the Fifth* (2011), a less successful transnational feature about an American in Paris. Finally, he returned to Poland for his Oscar-winning post-Holocaust road movie, *Ida* (2013). This film emphasises the photographic qualities of contemporary British cinema (which I have discussed elsewhere in relation to *Control* (Cortvriend, 2016)), that emphasises tensions between stasis and movement – themes which will emerge in my reading of *The Outer Edges* (2013) and *Slow West.*

Indeed, Pawlikowski's and Ramsay's films, and filmmaking careers, are analogous to many films and filmmakers studied throughout this thesis. Both began filmmaking within other contexts, Pawlikowski in television documentary and Ramsay in the gallery space. Their debut feature films took radical approaches to the particularities of everyday lives in Glasgow and

Margate, respectively. However, as their careers progressed, they began making less nationally-specific films and, instead, Ramsay began making films set in America (*We Need to Talk About Kevin* (2011) and *You Were Never Really Here* (2017)) whilst Pawlikowski's most recent film, *Ida*, takes him back to his homeland of Poland to deal with a specific national narrative. *Morvern Callar*, in particular, demonstrates the mutable attitudes to the national which come to shape this thesis, whilst continuing to work in a sensory register. The film begins in Oban but halfway through the action moves to Spain. In this way, we can think about how these two key antecedents to this tendency reveal the mobility of this cinema, in terms of the institutional background of the filmmakers, the spaces they represent, and their shifting attachments to the national.

Ramsay and Pawlikowski are often grouped together with other early New British Realist filmmakers, namely Shane Meadows and Michael Winterbottom. These two filmmakers seem less influential on the tendency I am studying, though they share many thematic features: Winterbottom's symphonic *Wonderland* (1999), charting three sisters in working-class South London, finds particular continuities with *sleep furiously* which I study in Chapter Two; *9 Songs* (2004), too, can be viewed as highly influential on *Weekend* and *Kelly + Victor* in its frank portrayal of real sex, its representation of youth, the city and its utilisation of pop music; *Everyday* (2012), his 2006 film, could also be read alongside many of these films with its intense focus on quotidian, marginalised lives. Shane Meadows' work is also highly influential on this tendency in his poetic foregrounding of landscape, which is also foregrounded in the films of Duane Hopkins, for example.

These key four filmmakers will not appear in the bulk of my thesis for two reasons. Firstly, this thesis is not an exhaustive overview of all contemporary auteurs working within British film. Indeed, the list of contemporary British filmmakers not included in my case studies include a wide variety of (debut) films and acclaimed directors (most notably: Terence Davies, Joanna Hogg, Peter Strickland and Ben Wheatley) that could have easily been included. Secondly, the

earliest film that appears in my thesis is *Red Road,* which postdates the majority of Ramsay's and Pawlikowski's films. I have decided to begin with this film because, as we can see from the aforementioned debates, Arnold is a catalyst for much of the discourse around this cinema, emphasised by the fact that the *Journal of British Cinema and Television* has already, after directing just three feature films, published a Special Issue on her films.

Indeed, Arnold is the thread that unites these four chapters, thus demonstrating her polycentric approach to space and place – moving between urban Scotland (*Red Road*), Essex estates (*Fish Tank*), rural Yorkshire (*Wuthering Heights*) and impoverished America (*American Honey*). Her films demonstrate the generic fluidity of contemporary British cinema, moving between subversive thriller (*Red Road*), heritage drama (*Wuthering Heights*), realist drama (*Fish Tank*) and a musical-inflected road movie (*American Honey*). Meanwhile, she has also worked within television, directing many episodes of *Transparent* (2014-) which mirrors the progression of Andrew Haigh, whose HBO series, *Looking*, I will analyse in Chapter Four. Her unwavering attention to space and place, the everyday, and her filmmaking techniques, which heighten an engagement with subjectivity, provided the impetus for my own thoughts on contemporary British cinema.

Chapter Outlines

My thesis is structured by geographical space (urban, rural, intermediary) which will elucidate how contemporary British filmmakers represent different spaces with various emphases. The thesis will begin with spaces more familiar to viewers of British cinema – the urban and the rural – which will demonstrate this tendency's departure from other modes in British cinema. I will then move outwards to less represented spaces within British cinema history: liminal spaces of suburbia and the edgelands. Finally, I will analyse the emerging trend which sees British filmmakers setting their films in America.

The first chapter will study the representation of the urban, arguably the paradigmatic space for British cinematic realism, within this tendency of contemporary British cinema. This

chapter will demonstrate the continuities with British cinema history, as well as the styles of contemporary global art cinema. In the first section, I analyse *Weekend,* a film which represents young gay men in contemporary Nottingham. I will argue that Haigh's film continues social realism's impulse of social extension, focusing on sex and sexuality, finding continuities with *Saturday Night & Sunday Morning* (1960) and popular gay British cinema, such as *My Beautiful Launderette* (1985) and *Beautiful Thing* (1996). I will then follow this with an analysis of *Red Road* and *Under the Skin*, two generically-inflected films, set in Glasgow, which both explore what it means to be a woman. Both directors, outsiders to Glasgow, use their protagonists as avatars for traversing foreign spaces which, in turn, provides an inverse of the foreign spaces British directors represent in Chapter Four. What I find in this chapter is how the urban is still a space which is, firstly, associated with identity politics and social extension. Secondly, I will demonstrate how this space is still often represented utilizing modes of filmic realism. The urban-set films, then, in some ways mark the continuities between British cinema history and contemporary British film which, as we will see, becomes destabilized when representing other spaces.

The second chapter will focus on the rural and, for the most part, these films subvert the horror and heritage genres with which the rural is most closely associated within British cinema. I begin my analysis with films that subvert the heritage genre, *Bright Star* and *Wuthering Heights*. These two films reformulate identity politics of the quotidian rural past, focusing not on rich white men, but on a black Heathcliff and a poet's wife. Furthermore, the films' intensely sensory mode invites us to inhabit and experience a faraway place, both temporally and spatially. This sensory realism is again utilised to evocatively document remote places, the Welsh community of Trefurig in *sleep furiously* and a hermit in Scotland in *Two Years at Sea*. Finally, this chapter will conclude with an analysis of *For Those in Peril*, arguing that its different textual registers evoke the schizophrenic nature of the protagonist, Aaron. I will explore this film's utilisation of myth which, again, reworks dominant spatial generic

associations with folk horror. Throughout this chapter, it will be demonstrated that the use of sensory realism is deployed to evoke remote spaces and places which, in turn, rework our historical conceptions of the landscape.

The third chapter will be devoted to liminal spaces, by which I mean those spaces between rural and the urban, including suburban and edgeland. This will begin with an analysis of the estate films, *The Selfish Giant* and *Fish Tank*, in which I further explicate the tensions between the social and realism which have emerged throughout this introduction. I will demonstrate how these filmmakers evoke space and subjectivity to create an empathetic realism, as opposed to a social realism. I will then go on to discuss *Shifty* and *Bypass*, two films set in suburbia, which I argue subvert the traditionally banal associations with which it has previously been represented. Their focus on crime provides a much more insidious backdrop to evoke this space. Finally, I will analyse *The Outer Edges*, a psychogeographic documentary, which continues the evocative documentary form of *Two Years at Sea* and *sleep furiously* but uses this to elucidate life on the margins. Throughout this chapter, then, there will be a focus on liminality: spatially, socially, generically, and textually.

My final chapter will be devoted to British filmmakers who have set their films (and television programmes) in America yet retain British funding. Although representing places far from the UK, they find continuities with films representing Britain. In this way, this set of films demonstrates the fluctuating commitment to the national throughout this tendency. I will begin with a pair of road movies, *American Honey* and *Slow West*, which demonstrate the precise mobility of this cinema. These two films, though, have extremely different forms. *American Honey's* intensely mobile camera and vivid soundtrack capture the hyperreal verisimilitude that was also on offer in *Under the Skin*, whereas *Slow West* utilises a static camera reminding us of the photographic tendency of *The Outer Edges*. I will then turn to the work of Steve McQueen and *Shame* (2011), using this film to think about the conditions of hypermodernity, globalisation and the digital age. I will conclude with Andrew Haigh's

television series, *Looking* (2014-), emphasising the fluidity between British film and American television by comparing it to his British feature films, *Weekend* and *45 Years*.

This thesis, then, will bring together a number of emergent theoretical discussions – those on the everyday and nationhood, sensory realism and subjectivity, and the lineage of British cinema – which will ultimately demonstrate that what is 'new' about contemporary British cinema is its alignment with contemporary global art cinema(s).

Chapter One

The Urban

Introduction

"What does the city create? Nothing. It centralizes creation. And yet it creates everything. Nothing exists without exchange, without union, without proximity, that is, without relationships. The city creates a situation, where different things occur one after another and do not exist separately but according to their differences. The urban, which is indifferent to each difference it contains, itself unites them. In this sense, the city constructs, identifies, and sets free the essence of social relationships." – Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution* (1970, p.117)

The urban is the paradigmatic space for British realism but this does not necessarily mean that representations of the city are inextricably linked to the mode. Indeed, Charlotte Brunsdon's (2007) study, *London in Cinema,* demonstrates the generic mutability and various representational spaces of the British cinematic city. In this monograph, and her work on London in cinema published elsewhere, Brunsdon demonstrates that the realist impulse in representations of London is most common in what she terms 'local London' – this is 'partly defined in the negative: it is not landmark London' (here, we might think of red buses, Big Ben or St. Paul's Cathedral) (p. 57). Through examples across different time periods in post-war cinema – such as Ealing's 'little London' (*Dance Hall* (1950) and *The Blue Lamp* (1950)), Horace Ové's London (*Pressure* (1976)) and South East London films (*Nil by Mouth* (1997) and *All or Nothing* (2002)) – Brunsdon (2007, p. 58) argues that:

> Instead of the exceptional, local London offers the ordinary and the quotidian, the unspectacular. The time of local London is a time of repetition. […] Local London in the cinema is where the ordinary people live: working-class and lower-middle-class people in undistinguished homes: terraced

streets, flats and estates. […] The local London [consists] of homes, jobs, routines and families, which is also, unsurprisingly, where female characters are found in larger numbers.

This mode of representing London can also be found across urban films more widely, including the case studies within this chapter. Indeed, we will come to see how repetitions of motifs, spaces and even specific shots draw our attention to the rhythms of everyday life of the kinds of working-class or lower-middle-class individuals Brunsdon thinks about in relation to realism and London.

In a special issue of the *Journal of British Cinema and Television* centring on space and place in British cinema, Steve Chibnall and Julian Petley (2007, pp. 217-8) found that the submissions tended to focus on a London-centric urbanism:

Discussion of space, place and cinema does have a tendency to be synonymous with discussion of representation of essentially urban spaces and places, and, sure enough, we could have completely filled this issue with papers about the representation of London.

This focus on London may have historical import when considering British cinema; however, within the tendency of British cinema I focus upon, the representation of urban Britain extends beyond London. Indeed, it could be said that contemporary British films which expressively evoke space are more interested in moving beyond the confines of the city or, at least, London. This is expressed through the structure of this thesis: only one quarter of it is devoted to the urban. This is what I will turn my attention towards in this chapter. I will demonstrate how the representation of the urban follows trends of British cinema, historically, through their utilisation of social-extension, with reference to films such as *Saturday Night & Sunday Morning* and *My Beautiful Launderette*. However, these films avoid metonymically addressing broader national social issues and, instead, stress a close engagement with a specific individual life and the way their everydays are constructed.

The films analysed here do not feature London but represent a plurality of urban sites: two are from Glasgow (*Under the Skin*, *Red Road*), one from Nottingham (*Weekend*) and another from Liverpool (*Kelly + Victor)*. These films and their filmmakers are moving away from London and instead are focusing on British *cities*, not merely *the* British city. Whilst the British New Wave emphatically moved from the centre (London) to previously under-represented regional spaces of the North and Midlands to give a shock of the new, the group of films I analyse are spatially polycentric. Therefore, what we see emerging is less a North/South dichotomy, and rather a sense that British films are less interested in these presumed contrasts between North/South and are instead offering a way for us to think of British urban experience in its totality.

This polycentric approach to representing urban space in New British Realism also works to break down certain class distinctions typically associated with the North. Whilst the North was typically represented in the popular imaginary as a predominantly working-class space (from 'Angry Young Man' literature and their adaptations, to the post-industrial films such as *Billy Elliot* (2000), *Brassed Off* (1996) and *The Full Monty* (1997)), what we see as part of the new British urban cinema is the collapse of any regionally-defined connotations of class. Social class itself is not a major focus of these urban-set features, which marks a departure from typical social-realist conventions in which class is usually a predominant thematic. All the films analysed in this chapter exist in an emergent, slippery working/middle-class sphere, indicated by the prevalence of the one-bed flat of the protagonists. Throughout this chapter, what becomes clear is that class is merely one social structure of many, including sex, sexuality, gender and age. Thus, these films preclude simple readings of class in favour of an intersectional approach to individual identity in contemporary Britain. As these films are more closely related through their representations of sex, sexuality and gender, which are figured at the fore of all these films, this demonstrates the close attention to individual identity and subjectivity which I argue is pertinent to contemporary British cinema.

This attention to interrelated issues of identity which engage with a specific subject (as opposed to a macro-social issue) is expressed through the films' styles. Throughout this chapter we find film styles that closely align themselves to characters' subjectivities. *Red Road* and *Weekend* emphatically engage with a single character's way of seeing the world, persistently using point-of-view shots and with the protagonists being featured in every scene. *Kelly + Victor*, on the other hand, is told from two differently-gendered first-person perspectives. Meanwhile, I will demonstrate how *Under the Skin's* hyperreal sound design illuminates the protagonist's way of experiencing urban spaces for the first time. Thus, throughout this chapter, I will remain attentive to how the films' subjective approaches illuminate their thematic interests in sex, sexuality and gender which are evocatively represented for the viewer.

In this section, I argue that these films still bear markers of realism – common features of representing urban spaces. Whilst the Glasgow set films (*Red Road* and *Under the Skin*) are generically-inflected - with thriller and science-fiction elements respectively - they also adhere to realist traditions, focusing on the quotidian in contemporary urban landscapes and utilizing modes of realism common to contemporary global cinema. These transgressive representations are marked as normal, not radical, through the focus on the everyday. In this way, to return to Lefebvre (1970, p. 117), these films display a keen awareness that 'the city constructs, identifies, and sets free the essence of social relationships.' For Lefebvre, the everyday is key to understanding greater social structures which pervade quotidian lives. These films are perceptive to this understanding of the city, the everyday and the attitudes to identity which the city invites.

This chapter will closely engage with (trans-)national cinemas. Throughout, these films invite comparisons with a range of global art cinemas including the work of Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, Chantal Akerman and Robert Bresson. These comparisons are not made to merely legitimise British cinema as global art cinema but to identify how, through emerging global

forms, these films shift away from the kinds of objective realism long associated with British social realism. In situating these films as a product of global art cinema, we can come to see the erosion of a national mode being replaced by a transnational impetus. This point is pronouncedly made in relation to the Scottish-ness of *Red Road* and *Under the Skin*. These two films, made by English directors and co-produced internationally, are arguably less interested in nationhood and are certainly not products of a devolved Scottish cinema. Yet, I will argue that the national can still be located in a transnational framework via the utilisation of space and place which evocatively engages with specific locales.

Indeed, a current focus on 'global' or 'world' cinemas can be found in recent debates within Film Studies. Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover (2007, p. 10), for example, argue that 'art cinema cannot (and never could) be defined solely by the Europe-Hollywood relationship, that the category demands a more complex vision of the global that is responsive to geographical complexity and, more important, susceptible to geopolitical analysis'. This echoes ideas expressed by Lucia Nagib (2012, p. xxiii) who has argued for a polycentric approach to film studies, such as in her *Theorizing World Cinema* collection, co-edited with Chris Perriam and Rajinder Dudrah, who claim that:

> In multicultural, multi-ethnic societies like ours, cinematic expressions from various origins cannot be seen as 'the other', for the simple reason that they are us. More interesting than their difference is, in most cases, their interconnectedness.

The national is not divorced from the transnational; rather, the national can be located within transnational structures of film production and trends across global film cultures. Here I will argue that new British cinema finds its national specificity in representations of a uniquely British quotidian life.

This chapter will begin with an analysis of *Weekend* in which I suggest that the film disrupts the conventional ways in which gay men are often represented in the city. I will then move on to

interrogate the film's slowness and how Haigh's preoccupation with the temporal reveals the conditions of everyday life in urban Britain. Following this, I will demonstrate how *Under the Skin* and *Red Road*, two films set in Glasgow, elucidate what it means to be a woman with an analysis of their forms of realism and generic inflections.

Homosexuality and the City: *Weekend*

Weekend focuses on a gay man, Russell, who is alienated from the world – indicated in its opening in which he displays an unease during a party at his best friend's house and by the silences and the nature of time passing within his own flat. Russell then meets Glenn at a gay club before the two men begin to get to know each other over a weekend before Glenn moves to America. These two characters serve as avatars for Haigh to express different ways of 'being gay' in contemporary society. Russell is a homonormative man – a gay man who wants to fit into structures of heteronormativity (he wants to have a job, get married and keep his homosexuality part of his private life). Glenn, meanwhile, represents a radical queer position – he does not want to fit into the homonormative lifestyle which Russell advocates – he wants to study art, he "doesn't do boyfriends", and he is comfortable with his sexuality in public. These tensions are never resolved: by the end of the film, when Glenn leaves, Russell is back in his flat as we continue to feel his anomie. This very attention to the different paths gay men have, in the various ways of being gay, are the core thematic in the film which, I will argue, differs from the history of popular queer British cinema.

Weekend, Popular Gay Cinema & Homonormativity

British queer cinema has represented LGBT+ lives in a variety of spaces but this often comes with a fantastical or mythical tendency. For example, there have been queer readings of many British heritage films (which I will return to in Chapter Two) and Richard Dyer (2002, p. 204) has claimed that heritage cinema has 'been surprisingly hospitable to homosexual representation' – here we might think of *Another Country* (1984)*, Maurice* and *Wilde* (1997) as films which overtly locate homosexuality in an upper-class rural past. Michael Williams (2006,

p. 116) has compared the queer tendency in films such *as A Room with a View* (1985) and *Maurice* with more contemporary, overtly gay, realist texts such as *Beautiful Thing, My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Like it Is* (1998) through the use of natural, Arcadian spaces or, as he terms them, 'queer oases' which 'make defiant performative gestures towards a mythically liberal classical past in order to transform and dis-place the cultural boundedness of the present.' Indeed, even the most quotidian of queer British films occasionally avoided representing homosexuality authentically; *Nighthawks* (1978), for example, 'ended with the central character entering […] a club [which offered] the potential of fulfilling every fantasy, of enlivening every dream' (Cant & Hemmings 2010, p. 4). Here, I will utilise textual analysis of two other popular British queer films, *Beautiful Thing* and *My Beautiful Laundrette*, to demonstrate how *Weekend* marks a departure from these quasi-realist films through abandoning referents of fantasy and utopia.

In her discussion of *My Beautiful Laundrette*, Charlotte Brunsdon (2007, p. 76) highlights the film's 'ordinariness,' claiming that there is a 'transformation of everyday life into the exceptional and the local into the utopian, when the banality of washing dirty clothes is also the opportunity for a waltz'. *Beautiful Thing* does something remarkably similar and openly plays with the ideals of utopia within a coming-out narrative. At the beginning of the film, when Jamie (Glen Berry) plays truant, he walks directly into a rainbow, as the soundtrack plays Mama Cass's 'It's Getting Better (Every Day).' By the end of the film, things have 'gotten better' in the everyday, as he waltzes with Jamie in a public, heterosexual space, to Mama Cass's 'Sweet Dreams.' This gesture suggests that the diversity he has journeyed into throughout the film is merely a dream for many individuals, which is suggested visually through the glances the community give Ste and Jamie whilst dancing, as well as the self-referentially camp gay codes of Mama Cass and rainbows which permeate the film.

My Beautiful Laundrette and *Beautiful Thing* both situate themselves in a working-class or lower-middle-class milieu, the same world as *Weekend* which is indicated by the tower blocks

in which the characters reside. These worlds are seen as 'ordinary' within British life and often get ignored in representations of homosexual British people. This is in opposition to the heritage film, which seeks to situate gay people in the 'other' world of upper-class individuals in the past. *Weekend*'s characters are located in a lower-middle-class sphere, whilst resisting notions of utopia or self-referential inclusion of gay codes and stereotypes which *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Beautiful Thing* utilize.

Weekend also reformulates conceptions of British social realism more broadly by engaging with a history of British realist texts, namely *Saturday Night & Sunday Morning* – the archetypal British New Wave film. Haigh's film takes place in Nottingham, the same city in which *Saturday Night & Sunday Morning* is set, and the tower block which Haigh uses as the central location in *Weekend* replaces Arthur Seaton's terraced house community featured in Reisz's film. The British New Wave films were radical for their social extension, moving away from London's middle-class to representing working-class, regional spaces. As Lindsay Anderson, a prominent British New Wave director, said: 'the number of British films that have ever made a genuine try at a story in a popular milieu, with working class characters all through, can be counted on the fingers of one hand' (in Lowenstein 2000, p. 226). However, these films can further be criticised for formulating regional, working-class spaces as hyper-masculine, white and heterosexual.

It is through the previous representations of Nottingham that the city has come to represent the ordinary, just as south London did for *My Beautiful Laundrette*. Haigh has cited *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* as an 'inspiration' (Dawson, 2011) on the film and this can be found within *Weekend's mise-en-scène*: Glenn's t-shirt when they first meet has 'Saturday Night and Sunday Morning' written on it in bold yellow text (fig. 1.1). The following morning, when speaking into the tape recorder, Russell notes how he liked 'Glenn's t-shirt,' immediately drawing our attention to the representation of the ordinary, as well as an appreciation of Nottingham's historical representations as a familiar city. Thus, Glenn styles himself as an

individual who acknowledges cultural history (he is about to embark on an art degree) and Nottingham's ordinary past. Haigh deliberately sets his film in Nottingham to queer spaces previously represented as heterosexual. Thus, *Weekend's* realist impetus can be located in a renewed engagement with social-extension.

Social-extension is felt throughout realist gay British cinema yet, in many of the films, the characters are repressed and often quite literally in the dark. In a much-discussed scene from *My Beautiful Laundrette*, Omar (Gordon Warnecke) and Johnny (Daniel Day-Lewis) are having sex in the dark, whereas Nasser (Saeed Jaffrey) and Rachel (Shirley Anne Field) make love in the lit-up room of the laundrette. Omar and Johnny are situated in the back of the laundrette, out of sight. Christine Geraghty (2005, p.44) argues that in *My Beautiful Laundrette*, 'setting, camera and lighting work to create certain spaces that operate symbolically'. The symbolism here is obvious: the homosexual couple are placed in the dark, setting gay sex as an underground activity which they cannot 'come out' of, whereas the straight couple have the privilege of sharing an intimate waltz in the overlooked front room of the laundrette.

One significant shot in *Weekend* then (fig.1.2), is a stationary night-time shot, in which Russell's apartment is the only one with the lights on. Glenn and Russell are seen kissing in the window, visible to those on the outside, whilst all the other inhabitants of the block have their lights off: this subverts the symbolic order of *My Beautiful Launderette*. The soundtrack plays John Grant's 'TC and Honeybear,' which Glenn and Russell are both familiar with, and spurs Russell to reunite with Glenn after going to smoke a joint in his toilet. John Grant became popular with his solo debut album in 2010 after suffering AIDs, depression and alcoholism when he publicly acknowledged his homosexuality. He became a popular singer-songwriter, both within and outside of the gay community. Thus, gay culture and gay men are now rendered visible, emphasising Haigh's homonormative project of aligning gay men with the dominant hetero culture. As Stephanie Deborah Clare (2013, p. 787) says:

Figure 1.1: Glen in a Saturday Night & Sunday Morning T-Shirt in *Weekend*

Figure 1.2: Russell's apartment at night in *Weekend*

Figure 1.3: The final shot of *Weekend*

> Russell is a homonormative guy. His fantasy of the good life aligns with [Lisa] Duggan's description of homonormativity: he seeks domesticity and marriage. He wants to love. He wants to be in 'a relationship'. He wants to get married. He sees these desires as interlocking: to love is to be in a relationship and to be in a relationship is to marry. Unlike Glen, Russell is not particularly political: he does not talk about sexuality with his straight friends, he does not attempt to claim gay public space and he is not a member of any political organization. He is, quite simply, attached to normativity.

For Clare, Russell is then an archetypal homonormative male which is in contradistinction to Glenn. This is where much of the drama in the film is located: they often argue about 'being in a relationship', a point of conflict which becomes the central narrative drive of the film. Russell's homonormative character[1] is represented as quotidian through Haigh's purposeful use of everyday space. In addition to the aforementioned shot, *Weekend* is primarily shot in external spaces: road, pubs, clubs and high streets. However, the film opens with Russell inside his quiet apartment: bathing, getting dressed and smoking a bong. By the end of the film, after having spent time *out* in public with Glen, he is back in his flat. But, now, he is leaning outside of the window and the film's final shot (fig. 1.3) is a repetition of the one in which his flat was lit up in the dark. This time, though, he is leaning outside, signalling a new comfort with his sexuality in public.

Style, Repetition & Temporality in *Weekend*

Haigh's use of space, in framing homosexuality as ordinary, is compounded by his realist style which is inflected by slow cinema. In this section, I will interrogate the designation of slow cinema in order to reveal Haigh's thematic preoccupation with the temporal. The shot lengths in *Weekend* are extremely long, with many lasting 3-4 minutes and with an average shot length of 38 seconds and, by focusing on the trivialities of the protagonist Russell, posing questions such as "should I wear my new pair of trainers" or "how do I compose this text message", we

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[1] For a further discussion of this, please see my analysis of *Looking* in Chapter Four.

could situate this film as a product of slow cinema. However, Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover (2016, p. 278) identify this as a piece of 'faux slow', alongside other queer films such as *A Thousand Clouds of Peace* (2003) and *Keep the Lights On* (2012), in which the films 'proclaim their aesthetic commitment to the non-eventful temporality of everyday life while always undercutting the viewer's experience of *durée';* thus, they propose that these films 'aim to be seen as world cinema rather than "just" gay films'. Galt and Schoonover argue that in *Weekend*, the very mode of slowness to which the film aspires is underlined by the use of focus pulls, for example, which guide the viewer's attention rather than to let it wander (for a detailed analysis of Haigh's use of focus pulls, see p. 234). In addition to this, the film, they argue, relies on familiar tropes of the art film:

> [*Weekend*] parade[s] the *mise-en-scène* of art films (empty cityscapes, quotidian details of tarnished modernity, long vistas of traffic jams) and echo the art house's typically humanist stance (expressing concern for the experiences of those who are downtrodden, forgotten, or looked past in everyday life) (p. 278).

This is further consolidated by the narrative in which *Weekend's* engagement with the 'indecisive rhythms of everyday life' which permeate the film's opening then 'become[s] disciplined by narrative' (ibid). However, I will argue that the film is continually punctuated by the indecisive rhythms of everyday life which continually interrupt the more familiar romantic narrative. In this way, I would argue that the film is not confined by its central romantic narrative but has more pressing concerns regarding the thematic of time.

I have already noted the similarity of the shots of tower blocks which coalesces Russell's romantic relationship with his isolated everyday which is symbolic in its figuration of Russell's coming-out narrative. There are other moments of repetition which also point toward the attentivity to Russell's everyday: repeated shots of him bathing, riding public transport and looking hesitantly at his shoebox. There are also visual rhymes which construct his everyday

world as unchanging which undergird Galt's & Schoonover's argument that a radical engagement with Russell's temporally slow everyday recedes as the narrative progresses.

Towards the beginning and the end of the film, for example, there is a shot that is virtually identical in which Russell enters his best friend's Jamie's house. He walks to their door, greets Jamie's wife with a hug, walks through to the kitchen and hovers in the entrance of the living room. These shots are from Russell's perspective which causes the viewer to identify with him: we see the world as he does. In both scenes, he feels like something of an outsider, arriving to both parties late, hovering for as long as he can in the domestic space of the kitchen and not where the social interaction is taking place. We feel his anomie from the life of his friends and this visual rhyme, which remains unchanging regardless of the relationship he has with Glenn. This interruption of narrative underlines Russell's continual quotidian activity, challenging the very idea that the romantic relationship alters the perception of his everyday movements, actions and gestures.

There are occasionally moments, too, which remind the viewer of the opening scenes. Following their first night together, Russell types on his laptop and stares out of his window in a 13 second static shot before he goes to work. This journey consists of two shots of him cycling, lasting 26 seconds. Following this, we find him lifeguarding at the pool in a scene which opens with a 15 second static shot full of the ambient sounds of the pool and a 47 second shot of him observing the pool (with two men playing with each other at the side of the frame). Taken together, these shots of Russell's banal quotidian activities are pervaded by a sense of uneventfulness, in which the viewer is implicated in his, and their own, experience of time. Furthermore, this disrupts the bind of the central narrative, and the film repeatedly engages in sequences like this to remind us of time's passing, of repetitious everyday activities, and to make us aware of Russell's everyday perception of time – which is disrupted when he is with Glenn.

Finally, taken together with Haigh's following film, *45 Years*, we can begin to see a preoccupation Haigh has with time's finiteness, revealing an existential attitude towards the world. *45 Years* focuses on an elderly couple preparing for their 45th wedding anniversary as Geoff (Tom Courtenay) receives a letter informing him that his first love's body has been found, having fallen into a glacier before he met his current wife, Kate (Charlotte Rampling). The film is structured into the seven days approaching their ceremony as Kate reflects on her marriage and its "bigger things", such as why they never had children. Both *45 Years* and *Weekend*, then, countdown to an event (the wedding anniversary, Glenn's departure for America) by which time they must contemplate the nature of their identity and negotiate a set of emotions. Haigh's preoccupation with the temporal, then, is not merely a formal, stylistic choice, asking the viewer to drift and therefore becoming a product of '(faux) slow cinema'; it is tied up with time's finiteness, of characters' continually battling against the temporal. In both films, these instances of melodrama are frequently interspersed with these banal moments of time's passing – such as Russell at work, or Kate walking her dog – revealing, precisely, that Haigh's films interrogates the melodrama of everyday life. *Weekend's* slowness, then, is not displaced by narrative. Rather, it is this very tension between finite time, the banal and melodrama which is precisely the thematic core of Haigh's filmmaking.

Weekend, then, is radical in its utilisation of melodrama contrasted with its slow cinema inflection. In formulating homosexuality as normative within urban spaces, we can begin to see the shifting relation popular gay cinema has with the real. Furthermore, it refigures the representation of Nottingham in independent British cinema, subverting the heterosexual space of quotidian British cities. In the next section, I will analyse the way in which urban space functions in *Red Road* and *Under the Skin*.

Outsiders & Femininity in Glasgow: *Red Road & Under the Skin*

Writing about the emergence of a 'new Scottish cinema' towards the end of the 1990's, Duncan Petrie (2000, p. 217) claims that films such as *Shallow Grave* (1994)*, Trainspotting (*1996*), My Name is Joe* (1998)*, Orphans* (1998) and *Ratcatcher*:

> rework the dominant representational traditions of the past. While no less reliant on the imaginative powers of myth, these images of Scotland have placed a new emphasis on the city as the heart of contemporary Scottish experience.

Whilst the institutional conditions of making a film in Scotland have changed since then, and not in the ways Petrie expected – films are not necessarily produced and funded indigenously – many films set in Scotland since Petrie was writing still place their focus on representations of the urban, particularly Glasgow. For example, three major directors working in Scotland have remained focused on the city in the 2000s, receiving backing from a host of European countries: Ken Loach (*Sweet Sixteen* (2002), *Ae Fond Kiss…* (2004), *The Angel's Share* (2012)), Peter Mullan (*Neds* (2010)) and David Mackenzie (*Young Adam* (2003), *Perfect Sense* (2011)).

However, the focus on the national has been disrupted with some of these directors, previously associated with representing Scotland, shifting their focus towards either England or America in the 2010s. Ken Loach and Paul Laverty (a Scottish screenwriter), whilst retaining an interest in the Scottish city, also remain committed to historical, civil war drama (*The Wind that Shakes the Barley* (2006), *Jimmy's Hall* (2014)) or to different British cities such as Manchester, London or Newcastle (*Looking for Eric* (2009), *It's a Free World…* (2007), *I, Daniel Blake (*UK, 2016)); David Mackenzie's *Starred Up* (2014), is set in an English prison and Lynne Ramsay's most recent feature-length film, *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, and her forthcoming film, *You Were Never Really Here* (2017), are set in America. Instead, many of the directors now working in Scottish cities often come from outside of Scotland, creating what Jonathan Murray (2012) names 'blurred borders' or David Martin-Jones (2009) as 'blurred boundaries' (which follows my discussion of the liminality of contemporary British cinema, as outlined in

the introduction). Both analyse Scottish cinema in a global context, Jonathan Murray, for example, emphasising the importance of the co-productions between Scotland and Denmark:

> A still ongoing process of collaboration between individuals and institutions working within the Scottish and Danish production sectors represents perhaps the most visible example of contemporary Scottish cinema's systematic move beyond a single set of national borders in both industrial and representational terms. Something like one in five of the early twenty-first-century fiction features produced with a significant element of Scottish financial and/or creative input emerged from what Mette Hjort (2010, p. 46) terms a strategic process of 'milieu developing transnationalism' overseen from opposite sides of the North Sea (p. 403).

The Scottish-Danish co-productions are particularly important in relation to Sigma films, Scotland's largest independent film production company, which co-produced both *Under the Skin* and *Red Road*. *Red Road* is representative of what Mette Hjort (2010) terms 'affinitive and milieu-building transnationalism' and is highlighted in Murray's (2012) essay. Meanwhile, David Martin-Jones's book, *Scotland: Global Cinema* (2009 p. 234) analyses ten different modes of Scottish filmmaking (from Bollywood to art cinema), arguing in each that Scotland's cinematic output in the 2000s belongs to 'global cinema,' with many of the films set in Scotland being made by outsiders:

> The increasingly blurry boundaries surrounding the category of Scottish cinema therefore require that we reconsider Scottish filmmaking and filmmaking in Scotland inclusively, both in terms of its artistic and popular merits and in relation to an increasingly global context of production. *Scotland: Global Cinema* (original emphasis).

Both *Red Road* and *Under the Skin* are co-productions between other nations, Denmark and America respectively, and both are made by English directors.

Another recent debate within Scottish cinema studies, since 2000, has been in relation to a 'devolved' Scottish cinema: the way in which Scottish cinema has taken some of its powers

away from London has sought to establish its own *national*, as opposed to *regional*, cinema, and how the Scottish film industry is utilizing transnational networks. In surveying 'new Scottish cinema's' institutions, Duncan Petrie (2000, p. 185-6) argues that:

> the 1990s has witnessed the emergence of a distinct Scottish film production sector, enabling more and more feature productions to be developed in Scotland and for a considerable proportion of production finance to be raised from indigenous sources. […] The new Scottish cinema is a distinct and meaningful entity but as yet its status should perhaps be understood in terms of a devolved British cinema rather than fully independent entity.

Petrie, here, is hopeful of a fully devolved Scottish cinema, yet Jonathan Murray (2007, p. 90) uses *Red Road* as an emblematic example of Scottish cinema in the mid-2000s to argue that:

> perhaps over the early years of the 2000s the concept of 'devolution' has come to mean something different. It might now be more accurate to say that, both in terms of international working and co-production arrangements and the representational content of much contemporary local feature work, what Scottish cinema is devolving itself away from is the notion that it must automatically be framed and best understood within any framework of national specificity at all.

Like many films Murray identifies, *Under the Skin* and, to a lesser degree, *Red Road* seldom engage with questions of nationhood explicitly. Rather, *Under the Skin* uniquely explores Hollywood stardom through its meta-analysis of Scarlett Johansson, as well as what it means to be a woman. Meanwhile, *Red Road* focuses on femininity and surveillance culture. However, I will argue that these films' use of place is less incidental than some suggest (Murray 2012) (Stewart 2012). Both these films demonstrate that Scottish cinema is indeed a global cinema and that, from the local, Scottish films do not merely explore allegories of nationhood but can address more universal themes.

Red Road and *Under the Skin* explore the local through an outsider's perspective, with an emphasis on female sexuality and voyeurism. Arnold and Glazer are both English and the

protagonists are both unfamiliar with the milieu they explore. Jackie has little knowledge of the Red Road flats, has a job, and the little we see of her household indicates that she lives in greater comfort than those residing at the flats. Meanwhile, Johansson's character is literally an alien in Glasgow. It is key to my argument here that these films are nationally specific, by evoking everyday spaces, and are universal, through their themes of femininity and by examining place through outsider figures.

Red Road as 'European' Art Film

Here, I will also explore the ways in which the text signifies continuities with other national cinemas, whilst examining how the film can still be deemed part of a regional (Scottish) and national (British) cinema. I also will explore the very terminology of the European art film and, instead, argue that a conception of global art cinema is much more useful in thinking about *Red Road* and, more broadly, this tendency in contemporary British cinema.

Due to the acclaim bestowed upon Arnold's film – including winning the Jury Prize at Cannes – and its innovative transnational production background, *Red Road* has already been discussed in several theoretical contexts within Film Studies: genre, feminism, medium specificity and (trans-)national cinemas. *Red Road* has been defined as a product of Scottish Art Cinema (Neely 2008), a European Art Film (Stewart 2012) (Murray 2007) and a Global Art Film (Martin-Jones 2009). What emerges here is not only a debate on the film's own lack of Scottish-ness but it also opens up considerations of the geography, history and trends of art cinema more broadly. Thus, I will now turn to how *Red Road* has been figured as a product of European art cinema.

Jonathan Murray (2007) and Michael Stewart (2012), in separate studies, both argue that *Red Road* belongs to the genre of 'European art cinema'. Stewart (2012) uses John Orr's (2004) formulation of European art cinema, stating that it fits into two of his categories: neo-Bazinain realism and traductive realisms. 'Neo-Bazinian' realism is characterised by low-budget cinema focusing on 'social-malaise', and Orr (2004, pp. 303-4) argues that 'all the best directors have a

distinct flair for shooting on-location with minimal budgets and for injecting a sense of milieu, above all a tangible sense of place, into their narrative concerns.' He then goes on to single out Ken Loach and Alan Clarke as forerunners of this category. On the other hand, traductive realisms (Orr 2004, p. 305) present a 'de-formation of the ontological image' which rework 'the role of the camera as a hyperactive presence that may not be reflective in the Godardian sense but is still disruptive of normal perception.' Here he highlights filmmakers such as Pawel Pawlikowski and Krzysztof Kieślowski as directors who belong to this tradition. Thus, for Stewart, Arnold's film can be figured as a European art film through its (realist) style and its epistemological complexity.

Murray (2007, p. 86), meanwhile, claims that *Red Road's* 'European-ness' is multifaceted due to its transnational production and its style, which he describes as:

> A remarkably wordless film, it attempts to find a visual language capable of representing the most extreme aspects of grief, not to mention the (self-)destructive actions the experience of such pain propels individuals towards. Both in its decision to subjugate narrative coherence and variety of incident to a psychological exploration of female interiority and sexuality and in its determination to inhabit rather than explain an especially intolerable individual experience of loss, *Red Road* accords generally with the aims of the European art cinema tradition as conventionally defined.

Implicit here is a reference to David Bordwell's 'The Art Cinema as Mode of Film Practice' (1979), in which Bordwell defines European art cinema as featuring both realism and authorial expression, psychologically coherent characters and a disruption of classical conventions of narrative. Indeed, Murray's emphasis on the wordless interiority of the film coheres with my conception of subjectivity in this tendency within contemporary British cinema. I will now use textual analysis to demonstrate how the scene in which Jackie first visits the eponymous flats elucidates Murray's and Stewart's analyses of how *Red Road's* style conforms to the European art film.

The sequence lasts eight minutes and, except for a few brief lines ("mug of tea, please"), it is almost dialogue-free. Punctuating the scene, whenever Jackie feels a sense of anxiety and threat – when she first sees the street sign for 'Red Road', when she first looks at the flats, when she picks up a shard of glass – the score interjects with a quiet, foreboding bass hum, or a higher pitched octave of strings which create a nervy atmosphere. The camera is constantly following Jackie, reacting to her movements: this implicates the viewer within the sharing of Jackie's perspective, with her being-in-the-world. The sound design throughout this sequence emphasises the relationship between the viewer and Jackie's perspective. The only sounds we hear are those which we assume she concentrates her hearing on: her footsteps, Clyde talking to the waitress or, most interestingly, the amplified sounds of birds which generates a strained, almost horrifying atmosphere. The sound design gives expression to the realist aesthetic Arnold employs, as well as marking it as neo-Bazinian, which can also be located through the employment of a handheld camera and long tracking shots.

In this way, *Red Road's* formal properties are similar to *Weekend*, which also intensely follows its protagonist. Hannah McGill (2006) also likens Arnold's style to the Dardennes. She suggests that:

> Like the Dardennes, Arnold declines to probe her protagonist's subjective experience or to anticipate her next move. The film's viewers are in the same position as a CCTV camera operative: they can only follow the action, making sense of it as they go.

However, as argued in relation to Jackie's first visit to Red Road, I would counter that Arnold *does* probe her protagonist's subjective experience: this is precisely the project Arnold refines throughout her *oeuvre*. The point-of-view shots, the expressive sound design, and the attention to Jackie's body and movements validate this. Therefore, in closely inhabiting the subject's interiority (as Murray (2012) also suggests we do) there is a marked difference between Arnold's and Haigh's filmmaking practices. Indeed, I would also contest McGill's assertion that the viewer is in the same position as a CCTV operative. The aesthetic of the

CCTV camera consists of zooms and pans from a distance, filled with a conspicuous silence; Arnold's camera, however, is intensely mobile, moving with Jackie and attentive to the sounds of her everyday life. On the other hand, Jackie's transgression of the CCTV she watches and the space she inhabits does implicate the viewer. The epistemological conditions of voyeurism and the film experience, and the link with CCTV and surveillance culture, is where I will now turn my attention.

Surveillance is somewhat specific to British urban spaces with Clive Norris and Gary Armstrong (2010, p. 49) claiming that the UK is the country with the highest amount of CCTV cameras in operation, and *Red Road* seeks to deconstruct popular myths and representations of CCTV. Catheriene Zimmer (2015, p. 18) argues that the two canonical texts of surveillance cinema are *The Conversation* (1974) and *The Wire* (2002-2008) which speaks to this audiovisual tradition as being an American, albeit not necessarily a 'Hollywood,' genre. However, Zimmer notes that surveillance narratives have 'become increasingly common since the 1990s in a variety of cinematic arenas [...] ranging from European "art" cinema to American action-thrillers and the global reinvestment in horror' (p. 1). Jessica Lake (2010, pp. 237-8) frames *Red Road* as a radical re-working of canonical art cinema representations of surveillance narratives, arguing that it:

> challenges the alignment of surveillance with male voyeurism and suggests the existence of a distinctively female voyeur/voyager, who works to collapse distance rather than maintain it and to traverse space and screens [… becoming] a leading example of how the changing practice of surveillance is being reconceived and represented by cinema.

Zimmer (p. 70) take this argument a step further, arguing that:

> not only does *Red Road* highlight the dynamics between gender and surveillance, but it shows that even a film explicitly about crime and punishment (and some of the very literal uses of video surveillance in

contemporary law enforcement) uses the surveillance trope as the basis of ambiguity and indistinction.

The film therefore inverts both perceptions of gender and surveillance and also the (digital) indexical image as a resource for objective truth. As *Red Road's* digital cinematography (shot by Robbie Ryan) functions as an obtrusion, akin to a CCTV camera itself, there is a conflation of the viewer and subject, asking us to engage dually with images of surveillance: both the spectators' voyeurism and Jackie's transgression of this. In short, Arnold's ontological intrusion in having Jackie transgress the screens she watches, invites the viewer to feel as if they could, likewise, cross into the film's diegesis. This also, as Lake and Zimmer suggest, speaks to the dynamics of gender, surveillance and power. The film's narrative and form therefore subverts dominant models of genre within cinema and television, re-working myths of surveillance cemented through both representations in modern global cinema and popular assumptions about the function of indexical images in the digital age. In this way, the film shares a thematic interest in cinematic realism and surveillance in the same way as, for example, *Caché's* modernist form causes 'the spectator [to] become aware of themselves as complicit in the cinematic spectacle' (Wheatley 2009, p. 28). Surveillance narratives, then, are becoming increasingly common, as Zimmer suggests, in European art cinema. However, it is questionable whether the label of European art cinema is appropriate or applicable within contemporary film theory.

David Martin-Jones (2009, p. 219) claims that popular conceptions of European art film established by Bordwell '[describe] much indigenous Scottish cinematic output of the 1980s and 1990s'. However, he goes on to acknowledge that filmmakers from other regions – such as Hsiao-Hsien Hou, Satyajit Ray, Wong Kar-Wai and Takeshi Kitano – also fit into the 'European' art cinema aesthetic: 'at a purely aesthetic level this can be seen as the expansion of the European niche product around the world and as a means of increasing its market share in relation to Hollywood' (p. 222). Here we can understand that art cinema is no longer purely confined to notions of European-ness and it could be questioned whether, in today's

globalised economy, we can comfortably designate art cinema as being purely 'European.' This is echoed in Karl Schoonover's and Rosalind Galt's (2010, p. 9) collection *Global Art Cinema*, in which they argue that:

> Because of the Eurocentric structure of this dominant history, art cinema's been commonly linked with a narrow and reactionary version of the international, rather than with more expansive, radical, or controversial frames such as world cinema, postcoloniality or globalization.

In their collection, Mark Betz (2010, p. 33) argues that art cinema has moved 'beyond Europe':

> I am thus positing a parametric "tradition" that constitutes one strand of an "international style" for contemporary world cinema, indeed contemporary art cinema, and that has since the late 1980s continued in Western Europe but has also proceeded in parallel in Eastern Central Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, and especially East Asia.

Many scholars, therefore, are arguing for a re-thinking of the terminology accompanying the mode of 'art cinema'. Certainly, I would agree that filmmakers outside of Europe frequently singled out – Wong Kar-Wai, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Pablo Larraín and Zhangke Jia – all fit with conceptions of 'European' art cinema as conventionally defined, but engage with concerns specific to their nation, through political allegory or more overt reflections on a nation's recent history. Within the space of art cinema, the binaries of East/West no longer apply. It has become all-encompassing regardless of geographical location: hence the term '*global'* cinema, no longer '*European'* nor seen in opposition to Hollywood. In this way, Murray and Stewart might want to suggest that *Red Road* belongs to a global tradition, rather than a 'European' one which has been imagined by a Eurocentric discourse in the history of Film Studies. However, it is easy to see the perspective from which they situate *Red Road* in a 'European' mode of filmmaking, in style, themes and through its radical production background.

Red Road is the first film in the Advance Party initiative, devised by Sigma Films and the Danish Zentropa, which aimed to produce three films – at least one made by a Scottish filmmaker and

one by a Danish director – with a set of rules proposed by Gillian Berrie, Lone Scherfig and Anders Thomas Jensen. According to Mette Hjort (2010, p. 55):

> All three films would be shot on location in Scotland, in no more than six weeks' time, and using digital technology. Further constraints involved a budgetary ceiling of £1.2 million and use the same set of characters, played by the same cast, across all three films.

The character for Jackie, for example, had the following description, which is illuminating in the ways in which Arnold and McKinnon interpret this treatment for their own authored purposes: 'JACKIE, 34. The world has been insanely unfair to her. She has lost her only brother, her husband, and their child. Jackie is a bit aloof and cool. Habitually, she maintains a relationship with a married man, whom she meets with afternoons, fortnightly. He can't quite bring himself to part with her full bosom and she gets just enough intimacy to avoid shutting herself off from the world. Jackie used to be a lot funnier and crazier than she is now. Little details give away this trait: Maybe she has a flight certificate, speaks French, or plays the banjo –she just hasn't used her skills for some years.' (Hutcheson, 2014, p. 25)

This final stipulation was one that *Donkeys* (2010) – the second feature of the initiative, following *Red Road* – defied. According to Linda Hutcheson (2014, p. 15):

> These stipulations reduced production costs and thereby created a relatively low risk environment in which three first time directors could practice their craft. Additionally, the Advance Party framework offered development support to its participating directors. The three filmmakers took part in workshops held at Zentropa's Film Town.

Only two of the three films were eventually produced, which Hutcheson (p. 22) notes is actually an achievement considering that 'on average only 18% of feature films developed in the UK are given the green light'.

By contrasting the two films eventually produced by the Advance Party initiative, we can begin to see how *Red Road* distinguishes itself as an art film through its formal properties. The only

thing that separates *Red Road* from *Donkeys* is authorship – manifested in both writing and direction – since both had identical rules governing character, cast, budget and location. Although *Donkeys* did not rigidly stick to the rules proposed by the initiative, many of the characters are still the same (albeit occasionally modified) and it was produced on a small budget in Glasgow. The rules state that 'the films take place in Scotland but apart from that the writers are free to place them anywhere according to geography, social setting or ethnic background' (Hutcheson, 2014, p. 12). Yet both directors chose a white, Glaswegian, lower-middle class milieu for their film. *Donkeys* focuses on Alfred (James Cosmo) and his relationship with his son (Steve) and daughter (Jackie) – who are unaware of their siblinghood and go on a date. The film has a stripped-back, inconspicuous style, consisting of short, static shots, with the scenes placing emphasis on dialogue above visuals, characterised by the amount of shot-reverse-shot sequences in the film. This contrasts with the obtrusive realism which Arnold utilises in her film for both thematic depth and a visceral engagement for the viewer. Furthermore, *Donkeys'* emphasis on masculinity reminds us more of the Scottish cinema of the 1990s whereas Arnold's film – working with the same characters – is much more radical in its treatment of gender. We can then begin to see how Arnold, building on *Wasp* (2003) (Natalie Press's character here is similar to the one in her earlier short) is establishing a mode of authorship which will eventually be refined in *Fish Tank*, *Wuthering Heights* and *American Honey*. Throughout her work, Arnold maintains a neo-Bazinian aesthetic and a thematic interest in gender and power. 'The art cinema foregrounds the *author* as a structure in the film's system', says Bordwell (1979, p. 719), and the ways in which Arnold retains her particular style when governed by 'rules' dictated by others shows the way in which we can view Arnold as an 'auteur'. Through these differing thematic and formal approaches, we begin to see how Arnold works within similar parameters to McKinnon, yet maintains her individual style akin to the contemporary 'neo-Bazinian' art cinema.

In this section, then, we have begun to see how this tendency in British cinema has a fluctuating and contestable attachment to regionality and nationhood. I have argued for a global art cinema rather than a Eurocentric model of art cinema and, furthermore, begun to think about Arnold's interest in the epistemological conditions of cinema and her subversive attitudes to gender which will be further demonstrated throughout this thesis. In the next section, I will explore how, conversely, the specificity of location demonstrates how the national still persists within a global context.

Outsiders, Danger and Attractions: The Specificity of *Red Road*

Like *Weekend,* one of the major projects of *Red Road* is that it seeks to de-stabilise myths of the tower block, and specifically the infamous Red Road flats. However, whereas Russell occupies this space, Jackie is foreign to it. Jackie's outsider status is realised in three different ways. Firstly, it is established that she has little knowledge of the Red Road flats: she asks her colleague if she's "right in thinking they house a lot of ex-prisoners?" Secondly, she occupies a different class location than the residents of Red Road. Although Jackie's own flat is modest she is not a member of Red Road's under-class. Finally, this outsider status is framed cinematically: the film begins with Jackie viewing the flats through her CCTV screen which we are also shown, drawing us into her subjectivity, attentive to her haptic experience of controlling the instruments of surveillance. As the film progresses, she transgresses this screen when she explores Red Road. She is a voyeur entering the space of the screened city, implicating the viewer too: we are all outsiders, with Jackie, crossing boundaries and delving into uncharted territory. In this section, I will explore the specificity of place through Jackie's own exploration of Red Road, arguing that her experience of this place oscillates between terror and pleasure.

Scholarship on *Red Road* posits that the eponymous flats play a narrative function and that Arnold avoids addressing place, and by extension nationhood, in her film. For example, Murray (2012, p. 406) claims that:

Instead of close engagement with local specificity–*Red Road* is a Glasgow street address–this film's name refers primarily to the idea of a place, and a personal journey one takes to reach it, conceived in terms psychological, not physical.

He points to the red-hued *mise-en-scène*, typically linked to Jackie's femininity and sexuality, to argue that the title acts as a kind of metaphor for Jackie's journey as opposed to any geographical specificity. Michael Stewart (2012, p. 563) draws upon this by arguing that:

If the flats provide a placeless backdrop for the examination of universal questions, they are also a paradigmatic choice, loaded with mostly negative meaning which *Red Road* does little to unpack.

However, there is a contradiction here between 'placeless' and the connotations the Red Road flats have; for if the flats have pre-loaded associations, the film must be addressing or challenging these implications. Furthermore, Stewart places *Red Road* within the tradition of 'neo-Bazinian' cinema in which sense of place is emphasised, causing a contradiction within his characterisation of *Red Road* as belonging to this sub-category of European film. Moreover, I will show here how the film does 'unpack' the negative connotations of the Red Road flats, and more broadly tower blocks in general.

Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (2001, p. 103) argues that 'some location shot films do indeed render up a "sense of place" as a result of the coincidence between location and nominated setting'. Whilst Arnold might not purposefully inscribe the importance of 'place' into her film, there is (at least) an incidental exploration of place due to the medium's indexical nature. This is where, due to the very medium of film and Arnold's utilisation of on-location cinematography, the film's Scottish-ness is located. She very much 'unpacks' Red Road whilst examining universal questions in a specific place. Indeed, in examining *Red Road* and *Last Resort*, Andrew Burke (2007, p.178) claims that 'dramatization enhances documentation rather than compromises it'. The dramatization in *Red Road* enhances the 'sense of place', the indexical on-location shots, and Arnold's film demonstrates the allures and threats of this specific place.

The flats of Red Road are both a place of danger and attraction for Jackie, much like her relationship with Clyde and, in this way, they act as a metaphor for her psychological interiority. When we first hear about the flats we are told that they are home to 'ex-convicts' and when Jackie first follows Clyde around the location it is filmed as a thriller, through the sound and the wordless tension of the sequence. However, on her subsequent visit to the flats – though this danger does not subside – we see the flats as a place of wonder and open to intimate possibilities.

When Jackie first arrives to enter the flat, the tower block is shot from a low angle, emphasising its scale. The brutalist structure is framed as an intimidating block as she stares at it for over ten seconds with the amber light softening the motif of red (signifying danger), presented throughout the film. The tower block is so enormous that we cannot see its peak: it is an unknowable entity. As Jackie gains access to Clyde's flat, via the graffiti-strewn lift, she immediately enters the light, domesticated space of the kitchen rather than the front room which is configured as threatening through the employment of the colour red - a visual motif used throughout the film to signal her feminine instincts. Here, the space of the kitchen is extremely messy with takeaway cartons, crisp packets and dirty floors. Amidst all of this, Jackie meets April (Natalie Press) and despite these dirty surroundings, April's unkempt hair and fuchsia bra-strap on show, Jackie comments that 'you're a really pretty girl.' Here we, with Jackie, are invited to look at under-class spaces which are also beautiful –different 'everydays' containing their own allure – even through different class perspectives.

Following this she enters the front room which is filtered through red light. She stands at the edge of the room whilst others dance to 'Morning Glory' by Oasis. Clyde looks at her as the camera is bathed in red, and the film slowly cuts between close-ups of Jackie's face and her view of Clyde who begins to walk towards her. These shots mainly focus on Clyde from Jackie's point of view, with quick cuts to a series of seven close-ups, with Jackie's face filling the frame more each time (fig. 1.4, fig. 1.5), and the affective power of the close-up making us feel her

anxiety. These shots focus on Clyde, we are watching and looking at men, which inverts traditional modes of film viewing. The audience still isn't explicitly aware of her relationship to Clyde which increases the tension here: she could be at risk. The music cuts to silence which

Figure 1.4: Close-up of Jackie in *Red Road*

Figure 1.5: Second close-up of Jackie in *Red Road*

Figure 1.6: Jackie's ringed finger in *Red Road*

gives the following lines an air of threat as Clyde asks "have we met?" and Jackie explains they did so "at the café." The diegetic music then changes to 'The Vanishing American Family by Scubaz: a mellow, fuzzy electronica song, setting a softer, tender tone as the two begin to intimately dance. The red lighting now becomes less dangerous and softly erotic and, as Jackie learns her footing in this environment, her femininity reveals itself. She is taken by the man she obsessively stalks, showing a sexual desirability in a man we have been led to believe is hateful. There is a quick cut to Jackie's ringed-finger (fig. 1.6), reminding us of her widowed status and linking Clyde with this. As he gently brushes her neck, Jackie closes and opens her eyes, signalling the conflict between her sexual desire and her longing for retribution, which visually communicates Burke's (2007, p. 185) assertion that 'Jackie's desire for comprehension oscillates between a desire for revenge and sexual desire'. She then has a sudden moment of realisation, runs out of the flat and vomits in the lift, contributing to the unkempt sight of elevators in tower blocks. Focusing on the female's sexual desire is somewhat radical, subverting the male gaze, and is an idea I will return to when analysing *Under the Skin.*

This is just one sequence of many in which the dangerous tower blocks are also conflated with attractions within this area of Glasgow. The next time Jackie visits, she brings whisky for an absent Clyde, and shares a mug with Stevie (Martin Compston) and April. In this sequence, the height of the flats open itself up to transcendental possibilities as Jackie is invited to *feel* the wind. Jackie appreciates the view – one of the major appeals when tower blocks were being built in the late 1960s – as the window is opened and, for a moment, there is a wild yet tranquil scene as the wind blows through their hair. Arnold's camera pauses on this moment: the sound of the wind and birds combine with the focus on April's hair, inviting the viewer to share this sensory experience. This peacefulness is quickly disturbed as Stevie holds April out of the window, causing terror for both her and Jackie. Here, Jackie's outsider status is again re-affirmed by her sense of unknown possibilities – how the high rise simultaneously possesses dangers and attractions. Furthermore, through Arnold's filmmaking techniques, the audience

is invited to share the same experiential quality of the flats as Jackie, inviting us to share her subjectivity and evoking the particularities of the Red Road flats.

The influence of new extremism can be felt in *Red Road* in an explicit scene in which Clyde performs cunnilingus on Jackie. Tanya Horeck (2011, p. 174) writes that this sequence subverts the rape-revenge thriller and that:

> The exceptional power of the sexual encounter in *Red Road* comes from our uncertainty about the motivations that underpin it and how to position ourselves in relation to the seemingly ambiguous events we are watching: how do Jackie's sexual fulfilment and pleasure relate to her unease and fear/anger towards Clyde?

In this sequence Jackie feels immense pleasure in the cinematically subversive sexual act, framed once again by red lighting from a lava lamp. She is receiving pleasure which is in direct contrast to the sex scenes earlier on in the film in which Avery finishes quickly, leaving Jackie dissatisfied. In this alien place, there is a reciprocal desire which we did not find in her earlier sexual exploits. After Clyde and Jackie have finished, she takes the semen from his condom, inserts it into her vagina and beats herself with a rock to frame a rape. Again, Jackie is finding pleasure at the tower block before committing to an extremely dangerous and ethically dubious act. As Horeck (2011) notes, we are unclear about her motivations behind this, leading us to have to re-think the scene once we understand them.

Though the threat of terror is never far from the flats, it is also an attractive, pleasurable place for Jackie and the viewer. Formulated through the use of music, lighting and careful close-ups, the formal qualities Arnold employs expresses the attractions of this specific place, whilst, at the same time, also constructing the flats as something deeply threatening through the narrative and the flat's drab *misé-en-scene*. Arnold finds erotic, transcendental and beautiful possibilities within the space of the tower block, subverting their popular image, whilst never avoiding the fact that the Red Road flats can also be an intimidating experience for those unacquainted. Therefore, I have illustrated that *Red Road* does pay attention to the

specificities of this place. It is not merely a metaphor for Jackie's interiority but Arnold invites us to challenge popular assumptions about everyday, under-class Glaswegian life. Here, then, we can begin to see how, although using techniques common to contemporary global art cinema within a transnational production context, the national still persists through specific use of space and place.

Under the Skin, Sound & Selving

An altogether stranger and more oblique film, Jonathan Glazer's *Under the Skin* follows a nameless character (Scarlett Johansson[3]) as she moves around Glasgow picking up men in a white van. These male actors were either local Glaswegian men who were unaware it was a film (until they had to sign a release form) or local non-professional actors who were cast, and it was Glazer's intention that these were to be indistinguishable to create the same 'textural' reality (quoted in Brown, 2013). Glazer's project uses a myriad of cinematic devices to represent everyday life: employing long-takes, hidden cameras to capture ordinary life in its totality, amplified sound and the use of non-professional actors. However, it oscillates between this mode and an abstruse science-fiction film in which men are led back to Johansson's dilapidated dwelling, hoping for an erotic encounter, then follow her into the flat, strip and are finally engulfed in a black, thick liquid.

Like *Red Road*, Glazer indicates that this is a film about watching and seeing, established in both films' openings. *Red Road* began with Jackie operating the CCTV cameras, haptically operating the machinery to become a voyeur. *Under the Skin's* first image is of a speck of white light surrounded by black (fig. 1.7) which slowly zooms in to reveal a lighter, concentric circle of light. The audience's eyes are then shocked as we cut closer so that the black turns into a bright, white-blue light (fig. 1.8). As the scene progresses, these bright spheres gradually begin to form an eyeball which is finally revealed (fig. 1.9). Johansson then assumes the body of a

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[3] I will refer to the character as Johansson. Although in the source material, Michael Faber's *Under the Skin*, she is named Isserley, I feel that referring to her as such whilst discussing the film would strip the film of its radical departure from the original novel. (Faber, 2000)
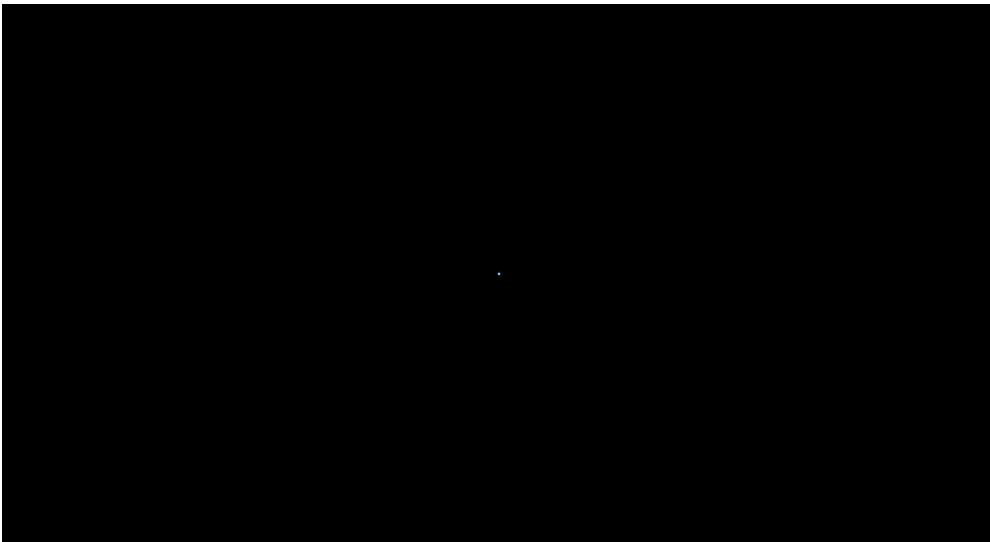
Figure 1.7: Speck of light which opens *Under the Skin*

Figure 1.8: Blue light in *Under the Skin*

Figure 1.9: The construction of an eye in *Under the Skin*

woman found dead in a field: this is a new body, a corporeal alien. The rest of the film, oblique

as it is, is about this alien learning human emotions – compassion, sexuality and fear – and the

construction of a human identity to accompany this human body. *Under the Skin's* creation of

an eyeball speaks to a history of art cinema such as Dziga Vertov's 'cine-eye' and particularly

Blade Runner (1982)*,* with which Glazer's film shares many affinities regarding the distinctions

between human and other life (be it replicants or aliens) as they evolve into beings. *Blade*

Runner similarly opens with an emphasis on the eye as human eye and the replicants'

soullessness. As Giuliana Bruno (1987, p. 73) argues: '*Blade Runner* posits questions of identity,

identification, and history in postmodernism. The text's insistence on photography, on the eye,

is suggestive of the problematics of the "I" over time'. The same could be said of the function

of the eye and the "I" in *Under the Skin* which similarly deals with questions of identity and

identification.

In *Under the Skin*, the conflation of genre demonstrates that specific modes of British cinema

have been disrupted through transnational influences. Many critics emphasise the social realist

impulse in the film and the way in which this has been ruptured via Glazer's postmodern

science-fiction art cinema. A frequent parallel was made between *Under the Skin* and the work

of Abbas Kiarostami who, in films like *Close-Up* (1990), *Taste of Cherry* (1997) and *10* (2002),

frequently shoots his films in cars. In his *Sight & Sound* review, Samuel Wigley (2014) highlights

the social realist impulse in the film:

> From her driving seat, we see a gritty, social-realist Britain: familiar high-
> street shops, ordinary faces, shabby roadsides. The first section of Glazer's
> film plays like an oneiric northern-climes recasting of Abbas Kiarostami's *10*,
> in which an Iranian woman driver's conversations with successive passengers
> cumulatively take the temperature of a nation. The chipper lad, the cocksure
> charmer, the deformed lonely-heart – in *Under the Skin*, each takes his turn
> in the passenger seat. [….] Nothing in our kitchen-sink tradition prepares us
> for the formidable scenes in which these unwitting passers-by follow the

alien femme fatale into her lair, feeling the siren's pull as they shed their clothes bit by bit in a Tardis-like cavern of endless blackness.

Furthermore, Peter Bradshaw (2014) also highlights the realist style whilst comparing it to another Kiarostami film:

> But alongside the sci-fi exoticism he brought the grit and sinew of contemporary realism, calling to mind the work of film-makers like Ken Loach, or even Abbas Kiarostami and the opening of his *The Taste of Cherry*, in which a desperately unhappy man drives around the itinerant labour markets of Teheran looking for someone to help him. These fantastic alien forms are scuffed with ordinariness and even bathos*.*

Whilst British social realist modes of filmmaking are being experimented with in *Under the Skin*, it still operates in tandem with experimental genre fiction and art cinema methods. This demonstrates that whilst this tendency in British cinema remains interested in traditional modes of realism, other generic modes of filmmaking are conflated with it to create something new. The film's first half is set in the city centre which is when it most prominently displays the conflation of social realist and science-fiction elements. Whereas rural spaces in the film are associated with the horror genre – a long tradition in British cinema (see pp. 111-12) – the urban sequences remain committed to a realist aesthetic.

Here I argue that the alien is a device for exploring the everyday afresh, defamiliarizing sounds and sights of everyday spaces as well as the 'ordinary' human body and processes of stylisation. This is achieved through experimental art cinema practices such as on-location shooting and amplified sound design as well as through the star persona of Scarlett Johansson as being transformed as an 'ordinary' woman in Glasgow, thus again opening up ways to think about the global and local through use of casting. Like many films Murray (2012) identified, *Under the Skin* never engages with questions of nationhood explicitly. Rather, it uniquely explores Hollywood stardom through its meta-analysis of Scarlett Johansson, as well as what it means to be human, suggesting that from the local, Scottish film can explore universal themes.

One way in which *Under the Skin* uncovers the specificity of urban space is through the sound design which amplifies the acoustic landscape of everyday life in Glasgow. In this way, it can be compared to Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975) or Robert Bresson's films in which sounds are amplified so that we feel the mundane or the importance of the role everyday objects hold. For example, in *Jeanne Dielman*, there is the frequent sound of the hum of the fridge to emphasise the domestic space which Jeanne is circumscribed by, making the real subjective. Ivone Margulies (1996, p. 63) claims that Bresson's:

> amplified diegetic sound is supposed to stand for the corresponding visual referent. Yet his work generates a redundance, a blocking of psychological interpretation that resembles Akerman's effects […] What might have passed unnoticed, absorbed as "natural," creates instead a sense of repetition.

This repetition is a key marker of quotidian activities, whether it is someone's livelihood (*Pickpocket* (1959)) or domestic chores (*Jeanne Dielman*). Indeed, in their reading of sound in *A Man Escaped* (1956), Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (2008, p. 294) claim that: 'the commentary and the sound effects draw our attention to tiny gestures and ordinary objects that become crucial to the escape'. In this way, Akerman and Bresson use amplified sound to heighten their exploration of the ordinary, transforming it into something which highlights the domestic (Akerman) or builds tension (Bresson). Defamiliarizing the quotidian, via non-naturalistic, subjectively heightened sound, therefore makes visible banal features of everyday life.

Glazer does something similar but for a different purpose: using art cinema techniques to meet his realistic and generic ends. These techniques involved the camera department developing their own micro-cameras to use in the car so that the men would not know they were being filmed. The amplified sounds in *Under the Skin* evoke how it feels to inhabit the everyday city for the first time – and more specifically, Glasgow. Here, Johansson's alien inhabitation of Glasgow stands as an avatar for the viewer who may be unfamiliar with the city and for the

English director himself. It presents us with a heightened reality so that we experience these spaces – both sonically and visually – as Johansson's alien character does. Like *Red Road's* narrative of Jackie's outsider status exploring the Red Road flats, *Under the Skin's* soundscape works to show how an outsider would view ordinary spaces of Glasgow, somewhat counter-intuitively through embellishing ordinary sounds. The sound designer Johnnie Burn (2014) has talked in detail about representing reality through amplified sound in *Under the Skin*:

> The other big shoot challenge was another 'presenting reality' issue. Scarlett was to play an alien anonymously in human form, and with no green skin on show, there'd have to be unusual credibility in her surroundings to allow her performance to bring out this sense of other. […] Additional voice sounds used for non-scripted real world elements (like fellow restaurant-goers or people on streets) are made by 'crowd actors' who are often far from their native tongue in distance and time. Most films just don't need to be as real as *Under the Skin*! But for a film without much dialogue, relying on large periods of unscripted observation to present a realistic immersion into a truly non-generic world, this was a problem. Our solution was: any sound, voice, vehicles, nature, you name it, record it all, for real, in Scotland.

Similarly, Jonathan Glazer (in Tobias, 2014) has also spoken in detail about the sound design in the film:

> The theory of how we were going to use the sound in the film was long worked out. For the sound, it was about capturing everything we needed, that more conventionally in a film, you wouldn't bother with. All the sonic chaos of the world that we tune out. If we stop for a second and become aware of the air-conditioning unit [points to hotel-room vent], there's clicking going on down there—we block all that out. The role of this was to use all those things and have those things somehow becoming symphonic, just bubbling away in the background. All of the things you would normally cut out of the soundtrack for being noisy would be the things we used and pushed to the foreground. There were a lot of developed microphones to achieve that stuff.

All these 'things bubbling away in the background' is precisely, then, what makes the film's sound seem at once more real, but also more strange and other-worldly, oscillating between the quotidian and noticing the abnormality of everyday sounds we block out. One example of this is the first sequence in which Johansson explores everyday Glasgow spaces in the shopping centre, just after she has inhabited her human form. Naturally, the alien needs some ordinary clothes to make herself indistinguishable from ordinary Glasgow citizens. This also plays upon the star persona of Scarlett Johansson as dressing down, to be made indistinct herself, commenting on how Hollywood actors are 'alien' to ordinary citizens. The character is therefore dually other: as both a foreign yet embodied species and as a meta-commentary on stardom.

The first sequence following Johansson through Glasgow takes place in the shopping centre. In this sequence, Johansson begins the first processes of identification with humans via processes of selving. The sequence opens as she travels down the escalator to a hyperreal symphony of sounds: babble from the other shoppers: coughing, laughing and the squeak of a plastic bag. Hearing all this in a film, amplified, seems uncanny: it draws attention to our everyday lived-in aural experience which we would not usually notice. As Johansson then negotiates her way through the crowds we hear footsteps, talking and more laughter. This is a space for social activity: for talking and laughing. Thus, the sound here reminds us that everyday experience is often built through a dual social and consumerist activity. As she continues to walk through the centre, heavy electronic music begins to play. At first, we may assume this is part of the non-diegetic score but as Johansson walks past one of the stores, the drum'n'bass music crescendos and then quietens. Just as Johansson experiences these phenomena for the first time, so does the audience, through the expectation of hearing the progression of a non-diegetic score being denied. Finally, she enters a shop and feels a red blouse, some boots and a lipstick. The feeling of textures is lingered upon by the camera, as the sounds these clothes make upon her fingertips are placed high in the mix on the soundtrack. It is important that she

Figure 1.10: Hand-mirror in *Under the Skin*
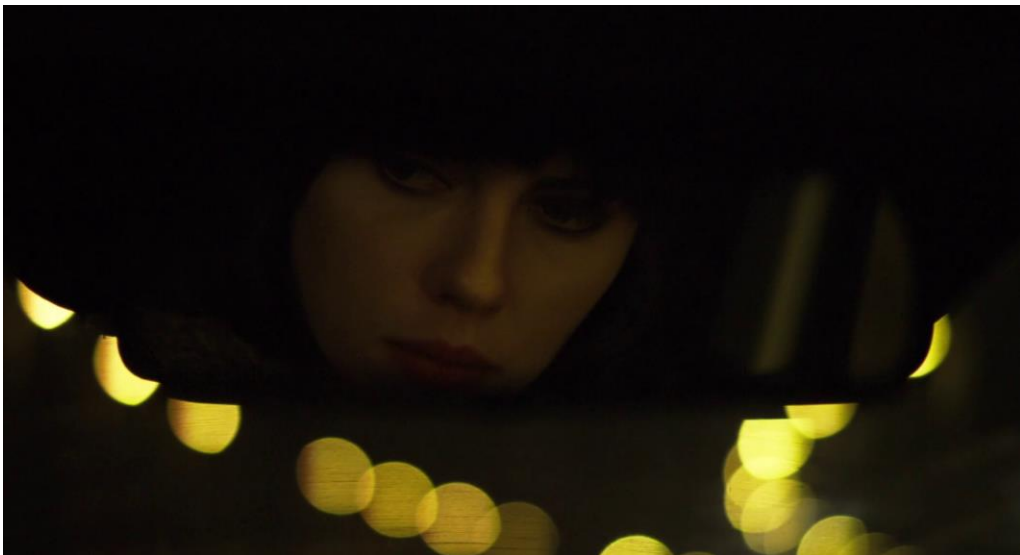
Figure 1.11: Rear-view mirror in *Under the Skin*
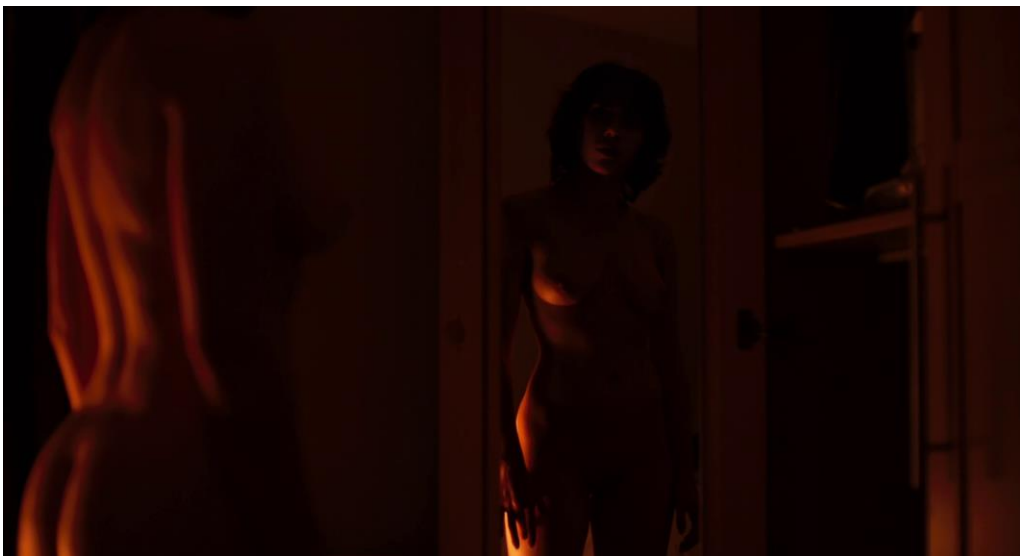
Figure 1.12: Full-length mirror in *Under the Skin*

picks these ordinary clothes, or as Ara Osterweil (2014, p. 46) would have it in her analysis of *Under the Skin*: 'fashion marked with regional and class identity'. She then wears these clothes in the car as she applies her lipstick, looking at herself in her hand-mirror (fig. 1.10), which is shown in close-up, emphasising the Lacanian mirror stage process of recognising one's self as a human being. Indeed, this motif of looking in mirrors – the hand-mirror, her rear-view mirror (fig. 1.11) and finally the full-length (fig. 1.12) – marks the evolution of Johansson as a human. This can find comparisons with Brandon's (Michael Fassbender's) final moments of becoming in *Shame*, which will be discussed in Chapter Four.

This process of selving works in two ways: to selve the alien as a 'normal' human being and to give a meta-commentary on how Johansson prepared for the role (she picked her own clothes as her 'disguise'). Furthermore, it draws our attention to our own everyday processes of selving and its relationship with social traditions and consumerism. Johansson, in order to be viewed as an 'English' woman lost in Glasgow, had to partake in these very activities. A Hollywood star driving a white van around Glasgow seems incongruous, an actress who, in the same year as the film's release, appeared in the hit blockbusters *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* (2014) and *Lucy* (2014).

Under the Skin and Femininity

Under the Skin's everydayness is also part of the film's broader project in allegorizing what it means to be a woman in the 21st century. Osterweil's examination of the evolution of the protagonist shows how with a female body, and a burgeoning womanhood, comes desire, compassion and danger. Osterweil (2014, p. 47) simply, yet effectively, suggests that the film subverts the 'male gaze':

> Seen through the figure of a woman who both looks with a piercing gaze and
> is constructed deliberately "to-be-looked-at," conventional gender balance is
> implicitly challenged. The fact that Glazer includes actual scenes of
> interactions with unknowing people on the street only adds to the intensity
> of the film's inversion of the traditional gendering of scopophilia [...] *Under*

the Skin brilliantly demonstrates that for a woman to dare to look with desire
radically transforms the everyday landscape and its power relations.

Indeed, from the moment in which Johansson first drives around Glasgow we are immediately invited to join her as a seer. Just as the defamiliarization of everyday sounds invited the audience to experience the world as she does, for the first time, the structuring of Johansson's burgeoning womanhood also attunes us to her subjectivity as she traverses these spaces. The camera from inside the white van – the white van itself loaded with connotations about male sexual predators, speaking to gender inversion in the film – slowly looks out onto an everyday Glaswegian street: pedestrians on pavements, other cars, the city's quotidian rhythms. The camera then fixates on one male staring at his phone, unaware of what is around him, tracking his movements as the van passes. Once Johansson has learnt the knack of watching, we are shown her gaze which constantly fixates on men. In this short sequence of 44 seconds (11.51-12.35), we look at a staggering 16 men, with the cuts between then becoming more rapid as the sequence progresses. The first five men take up 16 seconds of screen time but, by the final five, this halves to eight seconds. Both Johansson and the audience are quickly initiated into this method of looking at men which gradually becomes normalised through the quick edits and it is extremely rare that we are directed to look at men in an erotic manner through the eyes of a female. (Action cinema, for example, may guide us to admire the tough, hard bodies of men, but not in an explicitly erotic way; and recent queer cinema such as *Stranger by the Lake* (2013), *Taekwondo* (2016) or Xavier Dolan's work do so through the eyes of a male still.)

Moreover, the fact that these are ordinary Glaswegian men – we are asked to look at men regardless of race, age and size – makes this science-fiction allegory uncanny. Following this initial sequence, we wade through crowds of men after a football match. We can only imagine what the implications would be if it was a man in a white van driving between crowds of females, but it is this inversion that is key to the film's project of exploring the female's sexuality and gender power dynamics in the contemporary Western world (indeed, not merely Scottish), and I will return to themes of driving, mobility and gender in my analysis of *American*

Honey. As the alien becomes more human – after she attempts to eat cake, as she has her first sexual experience, as she recognises herself in a full-length mirror for the first time – she lets men go free and faces being sexually preyed upon herself. She is not just learning human emotion, but also about power dynamics that seem ordinary to us. Through Johansson's character evolving from newly-embodied alien to near-woman, Glazer sets a project to de-familiarize ourselves from our own social constructs to create a feminist allegory. He purposefully utilises the everyday representation of the city and quotidian lives (in one comic moment, a disfigured man replies to her advances claiming he is "just going to Tesco") to emphasise unequal gender relations in 21st century Britain.

I began this section by discussing Petrie's (2000) ideas of the representation of Scotland in the late 1990s, in which masculinity was of key importance in films set in Scottish cities such as in *Trainspotting*, *Orphans* and *My Name is Joe*. However, as Sarah Neely (2008, p. 157) notes in her overview of Scottish cinema: it 'is increasingly less bound to issues of representation; there is an opening-up of discourse and a freedom of movement across both genre and subject'. Indeed, this movement of genre and subject are reflected in the two films I have discussed here, which is heightened by the films' cinematic language. *Red Road* invites us to share Jackie's perspective as well as the sensations and emotions she feels. *Under the Skin*, meanwhile, uses sound to defamiliarize everyday Glasgow which positions the viewer with this alien figure.

Both these films are told from outsider perspectives, as someone exploring an unfamiliar class territory or as a literal alien who struggles to identify with all aspects of Scottish identity. It is pertinent that these two outsiders are women – figures who used to be outsiders in traditional Scottish cinema itself. These two English directors employed outsiders to address not only notions of Scottish-ness but also universal questions of womanhood. Indeed, *Under the Skin* asks perhaps the most universal question of all: what does it mean to be human?

Conclusion: *Kelly + Victor*

Throughout this chapter I have demonstrated the mutability of everydays: between a working-class woman, an alien in Glasgow, and a gay couple in Nottingham. These three films utilised film style to evoke these different characters' subjectivity. *Under the Skin* defamiliarizes sound to allow us to imagine what it is like to experience urban British spaces for the first time; *Weekend's* focus on repetitious routine evokes quotidian life in the city; and *Red Road's* generic thriller elements heighten the specificity of place and the dangers and attractions Jackie feels when visiting Red Road. These films, I argue, utilise subjective positions to socially-extend representations of individuals found in the city which draws upon the long lineage of how the urban has been figured in film: as a paradigmatic realist space. In this conclusion, I will draw our attention to another film, *Kelly + Victor,* and argue that its focus on transgressive sexualities illuminates the main themes of this chapter.

Another film centring on a young couple, *Kelly + Victor*, is set in Liverpool and focuses on their sexually transgressive relationship which centres on erotic asphyxiation. Evans's film utilises rapid editing to oscillate between the two subjectivities of the protagonists which enables Evans to evoke two different ways of seeing the world. *Kelly + Victor* is adapted from the novel of the same name by Niall Griffiths (2003). The novel is split into two halves, each narrated by the two characters, in which the first 157 pages are told from Victor's perspective, with the remaining 187 pages from Kelly's point of view, both in the first-person. Evans carefully edits his film to resemble this approach, providing a linear narrative fluctuating between both characters' subjectivities. Like *Under the Skin* and *Red Road*, *Kelly + Victor's* dual first-person approach challenges hyper-masculine connotations of the urban in British cinema.

In *Kelly + Victor*, the technique of showing both characters' subjectivities, expressively, is emphasised when both characters are together. It is often ambiguous as to whose subjectivity we are exploring, yet sometimes it is made clear through editing patterns. Take for example

the scene in which they get back from the club and enter Kelly's house. The camera in the club alternates between each other's perspective, emphasising the style which will continue throughout the film. However, in this following sequence, each character takes lifestyle drugs (in this case 'meow meow' – the popular 'legal high' of the early 2010s) or a drink of whiskey, and it then cuts to the couple's sexual encounter. This demonstrates both characters' anticipation of the sex they are about to have: both their expectations and the realisation of this.

When Kelly first snorts the mephedrone she sharply inhales and, as the camera and sound track focus on her snorting, there is then a sharp cut to their bedroom scene. In this brief shot in her bedroom she is asked whether she has a condom and replies 'fuck it', showing her anticipation and expectation of unprotected sex. When Victor then takes the drugs, there is a corresponding edit to their bedroom scene as he nuzzles Kelly's breast, showing his anticipation. This continues for another three cutaway shots from ambiguous perspectives, as the cuts become more rapid, with some of them lasting between only 1-2 seconds, from the 6-8 seconds at the beginning of the scene. Finally, the scene ends with both characters in focus and there are multiple graphic matches, of Kelly kissing Victor being matched with her kissing his chest and as their kiss becomes more passionate, we then see Kelly on top of Victor in bed. This detailed editing functions at first to emphasise both characters' desire and then, secondly, to show how compatible they are with shared expectations. This dual form is used throughout the film to explore two different characters' attitudes to their relationship and their everyday lives. In remaining faithful to the book's dual perspectives, the film attempts to show both the male and female perspective of this transgressive relationship, thus eschewing any gender preconceptions.

This attention to the ways in which different genders experience urban environments subverts typical connotations of British realist urban cinema as being hyper-masculine. In this way, they follow what Charlotte Brunsdon (2000) identifies as narratives of 'desperate girls' which

emerged in the 1990s in films such as *Stella Does Tricks* and Caroline Adler's *Under the Skin* (1997) which transforms ideas of the 'angry young men' and the hyper-masculine space of the urban. In particular, Brunsdon argues that these films are, in many ways, 'post-feminist' – 'the heroine both is and isn't sexually autonomous' (p. 175). These ideas of post-identity are stretched further in these films: In Glazer's *Under the Skin*, the 'woman' is an alien which hints at the gender mutability associated with fourth-wave feminism; *Weekend* is concerned with post-gay politics and homonormativity which juxtaposes two ways of 'being gay' through the central relationship; and *Red Road* subverts the rape-revenge thriller and thus expresses a radical feminist impulse present in British audiovisual media.

The structure of *Kelly + Victor*, which juxtaposes two different subjectivities, marks a difference from the totalising subjectivities of the other films analysed in this chapter yet it works to similar effect: to understand the way in which individuals make sense of their urban environments. Throughout the film, there is a close attention to the ways in which the characters experience everyday life. As Victor makes his sister a cup of tea, his sister gives him a phone for his birthday – this emphasis on communication and technology reflects concerns about the ways in which individuals communicate, integrate and relate to one another: in *Red Road*, this is manifested in the central conceit of the CCTV cameras and Jackie's transgression of the camera and its filmed space; in *Weekend* this is marked by the attention to the text messages Russell labours over; and in *Under the Skin*, this is represented by the conversations Johansson has with real men in Glasgow. In this way, the urban films here articulate Lefebvre's (1970, p. 117) notion that 'the city constructs, identifies, and sets free the essence of social relationships.'

Chapter Two:

Representing the Rural

Introduction: *Better Things* & Rural Representation

> It is significant, for example, that the common image of the country is now
> an image of the past, and the common image of the city an image of the
> future. That leaves, if we isolate them, an undefined present. The pull of the
> idea of the country is towards old ways, human ways, natural ways. The pull
> of the idea of the city is towards progress, modernisation, development. In
> what is then a tension, a present experienced as tension, we use the contrast
> of country and city to ratify an unresolved division and conflict of impulses,
> which it might be better to face in its own terms. (Williams, 1973, p. 297)

Raymond Williams's (1973) seminal study of the representation of the country and the city in

English literature found that the country represents the past, manual labour and the human.

The city, on the other hand, is the space of the future, modernism and machine. Williams's

conception is typical of the ways in which the country and the city are often figured.

Contemporary British cinema complicates such a schematisation by demonstrating the

continuities, as opposed to the contrasts, between the two. When analysing representations of

the urban in Chapter One, I found that the films had a formal interest in obtrusive realism, as

well as using subjectivity to foreground identity politics. Indeed, in representations of the rural

there is a continuation of such projects; however, I will argue that in representations of the

rural, of distant places (both in space and time), a sensory mode of address is more prominent.

This tension between urban and rural has been argued for by Catherine Fowler and Gillian

Helfield (2006, p.3). They state that:

> While it is tempting to speak of the urban and rural in oppositional terms,
> they are inextricably linked as points of tension rather than points of
> contrast. Indeed, we can say that underlying all rural cinema is a
> contemporary consciousness that complicates yet also specializes its

apparent attachment to the past, while at the same time drawing nearer to the concerns of urban cinema: the expression of ongoing conflicts within a rapidly changing society or culture and the need to maintain a connection to a pure cultural or national identity lost through urban assimilation and the dissipation or abandonment of traditions and rituals that in the rural context had kept this identity alive.

Whilst they claim that rural cinema is drawing nearer to the issues pertinent to urban cinema, I will argue that in contemporary British art cinema we now see them converging. Even when representing the past, rural British cinema is engaging with issues relevant to contemporary life. Andrea Arnold's *Wuthering Heights*, as we will see, complicates preconceptions of whiteness in Britain's past and, in doing so, speaks to the marginalisation of blackness in contemporary society. Meanwhile, a contemporary rural film, such as *For Those in Peril*, could be compared with *Red Road* in its exploration of gender and grief.

Those films set in contemporary rural space also complicate the traditional associations of rurality and past-ness. *Better Things*, Duane Hopkins' film exploring a cross-section of contemporary everyday life in the Cotswolds, engages with social problems of old age, drug addiction, sex and mental illness. David Forrest (2010) argues that this film's social issues are secondary to the film's visual and aural project and is therefore emblematic of New British Realism. It bears repeating his analysis of *Better Things* here: such films place 'socio-political impulses as the backdrop rather than the catalyst for their work' and that they are 'united by a poetic and aesthetically bold approach to their subject matter, which merges traditional thematic concerns with expressive art cinema templates' (p. 32). Whilst *Better Things* privileges style, Hopkins' use of associative editing and expressionistic sound represents such socio-political issues ambiguously, signalling a move away from the didacticism of traditional social realist films. Furthermore, the films discussed by Forrest in relation to New British Realism move between representations of country and city, thus demonstrating that there is a consistent textual approach to representing diverse spaces and places.

This approach is often rooted in a personal tendency which is frequently autobiographical. To return to Williams (1973, p. 2), he claims that writing *The Country and the City* was a 'personal issue,' thus demonstrating that to think of space is to think of the personal. These rural films, too, are often noted by the filmmakers as being semi-autobiographical. Forrest (2010, p. 37) argues that this personal impulse, which characterises much of new British realism, liberates the filmmakers' approach to their material. Whilst this is true in the films studied in this chapter, it is in direct contrast to the outsiders filming urban spaces in Glasgow, and this tradition can be backdated further back to the outsiders who directed the films of the British New Wave. The shift towards representing the rural is one way in which British filmmakers disrupt traditional methods of realism - by diversifying realistic representations of space and place. Filmmakers such as Hopkins and Gideon Koppel - whose film s*leep furiously* I will later return to in regard to the personal - grew up in the rural spaces they represent, yet even filmmakers who come from urban spaces, such as Carol Morley, transpose personal issues (as documented in her Stockport-set memoir *7 Miles Out* (2015)) from urban to rural spaces in *The Falling* (2015). Other established filmmakers usually associated with urban or suburban spaces, such as Mike Leigh (*Mr. Turner* (2014)) or Terence Davies (*Sunset Song* (2015)), now turn to the rural for so-called 'passion-projects,' demonstrating their longstanding personal interest in the rural.

If realist British cinema was predominantly interested in the urban, the rural was often a site for genre cinema. Horror films have often been set in the countryside allowing for the barren space of the British wilderness or the claustrophobia of small communities to shock audiences. *Hot Fuzz* (2007), for example, parodies this association through its many allusions to British horror film and its connotations with village life. Another genre frequently linked with the rural is the heritage film, often noted for the attention to country houses and the genre's formulation of England as a green and pleasant land. The films discussed in this chapter are all generically inflected yet they subvert traditional modes of representing space through

contemporary realist forms. The films I analyse in this chapter destabilise traditional approaches to genre and space, reworking heritage, documentary and horror cinema. Similarly to *Under the Skin* and *Red Road*, the coalescence of genre and realist filmmaking methods undermines the outmoded schematisation of British cinema as one which adheres to rigid polarisations of realist and generic modes.

By structuring this chapter through genre, it could suggest that social realist dramas are slowly being eradicated through these new forms. This, however, would be untrue. *Better Things* is but one example of a rural film that utilises and adapts contemporary realist forms using a backdrop of traditional social-realist content. Stella Hockenhull (2013, p. 72) argues that Hopkins 'chooses to introduce aspects which one might encounter in an urban environment, and to recreate them in a rural milieu'. This argument is immediately problematic as Hockenhull never identifies which 'aspects' are associated with the urban, with pre-existing cinematic representations of urban and rural, or whether these ambiguous aspects are a purely urban phenomenon. Both readings, of course, would be incorrect. However, what we could suggest here is that British cinema is now transposing social issues, that we would often associate with the urban via past on-screen traditions, onto the rural. Indeed, what we can see in the majority of my case studies here are connections between urban and rural and it is more useful to think of the continuities between the two rather than think of these spaces in binary terms. Furthermore, Hockenhull suggests that Hopkins is filming in a 'semi-documentary' mode, one which reinforces what we might come to expect of a realist film. 'Semi-documentary', the way in which Hockenhull uses it, could be shorthand for traditional social realist filmmaking methods. This may be true of its thematic content as opposed to the aural and visual aesthetic Hopkins utilises. This film coheres with new modes of cinematic realism yet it is not affinitive with documentary - indeed, the very 'recreation' between urban and rural which she identifies must, via her reading, be fictionalised. Rather, Hopkins' adaptation of pre-existing social-realist modes must not be reduced to the lineage of Britain's realist

filmmaking practices. It is emphatically not filmed in a mode which we would usually describe as social-realist or 'semi-documentary'. Conversely, its impressionistic, photographic style has more in common with what Christopher Williams (1996) terms the social-art cinema of the 1980s, with Hopkins' rich tableaux finding antecedents in directors such as Bill Morrison and Terence Davies. The film can therefore be aligned with the photographic, not the 'semi-documentary,' impulse.

Hockenhull (2013) provides one of the only monographs on contemporary British cinema: *Aesthetics and Neo-Romanticism in Film: Landscapes in Contemporary British Cinema*. The monograph surveys landscape in four genres: realism, horror, the woman's film and accented cinema. The central thesis of the book is that landscape in contemporary British film can find continuities with contemporary art in evoking Romantic notions of the Sublime. However, this seems to me a rather reductive exercise in finding parallels between diverse filmmaking and artistic practices. She claims that 'the predominance of prolonged rural shots, often visually enhanced through a widescreen format, is subliminally and intuitively invoked, in correspondence with 'the felt sense' of the period' (p. 209). This 'felt sense' is used according to Williams's concept of 'structure of feeling' and Hockenhull argues that romanticism is an 'appropriate reactionary response' to the 'current political, social and economic climate' (p. 211). The monograph therefore rests on a tenuous connection between Romanticism, a diverse visual culture and a vague argument that this may be a subliminal reactionary statement on behalf of filmmakers. Despite these shortcomings, her work does highlight the importance of landscape in contemporary British cinema and the way it functions across various generic contexts.

This chapter will be similarly structured into three sections based on genre. I will begin by analysing how three different filmmakers invert tropes of the heritage film in Andrea Arnold's *Wuthering Heights* and Jane Campion's *Bright Star*. I then turn to the mode of documentary cinema and the ways in which s*leep furiously* and *Two Years at Sea* evoke their subjects' world

through blurring the line between fiction and documentary. Finally, I will analyse the ways in which *For Those in Peril* utilises generic elements of the horror film to realise themes of trauma and youth.

Throughout my analyses there is an attention to the mode of sensory realism which is pervading contemporary world art cinema. Within this chapter, I demonstrate how filmmakers seek to evoke rural spaces which results in an experiential cinematic experience for the viewer. This is particularly explicit when filming faraway places both in time (the past) and geographical space (the wilderness). Implicit in this argument is that these films, through utilizing modes of sensory realism, carry a transnational impulse: *Bright Star* has a director from New Zealand (Jane Campion) and many films are international co-productions. In emphasising this cross-cultural exchange and transnational impulse:

> We are able to recognize the potential for a move away from analyzing and consuming realist cinema on the basis of its thematic specificity, looking towards a newer and more liberated critical awareness of joint stylistic and formal traits and transcending the narrow distinctions of national cinema(s) (Forrest 2010, p. 41).

Forrest (2010) and Jonathan Romney (2009) both argue that *Better Things* finds textual parallels with the films of Bruno Dumont and I will argue similarly that the films analysed in this chapter share an affinity with French cinema in particular. Thus, we are now moving to a cinema beyond the national; yet the national can still be located in the attention to the everyday, the reformulation of national genres and by evoking the particularities of space and place.

New Romantics & Rural Realists: *Bright Star* and *Wuthering Heights*

Bright Star and *Wuthering Heights* represent the Romantic era through the detailing of John Keats's romance with Fanny Brawne (based on a biography by Andrew Motion (1998)) and an adaptation of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1948) respectively. In this section, I will argue

that they subvert conventions of the heritage drama by disrupting traditional representational strategies of imagining Britain's history and by utilizing contemporary modes of subjective, sensory realism to evoke the past. I will begin this section by considering Arnold's and Campion's representational strategies and their sensory address.

These films, as I will demonstrate in this section, are products of auteurism. These female directors are recognisable names in art cinema – across various national contexts – and carry differing connotations: Campion as an established global, transmedia[4] feminist auteur and Arnold as a promising and distinctive voice in contemporary British cinema. What we see emerging through looking at these two directors is that this filmmaking tendency does not solely consist of a 'new wave' of directors but also includes established filmmakers refining their approaches. The style of these films, I will argue, follows contemporary trends in art cinema and, by representing the past through these modern approaches, are interested in the ways Britain's history can be evoked as a sensual experience for the viewer. Therefore, these films are not purposefully contrary to the heritage film but are products of authorship and, through the directors' alternative approaches to filmmaking, disrupt common strategies of representing Britain's past.

Throughout this thesis I am arguing that the modes of filmmaking in contemporary realist film offer a sensory experience of everyday life. When transplanting this mode of filmmaking onto Britain's past it functions as an experiential insight into everyday epochs of the past. In this way, these films are sites of what Alison Landsberg (2004, p.2) terms 'prosthetic memory,' a form that:

> emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about
> the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theatre or museum. In this
> moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person sutures
> himself or herself into a larger history […] the person does not simply

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[4] I will return to this idea in relation to *Looking* and I will also detail how Campion's *Top of the Lake* (2014-) is an innovative transnational and transmedia production (Chapter Four).

apprehend a historical narrative but takes on a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live. The resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape that person's subjectivity and politics.

The experiential mode of address which situates the viewer in a non-lived memory disrupts traditional approaches to the costume drama or heritage film in which the audience is usually asked to gaze at the surface pleasures of the upper-classes which promotes a conservative nostalgia. British historical drama has predominantly been viewed as a genre that upholds popular conservative myths. James Chapman (2005, pp.6-7), for example, argues that:

> The subject matter of the historical film involves a special relationship with notions of nationhood and national identity. The British historical film offers a popular vision of the past that promotes dominant myths about the British historical past.

Through texts such as popular film, these dominant myths become a shared experience of a nation's historical culture which is an important way for the nation to understand its own (historical) conception of Britishness. This is particularly problematic in relation to the heritage film, a sub-genre that represents a partial vision of Britain's past. *Bright Star* and *Wuthering Heights* complicate this generic tradition by diversifying these representations: the past is no longer a male, upper-class, white, occasionally homosexual space, but a bi-gendered, working-class and an occasionally ethnic space.

In *Bright Star* and *Wuthering Heights*, the focus on personal identity – femininity and blackness, respectively – recalls the different aspects of identity I found when examining urban spaces in contemporary British film. Within urban films, I argued that the emphases on youth, sexuality and femininity are prominent in films like *Red Road, Weekend* and *Under the Skin.* Here, we can begin to see how British films and directors have pressing concerns about identity regardless of the sites they are representing, resisting notions that politics of representation are limited to the contemporary space of the urban. Arnold, whose *Red Road*

was explored in regard to femininity in Glasgow, now considers race in the Yorkshire Moors and Jane Campion, whose films Hilary Radner (2009, pp. 17-21) argues can be situated in a 'feminist orbit', focuses on femininity and gender relations in 1818 Hampstead Heath. This demonstrates that rural and urban spaces are not necessarily oppositional sites for exploring identity and that both are important sites for representation, which breaks down the traditional oppositional binary between country and city.

Bright Star and *Wuthering Heights* are able to subvert the form of the heritage film because, being independent features, they do not need to recoup large studio budgets by providing easily exportable representations of Englishness. In his monograph, *Film England*, Andrew Higson (2011) details English (and sometimes British) cinema's transnational structures whilst analysing a range of English literary cinema between 1990 and 2010. He argues that 'Englishness in cinema is [...] profoundly caught up in the changing circumstances of nationalism, transnationalism and globalisation' (p. 5). Indeed, he picks *Bright Star* as one of five examples (the others being *Sense and Sensibility* (1995), *Elizabeth* (1998), *Harry Potter and The Prisoner of Azkaban* (2004) and *Match Point* (2005)) which complicate how we term or designate 'British' cinema. In *Bright Star*, it is the New Zealand director, the multi-national cast (primarily from UK and Australia) and the co-production financing between Australia and the UK that brings this notion of 'Britishness' into question (ibid. p. 2). Whilst he notes that these transnational structures have been in place since well before the First World War, he argues that there has 'been an *acceleration* of those transnational tendencies in the contemporary period, in the so-called era of globalisation' (ibid. p. 4, his emphasis). Most films made in Britain bring investment from other countries: for larger budget films, it is often through America so they can oversee commercial interests there (such as the partnership between Working Title and Universal), whereas smaller, independent films are often co-produced with other smaller nations. *Bright Star* is a co-production between Australia and Britain, with funding from BBC Films, the UK Film Council, Screen Australia, New South Wales Films and

Television Office Pathé. This was deemed 'British' by the BFI via their co-production treaty, thus receiving tax reliefs when filming in the UK. *Wuthering Heights* is a solely British production, receiving backing from Film4, Screen Yorkshire and Ecosse Films. It was classified as British as it passed the Cultural Test; indeed, the film wholly embodies the Cultural Test's ethos through challenging the very conception of heritage film.[5] Through being independent features, and not having to reduce their representations of Englishness to sell to foreign markets, then, these two films are able to subvert the form and content of the heritage film. I will now explore the generic conventions of the heritage film and the discourse provoked by the films.

The Heritage Film

The heritage film is a critical construct that groups together films from *Chariots of Fire* (1981) to *Sense and Sensibility* and, most famously, the films of Ismail Merchant and James Ivory. The heritage film is a term applied to costume dramas, usually adaptations, which form a larger part of heritage culture that, under the Heritage Acts of 1980 and 1983, sold Britain's past as an ideologically limited and conservative fantasy under Thatcher's Britain. Critics have noted that many costume dramas, specifically heritage films, are problematic in that they mythologize the upper-class past as the dominant national history. John Hill (1999, p. 70), for example, argues that the:

> historical heritage which such films construct […] tends to be a particular version of the national past: one which is associated with the privileged lifestyles of the English upper classes, elite institutions (such as Cambridge and Oxford universities), the country (and country house), the Home Counties and ex-colonies.

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[5] The BFI's Cultural Test is split into four sections. Section A measures cultural content through four different categories: if it is set in the UK, if it has British characters, if it is based on British subject matter and if it has English dialogue. Section B measures Cultural Contribution through: cultural creativity (whether it is a new interpretation of British culture), whether it engages with cultural heritage and if it represents cultural diversity. Section C is entitled Cultural Hubs: whether these films are filmed and post-produced in the UK. Finally, section four designates points to Cultural Productions if the cast and are British. *Wuthering Heights* fulfils all of these categories and is therefore the epitome of a 'culturally British' film as defined by the BFI (BFI, 2014).

Andrew Higson (1993, p.96) similarly posits that

> the national past and national identity emerge in these films not only as
> aristocratic, but also as male-centred, while the nation itself is reduced to the
> soft pastoral landscape of southern England, untainted by the modernity of
> urbanization or industrialization.

The formal construction of the upper-classes, elite institutions and the country house distance the viewer from experiencing the past, from engaging with the subjects' point of view and is in keeping with the ideological problem of the films' assertion of a bourgeois past. Some heritage texts such as *Brideshead Revisited* (ITV, 1981) and *Maurice*, overtly engage with representations of homosexuality more openly than other heritage texts such as *A Room with a View*. However, even in these ostensibly socially-conscious texts, we are distanced from these problems as the narratives intersect with the alien upper-class history found in the heritage film. They also privilege a pictorial look causing the audience to be kept at a distance from the characters. For example, throughout the opening section of *Maurice,* each scene is introduced through a medium or long establishing shot of Oxford University and when we enter a room the focus does not immediately shift to the characters but to their surroundings. The introduction of Michaelmas College, for example, constructs this story as Other, as something to be gazed at admiringly. The initial shot pauses as we look out of a window at the grand architecture, the camera then slowly pans around an interior room where we find five characters. However, they are not the immediate focus of the shot. The emphasis here is on the environment, both exterior and interior. As the scene then moves into a more formulaic shot-reverse-shot, the camera is in deep focus which draws the viewers' attention to interior design, clocks and ornaments as much as the characters themselves. This focus on surface and aesthetic pleasure immediately marks the film's representational strategies as relatively insignificant. We are not invited to empathise with the characters but are asked to gaze admiringly at, not experience, the characters' surroundings.

The heritage film is not a stable genre, though, and is much more diverse than just the Merchant & Ivory films of the 1980s. Claire Monk (2002, p.194), a staunch defender of the heritage film, counters such critiques given by Hill and Higson by arguing that it is not a fixed genre and that:

> the preoccupation with the national/ideological which continues to shape academic and critical discourse around the films leaves audience and fan perspectives on both 'old' and 'new' (or post-) heritage films almost wholly unvoiced. The effect is to invalidate what would surely be a useful and relevant focus on how the films might work as popular cinema, within genres in which the period setting provides an opportunity for specific pleasures which are not all reducible to ideology.

Monk does not attempt to counter these ideological critiques but merely argues for a paradigmatic shift regarding audience pleasure. Whilst I agree that criticism of the heritage films has been confined to work on national cinemas, Monk ignores the fact that much criticism, from Hill and Higson, feature in studies *about* national cinema. Indeed, in *English Heritage, English Cinema*, Higson (2003) notes the diversity of the group of films often identified as heritage in his analyses of *Elizabeth* and *Howards End* (1992). Furthermore, prior to Monk's criticisms, some have identified the heterogeneity of the heritage film. For example, Phil Powrie (2000) identifies an 'alternative heritage' in the works of Terence Davies and films such as *Small Faces* (1996) which take an experimental form to working-class, regional representations and are removed from the literary paradigm. In another essay, Monk (1995) recognises the 'post-heritage' sub-genre in films such as *Carrington* (1995), *Orlando* (1992), *The Age of Innocence* (1993) and *The Piano*. These films cross national borders and are characterised by 'an overt concern with sexuality and gender, particularly non-dominant gender and sexual identities: feminine, non-masculine, mutable, androgynous, ambiguous' (Monk 1995, p. 93). Some have misused the term 'post-heritage' to mean any film made which avoids tendencies of the traditional heritage film. Michael Lawrence (2016, p. 192), for example, argues that the coalescence of present-ness and past-ness found in *Wuthering*

Heights is an example of its status as a 'post-heritage' film. I would argue, however, that this is not necessarily a feature of the post-heritage film. Indeed, he never defines what he means when he uses the term 'post-heritage,' thus ignoring Monk's (1995) original definition. What Lawrence calls post-heritage is what I term 'anti-heritage', films that destabilize traditional heritage forms resulting from concerns of authorship and coalescing present-ness and past-ness through contemporary arthouse form.

These forms can be identified by considering how they converge with contemporary arthouse aesthetics such as slowness. One of the formative texts of heritage audiovisual culture is the ITV miniseries *Brideshead Revisited* which, like *Maurice*, openly explores homosexuality and the past. Sarah Cardwell (2002) argues that one of the distinctive features of this adaptation is its slowness. This can be located in its narrative development which stems from its faithful adaptation and is echoed in the sparse editing and static camerawork (pp. 110-113). Paul Cooke and Rob Stone (2016) argue that slowness is a common feature of the heritage film across diverse national contexts. They claim that films such as *Chariots of Fire, The Patriot* (2000)*, The King's Speech* (2010)*, Django Unchained* (2012) and *12 Years a Slave* (2013):

> tend to be punctuated and driven by dramatic scenes, yet long takes and
> minimal camera movements can also slow them down for the haptic
> encounter that allows the spectator to experience, even fetishize, the detail
> of the visual (p. 314).

They argue that this slowness and the films' commitment to coalescing past and present results in the Deleuzean concept of the crystal-image (a concept I will return to in relation to Paul Wright's treatment of time in *For Those in Peril*). The examples they choose to demonstrate the slow impulse within the heritage film, though, are problematic. In the introduction to *Slow Cinema*, in which Cooke and Stone's article appears, Tiago de Luca and Nunno Barradas Jorge (2016, p.5) argue that slowness 'makes time noticeable in the image and consequently felt by the viewer [which] is often achieved by means of a disjunction between shot duration and audiovisual content'. Even in the scenes of *The King's Speech* to which Stone

and Cooke allude, in which the camera fetishizes the wallpaper and set design, this never *feels* slow. In fact, Hooper's decentred camera gazes upon such detail whilst having action occur in another part of the frame, thus audiovisual content is never slowed to the point of feeling time. Indeed, Stone and Cooke do not refer to *Wuthering Heights* or *Bright Star*. On the one hand, this could be due to these films' disavowal of traditional generic elements of the heritage film. On the other, the ignorance of perhaps the slowest films which could fit into a loose conception of the heritage genre is at least an oversight. Thus, although slowness has been argued for within the heritage film, I would posit that these two films destabilise traditional markers of slowness - for example, stillness - within the genre.

Stone and Cooke suggest that recent heritage filmmaking continues the conservative project of the 1980s British films. Whilst it is true that they present a tourist gaze of the national past, I argue that more traditional heritage films produced in Britain since the mid-2000s attempt to revitalise the genre via formal experimentation. This can be found in films made by Working Title (*Pride & Prejudice* (2005), *Atonement* (2007) and *The Theory of Everything* (2014)) as well as films from other production companies (*The King's Speech* and *The Imitation Game* (2014)). These films take place in a historical moment. They all privilege a pictorial look, they mostly focus on the upper-classes and are often adapted from works of English literature. These films distinguish themselves from traditional heritage films of the 1980s by engaging in superficial formal experimentation; for example, *The Theory of Everything's* coloured filters, Joe Wright's long-takes and Tom Hooper's decentred framing. Still, they mark a revitalisation of the heritage drama. Indeed, Higson's (1993, p. 91) critique of the 1980s' heritage films resonates when applied to these contemporary films, as he asserts that:

> While the obligation to succeed internationally requires to some degree an effacing of the specifically national, certain films of the 1980s used the national itself - or at least, a version of the national past - as their prime selling point. Images of Britain and Britishness (usually, in fact, Englishness) became commodities for consumption in the international image market.

This easily exportable mode of filmmaking then still persists, albeit in slightly modified forms, and is therefore a genre that has sustained itself, precisely because their vision of Britishness is popular in America and is therefore commercially viable.[6] The exportability often relies on prestige, with all of the recent films identified receiving major Oscar nominations. However, in films made with smaller budgets, it is not necessary to create commercially exportable visions of 'Englishness' as the studio does not need to recuperate the modest budgets by selling the film to a large, foreign audience. This results in less stereotypical notions of Englishness and thus challenges conventional approaches towards representing the nation's past. Such representational strategies are evident in both *Bright Star,* which I will explore in relation to femininity and costume*,* and in *Wuthering Heights* through the representation of blackness.

In this section, I will demonstrate that *Wuthering Heights* and *Bright Star* disrupt formal conventions maintained in the form of the traditional heritage film. The films oppose the surface gaze associated with the heritage film and representations of the upper-class white male which dominate traditional heritage filmmaking. I term them 'anti-heritage', as they eschew traditional ways of filming Britain's past yet share some of the core features of a heritage film – associated with English literature, portraying the Romantic/Victorian past and having lavish costumes. Instead, these films are more interested in an experiential sensory realism through the focus on diegetic materiality, enabled through the attention to texture, nature and slowness. This experiential mode of address therefore moves away from the tourist gaze we associate with heritage filmmaking, from the 1980s to the output of Working Title, and thus become an example of prosthetic memory (Landsberg 2004) which has a political end in reconfiguring an English past as previously and popularly imagined.

Femininity & Costume in *Bright Star*

Bright Star reconfigures traditional features of the heritage film - such as costume and landscape - to advance Campion's central feminist project. The anti-heritage film may take one

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[6] All these recent examples of heritage films, for example, made back at least double their production budget in America alone.

of the aesthetic pleasures which the heritage film fetishized and imbue it with meaning and representational significance. In *Bright Star*, Campion moves costume beyond its typically decorative function in the heritage film. Through the attention to Fanny's female craft, Campion emphasises the importance of feminine art. Kathryn Sullivan Kruger (20001, p. 23) argues that:

> Without respect for this work [such as weaving], the history of female experience will always be considered less valuable than its historical male counterpart in male experience […] Because we habitually link female involvement to textile history, the recuperation of this history recovers a record of women's participation in the creation of culture and its texts, thereby reclaiming a female authorship.

Indeed, in emphasising the importance of (historical) feminine work, Campion reclaims a marginalised, silenced aspect of culture against a vocal male artist, a central project of her own authorship.

The film opens with a close-up of Fanny piercing fabric with a needle which is sensually intense and therefore immediately constructs costume and Fanny's craft as a central motif. Fanny's key creative pursuit is her clothes which she crafts herself and takes great pride in – 'this is the first frock in Woolwich or Hampstead to have a triple-pleated mushroom collar', she proudly tells Keats - and there are many shots of her pursuing her needlework throughout the film. Yet this creativity is often looked upon by her rival, Mr. Brown (John Schneider), who has a close homosocial relationship with Keats, as frivolous, indicating how the patriarchal retelling of the past forgets the history of 'shallow' feminine craft. His first lines of the film – "the very well stitched little Miss Brawne in all her detail" – makes a mockery of her creative passion, which she vehemently defends.

In the film, Keats's poetry is reduced to a few recitals of his work compared to the omnipresence of Fanny's fashions which are on display throughout. This challenges not only generic strategies of representation in the heritage film, but also the wider history of women's

art as being marginalised in our cultural memory. One way Fanny's art is displayed is through her wearing a different costume in each scene. This is in stark contrast to Keats who spends the majority of the film in a teal jacket (fig. 2.1). In their first meeting, Fanny exclaims her distaste for it and claims that he should wear a velvet blue blazer which draws attention to the presence of his costuming. Fanny is seen stitching her own clothes throughout the film. When Tom Keats (Olly Alexander) dies, for example, she immediately stitches a black garment and repeats this process when she hears of John Keats's death, too. This takes on a deft poignancy in the film, as when Keats is away on holiday or is 'imprisoned' with his illness, Fanny also wears teal (fig. 2.2), suggesting she misses the sight of Keats's apparel and, by extension, Keats himself.

This detailed costuming is not just symbolic but is an exploration of and a testament to Fanny's craft. Fanny's art is arguably more visible throughout the film than Keats's is and *Bright Star* therefore reveals a female hidden history in a biopic marketed on Keats's poetry. Fanny is quick to stitch beautiful garments which reflect her own emotions. This is similar to Campion's *The Piano* or *An Angel at My Table* (1990) where the music (Ada's piano playing) and the narrative (Janet Frame's writings), respectively, are both expressive filmic devices and at the same time are attentive to female art. Hilary Radner (2009, p. 13) claims that 'Campion's heroines often struggle over the choice of life or art' and that 'within Campion's corpus, the woman's film pushes the conventions of the genre in order to make certain kinds of extreme statements about the ways in which a woman figures her identity and desires'. The same could be said of *Bright Star*, a film which could, if directed by another filmmaker, take on the air of

Figure 2.1: John Keats' teal blazer in *Bright Star*

Figure 2.2: Fanny's teal dress in *Bright Star*

typical literary drama or give into generic conventions of the heritage film. However, Campion pushes this film in a different direction, focusing on a famous male through a woman's perspective. This works to defamiliarize the dominant masculine narrative popular within representations of Britain's past.

Bright Star, like *Wuthering Heights*, diversifies the national past through depicting a rural working-class, reworking the 'regimes of signification' (Edensor 2002, p.44) found in the heritage film. One reason for Keats's modest clothing is his class-location which is referenced occasionally in the film: he is poor, too much so to legitimately marry Fanny, which causes much of the narrative tension. The first half of *Wuthering Heights* also centres upon the working-classes in rural England, whereas in the second the protagonists' class status changes to an upper-middle class setting. Through representing the working-class within a Romantic epoch, these filmmakers destabilise popular historical film which is pervaded by the upper-classes (and, thus, we can link this back to the kinds of social-extension we found within urban sites). This is not entirely new. Sarah Cardwell (2006, pp. 25-6), for example, argues that Thomas Hardy adaptations and their focus on 'working the land' were 'overlooked as a potential source' for heritage filmmakers and that 'these adaptations do not demote the rural to the status of "landscape" or "backdrop" to be gazed at and admired. Instead, they depict it as land that must be worked, lived with and respected'. In discussing rural spaces as a key site of constructing national identity, Tim Edensor (2002, p.44) claims that the heritage industries undergo 'regimes of signification which construct this rural idyll as a manifestation of Englishness [which] mask[s] the underlying undecidability of the countryside and the nation, their ambivalence and multiplicity'. *Bright Star* and *Wuthering Heights* therefore demonstrate the precise ambiguities that had been lacking within representations of Britain's national past.

Heathcliff's Blackness

As *Bright Star* reworks the male-centred narrative of the heritage film, Heathcliff's blackness similarly deconstructs the formulation of the rural past as a white space. In *Wuthering Heights*,

he is played by two different actors: Solomon Glave (Young Heathcliff) and James Howson (Old Heathcliff). In interviews, when questioned about casting a black Heathcliff, Arnold (in Olsen, 2011) asserts that:

"I think the only reason people are surprised is they've just seen white Heathcliffs all the time and I don't think anyone's really concentrated on the text," Arnold added, noting that his descriptions in the book make reference to Heathcliff appearing like a gypsy or Indian sailor. "I decided that's really where the truth was, what really mattered was his difference, his exoticness. That was mainly what I thought was really important."

However, as Galpin (2014) has demonstrated, Arnold is less interested in authenticity than she is in mapping her own concerns onto the adaptation. This is manifested in the film through anachronisms in the ubiquity of contemporary language (for example, instances of 'come on' and 'okay') and the closing Mumford and Sons song - the only instance of non-diegetic sound in the film. Much of the dialogue in the novel is almost completely absent in the film, again stressing that Arnold is not interested in a faithful adaptation. Moreover, Arnold has only adapted the first half of the novel, a persistent trend in feature-length adaptations of *Wuthering Heights* – this is true in the most popular and acclaimed filmic adaptations: *Wuthering Heights* (William Wyler, USA, 1939), *Abismos de Pasion* (Luis Bunuel, Spain, 1954), *Hurlevent* (Jacques Rivette, France, 1985), *Wuthering Heights* (Robert Fueston, UK, 1970) and *Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights* (Peter Kosminsky, UK, 1992). This demonstrates that she is not interested in an authentic adaptation of the source text but with the cultural memory of the novel. Therefore, I suggest that Arnold is a little disingenuous with her comments here regarding her desire to adapt the text faithfully. As she does suggest, casting a black Heathcliff is an openly provocative statement about our cultural memory of *Wuthering Heights*, challenging our preconceptions of Britain's past as being imagined as 'white' and, in doing so, draws our attention not only to issues of blackness but also Britain's own imagined white history.

The film exhibits an awareness of the intersectionality of race (or, ethnicity) and class which follows representational strategies found in black British cinema. In 'New Ethnicities', following films such as *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Passion of Remembrance* (1986), Stuart Hall (1996, p. 44) argues that:

> What is at issue here is the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category 'black'; that is, the recognition that 'black' is essentially a politically and culturally constructed category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed transcultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantees in Nature.

Hindley is marked as a skinhead in the film, another anachronism, which corresponds with other examples of popular British realist films, as Amy Raphael (2011) argues: he 'wouldn't look out of place in *This Is England*'. This is a choice which also challenges our cultural preconceptions of *Wuthering Heights* in which Hindley is figured as a long-haired, masculine figure.[8] He is a working-class labourer, then owner, of the farmhouse Wuthering Heights. When Heathcliff is first introduced he is initially presented as an outsider and someone who has come from relative poverty: as he scowls at the dog we see his decaying, crooked teeth which compare unfavourably to those of the Earnshaws. He hovers in the doorway, revealing his discomfort in entering the domestic space of the home, as Nelly is instructed to "clean him up." He is therefore immediately constructed as an outsider to this community, not only due to his blackness but also because of his class location. The abuse he then suffers cannot be singly attributed to his race, but also his class. Later in the film, when Hindley acquires the farmhouse, Hindley says Heathcliff is "to move in with the animals, where [he] belong[s]." In the second-half of the film in which he returns a well-dressed, rich man with good English he faces no racist abuse from the Lintons and the racist slur from Hindley – "you always were a

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[8] He was previously played by Hugh Williams (1939), Julian Glover (1970), John Duttine (1978), Jeremy Northam (1992), Ian Shaw (1998) and Burn Gorman (2009) in various film and television adaptations of the novel, all fitting with this imagined perception of Hindley. Indeed, this perception of Hindley has no basis on character descriptions in the novel itself (Brontë, 1848).

thieving nigger" – is firmly in the past tense. This suggests he is a black man no longer, for

blackness was previously inscribed not only as skin colour but in his class location, therefore

being positioned as Other to the Earnshaws. In Arnold's film then, there is a keen awareness of

the intersectionality of ethnicity and class, even if this is more covert than in the films of the

1980s to which Hall refers.

Through exploring blackness in Britain's past, Arnold's film contests the white perspective

found in the traditional heritage film which has been viewed as a form of racism. Richard Dyer

(1997, p. 9) claims that 'for those in power in the West, as long as whiteness is felt to be the

human condition, then it alone both defines normality and fully inhabits it'. This whiteness has

been challenged in black British filmmaking, yet the invisibility of blackness in the heritage film

is strikingly problematic. In her conclusion to her study on black and Asian representation in

British film and television, Sarita Malik (2001) asserts that we need to re-think our national

heritage and that the elision of blackness in heritage fictions is but one way in which British

audiovisual cultures are racist. She argues that 'racisms then, are not always about

stereotyping, marking and abjecting; they are also about omitting (heritage texts), excluding

(public debates) and misrecognizing (Black-British youth cultures)' (p. 176). Arnold is

challenging a key cultural text and, through mapping blackness onto England's past in the form

of a costume drama, the film defies the myth that whiteness is 'normal' in Britain's past.

Subjectivity & Tactility

Bright Star and *Wuthering Heights* also challenge heritage fictions through their sensory mode

of address. Most analyses of the synesthetic possibilities of cinema have been offered from a

phenomenological perspective; though here I suggest that these films have a sensory register

which can be found through close analysis of the film rather than a subjective approach. These

two films have a sensory address which can – but does not necessarily – evoke a sensual,

tactile, synesthetic response in the viewer. Two short sequences in the films demonstrate the

sensory address present throughout. The first I will consider is when Keats moves into his

room which is located next to Fanny's and the second is when Cathy and Heathcliff embark on a horse ride.

In keeping with Sobchack's (2010) account of *The Piano*, I contend that Campion's direction of *Bright Star* also allows the viewer an opportunity to be sensually engaged with the film. The scene in *Bright Star* in which Fanny and her younger sister, Toots (Edie Martin), are moving into their new bedroom, which is adjacent to Keats's, carnally engages the viewer. The score is high in the mix, a song aptly named "Yearning" on the original soundtrack, as Keats and Fanny knock on the wall which divides them. Keats hesitantly knocks first and there is a focus on his delay as his fingers softly caress the wall. After the knock, Fanny springs over to the wall as she similarly hesitates and returns the gesture. We hear their rustlings, the sound their mouths create and, finally, the noise their hands make as they intimately stroke the walls in correspondence with each other. Campion's deliberate pacing of this sequence allows us to linger on this everyday romantic sensuous activity. She is offering up a way for us to engage with the film 'cinesthetically' (Sobchack 2010) with our own bodies, through sounds, natural lighting and the focus on touch. This emphasis on the possibility for the viewer's embodiment with the film is evident throughout the film which sensually evokes Hampstead in 1818.

Initial reviews of *Wuthering Heights* praised its 'sensory, kinetic experience' with Anthony Quinn (2011) so enamoured by the elemental experience of the film that he wrote:

> Having spent two hours in front of Andrea Arnold's wind-whipped, rain-slashed *Wuthering Heights* I felt the urge to pick gorse off my coat, wipe the mud from my boots and warm my hands at a fire. Here is a film so deeply entrenched in nature that the experience is more like a monumental hike across wild country than anything we generally understand by a costume drama.

The horse ride sequence in particular has a strong appeal to the senses. The sequence begins with Cathy adjusting the horse's stirrups. There is close attention paid to this everyday action (of the past), with heavy focus on sound and touch. As Cathy lifts a rein beyond the horse's

ear, the clanging of the chains and the sound of the wetness of the horse's mouth is intensified, guiding us to feel the sequence with our senses of sound, touch and vision. All these movements and sounds are viewed from Heathcliff's perspective, allowing the viewer to become embodied in his experience of his everyday world. In the next scene as they ride the horse, the intimacy between the two is foregrounded through the close-up of their bodies which gently touch. There is then a close-up of Heathcliff inhaling the scent of Cathy's hair with the sound-track emphasising the sound of Heathcliff's heavy breathing. The hair then flows into the camera so that the viewer's vision matches that of Heathcliff's. This shot briefly becomes slow-motion, with Arnold encouraging the viewer to dwell on the characters' intimacy: the hair flowing into our vision, the smell which we might 'cinesthetically' recognise, and then a close-up of Heathcliff's hand which slowly caresses the horse. This sequence therefore utilises filmmaking language – slow-motion, close-up and sound – to offer the viewer a sensory engagement with the film. Heathcliff's longing manifests itself in his sensual responses to Cathy's body, movement and her touch; all of which Arnold offers us to identify with, sensuously.

The evocation of the characters' sensorium creates a representation of the real which goes beyond simple ocularcentric verisimilitude we associate with simple notions of a Bazinian realism of 'cinema as window.' Key realist thinkers, though, were misinterpreted as having an ocularcentric approach to figuring cinema. Siegfried Kracauer (1960, pp. 158-9), for example, claims that:

> Film not only records physical reality but reveals otherwise hidden provinces of it, including such spatial and temporal configurations as may be derived from the given data with the aid of cinematic techniques and devices [...] These discoveries [...] mean an increased demand on the spectator's physiological make-up. The unknown shapes he encounters involved not so much his power of reasoning as his visceral faculties.

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Here, he locates a 'physical reality' in cinema's visceral, sensual, bodily affect which pre-dates phenomenological film theory, speaking to the ways in which bodily responses to a film are a key facet of cinematic realism. Meanwhile, film theorists have recently re-evaluated Bazin's theories of cinematic realism in the digital age, following structuralism's rejection of his theories in the 1960s and beyond. Justin Horton (2013), for example, suggests that Bazin's writings are often misconstrued and reduced to simple notions of deep focus, long takes and the indexicality of the image. Horton claims that:

> It is clear that Bazin's realism is multifaceted: on the one hand, the camera's automatism gives us reality without the intervention of the artist; on the other hand, the cinema is "profoundly aesthetic." And while certain stylistic choices render an image closely in accord with human perception, Bazin insists that this aesthetic must work in concert with a narrative looseness that restores the ambiguity of life that the Hollywood film had all too tidily eliminated (p. 28).

There is an episodic narrative to these two films: we drift in and out of sequences, often unaware of where we are and who the peripheral characters are. The intervention of the artist, in these instances, is strikingly akin to 'human perception', that is a world which we must make sense of. Jennifer Barker (2009, p.2) claims that 'exploring cinema's tactility opens up the possibility of cinema as an intimate experience and of our relationship with cinema as a close connection, rather than as a distant experience of observation'. Indeed, this intimate experience is entirely realistic, providing a visceral world which the viewers' body identifies with, allowing us to engage with the characters' everyday bodily and perceptual experiences.

Space, Nature & Landscape

The engagements with characters' subjectivities in these two films are in stark contrast to the traditional heritage film, which can also be found in the films' exploration of nature and landscape. Paul Dave (1997, p. 118) quotes Higson as he notes that 'typically heritage space is constructed with panoramic views of "heritage properties" achieved through "self-conscious

crane shots and high angle shots" only functioning weakly as establishing shots and disconnected from any character's point of view'. Furthermore, many establishing shots in heritage films peer through pretty flora, or trees, projecting a conservative English utopia. There is no such establishment or focus on property or the surface beauty of nature in *Bright Star* or *Wuthering Heights*.

Wuthering Heights does use establishing shots to gaze upon nature, but in a dissimilar way to the heritage films' emphasis on the beauty of the country house and its surrounding organised fauna, through representing Britain's wild landscape. *Wuthering Heights* does not promote a conservative nostalgia but explores the mundane, allowing us to engage with the space the characters inhabit every day. The sequence in which Heathcliff returns to Wuthering Heights and walks to the Lintons' house is a prime example of how Arnold uses establishing shots to capture nature in its totality, not just to formulate England as a 'green and pleasant land' but also its wilder aspects. The first is an eerie close-up of a spider's web, the second a creature's skeleton embedded in mud and the third a more conventional landscape shot of the Yorkshire Moors. This sequencing demonstrates that Arnold is moving away from typical strategies of representing the rural to explore mundane sites of interest: a spider's web as opposed to a country house. The landscape shot is handheld and whilst one could argue it is a typical shot – in Martin Lefebvre's (2006, p. 22) terms, 'space freed from eventhood' – I suggest that it constitutes a subjective approach from Heathcliff's perspective. Heathcliff is making a journey, back from the city to the country, in which he admires everyday features of nature – whether it be spider webs, decaying animals or the grand landscape. Edensor (2002, p. 37) argues that 'the national is evident not only in widely recognised grand landscapes and famous sites, but also in the mundane spaces of everyday life'. It is through the attention to small details of rural mundane spaces demonstrated here that we can locate the national, here manifested as wild and eerie.

Furthermore, the 4:3 ratio in which Arnold shoots her films disrupts conventional approaches to landscape and creates a greater focus on character. On her decision to film in the academy ratio, Arnold (in Harris 2012; Chang 2012) said:

> It is a portrait frame. My films are generally from the point of view of one person. I think it's a very respectful frame. I keep using the word respect and I don't know why I keep saying that, but that's what it feels like to me when I look at somebody framed in a 4:3 frame. It makes them really important. The landscape doesn't take it from them.
>
> Also, it gets more sky. If you go this way (pointing to the sides), you get more green shooting on the moor. With full frame you get a different version of landscape. For me it takes away nothing. I think it adds more.

Arnold's previous film, *Fish Tank*, was also shot in 4:3 so that the central protagonist, Mia (Kate Jarvis), was always centre of focus, filling the frame and creating a sense of claustrophobia with her family. Arnold chose to shoot *Wuthering Heights* in the same unconventional ratio so that Heathcliff would not be lost in the landscape. The film also develops Arnold's signature style, with long tracking shots reacting to the characters' movements, which she has refined since her short film *Wasp* (Andrea Arnold, UK, 2003). Containing Heathcliff to the confines of 4:3 therefore reminds us of Arnold's status as an experimental auteur -- in keeping with art cinema traditions -- and privileges the character's subjectivity at all times. The film is specifically not presented in a landscape mode, rather, the aspect ratio has an affinity with facial close-ups rather than wide vistas.

The 4:3 ratio brings Cathy and Heathcliff closer together within the tightened frame which prioritises their romance over the beauty of landscape. In fig 1.3, the couple are not merely figures in the landscape but a pair who are the key focus of the shot. If this shot were to be opened out then they would become secondary to the landscape. The composition of the frame here is also indicative of Arnold's approach. The frame is almost split in two -- horizontally, vertically, diagonally -- we notice the landscape onto which they gaze yet our eyes

are drawn to the left-hand side of the frame due to the depth of the shot: rocks in the foreground, the characters in mid-shot and hills and clouds in the background. The right-hand side, however, is comparatively empty and two-dimensional, with the sunlight washing out much of the background of the shot. Thus, the couple is privileged here, they are squashed
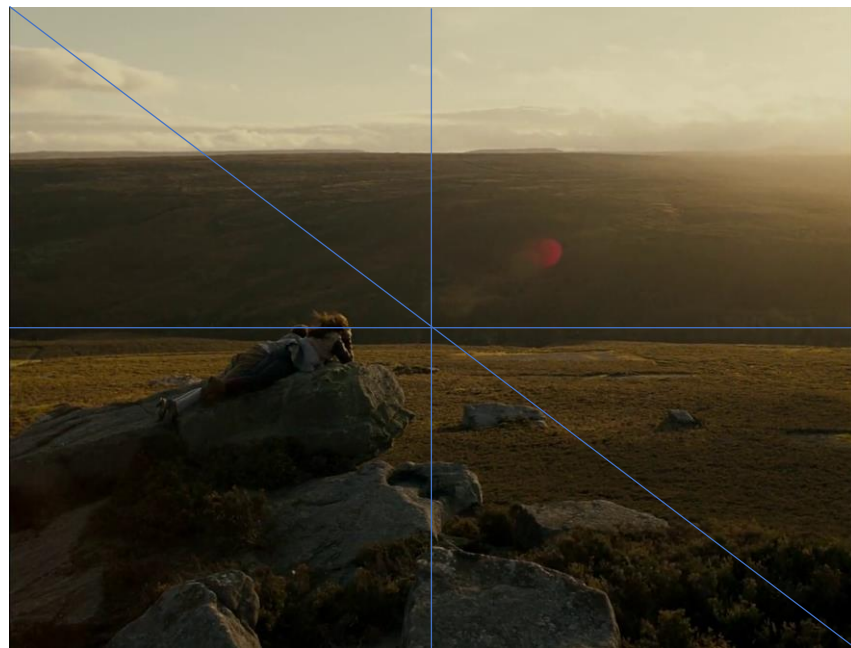
Figure 2.3: Landscape in *Wuthering Heights*

Figure 2.4: Flashback in *Wuthering Heights*

together on the left-hand side of the frame which is heightened due to the 4:3 aspect ratio. The characters' visits to the rocky moors are revisited later in the film, during which there are flashbacks to the earlier sequences. In this scene, however, the characters dominate the *mise-en-scène*, with little attention to landscape (fig. 2.4). Through this deliberate positioning of landscape in the film we begin to see how Arnold privileges character and careful compositions over pictorial grandeur as found in the heritage film.

The use of space and landscape in *Bright Star* is less ostentatious than *Wuthering Heights* but represents the realities of Keats's everyday thoughts and actions. A collection of Keats's letters and poems were released as a tie-in book under the title *Bright Star: Love Letters and Poems of John Keats to Fanny Brawne* (Keats & Campion 2009). The paratext here invites the viewer to engage with Keats's thoughts and lived experience. There are multiple references from Keats regarding his walks with Fanny in Hampstead Heath, for example he wrote that he 'shall be looking forward to Health and the spring and a regular routine of our old walks' (Keats & Campion 2009, p. 28). The regularity of their walks is tangible in the film and it is in these scenes in which the couple's romance unfolds. Most of the sequences take place in Wentworth Place and there is an emphasis on interior shooting. This immediately eschews any notion that there is a pictorial observation of nature and suggests that Campion is more interested in the dynamic *in* the house rather than a fetishised gaze *on* it, on flora or on pastoral spaces.

In *Bright Star*, romance functions as pathetic fallacy: 'blossoming' in spring and equating winter with death. Although they share a house, the couple's most intimate moments occur on their walks in the woods, ostensibly a public space, yet it is constructed in the film as the pair's sanctuary. They first walk through the woodland to Keats's dying brother's house in the winter, when the trees are reduced to their bark, already establishing winter as synonymous with death. As the film progresses there is an argument between Brown, Keats and Fanny which also takes place in the forest, still in winter. Yet, when the trees come in to blossom, Fanny and Keats go on a romantic walk and share their first kiss and on their next walk, still in summer,

Keats gives Fanny a ring. The final woodland scene between the pair occurs when they dance in late summer. There is a cutaway to Pip picking up an autumnal leaf which she picks up and throws away and says "there's no autumn around here!" This foreshadows the tragic conclusion of the film in which Fanny, heartbroken upon hearing the news of Keats' death, wanders through the snowy woods, emotively recalling Keats's poem 'Bright Star'. Through costuming and the attention to nature, Campion is constantly pushing the conventions of the heritage film to signify rather than to display, all cohering with concerns pertinent to her own authorship.

Wuthering Heights and *Bright Star* invite the viewer to engage with the protagonist's way of seeing the world. In this way, these anti-heritage films move away from the traditional heritage genre by not only offering alternative representations but also a corporeal and cognitive means of experiencing the past through various class, gender and ethnic perspectives. All three films represent the everyday past – for example, we have seen a horse ride, a walk through the woods, crafts and arts, a trip to the market, a sing-song and parlour games – and, by allowing the viewer to *experience* the quotidian past, these directors are rooting us in a working- or middle-class everyday history rather than epic historical events (a backdrop common to the heritage film – here we might think of colonisation in *A Passage to India,* World War Two in *The Remains of the Day* or the Olympic games in *Chariots of Fire.*).

In terming these films 'anti-heritage' I do not mean to suggest that the filmmakers are self-consciously positioning these films in opposition to traditional heritage films. Rather, they are products of the directors' authorship, transplanted onto material which could otherwise have been constructed as a heritage film. Galpin (2014, p.97) argues that:

> Arnold's privileging of mood over plot in *Wuthering Heights* feels deeply poetic, calling into question the sharp distinctions that have been made between the capabilities of the two media [film and literature]. In the case of this film, both the end product and the author's own sensibility seem to situate it more clearly as the product of an auteur.

This could also be said of *Bright Star* which, while it takes a more traditional approach to its style, is often sensuous and explores femininity: two expectations of *a Jane Campion film*. These films are less interested in adaptation than they are in exploring the director's own contemporary attitudes towards women and minority figures, class distinctions, and film style.

Parallels can be found between these films and the films exploring femininity in urban environments in terms of their formal and representational projects. These films rework genre with a realist inflection just as *Red Road* and *Under the Skin* did, whilst maintaining an insight into gender identity, ethnicities and nationhood. Despite the different spaces these anti-heritage and urban films explore, the contemporary focus still persists: emphasising that country/city and past/present are not binary terms but points of tension.

Evocative Ethnography: *Sleep Furiously* and *Two Years at Sea*

Ethnographic Film & Cinema-Vérité

> But what if film doesn't speak at all? What if film not only constitutes discourse about the world but also (re)presents experience of it? What if film does not say but show? What if a film does not just describe but depict? What, then, if it offers not only 'thin descriptions' but also 'thick depictions'? (Taylor 1996, p. 86).

In this section, I will consider a mode of reflexive documentary present in contemporary British cinema which may fall under the banner of ethnographical film or visual anthropology. Jay Ruby (1971, p. 36) argues that visual anthropology:

> Can be divided into two categories, primarily upon the basis of intent and the corresponding techniques employed: research film, which is part of the general body of scientific films common to many disciplines, and interpretative film, which is really a special kind of documentary.

Here, I am interested in the interpretative film category which is perhaps best represented by the films of Jean Rouch, one of the key figures of *cinema-vérité.*

Cinema-vérité is a frequently misused term, often equated with direct cinema as a hyper-realistic mode that is purely observational. This is untrue. Bill Nichols (1991, p.44) claims that *cinema-vérité* might be better understood by the term 'the interactive mode' in which the filmmaker is just as visible as the actors, often engaging in one-on-one interviews and following methods of ethnographic interviews. Whilst many argue that *cinema-vérité* is devoid of style, Edgar Morin (2003, p. 238) argues that 'in this type of filming, framing must follow the event'. Thus, a style emerges, not through planned cinematographical decisions but through spontaneous filmmaking choices which respond to events as they are recorded. In this way, this mode of filmmaking is continually interpretative rather than an act of pure research, according to Ruby's definitions.

For example, during the opening of *Chronicle of a Summer/Chronique d'un été* (1961), Morin and Rouch interview Marceline and discuss the film's objectives. As Marceline begins to discuss her daily life, the sound bridges to a tracking shot of Marceline, ostensibly living her everyday life. Initially, we think we are merely tracking her quotidian movements but when she says "I live by the principle that tomorrow's another day. For me, adventure is always around the corner," there is a corresponding jump-cut to Marceline walking around a corner. As she turns the corner, the camera follows her down the street briefly. The camera then remains static as Marceline walks down a straight road in centre-frame. The composition is extremely stylised with shadows on either side due to the tall buildings, causing Marceline to be silhouetted by the light in the top-centre of the frame. Both the editing and cinematography here respond to the subject's speech, they do not merely follow it, and it is here we can locate the artist's mediation between subject and screen. These highly formalised shots which offer 'thick depictions,' rather than the 'thin descriptions' of the research film, speak to the tensions between science and art, document and documentary, and truth and

fiction which are widely debated in anthropology and documentary theory. Anthropologist Margaret Mead (2012, p. 5), for example, argues that it is:

> inappropriate to demand that filmed behavior have the earmarks of a work of art. We can be grateful when it does, and we can cherish those rare combinations of artistic ability and scientific fidelity that have given us great ethnographic films. But I believe that we have absolutely no right to waste our breath and our resources demanding them.

On the other hand, others argue that evoking human behaviours through mediation and artistic practices is crucial to retaining the spirit of written ethnography in visual anthropology. Stephen A. Tyler (1986, p. 130), for example, argues that

> the whole point of "evoking" rather than "representing" is that it frees ethnography from *mimesis* and the inappropriate mode of scientific rhetoric that entails "objects", "facts," "descriptions," "inductions," "generalisations," "verification," "experiment," "truth," and like concepts that, except as empty invocations, have no parallels either in the experience of ethnographic fieldwork or in the writing of ethnographies.

Through Mead's and Tyler's contrasting approaches to visual ethnography, we can begin to see that approaches to ethnographic filmmaking are fluid, dynamic and widely contested.

In this section then, I will not argue, somewhat reductively, that s*leep furiously* and *Two Years at Sea* are strictly examples of ethnographic film. Mead would disagree given her prioritising of a scientific method, whereas I will argue these films evoke a way of life in the manner that Tyler proposes. They certainly fit into a loose definition of the genre; the filmmakers attempt to evoke the everyday actions of a given distant people through a mode of experimental documentary cinema. What I am interested in, however, is *how* they evoke the everyday realities of their subjects, how this coheres with filmmaking strategies found in the contemporary British fiction film and broader documentary practices, and how space and place are represented.

Ethnographic film often intersects with avant-garde and experimental filmmaking practices. Emile de Brigard (2003, p. 16) notes that the first instance of ethnographic film, by Félix-Louis Regnault, was prior to the first screening of the Lumières' first public projection of *cinematographie* films. This demonstrates that since filmmaking's inception, anthropologists were experimenting with the moving image for their own practical purposes. Ethnographical film quickly became popular with audiences and critics too. The first commercially successful documentary feature*, Nanook of the North* (1922)*,* is often considered a work of ethnographical film. Furthermore, the films of Jean Rouch, Frederick Wiseman and Dziga Vertov, all noted for their formal and thematic experimentation and focusing on the everyday actions of various peoples, are often considered works of, or forerunners to, visual anthropology *and* experimental art cinema. Perhaps the closest precedent to the form of filmmaking discussed here is avant-garde filmmaker Chick Strand. In 'Sensuous Ethnography,' Vera Brunner-Sung (2015, p. 53) argues that:

> The intimacy of [Strand's] gaze wants to collapse the distance between filmmaker and subject, outsider and native; the result is a relentless visual encounter; It may be that this unapologetic subjectivity played a part in preventing Strand's work being embraced by male-dominated visual anthropology circles […] The breadth of her interests went well beyond the specific concerns of the field, however, into film language and poetic forms.

sleep furiously and *Two Years at Sea* attempt to evoke, rather than strictly document, a place and a people through reflexive, evocative and sensory filmmaking techniques. They both blur the lines between fiction and non-fiction and, in this way, become examples of what Stella Bruzzi (2010, p. 10) terms the performative documentary: films that present 'a multi-layered, performative exchange between subjects, filmmakers/apparatus and spectators'. s*leep furiously* is Gideon Koppel's exploration of the Trefeurig farming community in mid-Wales, where he grew up. *Two Years at Sea* is video artist Ben Rivers' feature debut about Jake Williams, a man living alone in the remote Scottish wilderness. In both films, there is a tension

between evoking these places through subjective and reflexive filmmaking styles whilst remaining close to the spirit of ethnographical film. This reflexivity coheres with practices found across contemporary documentary. Ohad Landesman (2008, p. 34), for instance, argues that:

> Contemporary documentaries only keep revisiting their primordial assumptions, pressing harder on the thin line between fiction and fact in an ongoing effort to redefine the genre's aesthetic and ethical doctrines.

This blurring between fact and fiction, between subjectivity and objectivity, has accelerated at a time when film's truth claims have been interrogated due to the emergence of digital technologies, ridding the image of its indexical referent. In 1995, anticipating the move to digital, Brian Winston (1995, p. 6) asked: 'what can or will be left of the relationship between image and reality?' It is important, therefore, that these two ethnographical films were shot on film yet still attempt to speak to the performative impulse that is common in the contemporary documentary. The indexical referent is still visible in these films, yet the filmmakers often emphasise their own role as mediator between subject and viewer.

On the other hand, the move to digital filmmaking has caused some documentarians to abandon their presence with their subject by utilizing tiny cameras and remote filming. Harvard's Sensory Ethnography Lab's (SEL's) film *Leviathan* (2012), for example, attaches GoPro cameras on an industrial fishing ship to record events. This demonstrates digital's capability to record reality unmediated, even if this is still edited by the filmmakers. The SEL's most well-known films – *Sweetgrass* (2009), *Leviathan* and *Mankamana* (2013) – are an interesting comparison to these British ethnographical films in that they aim not to, in the words of Nick Pinkerton (2013, p. 80), 'show you a way of life, but to show you how that way of life might *feel*'. This speaks to the mode of sensory realism found in the contemporary art film. Indeed, key to my argument here is that *Two Years at Sea* and *sleep furiously* depict experience as opposed to merely *describing* events in search for an objective truth. In this

section, I will consider the filmmakers' employment of analogue film, which has specific capabilities to evoke space, place and environment. I will consider how they use increasingly popular modes of the contemporary documentary – slowness, the personal and the performative – to best help us *feel* the environment depicted.

Performative & Reflexive Documentary

Here I will use the performative documentary according to how Stella Bruzzi terms it. This, however, should not be confused with Bill Nichols' (2001, p. 131) definition as a mode that 'emphasize[s] its subjective and affective dimensions'. For Nichols, the performative mode is best characterised by filmmakers such as Michael Moore or Morgan Spurlock. However, Bruzzi (2010, p. 153) terms the performative as 'a mode which emphasizes – and indeed constructs a film around – the *often hidden* aspect of performance, whether on the part of the documentary subjects or the filmmakers'. Bruzzi's definition is more nuanced, stressing that the performative documentary relies on covert forms of subjectivity, documentaries that are open, fluid and have an affective and cognitive exchange between filmmaker, film and spectator. *The Act of Killing* (2012) exemplifies this mode. Oppenheimer's film centres on Anwar Congo's performance of the past and his own subjective memory. Within this structure there are scenes which may be either performed or real, revealing the fissures between fiction and reality and, in turn, memory and the past: the unattainability of truth.

sleep furiously and *Two Years at Sea* are also working in the performative mode, albeit less obviously than *The Act of Killing.* River's and Koppel's features are much more oblique, leaving the viewer unsure of what is staged. However, here I will demonstrate, through textual analysis and the directors' own accounts of their films, how the performative can be located in these films through reflexive gestures and by foregrounding the texture of film.

Koppel (2007) claims that s*leep furiously* fits into a historic tradition of documentary, dating back to the Querschnitt filmmaking tradition (films such as *Regen/Rain* (1929)*, Chelovek s kino-apparatom/The Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) and *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Grosstadt/Berlin:*

The Symphony of a City (1927)) and stresses documentary's long history of blurring fact and

fiction. He says that:

> Placing the film within a critical, historical context, there is an exploration of
> precedents to this idiom of practice – documentary which interrogates the
> boundaries between its supposed and assumed objectivity, and the
> subjective view of the personal, what one might term 'poetic' film' (2007, p.
> 305).

Koppel then acknowledges the influences upon *sleep furiously*. Ben Rivers, too, uses personal

influences – such as the writer Knut Hamsun as inspiration for his film and his longstanding

interest in isolated individuals -- which exaggerate the world of his subject. In this way, both

films are performative and ask the viewer to recognise the distinction between reality and its

mediated on-screen representation. Both directors speak about their intention to emphasise

particular moments of their protagonists' everyday life rather than make objective truth claims

about these particular environments. Koppel (2007, p. 310) notes the influence of 1930s

Querschnitt filmmaking: 'one that was essentially concerned with an evocation of the world

rather than claiming objectivity.' Rivers (in Hattrick 2012), on the other hand, emphasises the

performative aspects of his work in interviews, arguing that the documentary form is:

> about making something [that] exists for itself; it's not a representation of
> something. This is part of the problem with the word documentary and it's
> [sic] associations, but it's also what makes it an interesting form; you can
> play with those things. And they have been played with right from the
> beginning.

These two films self-reflexively demonstrate that documentary is, as John Grierson said, 'the

creative treatment of actuality.' They explore their characters' everydays, even though

sometimes these may be exaggerated to emphasise certain facets of their lives.

The opening of *sleep furiously* demonstrates the self-reflexive performativity which introduces

the viewer to this mode of filmmaking. A man, dressed in ostentatious regalia clothing, walks

down a road ringing a bell. The inspiration for this sequence comes from playwright Kaspar Handke, as Koppel:

> devised and shot a scene in which a character from the community walks through a deserted landscape towards the camera. […] The camera is static and the scene is composed in a single shot which lasts for several minutes, and is now the opening image of the film (Koppel, 2007, p. 320).

The very fact that Koppel notes his own intermediary role as filmmaker, one who 'devises' scenes, already reminds us of the fluidity between documentary and the fiction film. Immediately following this, as the bell continues to chime, we are shown blocks of different colours, some of which are repeated – red, olive, teal, red, olive – which serve to disorientate the viewer, reminding us that this is a film, asking us to remember that no documentary can accurately make a truth claim. As Dara Waldron (2014, p. 120) argues: 'the flashing screen reminds the spectator that the building blocks of the film are colour; the tools of the artist'. This flashing screen punctuates the film once more in the middle of the film, reminding us of the unknowable distinction between fiction and reality in the film and Koppel's own role as mediator.

Similar moments also arise in *Two Years at Sea*. Ben Rivers often repeats in interviews that Jake Williams is a performer and that the film is a construct. For example, he claims that:

> there was a lot of ease with Jake so it was really easy to talk to him about repeating actions, setting up scenes, doing things which he wouldn't normally do, or he would normally do, or things he would *think* about doing but would never have got round to doing if I hadn't been there (Hattrick & Rivers, 2012).

There is then a focus on performance that is tangible throughout the film. The sequence most obviously performed is a relatively short one, in which Jake's caravan floats from the ground and into the trees. This sequence follows a shot of Jake sleeping, an extremely flat image with little depth – already creating a dreamlike shot as his face melds into the leaves – as birds chirp

on the soundtrack. The sound then bridges over to another shot, in which the caravan slowly hovers into the bottom half of the screen. Due to the sound, the sequence becomes disorientating for the viewer. We are rooted in an ordinary rural space yet something extraordinary is happening. It is ambiguous as to whether this is representative of Jake's dreams, perhaps an hallucination, or an event that is evocative of the magical space Rivers is (re)presenting. In any case, it serves to remind the viewer that this film is a construct: a performed, exaggerated reality which evokes the protagonist's world through these strange actions. Whilst performed, this hyper-reality invites us to experience Jake's remote world and allows the viewer to engage not only with his everyday reality, but also his extraordinary thoughts and the imaginative power one feels from living in such remoteness.

The tension between documentary and fiction is intensified further by the filmmakers' decision to shoot on film. These films are not shot on digital and therefore have not been manipulated in ways familiar to spectators in the 21st century. Yet neither film makes a case for truth claims despite being photographically recorded - thus retaining a relationship with the indexical. The choice to shoot on film, in both instances, is key to evoking and engaging with the environment, causing the viewer to feel these remote worlds in the same way that the anti-heritage texts did for the past.

Koppel initially tested footage of the Welsh landscape on multiple digital cameras but it lacked the texture that film gave. The cost of film would scale back the project yet he felt that analogue recording was essential for the film. Koppel (2007, p. 315) argued that:

> As the gap between film and high definition video formats closes – at least in terms of specification – it is becoming increasingly difficult to justify film over video, particularly for a low-budget project which was branded 'documentary'. I argued that if you imagine a video image of a magnificent landscape projected onto a big screen, as a signifier it says 'great landscape' loud and clear but little else. The same landscape shot on film may allow the audience to 'fall into' the image, to engage with it through their imagination, not simply their powers of recognition.

Koppel's arguments have been echoed across the film industry and are similar to Walter Murch's (in Collin 2015) experiment about recording an empty room on digital and on film: 'the feeling that I got from looking at an empty room on film is of a rising potential, as if somebody was about to come in […] and the feeling I got on video was of somebody just having left'. For Koppel and other filmmakers, digital merely signifies whereas film is experiential. Koppel's argument that film viewers 'fall into' the landscape and 'engage' through their 'imagination' means that the choice of analogue stock creates a mode of address that evokes the landscape. For example, the film's landscape shots are used to mark a new season which structures the film into four segments. These shots utilise the frame, often to mark a journey of the library van. In a long-shot, for example, the van will travel from centre-frame and exit centre-left which draws attention to documentary as a mediated form, with the camera perfectly placed for aestheticizing this journey whilst locating the van in the Trefeurig landscape. These shots are long takes of often over a minute and the grainy, tactile quality of the image, given by the film stock, embellishes the seasonal qualities of the landscape: rain, wind and sunlight. The heavy rain as we reach the autumnal sequence, for example, is extremely grainy and these little flecks in the image are reminiscent of a viewer's own experience of precipitation. Furthermore, Koppel (2007, p. 317) says that film's finiteness, in comparison to digital's ability to mass record, creates:

> A fundamentally different form of engagement with the world of the project
> being made – an engagement formed first in advance, in the determination
> of subject, and retrospectively, from the perspective of an edit suite.

Shooting on film, therefore, encourages Koppel to plan-out sequences, again reinforcing that this is a performative film which blurs documentary and fiction filmmaking techniques.

In *Two Years at Sea*, Rivers shoots on 16mm film which he then hand-processes, a technique he has developed throughout his career. This gives the image a distinctive look. It is not just the rough texture, full of grain and marks, but also that the light glimmers and the film waves.

It feels like damaged film stock and, in a sense, it is, yet this damage is intentional. This is not just for superficial effect but, like Koppel's method, it makes us feel the world he is capturing. Rivers (in Sicinski 2012) claims that:

> What remains in my black-and-white films is the hand-processing, which I can control to a greater degree to produce marks and textures which I feel mirror the environment and the entropy occurring all around us.

Therefore, the director's mediation invites the viewer to experience Rivers' perception of the environment. The shots of the forest in *Two Years at Sea* are starkly monochrome, with the light glimmering and the trees remaining firmly silhouetted. The effect is akin to watching a deteriorated silent film. It is otherworldly and seems from another age – it is certainly alien from popular forms utilised in contemporary film. This detachment from the contemporary therefore reflects Jake's everyday reality. Rivers reflects this formally, as the forest glimmers, the audience perceives that this way of life is other-worldly, allowing us to feel through Rivers' form the strangeness of his subject's lifestyle.

Whilst the image may be mediated or events performed in the mode of the performative documentary, the film can still be more evocative than if it were shot akin to *cinema vérité*. Philip Rosen (1993, pp. 58-9) argues that 'we must keep reminding ourselves that the documentary tradition has rarely supposed that the photographic/cinematic "impression of reality" is, in itself, sufficient for knowledge.' The filmmakers here never make any truth claims but cohere with a long lineage of documentary cinema. The distinction between reality and fiction are key to understanding how these filmmakers textually and texturally evoke their remote environments.

Sensory Ethnography and The Personal Impulse

The sensual evocation of these environments is then mediated and takes on a subjectivity assimilated from written ethnography. This subjectivity, then, is inextricably personal. Anna

Grimshaw and Amanda Kavetz (2009, p. 549) equate observational cinema and ethnographic film. In their essay on observational cinema, they claim that:

> For over the last decade, there has been a renewed concern with questions of the body, the senses, experience and emotion, skilled practice, and forms of knowledge. Shifts in the discipline's theoretical orientation linked to these questions have stimulated debate about the techniques and forms by which anthropological work has traditionally been conducted. Visual anthropology – and ethnographic filmmaking in particular – has increasingly come to the fore in discussions of this kind.

A phenomenological framework has therefore been pertinent in visual anthropology discourse since the mid-1990s. A visual evocation is now privileged over mere description by utilizing filmmaking techniques that accentuate the corporeal and the environmental. Grimshaw and Kavetz point to the works of Paul Stoller (1997), Michael Taussig (1993) and David MacDougall (2006), who have stressed film as an important practice in exploring the sensory within ethnography. MacDougall (2006, p. 271), for example, has argued for three principles of visual anthropology:

> 1. To utilise the distinctive expressive structures of the visual media rather than those derived from expository prose.

> 2. To develop forms of anthropological knowledge that do not depend upon the principles of scientific method for their validity.

> 3. To explore areas of social experience for which visual media have a demonstrated expressive affinity—in particular, (a) the topographic, (b) the temporal, (c) the corporeal, and (d) the personal.

sleep furiously and *Two Years at Sea* adhere to these three principles and can be located in an emergent strand of documentary film. Whilst visual anthropology may date back to the 1920s, there is an emergent emphasis on the different tenets of expression outlined by MacDougall. Here then, I will demonstrate how these two films engage with forms of contemporary visual anthropology.

sleep furiously has a particular affinity with the autobiographical film. However, this relationship is covert: there is, for example, no use of voice over or the personal pronoun which might be expected in personal or essayistic cinema. Laura Rascaroli (2009, p. 35) posits that one of the key constituents of an essay or first-person film is openness, where:

> Each spectator, as an individual and not as a member of an anonymous, collective audience, is called upon to engage in a dialogical relationship with the enunciator, hence to become active, intellectually and emotionally, and interact with the text.

Indeed, throughout the film the viewer is asked to decipher what is staged, what is organic and how the filmmaker relates to the spaces he is inhabiting. It is an implicit call to become active, intellectually and emotionally.

Whilst the autobiographical impulse is not perhaps a key focus of the film, it is articulated in one of the film's most sentimental vignettes, in which Pip walks to the cemetery to lay flowers on what we presume is her husband's grave. The scene begins with a long-shot in deep-focus consisting of two planes separated diagonally by a path in the foreground, along which Pip is walking with her dog, and to the left Koppel frames the Trefeurig landscape. We then cut to a medium-shot of Pip digging out a large piece of bark from the field surrounded by barley. Following this, there is a shot of Pip walking diagonally through the frame, from the bottom left to top-right, recalling the space earlier formulated, this time dominated by a single mountain. Koppel cuts to a close-up of a headstone which is for Heinz Koppel. Pip places down the bark, leaves the frame and the shot lingers on the gravestone. The final shot in this sequence is a long shot of Pip walking along a path, trees in the background, a down-sloping hill in the foreground as the theme of the film plays, an elegiac yet extremely unsentimental, meditative piano track by Aphex Twin. As Pip leaves the frame, as before, the camera lingers, this time on the landscape.

As the gravestone reads Koppel, we can infer that Heinz is the director's father and Pip his widowed mother. The scene carefully positions Pip as part of the landscape, one of its inhabitants – just as important as the hills, mountains and trees which dominate. This, in turn, assumes a temporal and personal significance. People form part of the landscape of Trefeurig yet they are insignificant compared to the trees and mountains which stand through the ages. The inscription of Koppel on the headstone allows us to understand that this is an auto-ethnographical film. Gideon Koppel understands this place, this environment and is indebted to this landscape. The meditative tone of the sequence – through the music, the unsentimental capturing of the landscape and people who inhabit it, and the long, static takes – is similar to the symphonic, plaintive tone established throughout. Yet the self-reflexivity and focus on the individual takes the viewer by surprise. This suddenly becomes a piece of autobiographical cinema, a film not only about space, time and community but also Gideon Koppel himself. The sequence is bookended with a scene of children playing at school and men shearing sheep respectively – everyday activities in the community. Yet Pip's (and to a degree, Gideon's) everyday is informed by landscape, community and the past. Koppel (217, p. 318) has said of this sequence:

> It could be said that nothing happens in this sequence of images [...] But there is a quality to the images that clearly evoked strong feelings in and for me, and I had to trust that it could on some level do the same for other people […] Those images might provoke a momentary, sentimental identification, a nostalgia; but placed within a larger context of personal reflection, one emphasised now by style, by formal rhetoric (choice of film, pace of editing) and by the subjective properties of time, these images could unite me with the community and allow that community to speak for itself. It is the lyrical voice, rather than the objective voice, that can translate the specific into the general.

The subjective and poetic, for Koppel, is the most suitable way to undertake visual (auto)ethnography. As I have argued, the cinematic language of this sequence unites Koppel's

own personal history with the landscape of Trefeurig and, in doing so, allows us to recognise that ethnography does not have to 'depend upon the principles of scientific method for their validity' (MacDougall 2006, p. 271). Thus, personal cinema and visual anthropology do not need to be mutually exclusive. If the performative documentary relies upon a negotiation between spectator and mediator, then so does personal cinema and visual anthropology.

Two Years at Sea, whilst less personal, does not adhere to a scientific method. Rivers' portrait of Jake and his environment, as noted, is often staged and exaggerated, creating a more open film than s*leep furiously*. This openness is also located in the rendering of Jake's corporeal self and our corresponding response to his environment. MacDougall (2006, p.29) has argued that:

> The use of audiovisual media brings about an important shift in the emphasis of anthropology, primarily to do with its content. It brings within reach a new anthropological understanding of social life-worlds and *a fortiori* the social experience of individuals. This includes much that we might put under the heading of "sensory" knowledge—that is, how people perceive their material environment and interact with it, in both its natural and cultural forms, including their interactions with others as physical beings.

This sensory knowledge is at the core of *Two Years at Sea's* project. Within the film we follow Jake's everyday life. He showers, plays with objects, walks: essentially interacting with his environment with no exposition for the viewer. We have only sensory knowledge of this world.

The film often evokes these everyday actions through a formal technique of decentring Jake on one side of the frame, with his environment on the other. For example, when Jake showers, in medium-shot, Jake is on the right of the screen with the rest of his house in the left hand-side of the frame. The shot lasts 147 seconds as we watch Jake remove his upper-garments, switch the shower on and wait for it to heat up, before fully undressing as we watch him wash. The light source, from the window behind the shower, makes the rest of his dwellings seem dark, yet the frame is dominated by his shadowy environment. A similar shot closes the film, an eight-minute close-up of his face, again decentred so that he occupies the right-hand side of

the frame, as he watches a fire burning, with the rest of the frame eclipsed in darkness. The peculiar emphasis on empty, dark spaces in which he is engulfed allows us to focus on Jake's body and face and occasionally consider the way he interacts with his desolate surroundings.

Here we are invited to experience the world as Jake does. The durations of these shots are extremely lengthy, with little action to occupy the viewer. This causes the viewer not only to contemplate Jake's surroundings but also to feel them. When he is showering, we are focused on any small detail due to the lack of action, so that, for example, we recognise that the water starts to warm up through the steam rising, rendering the heat palpable. Further, the film's correspondence to Jake's experience of temporality make us feel the slowness and stillness of his everyday life. As he sits watching the fire, for eight minutes, we become aware of time's passing and, with little diegetic action, it becomes contemplative. In this way, the film's slowness evokes what we presume to be Jake's own perception of temporality and duration during everyday events. The film is therefore an example of how MacDougall defines contemporary visual anthropology. Moreover, it epitomizes a trend in contemporary world art cinema, what Tiago de Luca (2014, p. 25) calls 'a realism of the senses', of which one of the key facets is the long-take. He argues that:

> As far as the long-take cinemas under discussion in this book are concerned, it makes little sense to focus exclusively on their representational realm when they clearly opt for the long-take, as well as other strategies, as a means to infuse the image with the phenomenal real and thus decentre the fictional universe.

The long-take, for de Luca, becomes real not only because of its representation of space and time but primarily for its capacity to become hyperreal by evoking the materiality of everyday phenomena. Not only is this a central principle of contemporary art cinema - exemplified for de Luca by Carlos Reygadas, Tsai Ming Liang and Gus Van Sant – but it is also central to the ethnographical film. As MacDougall (2006, p. 270) claims, the experiential nature of this image:

allows us to reenter the corporeal spaces of our own and others' lives—the manner in which we all, as social creatures, assimilate forms and textures through our senses, learn things before we understand them, share experiences with others, and move through the varied social environments that surround us.

We can now begin to see the assimilation of ethnographic and art film practices. The fissures between the two, as demonstrated in the expressive modes of filmmaking in *Two Years at Sea* and *sleep furiously*, reveal the unattainability of knowledge and the potential for an authenticity that relies upon the experiential, corporeal nature of film.

The processes of communication, temporality, textures and everyday events are key to *Two Years at Sea* and are at the core of the film's openness. In being a fluid text, this film sparks a communication between screen and viewer, both corporeally and cognitively. In her work on diasporic cinema, Laura Marks (2000, p. 223) claims that 'any film or video is capable of calling on the memory of the senses in order to intensify the experience it represents.' Indeed, our experience of Jake's everyday life in *Two Years at Sea* is intensified due to the duration of the sequences and, if exaggerated by Rivers, this helps to communicate our own memories of slowness and stillness.

The Rural Symphony

These two films exemplify, somewhat counter-intuitively, why the performative and the ethnographical documentary need not be mutually irreconcilable. Although many of the sequences in the films are personal or exaggeratedly performed, this can help us to understand the unfamiliar lives and everyday habits of other environments through our senses. The blurring of the distinction between fact and fiction in these films only emphasises the environments as lived in by the protagonists.

Sensory realism then has the ability to not strictly document but to evoke. In this way, representing the remoteness in this mode achieves the same results as the anti-heritage texts. It brings the audience closer to a life that is not their own, to experience an other's everyday.

Throughout contemporary British cinema we can begin to identify how sensory realism is used to evoke different everydays in different places and eras.

To conclude, I will now take up Koppel's suggestion that *sleep furiously* is indebted to Queerschnitt filmmaking - what others have termed the 'city symphony'. Bordwell and Thompson (2008, p. 411) say that these films take 'candid (or occasionally staged) scenes of city life' and link them 'usually without commentary, through associations to suggest emotions or concepts.' This mode of filmmaking emerged in the 1920s, with key figures including Dziga Vertov, Joris Ivens and Walter Ruttmann, and is characterised by rapid montage causing a kaleidoscopic cross-section of a city, reflecting the filmmakers' embrace of modernity. Laura Marcus (2014, p. 89) argues that:

> The city symphonies open up the question of 'modernist dailiness': the preoccupation with everyday life is combined with the intimation that much greater space of time and culture are condensed within the diurnal round.

sleep furiously draws attention to the stillness and slowness of rurality through mapping modes of the city symphony onto the contemporary Welsh countryside. The film is so slow that we are no longer in the space of the everyday but the every-season. A third of the way through *sleep furiously*, there is a montage consisting of two shots, a long shot of the Trefeurig landscape and a close-up of a choir conductor. The sound of the choir singing 'Mae'r Aderyn Glas', a traditional Welsh choral song, bridges over the two shots which alternate five times over 210 seconds (creating an ASL of 42 seconds): three shots of the choir and two shots of the landscape. The first shot of the landscape is in fast motion, recalling more recent city symphonies such as *Koyaanisqatsi* (1982), yet even this image is extremely still, especially compared to the frantic city life captured by Geoffrey Reggio. This montage, then, is incredibly slow - even fast motion draws our attention to the perpetual nature of the landscape. The ASL of 42 seconds is in stark contrast to a city symphony film: *A Man with a Movie Camera*, for example, has an ASL of 2.3 seconds. If the representation of the urban in city symphony films

evokes a rapid pace of life, *sleep furiously* demonstrates that rural life is slow and still. By comparing a rural symphony with a city symphony, we find that while the pace of life is different, the modes evoking both everyday realities are not oppositional. It is through such assimilation of filmmaking methods that the rural is now represented.

Conclusion: *For Those in Peril*

To conclude, I will sum up these ideas with an analysis of *For Those in Peril* which elucidates many of the themes found throughout this chapter with an emphasis on space, genre, time and the sensory.

Genre

One sub-genre of the horror film has seen revitalisation in post-millennial British cinema: folk horror. Paul Newland (2016, p. 165) argues that this 'has become a significant cult concern' in recent years. Characterised by pagan sacrifice, rural spaces, folk traditions and hauntology, such films include *Witchfinder General* (1968), *Blood on Satan's Claw* (1971), *Penda's Fen* (1974) and, most famously, *The Wicker Man* (1973). Since the turn of the twenty-first century, Newland points toward a number of films 'that locate horror in rural landscapes'*: Dog Soldiers* (2001), *Eden Lake* (2008), *Wake Wood* (2010), *In the Dark Half* (2012) and *The Borderlands* (2013). The most significant director in relation to contemporary folk horror is Ben Wheatley. His films, particularly *Kill List* (2011) and *Sightseers,* fluctuate between many genres and, related to this, demonstrate dramatic tonal shifts. For example, *Kill List* begins with two hitmen, Jay (Neil Maskell) and Gal (Michael Smiley), who take on a series of killings flitting between black comedy and the crime genre. The film's *dénouement* is firmly within the realm of folk horror: the pair uncover a pagan human sacrifice in woodlands and the film concludes with Jay becoming king of the cultists. Meanwhile, *A Field in England* (2013) recalls the English Civil War and trades on notions of heritage, psychedelia and ritualism. *For Those in Peril,*

meanwhile, blends elements of folk-horror – myth, rurality and horror – with a realist tenet which is indicative of the treatment of genre throughout contemporary British cinema.

The pre-credits sequence of *For Those in Peril* establishes an eerie tone and demonstrates the mutability of genre within the film. The opening image is of Aaron (George Mackay), shot on digital, standing up, appearing to float on the sea. The sound is composed of the crashing waves and non-diegetic heavy, deep breaths. We then cut to a different visual format, archival footage of the sea, crashing against rocks as an organ plays. Aaron then narrates:

> "I remember when I was little. The mums and dads used to tell all the little kids about the devil in the ocean. How it has cursed the town and all of the people in it. And everyone was scared. And everyone was sad. And it looked like only darkness would remain. They knew only if the devil was caught would things go back to how they were before."

The archival footage is slowly played backwards so that the waves appear to fall back into the ocean, accentuating the eerie qualities of the landscape and its associated folkloric tale. There is then an almost imperceptible shot of a red screen, accompanied by the sound of a monster: a signification of the devil. Wright's interweaving of different textures - the contemporary digital, the archive, the diegetic and non-diegetic sound - with the folkloric story of the devil establishes themes and tropes of the British (folk-)horror film: rural community, lost innocence and the presence of myth. However, in placing the film within a Scottish rather than an English community, the film disrupts a specifically English-folk found within the folk-horror films of the 1960s and 1970s. In this way, the film's utilisation of regionality and realisms complicates folk horror's English-specificity in the same way that the other films studied in this chapter disrupt their generic modes.

Time & Subjectivity

For Those in Peril also draws our attention to time and subjectivity within these rural-set features. Throughout Wright's film, there are contrasting visual textures that present direct ruptures between past and present. The present in the film is shot on digital in washed-out

blues, yet sometimes an object will appear brighter, such as the yellow jacket which Aaron finds washed up on the shore, a remnant of his time upon the ship. The brighter images, therefore, draw our attention to the past rather than the dulled out blue-grey palette which serves to plunge the audience into a world of depression and trauma. The past, meanwhile, is represented through many textures: the archival footage, full of grain and often in black and white, serves to remind us of the enduring landscape; the Super 8 footage emphasises his dead brother's life and these snippets of Aaron's past, happy life, frequently involving his brother's relationship with his family and his girlfriend; the more recent past, in the aftermath of the sinking ship, is shot in lo-fi digital, reminding us of CCTV footage (which has a textural connection with *Red Road*). Throughout the film, then, these different textures call direct attention to the temporal, of past and present, of different layers of past-ness. In the edits between these different textures, and in the textures themselves, we see what Gilles Deleuze (2005, p. 80) calls a hyalosign or a crystal-image. That is when actual (present experience) and virtual (remembered or future experience) images – which are indiscernibly coexistent (the 'split') – can be seen on film. As Deleuze argues, 'time consists of this split, and it is this, it is time, *that we see in the crystal*. The crystal-image was not time, but we see time in the crystal.' Through these different film textures, Wright draws our attention to a Bergsonian conception of time, of its circularity as opposed to its spatialized linearity. Indeed, we could utilise this interrogation of layered time with the disruption of history which we found in *Bright Star* or *Wuthering Heights* which transpose contemporary perspectives onto Britain's imagined history. In this way, these films also demonstrate 'the split': they are a crystal image of past, present and future. Furthermore, the evocation of Aaron's own experience of time evokes his subjectivity in similar ways to the slowness of the community in *sleep furiously* and of Jake's life in *Two Years at Sea.* Thus, these rural-set features challenge conceptions of history and explore the temporal in radical ways.

Sensory & The Textural

This interweaving of different textures calls to mind the sensory tendency which I have argued is emphasised throughout representations of the rural. Wright (in Scovell 2014) has offered his thoughts on why he uses different textures throughout the film:

> To me film is the most exciting medium as literally any image and sound can be used to create a sensory, emotional experience. The use of different formats in the film, as well as deepening the narrative, was just another way to widen this sensory palate. Contrast is also something I'm very interested in so using beautiful, striking images one minute and the next having really scuzzy lo-fi quality images gave us that range of textures we were after. I think film can also be used well to represent different states of consciousness from real-life to memory, half thoughts to dreams and nightmares and can be almost truer to life by blurring the lines between these states.

What is apparent here is an attention to how texture represents 'different states of consciousness', from the actual (real-life) to the virtual (half thoughts, dreams, nightmares) (ibid). This blurring offers a way to conceptualise time formally. Wright also notes how the diverse visual formats in the film help to accentuate the 'sensory, emotional experience' (ibid). The juxtaposition of the sensory and emotional realms draws attention to the multiple and convergent ways in which sensory realist films affect the viewer both corporeally and emotionally. One sequence which exemplifies this is when Aaron lights a flare in his room. The flare emits a bright pink-red light which bathes the entire screen. As the camera lingers upon Aaron's body – his body and face are often shot in close-up which aligns us with Aaron's own perspective – Cathy (Kate Dickie) gently whispers the folkloric tale alluded to throughout the film. The mother's voice, soft and hushed, engages the viewer intimately, both aurally and corporeally. The scene fades to black and the next image is shot using Super 8 film, comprised of different everyday childhood activities – running on the beach, at a playground, playing fancy dress and play-fighting. Whilst the Super 8 plays there are two layers of sound: the

sound of Cathy gently singing a lullaby is lower in the mix and Aaron's narration is more audible. He speaks quietly:

> "I remember when we were young and full of love. All we needed was each other. And heaven was everywhere. Our mother's heart was strong, we were never scared. We promised we'd always be together. Anything seemed possible."

The use of textures here also creates an intimacy which reveals Aaron's interiority. He feels at once a dislocating coalescence of present and past, of actual and virtual, and as he is scared by the past. As we align ourselves with his body and his traumatised self – lighting red flares within the house – we revert back to his childhood demonstrating that he needs to be comforted. This sensory mode of filmmaking, which Wright openly strives for, grounds the viewer in his world, in his process of memory, in the actual and virtual world he perceives. The use of different visual formats and the range of aural textures within the film therefore draw attention to Aaron's interiority, his associated horror and his experience of time.

These rural-set films then utilise the sensory and, in some cases, textural realisms to evoke remote worlds: from the faraway past (*Wuthering Heights, Bright Star*), to isolated communities (*For Those in Peril, sleep furiously, Two Years at Sea*). This utilisation of the sensory is more heavily foregrounded in these films than the urban precisely because of their remoteness – they seek to immerse us in distant places, in terms of both space and time, in order to empathetically engage the viewer with these communities.

So far, then, we have seen how representations of the urban are still utilised as a partially realist space, interested in social-extension and identity. Surprisingly, this might also be applied to the rural texts I have studied here. However, the one key difference between the representation of the urban and the rural, though, may be found in the sensual evocation of space which is further emphasised in the latter. In the next chapter, I will turn my attention

towards spaces that are neither urban nor rural: the liminal and in-between spaces of the

suburb, the edgeland, and the estate.

Chapter 3

Living on the Edge: Liminal Landscapes and Marginality

Introduction

'Of or pertaining to a threshold,' the liminal already in some way connotes the *spatial*: a boundary, border, a transitional *landscape*, or a doorway in Simmel's sense of a physical as well as psychic space of potentiality. (Andrews & Roberts 2012, p. 1)

Our real social experience is not only of the country and the city, in their most singular forms, but of many kinds of intermediate and new kinds of social and physical organisation. (Williams, 1973 p. 289)

Defining Liminal Space

So far in this thesis, I have analysed how the urban and the rural share formal, aesthetic and representational projects. As I have argued, they are both familiar sites of representation throughout the history of British cinema which contemporary British cinema complicates.

The city and the country have historically been constructed as binary opposites. In his influential survey of space in English literature, Raymond Williams (1973, p. 290) argues that 'the contrast of country and city is one of the major forms in which we become conscious of a central part of our experience and of the crises of our society'. However, emergent intermediary spaces have developed through the 20th century. Roger Silverstone (1997, p.4) suggests that 'these interlinked centres of experience have dominated English spatial and cultural imagination for several centuries, and the rise of suburbia has challenged and repositioned this hegemony.' I suggest that this challenge is not just limited to the suburbs: there are other spaces that do not pertain to country or city. In recent British films, as I will argue, there are a variety of other spaces represented: edgelands, non-spaces and estates. It is these liminal spaces, neither urban nor rural, which constitute 'intermediate and new kinds of

social and physical organisation' (Williams 1973, p. 289). Indeed, the films I study here, as Tim Edenosr (2015, p.68) suggests, 'evoke a generic English contemporary landscape replete with a host of mundane settings that diverge from any notion of a romantic urban and rural englishness'. Thus, these new formations of space have no attachment to heritage which we have seen these films disrupt throughout my exploration of the urban and, particularly, the rural.

Liminality and Marginality

These liminal spaces are frequently, in contemporary British cinema, represented as marginal which, according to Rob Shields (1991, p.3), are:

> Those towns and regions which have been 'left behind' in the modern race for progress, [which] evoke both nostalgia and fascination. Their marginal status may come from out-of-the-way geographic locations, being the site of illicit or disdained social activities, or being the Other pole to a great cultural centre.

All the films analysed in this chapter (*Shifty, Bypass, The Outer Edges, Fish Tank* and *The Selfish Giant*) can be defined, in one way or another, as representing the marginal – geographically and socially. Throughout this chapter, I will argue that these films engage with the inter-generational effects of de-industrialisation whether explicitly (as in *Bypass* or *The Outer Edges*) or in more oblique ways (such as *Shifty, Fish Tank* and *The Selfish Giant*). In *Shifty*, for example, the effects of de-industrialisation and the reasons for the fictional town of Dudlowe being 'left-behind' are never foregrounded, yet there is a tension between place, masculinity and work which speak to the displacement of traditional masculinities in a globalised world. As David Forrest (2016, p.65) argues in regard to New British Realism:

> These post-industrial suburbs might not be positioned as sites of labour, they are all the more poignant in pointing to the visible decline of working-class communities, with their scarred landscapes instructive in conveying a sense of suburban socio-economic despair.

21st century British cinema is also extending representations of marginality from the North of the UK to other long-ignored left-behind places. As Shields (1991, p. 222) argues, the space-myth of the North, and its associated marginality as the 'Land of the Working Class', is propagated by representations in texts such as the cycle of British New Wave films and *Coronation Street*. However, what we see through the course of this chapter is a departure from these traditional spatial markers of marginality. The representation of marginality, for example, begins to become associated with Essex, as we see in *Fish Tank* and *The Outer Edges,* which departs significantly from the low-budget crime dramas associated with this place (other films set in Essex have largely been based on the Rettendon murders: *The Essex Boys* (2000)*, Bonded By Blood* (2010) and *The Rise of the Footsoldier* (2007) cycle of films). Furthermore, *Bypass* is set in the North-East, a region rarely represented in British film, whilst *Shifty's* ordinary North London suburbia is subverted by transposing elements of the urban hood film to a more middle-class space. Contemporary British film, then, is moving away from binary constructions of North and South and has a polycentric approach to space and place.

Of course, this is not completely new. Marginal life has been represented in films as diverse as *Beautiful Thing, Nil By Mouth* and *All or Nothing* (all set in South-East London). Elsewhere, a film such as *Last Resort* has often been discussed in relation to its liminality and marginality. Andrews and Roberts (2012, p.4) argue that it is:

> a film which was not only shot in Margate, but which also seriously grappled with the liminal experience of migrancy - of suspension, limbo, transit, non-places, marginality, of human 'matter-out-of-place' - *Last Resort* provided an insightful focus of reflection on some of the spatial contradictions and dynamics of liminality.

This film is set at the seaside, a space which is deeply liminal: often home to small towns, located between land and sea, often a space populated by migrants, and left-behind due to British people now holidaying abroad. The seaside is not inherently liminal in my own usage of the term as it can be urban or rural (cf. *For Those in Peril*) yet it is a space inextricably linked

with the liminal in British cinema. Steven Allen (2009, p. 68) argues that *Last Resort* and *I Want You* (1998) are marked by themes of movement and stasis, rejecting notions of social mobility and revealing a 'coercive and deceitful boundary zone' in relation to sex. *Last Resort* and *I Want You* then anticipate the films studied in this chapter in other ways, too. Allen (2009, p.69) claims that 'as landscapes, the films show how the British resort functions as a sensorial space marked by its sounds as much as by its visual presence.' This representation of the liminal as a sensorial space becomes evident throughout my analyses here, from the evocation of space in *Bypass* and *The Outer Edges* to the subjective cinema which emphasises touch in *The Selfish Giant* and *Fish Tank*.

Liminal Realism & *The Arbor*

Not only liminal in their representation of space and marginality, contemporary British film also occupies generic and institutional spaces of what Clair Schwarz (2013) terms 'liminal realism'. In relation to the films of Shane Meadows, she argues that:

> Liminality extends to [his films] and is central to the analyses of them, most especially in considerations of the representation of gender and class; homosocial desire; the foregrounding of autobiography and biography in his work; spatial constructs and the idea of place and regionality, and in the tension created between the different modes adopted by the filmmaker. Meadows deploys the conventions of social realism but also draws on other traditions, such as slapstick, folk customs and aspects of myth as well as generic conventions, such as horror, the western and the revenge drama (Schwarz 2013, p. 11).

For Schwarz, in Meadows' films the liminal can be read through diverse contexts including their representation of space, gender and class as well as its generic framework and the fissures between autobiography and fiction. This broader liminal tendency is characteristic of contemporary British art cinema. As noted in the introduction, Paul Newland and Brian Hoyle (2013, p. 233) argue that:

Post-millennial British art cinema is not easily definable or classifiable, but is instead characterised by industrial and formal fluidity, and, often, by an ambivalence towards borders, be they generic, formal, aesthetic, cultural, industrial, technological or, indeed, national.

This transgression of borders demonstrates that contemporary British independent film is, in many different ways, in a state of flux, of occupying a liminal space. This is particularly true of the films analysed in this section as well as other films set on estates, suburbs and the edgeland.

Clio Barnard's *The Arbor* (2010) is indicative of the ways in which contemporary British filmmakers represent marginal spaces. A loose adaptation of *The Arbor* (Dunbar 1980) and *A State Affair* (Soans 2000), the film is about the lives of playwright Andrea Dunbar and her daughter, Lorraine Dunbar. Andrea Dunbar, a playwright of the 1980s, wrote autobiographical plays *The Arbor* and *Rita, Sue and Bob Too!* (which went on to be filmed by Alan Clarke) about life on the infamous Buttershaw Estate in Bradford, before falling victim to alcoholism. Her daughter, Lorraine, became addicted to heroin and methadone before her two year-old son died of a drug overdose. The film reflexively uses actors to lip-sync over recorded interviews which is, as Beth Johnson (2016, p. 280) argues:

Alienating and effective in equal measure, this delivery of Andrea Dunbar's story and legacy (as well as the stories of her daughters) via verbatim techniques exposes the separation or dislocation between sound and image, space and time, representation and the 'real'. Barnard's purposeful drawing of attention to the staging and storytelling techniques utilised in *The Arbor* forces a reminder that audiences are screening a constructed text.

Through the verbatim techniques, then, we see the fissures between reality and fiction, document and documentary and space and time – recalling the performative form of contemporary documentary film identified in relation to *sleep furiously* and *Two Years at Sea*.

The Arbor is not only liminal through its experimental approach to documentary film methods but in many other ways too. Firstly, its liminal status is marked by the inextricable relationship between place and femininity which deconstructs the association between hyper-masculinity and marginal Northern spaces: the very attention to the 'talk of the text' which Barnard utilises 'has political resonance in both gender and class terms, allowing voices to speak that would not usually be heard' (Johnson 2016, p. 287). *The Arbor* also combines various forms – filmed performance of the theatre text, personal testimony, re-enactment, archival footage of *BBC Arena* and *BBC Look North*, and clips of *Rita, Sue and Bob Too!* (1987) – the film foregrounds the ways in which the Dunbars' work and life have had transmedia appeal (which will shape much of my discussion in this chapter, particularly in relation to *The Outer Edges*), again revealing the fissures between documentary, fiction, factual television and theatre performance. Furthermore, by incorporating footage of the Buttershaw Estate from the 1980s and filming the theatre re-enactments on the same estate in 2009, viewers become acutely aware of the changing nature of place: the effects of de-industrialisation – which Alison Peirse (2016) argues is central to Andrea Dunbar's work – and its eventual regeneration. The slippages in time and space also reveal the inter-generational effects of trauma, abuse and de-industrialisation. *The Arbor* can also be deemed an example of liminal realism institutionally as it 'was a project originally meant for television, only moving to a theatrical release due to the funding involvement of the UK Film Council' (Johnson 2016, p. 286), thus revealing the transgressions between forms of television and feature filmmaking in contemporary Britain. In addition to this, Barnard herself moves between feature films, short films and art installations, further demonstrating the gaps between art and the arthouse film.

Chapter Outline

Many of these themes of liminality emerge through the analyses in this chapter. In the opening section on *Bypass* and *Shifty* I argue that these films subvert popular space-myths associated with suburbia. *Shifty* transposes tropes of the urban hood film – such as *Kidulthood* (2006) or *Bullet Boy* (2004) – to North London suburbs which complicates previous representations of

the space. *Bypass* similarly constructs a suburbia which is dangerous and violent, and I will argue that, through Hopkins' idiosyncratic editing style, the impacts of de-industrialisation are made visible. These films are generically liminal, occupying a space between classical social realism and the crime film, as well as engaging with liminal characters: both in their marginal lifestyle choices and their age – between childhood and adulthood.

The next section argues that the sensory realism on offer in *Fish Tank* and *The Selfish Giant* evokes a range of liminal spaces of estates, edgelands and the suburbs. I argue that these films are indicative of New British Realism by obviating a focus on the social. I suggest that these films are post-national: they cohere with formal projects of global art cinema yet work *interspatially* with a range of British audiovisual texts.

The final section focuses upon the psychogeographic tendency within contemporary British documentary film (characterised by films such as Patrick Keiller's *Robinson* trilogy, *London Orbital* (2002) and the films of Andrew Kötting and Grant Gee). This section centres on *The Outer Edges*, a collaborative effort between British filmmaker Kieran Evans and Underworld musician Karl Hyde. Its focus on communities affected by de-industrialisation in the nation's edgelands demonstrates the fissures, like *The Arbor*, between space and time. Through analysing the intertextuality between Hyde's musical project, his diaries and the film text, we can begin to see how the liminal exists across a variety of British cultural forms. Finally, my analysis centres on the relationship between walking and stillness as represented in the film and its relationship to slow cinema. Through this, we can figure the film as a product of a post-national cinema in which nationhood is superseded by transnational methods.

Life on the Margins: *Shifty, Bypass* & Suburbia

Understanding Suburbia: Definitions and Cultural Representations

> In the suburbs people rarely dreamed of striking out for happiness. It was familiarity and endurance: security and safety were the reward of dullness - *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi 1990, p. 8).

> Intelligent, thinking people could take things like this in their stride, just as they took the larger absurdities of deadly dull jobs in the city and deadly dull homes in the suburbs. Economic circumstance might force you to live in this environment, but the important thing was to keep from being contaminated. The important thing, always, was to remember who you were – *Revolutionary Road* (Yates 1961, p. 20).

Suburbia has been notoriously difficult to define. Ann Forsyth's (2012, p.278) 'Defining Suburbs' argues that despite all the confusion around the term, given different writers' various emphases, the 'suburbs, at their simplest, are more recently developed parts of an urban or metropolitan area, outside the core or historical city area'. However, as Forsyth acknowledges, though, this raises questions about what is the core and where does the city, or indeed the rural, end or begin. As the city expands, too, suburbs become consumed by the city. For example, Bethnal Green, once rural, then suburban, would now be considered an inner-city district of London. This demonstrates that places are not fixed as suburban which emphasises suburbia's marginality. As Roger Silverstone (1997, p.5) argues, suburbia is physically peripheral, 'always on the edge, always defined by what the city and country are not, for both cultural and political marginality.'

An understanding of suburbia has arisen through its reproduction in cultural texts across different forms from various national contexts. The above quotes by Kureishi (1990) and Yates (1961), British and American writers respectively, suggest that suburbia has long been deemed 'dull' and 'familiar.' Both writers figure suburbia as a space which represses individual identity,

in contrast to the cities (both London and New York) which are 'bottomless in [their] temptations' (Kureishi 1990, p. 8). This repressive suffocation of identity found in representations of suburbia can be read through various ideological perspectives: Martin Dines (2010, p.1) argues that the 'hegemonies of suburbia are manifold'. Andy Medhurst (1997, p. 266), for example, argues that 'of all the hegemonies of suburbia, it is the hegemonity of heterosexuality that cuts deepest, that bites hardest'. Meanwhile, in a Marxist analysis of Richard Ford's and Bobbie Ann Mason's novels, Joanna Price (2000, p. 138) claims that through the writers' exploration of suburbia, 'the intrinsic instability of the determination of everyday life by consumer culture is revealed'. However, cultural texts since the late 1990s have often sought to contest traditional assumptions surrounding suburbia. Alan Ball's audiovisual texts, *American Beauty* (1999) and *Six Feet Under* (2001-5), for example, challenge the traditional uniformity of American suburbia by addressing issues of intersectionality, ethnicity, homosexuality and the consumerist impulse. Similarly, writers such as Jonathan Franzen use the backdrop of suburbia to explore contemporary political issues such as environmentalism in *Freedom* (2010) and privacy in the digital age in *Purity* (2015), signalling a shift away from representing suburbia as a closed-off apolitical entity.

Representations of suburbia within British culture tend to be most prevalent within the form of pop music. Simon Frith (1997), for example, argues that Britpop follows the suburban sensibility that has characterised popular British music since the 1960s. Whilst discussing punk music, Jon Savage (2002, p. 145) asserts that 'the dreamscape of suburbia has a powerful and unrecognised place in England's pop culture.'

Despite the frequency of representation within other cultural forms, according to Andy Medhurst (1997, p. 244), 'representations of suburbia in British cinema occur with surprising infrequency'. He argues that:

> Gentle domestic comedy seemed to be the one genre in post-1945 British
> cinema which found suburbia an amenable location and which found itself

recognized and welcomed by suburbanites as an acceptable fictionalisation of their lives (Medhurst 1997, p. 246).

He points to films such as *Here Come the Huggets* (1948), *The Big Money* (1958) and *As Long As They're Happy* (1955) as belonging to this strain of suburban representation in British cinema.

Within the lexicon of realist British cinema, suburbia is frequently used as a shorthand for another way of life, away from the working-class estate or terraced house. Medhurst (1997, pp. 250-1) claims that suburbia figures 'in the social realist cycle, if only as a largely unseen threat, a feared destination where the aggressively masculine protagonists are liable to end up once their proletarian defiance has been tamed through marriage'. This has been a tradition that has largely continued throughout British realist cinema. In the films of Mike Leigh, for example, suburbia often plays a larger role. David Forrest (2016, p. 62) argues that:

> Leigh's complex and non-prescriptive approach to suburbia goes beyond a reductive understanding of the suburbs as stultifying and static; although they are almost always deployed as markers of everyday life, the universal resonance and recognition of suburban spaces (and lives) in Leigh's films enables and enlivens his empathetic portraits of common, lived experiences.

Indeed, Leigh's understanding of everyday residences is broad and ranges from tower blocks (*All or Nothing*) to traditional terraced housing (*Another Year* (2010)). In films such as *Meantime* (1983) or *High Hopes* (1988), suburban couples (Barbara (Marion Bailey) and John (Alfred Molina), and Valerie (Heather Tobias) and Martin (Philip Jackson), respectively) are comically juxtaposed next to working-class characters in order to mock the suburban way of life often for political effect. As John Kirk (2001, p. 362) says:

> Valerie and Martin represent those sections of the working class who have accepted the Thatcher "brief," steeping themselves in commodity desire and driven by the need to get rich quick.

This strategy of placing suburbanites at the margins of the narrative for contrast - whether for comic or political effect - can also be found in contemporary British realist cinema. Here, we could think of how Conner's (Michael Fassbender) middle-class home on a new estate in *Fish Tank* raises questions about class identity and gender, in contrast to Mia's (Kate Jarvis) flat in a tower block. We might also think of a film such as *Pride* (2014), in which Joe (George MacKay) is derided for his middle-class, suburban background by affectionately being nicknamed Bromley (London's archetypal suburb).

In this section, I will argue that in contemporary British film we see an understanding of suburbia as a broader, more inclusive space by considering two low-budget British realist films, *Shifty* and *Bypass*, in which the representation of suburbia is foregrounded. The suburban, in these films, is not figured as a middle-class, consumerist, heteronormative space as previously represented in popular culture. In *Shifty* and *Bypass*, suburbia is a much more insidious space, fuelled by illegitimate activity. *Shifty*, produced by Film London Microwave's scheme, was made for below £100,000 and received a limited theatrical release on 51 screens via Metrodome. *Bypass*, produced by the North-East based Third Films, was produced for £1,000,000 with the production company distributing it directly, resulting in special one-off events in cinemas followed by a straight-to-VOD (video on-demand) release. The two films have superficial similarities: both focus upon a marginalised young male, played by rising stars Riz Ahmed (*Shifty*) and George Mackay (*Bypass*); they are generically inflected by the crime film, featuring chase sequences and illegitimate ways of making money; and both are set in suburban locations. Yet the films have divergent textual registers. *Bypass* exhibits a more familiar strain of poetic realism surveyed throughout this thesis, whereas *Shifty* relies on a more traditional adherence to continuity style. *Shifty's* approach to representing space via classical social-realist methods can be aligned with the 'hood' film such as *Kidulthood* or *Bullet Boy*. In contrast to *Shifty*, *Bypass's* experimental approach to editing converges space and time

which draws attention to the intergenerational effects of de-industrialisation upon North-Eastern towns.

Shifty: The Sub-Urban Hood Film

The British urban or 'hood' film has slowly grown in popularity since the early 2000s. Some of the many texts which would fall under this category include *Bullet Boy, Kidulthood*, *Adulthood* (2008) and *Top Boy* (2011-). The titles of these texts immediately flag up two key concerns of the urban film: youth and masculinity. Sarita Malik (2010, p. 142) notes that these films are often 'sold as 'black films' based on teen delinquency and gang culture, recurrent themes in how black masculinity in particular has been constructed in mainstream representation.' Yet these films are ethnically diverse. Thus, for Malik, blackness is no longer inscribed on the body but in culture, behaviour and taste. Robert Murphy (2007, p. 357) has argued that in the drug-films of the late 1990s, such as *Trainspotting*, *Twin Town* (1996) and *Human Traffic* (1999)*,* 'young people accept drugs, crime, violence and exploitation with hedonistic stoicism.' However, contemporary urban audiovisual texts mark a departure from such nihilism – they engage with delinquency, danger and violence. Narrative tropes of these films are often centred on escape and liberation from their dangerous environment. This is in keeping with thematic concerns of early 2000s grime music which these films are influenced by.[10] *Shifty*, like the cycle of 'hood' films, emphasises its urban credentials through the inclusion of grime music, by artists such as Tinchy Stryder, Sway and Plan B. The DVD cover for *Shifty* also positions the film alongside other urban films. The inclusion of baseball bats, hoods, the foregrounding of gun culture and the film's uncompromising tone – "Makes *Rock N Rolla* look like a fairytale!" – all work to align *Shifty* with films such as *Kidulthood, Bullet Boy* and *4.3.2.1.* (2010).

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[10] In *Bullet Boy*, for example, Ashley Walters – a prominent member of the grime act So Solid Crew – plays the lead role. In *Kidulthood*, the soundtrack is dominated by grime artists including Lethal Bizzle, Dizzee Rascal, Akala and Wiley. Skepta, a prominent figure in the recent revival of grime music, also features in the recent conclusion to the *Kidulthood* trilogy, *Brotherhood*.

Shifty uses many of the tropes of the hood film but it does not take place in the same geographical space of inner-city London. Shifty is living on the margins of society which is physically manifested in his surroundings of suburban Outer London. This is a world of terraced housing, interspersed with tower blocks, of graffiti-laden underpasses and quiet, familiar streets. By transposing issues traditionally represented within the space of the urban to the suburban, *Shifty* subverts the cultural imaginary of the middle-class, comfortable, ordinary space. Suburbia has often been identified as a heteronormative space, encouraging the growth of the nuclear family. In this way, the most typical suburban household in the film is Trevor and Valerie's – the characters that are married with two children. However, Trevor has recently relapsed into using crack cocaine and has lost his job on a building site due to his habit. Although representations of addiction within the suburbs are not new – we can think of the much-parodied image of the suburban housewife drinking wine throughout the day – the presence of crack cocaine within the space is much more sinister.

Throughout *Shifty,* the space of the suburban home is formulated as a cultural ideal against which the private lives of the individual are contrasted. Shifty's home, for example, is constructed as a typical British-Pakistani household. When the home is first introduced, in the entrance to his house is a Quranic scroll hung next to a picture of the homeland. We are then introduced to Shifty's home – making a breakfast of Halal sausages – as Creevy cross-cuts to Trevor and Valerie's house. The first image is what we come to expect of a typical suburban household: the housewife (Valerie) carefully balancing the phone between head and shoulder as she whisks an egg with her other free hand. The shot is dominated by two children, foregrounded on the left of the frame. We then cut to a shot of Trevor to the left of the children, standing behind a door frame leading to the kitchen. By the end of the sequence he has left, leaving an empty space behind the doorway, and a frame within a frame as the doorway leads on to filming the everyday scene of the kitchen. The introduction to this suburban home is therefore stereotypical: a married heterosexual couple, two children (one

boy, one girl), as the husband leaves the house (ostensibly to work) and the wife tends to the kitchen and the children.

However, as the film progresses, these two typical suburban homes become much more insidious as everyday life in them become linked to what we would expect in representations of the British urban hood film: drugs and violence. When we return to Trevor and Valerie's home, she is taking a pregnancy test when she finds remnants of cocaine on the toilet cistern. After a prolonged external sequence involving Shifty and Chris, there is a corresponding shot of Rez pulling out the washing machine drawer as he discovers a stash of Shifty's drugs taped to the back. We then cut to Valerie who is seen scrubbing the toilet in close-up which is followed by an overhead shot of the suburban landscape which situates these households as a microcosm of everyday suburban living. The juxtaposition of everyday household chores with Class A drug use reveals the underbelly of suburbia and the performativity of middle-class individuals. Thus, for Creevy, everyday suburbia is not far removed from the kinds of thematic impulses found in the urban film. When transposed to the suburbs, however, this kind of lifestyle is distinctly private – hidden within the confines of the home – whereas in the urban film it is a conspicuous public display of a certain kind of lifestyle associated with aggression and toughness.

Shifty's display of a tough masculinity permeates his everyday life. Yet there is a persistent tension between this and the friendly, childish persona he displays whilst with Chris. Andrew Spicer (2003) argues that the British tough guy emerged in the 1950s, typified by Stanley Baker's star persona. For Spicer (2003, p. 91), 'the real form of mutuality in [Baker's] films […] is the overpowering need for a male opponent on whom to release all the tough guy's pent up energies, a homosocial bonding that is deeper than any other satisfaction he can enjoy.' In *Shifty*, however, the homosocial bond that brings Shifty satisfaction is not another manifestation of his toughness but a softer facet of masculinity in his relationship with Chris. Similar to the private/public nature of the configuration of the home in *Shifty*, in exterior

public spaces, Shifty performs a tough, hard masculinity. Ahmed's voice work becomes rapid and full of expletives, his smile becomes crooked and his body language more threatening. Like the façade of the suburban home, Shifty's act of toughness is occasionally portrayed as performative. When he quietly breaks into Otis's (Rory Jenning's) home – a young man who is playing drum'n'bass music too loud, next-door to one of Shifty's clients – Shifty slowly walks past a mirror as he becomes silhouetted in shadow against the background of Otis's living room. As Shifty looks into the mirror, acknowledging how he looks – not yet threatening enough – he gently lifts his hood up, and Shifty swiftly becomes a dark, anonymous character, shot from behind in complete darkness. In this sequence, he takes control of the situation, speaking more slowly, over-enunciating his words as Creevy's camera frames him as dominant via low-angles. The attention to performativity in Ahmed's performance is also constructed through the framing of the mirror. The lighting and camera angles shows the façade he portrays in public suburban spaces, much like *Kidulthood's* ensemble in inner-city London. This performance of toughness occurs within the external space of the suburbs and the interior of the tower blocks, away from the suburban home.

This contrasts with moments of softness which occur within discreet public spaces and the confines of his own home. Many of these sequences foreground the pair of Shifty and Chris against the backdrop of the suburban environment which recalls 'that long shot of our town from that hill' (Higson, 1996). These are the scenes of intimate exchange between Shifty and Chris and give us an insight into the childhood bond between the two. In one example, they sit in a playground in a two-shot framed behind. In this long take, a tower block is framed between the pair which visually symbolises the environment that separates them. There are moments of intimacy here as Shifty lights Chris's cigarette and the pair ruminate on the violence that occurs within the community. Following this conversation, they play on some playground equipment and the pair laugh. In this sequence, though, the contrast between softness and Shifty's performed toughness is intensified due to the presence of the tower

block within most of the shots, as well as some of their conversation, reminding the viewer that Shifty is never far from the underbelly of suburbia which he inhabits.

The film concludes with Shifty escaping Dudlowe (a thinly-veiled Borehamwood) with Chris, on the coach back to Manchester. This echoes the opening of the film in which Chris travels down to London on the coach by himself. Throughout the film it has been revealed that Chris has a job in the service sector (recruitment), has a girlfriend and a mortgage. Throughout *Shifty* there is an emphasis on the lack of available, legitimate jobs for men in Dudlowe: Trevor cannot find work on a building site, Shifty earns money selling drugs, and many minor characters are unemployed. I will return to the relationship between deindustrialization and masculinity in my discussion of *Bypass,* but what is striking here is how available service sector jobs, in *Shifty*, are associated with Manchester which subverts traditional space myths around North and South. To prosper, and avoid a life of drugs, violence and crime, Creevy's characters not only have to move from a suburban to an urban environment but also from the South to the North of England. This approach to space and place subverts the hegemonic conception of what suburbia and the North represent. Traditionally, Northern cities are home to displaced masculinities following the fall of manufacturing – represented, for example, in *The Full Monty* or *Billy Elliot*. To designate Manchester as a place rife with opportunity, in contrast to a Southern suburban town which is fuelled by drugs, violence and crime, demonstrates a renewed interest in everyday suburban spaces and places taken for granted as 'dull' within the national imaginary. Indeed, it is this precise broadening representation of suburbia that enables a subversive approach to other urban spaces.

This narrative of escape has subtle differences with *Fish Tank* (the ending of which I will return to). In Arnold's film, Mia (Kate Jarvis) has no experience nor expectations of Wales and has had only a brief relationship with Billy (Harry Treadaway). Shifty's plans are less ambiguous and, as they share a pair of earphones, one bud in Chris's ear, the other in Shifty's, we understand that their symbiotic homosocial relationship will last. This concrete ending, made through visual

gestures, is not one which we have come to expect of the post-millennial art cinema (here we can think of the ambiguous endings in *Weekend, For Those in Peril* and *Under the Skin*). This type of ending, one which satisfies traditional narrative structures and audience expectations could stem from Microwave's commercially-minded ethos. Speaking about the writing process throughout the development of the film, Eran Creevy (in *The Making of Shifty* (2008)) said that 'we started to put more of a narrative into it rather than being '24 hours in the life of' and gradually over the course of a year it came together and became the script that we shot'. This addition of a more material narrative plot, as opposed a looser approach to narrative structure, indicates the kind of commercially viable writing Microwave encourages before greenlighting a project.

Shifty's visual style is also more conventional than the expressionistic low-budget films studied throughout this thesis. Films such as *For Those in Peril* and *Weekend* were also made on micro-budgets, with the former also being made through Warp X's similar film scheme. Where *For Those in Peril* experimentally synthesised different types of film stock to express themes of time, place and grief, *Shifty's* aesthetic strategy is much more conventional. The film is shot in classical continuity style, comprised of establishing shots, shot reverse-shots, two-shots and tracking shots when following the characters' movements. For example, the opening sequence cross-cuts between the three main characters – Daniel, Shifty and Trevor (Jay Simpson) – using familiar sequencing of establishing shots, mid-shots and close-ups which supply the viewer with enough diegetic information to foreshadow events throughout the rest of the film: Trevor taking drugs, Shifty walking around suburbia with his hood up and Daniel travelling to Dudlowe on a coach. We understand these characters will intersect, and that all this action is occurring concurrently.

This mode of filmmaking seeks to ground the viewer in a logical spatio-temporal world. This is in opposition to what we expect from the modern European art film. As Mark Betz (2009, pp. 4-5) summarises:

Unlike classical cinema - with its rather strict and elaborate set of rules that presuppose and reinforce a stable viewing position through a steady flow of differing views of time, space, and character in accordance with conventions of linear causality, continuity, and narrative - art cinema works the extremes of the temporal-spatial-narrative continuum, testing the boundaries among foregrounded aesthetic construction, spectatorial engagement and narrative intelligibility.

Shifty's classical approach contrasts to other low-budget contemporary British films which are closer to the style Betz is describing in the modern European art film. In the next section, I will demonstrate that Third's *Bypass* is constructed as an art film, considering how its form is shaped by models of the arthouse and how its exploration of the everyday is less generically and more politically motivated.

Bypass: Authorship & De-Industrialisation

Whereas suburbia in *Shifty* is shaped by the threat of violence or danger, which encourages a generic mode of filmmaking, *Bypass* is more concerned with Tim's (George MacKay's) struggle to keep himself and his sister above the breadline. This reconfigures suburbia not as something sub-urban, as in *Shifty*, but as something distinctly working- or even under-class. *Bypass* is centred on Tim, a young man with an absent father, a recently deceased mother, and an older brother, Greg (Benjamin Dilloway), who has just returned from a prison sentence for robbery to become an office cleaner. Tim is left unable to pay the bills as he looks after his younger sister, Lilly (Charlotte Spencer). He contracts a mysterious illness and follows his brother into illegitimate activity -- drug dealing and theft -- to stay afloat. This illicit activity in *Bypass* is a result of having no legitimate options to survive. Throughout the film, there are numerous references to money, bills and austerity within Tim's everyday life – he instructs his sister not to put the heating on and to keep the doors locked to prevent bailiffs from entering the home.

There are many associative montages in the film, several of which centre on money and others that speak to the cultural decline of working-class men in the North-East. One montage which

occurs early in *Bypass* follows Tim selling stolen goods to various people in pubs or in their home. During this 120-second montage there are 60 shots. Whilst the ASL is 2 seconds, many appear to be stretched out via Hopkins's utilisation of slow-motion. These shots are achronological: rather than being organised linearly by time, Hopkins juxtaposes different images to emphasise Tim's everyday routines. For example, he sells items to four different people yet they all appear repeatedly in different phases of the montage. There are also repeated shots of Tim's mobile nature – on a bike, walking down a corridor – which also occur through different stages of the sequence. This montage builds to a crescendo as Tim's girlfriend is featured more prominently before the sequence ends and the pair have a conversation. Throughout this sequence, we begin to see what dominates Tim's everyday life -- money, journeys and, most importantly, his girlfriend – and how Hopkins makes sense of this via achronological structuring. In this way, Hopkins's project is similar to how Deleuze (2006, p. 120) describes the films of Alain Resnais, in which:

> Events do not just succeed each other or simply follow a chronological course; they are constantly being rearranged according to whether they belong to a particular sheet of past, a particular continuum of age, all of which coexist.

This refusal of linear storytelling in favour of a conspicuous art cinema mode of editing demonstrates the divergence between *Shifty* and *Bypass*. It also emphasises the experimental tenet of contemporary British cinema which finds parallels with the way in which Wright evoked Aaron's experience of time in *For Those in Peril*.

Throughout *Bypass's* overarching narrative arc, Tim seems hesitant to make money through illegitimate means. The film opens with his brother being condemned to an 18-month prison sentence and Tim's illness seems a manifestation of his own morality. However, he does not have the cultural capital to make a better life for himself. Tim's situation is desperate and is where the suspense of the film can be located. Hopkins (in Horne 2014) has said that:

The attitudes of the older people in *Bypass* are a reflection of what I found when I spoke to people during my research. The older generation often said they had had a job for life, but their grandkids now have a job for a few weeks on some shitty zero-hour contract. They all have sympathy for these kids because they don't have the stability they had.

Hopkins is implicitly suggesting that the effects of de-industrialisation have hit regional working-class individuals in tangible ways and that their cultural heritage has been eroded. *Bypass* is set in Gateshead, in the North-East of England where Third Films is based. The North-East is, arguably, the region in which processes of de-industrialisation have hit communities hardest as a result of uneven spatial economic growth. Michael Anyadike-Danes (2004, p. 87), for example, found that the North-East has the highest amount of male unemployment at 31%, 'roughly double the rate in the South-East'.

Cultural inter-generational effects of de-industrialisation are explored throughout the film, most explicitly in other montage sequences. Tim meets his brother after he found a dead man on one of his jobs and panics and, when Tim calms down, they begin to ruminate on life, family and change. The scene takes place by Gateshead's bypass, on the riverbank overlooking a bridge made of steel. The characters cannot inhabit the city as they are meeting in secret, speaking to themes of urban displacement. Greg says 'do you know what a foundry is? It's where our family used to work, granddad told me that. Now I clean shit.' The conversation shifts to a nostalgic register, discussing the first time Greg got arrested and the games they used to play 'by the factory.' Whilst this conversation continues, the image track does not continue in a conventional shot reverse-shot by the river. We are shown a montage of images interspersed with the conversation by the bypass, some of which are related to the conversation they are having: POV shots of the characters' memories as children as their dad grasps their shoulder or takes them to the football match by the factory. Others seem to take place in the immediate future: Greg and Tim walk through the town and through flats. Other images are more oblique and unexplained: an unidentifiable man on CCTV. The conversation

that narrates these scenes is unbroken yet the characters gradually shift locations. In one shot, as Greg is speaking, they are still standing next to the river. In the next of Tim, he has moved inside, replying to Greg. The following shot of Greg remains by the river and they are then finally united by the table in the flat. The image track throughout this four-minute sequence is then radically discontinuous. In merging scenes from the past, present and future on the image-track, whilst maintaining a present-tense continuity on the sound-track, we feel the incongruity these characters feel with their father's and granddad's heritage (their past), the confusion of where they belong (their present), and their unintelligible future.

The images of past-ness throughout this sequence have nostalgic connotations. The film also moves into a more sensory mode with one shot of the (now absent) father gently grasping a young Greg's shoulder in slow-motion, appealing to the sense of touch. In these sequences, industry is continually figured through familiar signifiers such as gas tanks and foundries. In the present, the shots are bleaker: no longer is there a sensual register but a more objective realism. These sequences are comprised of bleak edgeland spaces, situated in a cramped, night-time underpass looking out onto a dirty river. The lo-fidelity qualities of the images of the future, meanwhile, lend a dream-like tone. This mode of associative editing emphasises the effects of the decline of industry on these working-class men through the juxtaposition of nostalgic images against the bleak, cramped interiors comprising the characters' present and their unknowable future.

This mode of editing is persistent throughout the film and is a reminder of the form found in *For Those in Peril*. Like Paul Wright, Hopkins' filmmaking emphasises a Bergsonian conception of time. Whereas Wright's crystal image tapped into grief and the generic conventions of horror, Hopkins' is much more political, exploring the erosion of working-class cultures and the everyday life of marginalised youth. Thus, though *Bypass* has moved on from a more objective realism – as found in *Shifty* – Hopkins shares concerns of traditional social realism such as the role of working-class young men in, or pushed to the margins of, urban towns. Hopkins (in BFI

2014) himself notes the shift from both the antecedents and some contemporary examples of social realism to his more expressive mode of filmmaking:

> I think I always tend to work in sequences rather than working in scenes. I like the idea that the film kind of flows from scene to scene and I always like to play around with different kind of time frames so we think we're in one space then we'll move into a different space then come back there and then go forward again. Quite a bit of cinema that I see is really about a storytelling that is almost to do with filming a kind of theatrical kind of idea and everything is put on performance or story […] one thing which is completely unique to film is editing. […] I think there's so much more that you can do with it, you can get under the skin of the story or character or the interior of the people. I think that's something that's very different in this film to social realism is that we go much, much deeper into the characters.

Hopkins' conception of cinema is oppositional to the kind of 'storytelling' found in the classical continuity form of *Shifty*. Further, we can align his mode of filmmaking with the formal interests of the new British cinema by expressing a character's interiority through expressive, sensory filmmaking techniques. This approach to editing, which focuses on marginalised characters, is a key signature of his authorship and is indicative of contemporary British art cinema. David Forrest (2010, p. 41) argues that Hopkins's previous film, *Better Things*, similarly employs experimental editing and sound to create a 'narrative of association,' signalling a shift within contemporary British cinema aesthetics:

> *Better Things*, with its associative, symbolic form and its use of stylistic and image-led features, as opposed to orthodox naturalistic, observational aesthetics, shows the manner in which new realist cinema in Britain is signalling a changing of priorities where the depiction of reality – while still central – is increasingly open to a broader range of approaches.

Through this image-led filmmaking form and editing style we can begin to see a set of thematic and visual signatures emerging within Hopkins's *oeuvre*. The image-led *Better Things* draws attention to the continuities within the marginalised community. *Bypass* similarly uses

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associative editing and a radical approach to sound to advance his thematic project about marginalised communities in contemporary suburban Britain. We could locate such a nurturing of Hopkins as an auteur via Third Films who actively encourage artistic expression and experimental filmmaking techniques.

This experimental approach caused the film to be harder to sell to distributors. Indeed, due to Haillay and Hopkins not managing to find a distribution deal to suit them, they took the route of direct-distribution. Haillay (2015) has said that:

> Given the themes in *Bypass*, we were keen to get the film out before the UK General Election on May 7 and take advantage of the political agenda across the media. Several UK distributors approached our sales company and visa-versa [sic], but none could make a deal that suited all parties and thoughts of direct distribution began to germinate. [...] We planned to hit cinemas between Easter and the election, followed by a non-theatrical release directly after polling day.

This mode of direct distribution, in which a production company sells to cinemas and VOD providers directly (usually alongside Q+As with the producer/director/actors), gives the production company full control of the positioning of its film. We can already note Third's political positioning with the dates of their screenings, giving credence to Hopkins's sub-textual ambitions. Throughout Third's promotional campaign there was also a series of posters which emphasised this film as a response to successive governments. These slogan posters placed Tim's face against catchphrases of successive governments since de-industrialisation, including "There is no such thing as society" "We are all middle class now" and "What you might call austerity I call efficiency," quotes from Margaret Thatcher, John Prescott and David Cameron respectively. Furthermore, *Bypass* premiered at the Venice film festival which positions it as a product of world cinema, legitimising the film's arthouse credentials.

Shifty and *Bypass* both subvert their local landscapes by demonstrating that the suburban is not always home to comfortable, middle-class families but is often a site for marginalised individuals. *Shifty* transposes themes of the hood/urban film to the suburbs whilst *Bypass* demonstrates that the space is also home to working- or under-class families. In these films, suburbia is a marginal space: a liminal zone between urban and rural. It is also figured as a home to marginalized young men, not the middle-class, heteronormative, consumerist family as it is often determined. Both films then subvert popular assumptions about the suburban but it is *Shifty* that reworks popular space myths regarding North/South and urban/suburban. In *Shifty*, the fictional Southern suburban town of Dudlowe which lies on the outskirts of London, presents little opportunity for the protagonists. In its narrative of escape, to urban Manchester – promising the life of service sector work, a mortgage and a girlfriend – the urban replaces the suburban as a site of commodification perpetuated by the nuclear family. Since the urban North is not usually associated with service sector jobs, Creevy's film subverts traditional connotations of space and place. In contrast to this subversive approach to space, *Bypass* propagates a different and more familiar space myth in which men in the North East are displaced and display changing masculinities.

Psychogeography & Edgelands: *The Outer Edges*

Psychogeography & Edgelands in Contemporary Britain

"Walking is intricately bound up with the imagination of place as part of the imagination of community (or its absence) in a long historical time" (Finnane 2016, pp. 115-6).

"There is a mobile dynamics involved in the act of viewing films, even if the spectator is seemingly static. The (im)mobile spectator moves across an imaginary path, traversing multiple sites and times. Her fictional navigation connects distant moments and far-apart places" (Bruno 2002, pp. 55-56).

Psychogeography has, since the turn of the millennium, seen a revival in contemporary British culture. Writers such as Iain Sinclair, Will Self, Nick Papadimitriou and Robert Macfarlane are at the forefront of this renewed interest in psychogeography, as well as filmmakers such as Andrew Kötting, Patrick Keiller and John Rogers. Famously defined by Guy Debord (1980, p. 5) as 'the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals,' psychogeography's etymological branches reveal the intersections between psychology and geography. Merlin Coverley (2010, p. 13) describes psychogeography as 'a perception of the city as a site of mystery and seek[s] to reveal the true nature that lies beneath the flux of the everyday.' However, for contemporary British psychogeographers, it is not necessarily the urban metropolis that is of primary interest. Rather, the revival of psychogeography in Britain intersects closely with a growing cultural exploration of the edgelands.

The neologism 'edgeland' was first coined by Marion Shoard (2002, p. 18) in 2002, who defines this space as an 'apparently unplanned, certainly uncelebrated and largely incomprehensible territory where town and country meet.' Her description of the edgeland spaces is vivid:

> Between urban and rural stands a kind of landscape quite different from either. Often vast in area, though hardly noticed, it is characterised by rubbish tips and warehouses, superstores and derelict industrial plants, office parks and gypsy encampments, golf courses, allotments and fragmented, frequently scruffy farmland. All these heterogeneous elements are arranged in an unruly and often apparently chaotic fashion against a background of unkempt wasteland frequently swathed in riotous growths of colourful plants, both native and exotic (Shoard 2002, p. 117).

Shoard explains that the space is a result of neglect, particularly by planning strategies. She writes that 'the interface is shaped largely by the planning applications that come in, rather than by proactive planning' (p. 135). This lack of planning means the edgelands are a mutable, adaptive space for contemporary Britain. Finally, Shoard encouraged celebratory

representations of the space via the arts in order to nurture an appreciation of the space functionally, politically and aesthetically.

Tim Edensor's (2005; 2007) work on industrial ruins demonstrates how edgeland spaces reveal the failures of capitalist society, resulting in places which are stressed, recessed and unutilised. He argues that:

> Whilst they testify to the unevenness of capitalist expansion, revealing sudden local economic recessions within a broader global dynamism which creates grateful recipients of capital flow elsewhere, ruins also signify the sheer waste and inefficiency of using up places, materials and people. Moreover, as glaring signs of instability, ruins deride the pretensions of governments and local authorities to maintain economic prosperity and hence social stability, and give the lie to those myths of endless progress which sustain the heightened form of neo-liberal philosophy through which a globalising capitalist modernity extends' (Edensor 2005, p. 165)

However, though industrial ruins signify the hardships of change which result in waste and decay, this very revelation, for Edensor (2005, pp. 166-7), is valuable:

> For through their very allegorical presence, ruins can cause us to question the normative ways of organising the city and urban life, and they contain within them stimuli for imagining things otherwise. Hidden in ruins are forgotten forms of collectivity and solidarity, lost skills, ways of behaving and feeling, traces of arcane language, and neglected historical and contemporary forms of social enterprise.

In this way, Edensor's work celebrates the very reason edgelands are maligned: for lying outside of normative modernism, both geographically and economically. He emphasises the excessive materiality on display in the ruins, foregrounding a 'politics of pleasure and sensuality' which runs in contrast to unsensual 'blandscapes' found within the city (Edensor, 2005, p. 167). Therefore, though his work is acutely aware that the ruins 'testify to the

unevenness of capitalist expansion' (Edensor 2005, p. 165), he advances an understanding of the political and sensual value of edgeland spaces which pervades *The Outer Edges*.

In 2002, cultural representations of the edgelands were already underway with the publication of *London Orbital* (Sinclair 2002) – the quintessential text in Britain's psychogeographic revival. In *London Orbital*, Iain Sinclair recounts his walk around the M25:

> I want to walk around the orbital motorway: in the belief that this nowhere, this edge, is the place that will offer fresh narratives. I don't want to be on the road any more than I want to walk on water; the soft estates, the acoustic footprints, will do nicely (ibid, p. 16).

London Orbital was a project with a filmic counterpart, directed by Chris Petit (2002), in which he drove around M25 continuously. Taken together, they are a dystopian take on neoliberal Britain which use the walks and drives as a springboard to reflect on politics, the self and geography. Ella Mudie (2016, p. 276) argues that Sinclair's project is to:

> Demonstrate the subversive power of conceiving the city as inherently intertextual, charting intersecting lines of authorial, environmental and even psychic or occult influences that defamiliarise the everyday to critical effect.

To give a sense of the tone of *London Orbital* (both book and film), popular intertextual references in Sinclair's work include J.G. Ballard, Aldous Huxley and *Dracula*. Yet his projects are intertextual in other ways. His most recent book *London Overground: A Day's Walk Around the Ginger Line* (Sinclair 2015) has been adapted into a forthcoming film, *London Overground* (2016). *London Orbital* was conceived as a bifurcated project: Sinclair would walk around the M25, collecting his research in a book, whilst Chris Petit would drive around the motorway, visually documenting his findings. Petit records the M25 on tape which he calls 'anti-image' just as the M25 is 'anti-cinema.' Paul Dave (2006, p. 141) argues that *London Orbital* is an example of 'occult heritage' which 'represents valuable but neglected resources of the past. These resources represent an occult heritage in the sense that they are hidden or obscured by

official heritage culture.' Thus, central to the project is uncovering an obfuscated Britain which lies in what Marc Augé (2008) terms non-places (such as motorways) or uncelebrated sites of history (abbeys and dilapidated asylums found in London's edgelands, for example). In the film *London Orbital,* Petit's digital images of the anti-cinematic M25 are often juxtaposed with filmic, cinematic images from Sinclair's walk, via split-screen, thus demonstrating an artistic value to the edgelands within the film's form. Furthermore, non-diegetic quotes from Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair, juxtaposed with images of the M25 and the more valuable edgeland spaces, 'results in an overwhelming and debilitating sense of the power of the dominant social order' (Dave 2006, p. 143). Thus, what emerges through the fissures of *London Orbital* – between book and film, between the split-screen itself, between intertextual quote and indexical referent – is an exploration of neglected everyday spaces (the M25) via a critique of neoliberalism.

Although not specifically critical of the edgeland itself, *London Orbital* is far from celebratory in tone. As Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts (2011, p.9) argue in a thinly-veiled criticism of Sinclair (and others, including Will Self):

> At other times – as in the work of some so-called psychogeographers – they [the edgelands] are merely a backdrop for bleak observations on the mess we humans have made of our lives, landscapes, politics and each other. In our view [… they are] using the edgelands as a short cut to misanthropy.

This quote appears in *Edgelands: Journeys into England's True Wilderness* – a book closer to what Shoard was calling for. Indeed, they credit Shoard as 'the starting point' for their book (ibid, p. 3). *Edgelands* is structured by 28 common features of edgeland spaces including cars, wire, retail, woodlands, wasteland and canals, and detail these in an intertextual, poetic and celebratory manner. Its cumulative effect, by placing its emphasis on *things*, is to draw the readers' attention to the excessive materiality of edgeland spaces. This materiality is inherently valuable for the memories they evoke which, for Farley and Symmons Roberts, are both personal and historical. For example, their section on wire begins with a sensory

emphasis as they describe in detail how the wire looks, what the space sounds like and the weight of the space. This leads them to ponder the history of the space itself, often relating to their own childhood experiences of exploring these spaces which run through the book as a whole. They write:

> The edgelands are a cross-hatch of wire. Because so few people live here, these areas lend themselves to an underground and aerial tracery of aluminium, copper and glass-fibre threads bearing voices, digits, voltage and hum into and out of the city. But at eye-level the pattern is more complex. These tracts of land are a bewildering mixture of high and low security. Here, where a Victorian mill has collapsed under decades of rain, the single strand of wire is less a fence and more a threshold, to mark out for kids where their territory starts. Years of crossing have given this wire a permanent sag, as if cowed by its own weight. But next door to this ruin is a freight depot, where juggernauts reverse into bays to be filled. Here the fences tower above you: double-weave steel sheets to keep you out. The edgelands are a complex mix of fiercely guarded private ground and common land by default, or by neglect. And the history of these places is held in their wires. (ibid, p. 93)

These illuminations of everyday edgeland details are similar to Nick Papadimitriou's (2012) *Scarp*. This book is an idiosyncratic mix of history, psychogeography, memoir and imagined characters as he wanders around a place he names Scarp, the edgeland area that lies north of London. To give a sense of his distinctive tone, in one section, Papadimitriou gazes at pylons only to imagine he is a Ukrainian veterinary surgeon, circa 1952, 'staring up at these triumphant monuments to the electrification of my region' (ibid, p. 43). Again, like Farley and Symmons Roberts, this demonstrates how material features of edgeland landscapes have historical and nostalgic connotations – Papadimitriou, Farley and Symmons Roberts all played in the edgeland spaces as children. This kind of play has also been represented in the British New Wave (we can think of the industrial spaces of *A Taste of Honey* (1961), for example). Furthermore, Papadimitriou's *Scarp* often invokes notions of Romanticism: he describes the space as 'an agent of consciousness expansion' with a 'perception-altering power' (ibid, p.7).

Scarp is the antithesis of Sinclair's misanthropic, dystopian *London Orbital*. It uses the same structure of a walk to celebrate contemporary Britain and its past, and emphasises the restorative potential of walking in such spaces. In this way, *Scarp* is similar to Edensor's work in celebrating the spaces, drawing attention to the value of the ruins through his focus on materiality and history.

Papadimitriou has also been the subject of a documentary film, *The London Perambulator* (2009). This 45-minute film takes the form of a conventional documentary, featuring talking heads from friends and colleagues of Papadimitriou (Will Self, Iain Sinclair and Russell Brand) who admire him as both a 'deep topographer'[11] and a British eccentric – as well as tracking shots of and narration from Papadimitriou on his walks. These are interspersed with montages and close-ups of the scenes which encapsulate Papadimitriou's world-view. The opening of the

[11] Deep topography is a neologism by Nick Papadimitriou to describe his practice. The term itself has been debated between those who engage in these kinds of practices. In *The London Perambulator*, Iain Sinclair argues that:

> Psychogeography was becoming a rather nasty brand name, I felt some guilt for having brought this about. It had an authentic status in the 1960s when it was connected to situationism and a way to aggressively dealing with the city. And then it drifted off into a kind of no-man's land until I thought Stewart Home rescued it with his London Psychogeographical Association in which the thing was activated again into present concerns and had a kind of comedy aspect to it as well. And that really got into the popular mind as a way of describing almost anything to do with cities, or anything to do with walking became psychogeography and Nick [Papadimitriou] clearly challenged this terminology and brought in deep topography which makes it seem more like that very British tradition of the naturalist, the walker, the edges of the city, the liminal figure who does all of that and who is not so conceptual in his practice. And I thought, therefore, that it was a very useful term. And I'd like to use it myself, I have signed-up to deep topography and abdicated from psychogeography immediately on hearing this term.'

However, this description by Sinclair of 'deep topography' is juxtaposed with a shot of Papadimitriou himself (briefly) describing what he means. He says:

> It's about getting a very dangerous balance between finding the overlooked and showing it to the other people who have an eye for the overlooked and not making the overlooked into something that is gazed at. You know, like people looking through the bars of a monkey house.

Sinclair suggests that there are only very few subtle differences between psychogeography and deep topography and that it is merely away for him to become disassociated with psychogeography (whose currency is becoming less 'valuable' as it increases in popularity). However, Papadimitriou (and this is reflected in his writing, see the above quotes from *Scarp*) is describing attributing histories to the material reality of edgeland spaces, to looking within the 'things' Farley and Symmons Roberts discuss, as opposed to merely 'gazing' or 'describing.' For my own purposes, then, I will still refer to psychogeography as a mode which blends psychology and geography; walkers who ruminate on a variety of topics. Deep topography is reserved for the more philosophical reflection on materials, particularly those found in edgeland spaces.

film is one such montage which begins with a rapid zoom onto Papadimitriou with close-ups of weeds, fencing, canals, iron gates and abandoned buildings. Alongside this, Papadimitriou narrates:

> Beneath the ground unseeing streams flow, after rain you can hear them. Waters rising through the sands and gravels to the south run down and unite hereabouts. The knowledge of this fact creates a sense of depth, of dimension. Are these natural features now engineered into the city's frame? The hermetic tail end of what was once common knowledge, a residue from better times now known only to the elect.

This encapsulates Papadimitriou's central thesis, that of looking at and philosophizing the edgelands and to uncover myths, real or imagined, which make up their history. In some ways, this relates to the project of the anti-heritage filmmakers I explored in Chapter Two, who re-imagined and destabilized our own notion of history and heritage. And it is here where Papadimitriou's and Sinclair's practices are linked: in uncovering unknown and obscure materials, relics of recent past, albeit to different ends -- Sinclair's as misanthropic and political, Papadimitriou's as philosophical and humanising.

Thus, in contemporary British culture, there has been a revival of psychogeography which is inextricably linked to edgeland spaces, particularly related to Outer London. This has resulted in the inaugural Estuary festival in 2016 which celebrates art about the spaces between London and Essex. One of the panels featured during the festival is called 'The Wilderness is Much Closer than You Think' with panellists including Symmons Roberts, Karl Hyde and Kieran Evans. The latter two individuals both collaborated on *The Outer Edges*, which I will analyse in this section. This film charts the places on the border of London and Essex that inspired Hyde's debut solo album *Edgeland* (UMC, UK, 2013), which works as a companion piece – with the DVD and CD being packaged together in a deluxe edition version of the album's release. Elsewhere, Hyde has kept a public diary online which has been filled with snatches of poetry, photographs and short prose which was then adapted into a book named *I Am Dogboy* (2016),

much of which centres on edgeland spaces or the conditions of urban living. He has also co-written a play, *Fatherland* (2017), centring on de-industrialisation, left-behind towns and fatherhood. In this way, his body of work colonises a generic edgeland which crosses formal and institutional borders.

In this section, I will analyse how *The Outer Edges* functions as a post-industrial elegy, how it represents the edgeland spaces as in constant tension with the city and how nature elucidates Evans's critical commentary of London. I will analyse how walking is – somewhat counterintuitively – represented through stillness in the film and how the sparse *mise-en-scéne* contributes to our understanding of edgeland spaces.

The Outer Edges as Post-Industrial Elegy

Throughout this chapter, I have argued that many films set in liminal spaces – be it estates, suburbs, or now edgelands – are characterised by exploring marginalised *individuals* (explicitly not figured as groups, see my earlier discussion of Clive James Nwonka's work in relation to *Fish Tank* and *The Selfish Giant*). From the narratives of working-class escapes in *Fish Tank* and *Shifty* through to disenfranchised young men or boys in *The Selfish Giant* and *Bypass*, all these films posit that lives on the margins – both geographically and socially – are informed by de-industrialisation in their communities. This continues the trend of what Paul Dave (2006) identifies as 'working-class elegies.' For Dave (2006, pp. 61-2), such films made in the late 1990s – *Dockers* (1999)*, Brassed Off, Billy Elliott*, *The Full Monty*, *Late Night Shopping* (2001) and *Human Traffic* – demonstrate, in various ways, the collapse of traditional working-class identities in the neo-liberal era. Whilst Dave figures these films together as 'working-class' elegies, *Brassed Off, Billy Elliot* and *The Full Monty* are often grouped together as nostalgic, *post-industrial* elegies. This elucidates Dave's central thesis: the working-class is not under threat *because* of de-industrialisation but the resultant 'job without a worker' labour market (ibid, p. 62). However, these latter three films are frequently discussed separately as nostalgic figurations of traditional industry via explorations of changing masculinities in the UK (Hill,

2004). In all three films, edgelands feature prominently. Writing about industrial ruins in these films, Tim Edensor (2005, p. 39) argues that:

> The now deserted factories [function] as symbols of former vitality in contrast to the quiescent present. [... In *The Full Monty* they] serve as safe venues in which the men can practise their stripping routines without fear of ridicule or sanction, and thus help them to restore some dignity to their quest for meaningful labour, adapt to changing gender roles, and make a few quid in the process.

Edgelands in *The Full Monty* then conflate two different time periods: the industrial past and the disenfranchised present. The spaces of industrial ruins serve as spectres of traditional notions of masculinity whilst the characters practise their routines. These spaces feature the ruins of industry: derelict factories, disused pallets, containers and ports. These remainders of traditional working-class masculinities are, in the post-industrial elegies of the late 1990s, as well as other films surveyed in this section, spaces of play, restoration and escape for the characters.

The Outer Edges tracks Hyde's and Evans's walk south from Woodford, following the river Roding, to Barking and then eastwards along the Thames until they finish in East Tilbury. One of the narrative strands, therefore, is the figuration of London against the edgelands and how London's homogenous office spaces strip away a sense of community afforded in the industrial era. During the film, the shadows of London's service sector become replaced by disused factories, wilderness and historical sites of importance (such as Eastbury Manor House). This is articulated visually and narratively via Hyde's commentary and the interviews the duo conduct with local residents on their journey.

Throughout the beginning of the film, in the carefully composed static frames which constitute the film's aesthetic strategy, lurking in the background are referents to London's financial sector, most prominently the skyscrapers of One Canada Square in Canary Wharf and the

Shard in London Bridge. In one sequence, Evans films such towers behind a motorway during a luminous amber sunset whilst Hyde narrates:

> Rush hour: the sky burns bright as the night beckons. People flee the emerald city. The silhouettes of the money towers drift away in the rear-view mirror. In front lies the weekend: time to dream, time to fight, time to believe.

For Hyde, the city of London, and its associated jobs in the financial industry, is a kind of humbug – much like the emerald city itself – compared to the spaces outside of the capital through which people find relief, something faithful that they can look forward to, rather than actively escape or 'flee'. Hyde's mocking attitude towards the skyscrapers as 'money towers' further develops the idea that urban work is empty and soulless. Furthermore, these are some of the most traditionally picaresque sequences in the film and, combined with Hyde's collaboration with Brian Eno, 'Sleepless' on the soundtrack, create a blissful tone. For Evans and Hyde then, escaping everyday office spaces located in the city, in pursuit of leisure outside of London, further demonstrates how the film values the unremarkable spaces (the edgelands, motorways) and places (Essex and the Estuary).

As the film continues, and Evans and Hyde move further out of London, the 'money towers' feature less frequently and take up less space in the frame (see figs. 3.1, 3.2, 3.3). Concurrently, the subjects of the film become more critical of de-industrialization. Take, for example, Chris, a market trader they interview at Dagenham market. He laments the unhappiness he finds when travelling into London as he claims that 'nobody looks happy' on their commutes. He says, 'I think the old-fashioned way was best, before the computers took over.' This exposes a critical attitude towards service sector jobs which have replaced traditional manual labour in the latter half of the 20th century amongst the marginalised people interviewed within the film.

Figure 3.1: Money towers in *The Outer Edges*

Figure 3.2: Fading money towers in *The Outer Edges*

Figure 3.3: Money towers nearly eclipsed in *The Outer Edges*

Towards the end of the film, in East Tilbury, Rhys and May similarly bemoan post-industrial society in their hometown. East Tilbury, otherwise known as Baťa-ville, was an estate set up by Tomáš Baťa next to the now dis-used Baťa factory in Essex.[12] As they nostalgically talk about their everyday childhood life on the estate, Rhys and May claim that:

> We had beautiful rose gardens, all the lawns were beautifully manicured. There was no rubbish - it wasn't allowed. [...] People were jealous, I suppose, because we had a swimming pool. We had a cinema. That was sort of luxury really. And tennis courts. It was a good life, yeah.

As they say this, discordant still images of contemporary East Tilbury are shown on the image track. These consist of the now shabby exteriors of houses and unkempt lawns, litter strewn streets, and closed down village halls. Signage on the village hall is shot in close-up, reading:

> 'EAST TILBURY RESIDENTS THIS IS YOUR VILLAGE HALL:
>
> - USE IT
> - PROTECT IT
> - RESPECT IT'

All these images then counter the idyllic past conjured up by Rhys and May. The instructions on the village hall sign are particularly poignant: the village hall is no longer in use, it has not been protected, and the faded lettering indicates that the space has not been respected. Such imagery of industrial ruins permeates the film and they most obviously invoke nostalgic associations regarding industrialisation. On the other hand, there is a tension here between this lament of the past and the aestheticization of the contemporary images. Whilst the images represent rundown, frequently abandoned places, they also find beauty in the bleak environment. For example, in one highly composed shot, a rusty bell (which indicated to the staff when work begins and ends) is filmed in the foreground of the left of the frame. Behind it, out of focus, lies the disused Baťa factory, whilst between the two planes are the edgelands'

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[12] Interestingly, Bata-ville now has a mobile phone app which you may use to guide you around the site. This speaks to a reclamation of the place as post-industrial heritage.

wilderness and rundown housing. The spectre of the factory 'through [its] very allegorical presence […] cause[s] us to question the normative ways of organising the city and urban life' (Edensor, 2005). Indeed, the presence of the Bata factory within this shot remind us that 'the ghosts of ruins also force us to confront the limitations of narrative remembering' (Edensor, 2005, p. 846). Therefore, there is a tension here between remembering the past as idyllic and the aesthetic present which is haunted by the Baťa factory. This is complicated by the composed and aestheticized image which implies a value in the space. Although the space is excessive – spatially as waste, aesthetically as anti-landscape, in its abundant materiality – it is celebrated in *The Outer Edges* as a reminder (or haunting) of the past which runs in contradistinction to the presence and representation of City office space earlier in the film. In this way, the aesthetic representation of East Tilbury allows the viewer to reflect on the wider structures of London, its spatial organisation and its economic dominance in the UK.

The Outer Edges also features many sequences focusing on nature which, at first, seem to constitute a distinct narrative thread in the film. However, as the film continues, this converges with the industrial elegy. For example, the film begins with Hyde's narration suggesting he will follow the ducks as 'they know where they're going.' After the first two interviews, he re-joins the river and the images match the soundtrack. 'I find traces of the river, blackened and filthy now,' which corresponds with an establishing shot of the river followed by a mid-shot. We then cut to a close-up of ducks, waddling in thick mud surrounded by litter as Hyde remarks: 'not a friendly place for nature, you'd think.' We then cut to an image of an urban fox who runs along a path, stares at the camera and retreats backwards as Hyde narrates: 'the scavenger reminds me that some adapt better than others.' The fox then becomes an analogy for those displaced, marginalised people Hyde and Evans interview in Essex. They are forced to 'scavenge' and change due to the changing economy – yet this celebrates the population's resilience in the advent of post-industrialisation.

This association between nature and de-industrialisation culminates in the interview with Adam. He grew up in rural Essex and expresses how he had a keen interest in nature as a child. However, Adam says that 'when working in the City, I realised in my whole commute and back I saw one dead looking tree between Liverpool Street and my office. And I thought: there's got to be more to life than this.' We find him now working for the Essex Wildlife Trust at Chafford Gorges Country Park. Adam resolutely rejects moving to and working in the City – not because of the spheres of work Chris dismisses, or the lifestyle Rhys and May lamented – but due to the specificities of space, and the nature associated with it. It is significant that the imagery associated with Adam's story is picaresque, comprised of misty bodies of water, herons and chalk gorges which counter the scenes of the City Adam describes. Thus, the filmmakers are implicitly critiquing the over-centralisation of London in contemporary industry and how this has led to an absence of nature in contemporary conceptions of marginality (we can also think here of the figuration of the horses in *Fish Tank* and *The Selfish Giant)*. Over the course of the film, the imagery of the 'money towers' is replaced by a representation of nature and wilderness. Thus, the three thematic concerns of the film – nature, de-industrialisation and space – are synthesised.

Hyde's complementary album, *Edgeland,* explores similar thematic territory albeit more obliquely. On 'Shadow Boy', Hyde's lyrics reflect thoughts he has as he 'rides a train into the sun.' Further, he claims that 'the iron bones of industry stand proud in the sun. The weeds and all the dirt looks beautiful.' As he sings (Hyde's vocal sits between the spaces of singing and spoken word) these lines correspond with an introduction of lighter, piano notes. These celebratory reflections on industrial ruins are met with a critique of the urban landscape 'where the coffee bars spread like weeds.' The film and album then have a consistent celebratory, romantic and nostalgic view of the London/Essex edgeland which exists in an inextricable tension with the city itself.

Walking and the Aesthetics of Stillness

This tension between London and the edgeland is also expressed through the film's formal project. The still shots, I will argue, follow a trend of filmmaking representing London – visible in Patrick Keiller's films and Evans's previous project *Finisterre* (2003). Formally, *The Outer Edges* is comprised of composed, aestheticized static shots of the edgelands, as well as the subjects they interview. This photographic approach is coherent with a trend Charlotte Brunsdon (2012, p. 468) identifies in British cinema – evident in *Control* (2007*), sleep furiously*, *Better Things*, *Hunger* and *The Unloved* (2009) – as well as Evans's *Finisterre*, a collaborative project between Evans, co-director Paul Kelly and indie-pop band Saint Etienne. Andrew Burke (2010, p. 107) argues that:

> In style and tempo the film [*Finisterre*] draws much from Patrick Keiller's *London* (1994) and similarly comprises a series of images shot from a static camera. The movement of the film, as a result, resides in the frame itself as well as in the montage.

The influence of Keiller on both *Finisterre* and *The Outer Edges* is manifested in different ways. Both utilise static shots and montage which 'serves as a state that has his characters in their travels, making discoveries and remarking on items of local and historical interest' (Goldsmith, 2012). The reflections on space and place that occur in Keiller's films and, in particular, *The Outer Edges* are more reminiscent of the act of deep topography than psychogeography.

I disagree with Burke's assertion that Keiller's films are similar in tempo to *Finisterre* (and, by extension, *The Outer Edges*). Keiller's films are significantly slower than Evans's work, whose ASL amounts to 3-4 seconds. Keiller's slowness, which provokes the spectator to interrogate the image, to reflect on time and change, is closely linked to Keiller's own ideological critique of neoliberalism. For example, in *Robinson in Ruins* (2010), Robinson's trip to the shop (Lidl) is extended so that the nameless narrator (Vanessa Redgrave) has ample chance to reflect on globalisation, large corporations' mistreatment of staff, local government and de-industrialisation. The two shots of Lidl last for 93 seconds. Thus, the slowness of Keiller's

filmmaking allows it to become more intensely essayistic. On the other hand, Evans's ASL causes Hyde's narration to be fragmented, less digressive and more focused on surface pleasures of the edgeland spaces. *The Outer Edges*, which has a similar tempo to *Finisterre*, does less to critique processes of de-industrialisation but rather celebrate the spaces which have been left behind. Although, as I have argued, the tone is deeply elegiac, it is also celebratory in romanticizing these left behind spaces. The different tempos in the film emphasise these points. Evans's camera cuts to a suburban street as Hyde narrates that he 'head[s] down streets of pebble-dashed art and porch extensions.' We then cut to a flag in support of West Ham: 'In back gardens, flags fly high for a football tribe.' Cut to close-ups of street names: 'Street signs hint at gunpowder plots and times past.' Cut again to a mid-shot of a large house: 'I turn a corner. A Tudor manor house floats proud in a sea of concrete. I step back in time.' The image lingers long enough for Evans to make surface reflections on aesthetics, history and space. Here, the tempo of *The Outer Edges* ensures a celebratory tone in which everyday surfaces of housing become 'art' and where street signs signify a rich history. Filmmakers such as Petit or Keiller, on the other hand, interrogate a certain image at length, reflecting on an everyday object for so long that it becomes a signifier for the failures of neoliberalism.

Furthermore, *Finisterre* and *The Outer Edges* do differ in relation to the rhythms of editing. Whilst they tend to a similar 3-4 second ASL, *Finisterre* cuts on the beat to Saint Etienne's indie-pop music, creating montages akin to a music video – this is particularly evident in montages of commuters which open the film. *The Outer Edges* follows no such rhythmical editing even though it too is scored by a tie-in album. Instead, *The Outer Edge's* rhythms are defined by the narration, cutting to correspond with Hyde's freeform spoken-word poetry. Burke is right to suggest that Evans's and Keiller's formal projects have many similarities, particularly the use of still shots and montage to represent a journey. This can find its traditions as far back to the city symphonies of modernist Europe (as discussed in relation to

s*leep furiously*), yet those films were constrained by immobile, heavyweight technologies. Since the advent of the digital camera and the innovation of Steadicam, walks, journeys and anything mobile in nature have tended towards an intensely mobile camera. Within the lexicon of British cinema we can think of Alan Clarke whose 'version [of the walking motif] is hugely distinctive and fundamentally ideological' (Rolinson 2005, p. 103) whilst David Thomson (1995, p. 133) argues that 'no one has ever grasped the central metaphor of cramped existence in walking as well as Alan Clarke.' Both Clarke and his successors represent walking through long Steadicam takes, focusing particularly on a subject's face – we can think of *Road* (1987) or *Rita, Sue and Bob Too!* in which the film is primarily structured by such walks which capture the cramped estates Thomson refers to. Evans's representation of walks, in which the shots are static and less dependent on the long-take, is antithetical to Clarke's and much of independent British cinema's method.

Indeed, *The Outer Edges* has more in common with other contemporary national cinemas than the history of British cinema. Throughout Tiago de Luca's (2014, pp. 235-6) case studies in *Realism of the Senses* he argues that in these films: 'characters devoid of psychology interminably walk, stroll and loiter, often aimlessly, which in turn provides a cue for a quiet and realistic observations of landscapes and cityscapes.' We can think here of his case studies such as *Japon* (2002), *Last Days* (2005) or *The River/He liu* (1997). We can even extend this to other slow journeys, such as the car rides which permeate Abbas Kiarostami's *oeuvre*. Throughout de Luca's and Barradas Jorges's edited collection *Slow Cinema* (2016), walking becomes one of the central themes. In her piece on *Meek's Cutoff* (2010) in *Slow Cinema*, Elena Gorfinkel (2016, p. 130) argues that:

> Wandering is a primary feature of the modern art cinema […] linked with urban modernity and the preponderance of the *flâneur* and *flâneuse* in post-war cinema. Walking has a central place in contemporary global instantiations of slow style, especially in the form of the extended following shot that moves with the characters' perambulations.

However, like *The Outer Edges*, 'walking in *Meek's [Cutoff]* is stripped of this capacity for virtuosity in the mirroring of camera movement or individuation with the walkers. Camera movement is thus always subtle, and never ostentatiously materialised in the baroque tracking shot' (ibid, p. 131).

I will argue that the lack of camera movement in *The Outer Edges* achieves three things. Firstly, it emphasises the topographical qualities of Evans's cinema. The static frames cause the viewer to study intently the materiality of the spaces represented. With little to no action in a shot it allows the viewer to appreciate both the composition of the photographic image and also the beauty of the edgelands – both its natural facets and its ruins. Throughout the film, the shots are highly composed, which draws our attention to the aesthetic potentials of this space. For Evans, the edgeland is a landscape which is full of symmetry and unlikely beauty. For example, an image of a bypass (fig. 3.4), draws our attention to the angular geometry in a space which might often be dismissed as an eyesore. There are many planes in this shot, from the foreground railings to the solar panels in the background which, in itself, draws our attention to the productivity of edgeland spaces as something that can fuel the city. These immobile shots then emphasise the reflective facet in the exercise of deep topography and allow the viewer as an (im)mobile spectator to experience the reflective and restorative nature of Hyde's journey.

Figure 3.4: Geometry of the bypass in *The Outer Edges*

Secondly, stillness is also part of the film's commitment to slowness. Laura Mulvey (2006, p. 12) argues that 'cinema has always found a way to reflect on its central paradox: the co-presence of movement and stillness, continuity and discontinuity.' Indeed, the stillness in this film emphasises these tensions via both the capturing of walking (motion) through static images (stillness) and the elliptical edits between said shots which capture the continuity of Hyde's walk but are also discontinuous in their disintegration of the spatio-temporal relationship. These forms of stillness have been agreed upon as a key component of slow cinema. Song Hwee Lim (2014, p. 81), for example, argues that static, fixed cameras recording long-takes alongside pared-down cinematic action 'allow ample time to instil a sense of slowness and to create moments of nothing happening, during which our minds can contemplate as well as drift'. As outlined, whilst the ASL is a relatively short 4-seconds in the film, de Luca and Nunnas Jorge (2016, p. 5) argue: 'the ASL of a given film is arguably not a reliant indicator of slowness'. However, combined with the austere inaction of the film's *mise-en-scene* and the static cinematography, we could consider this film as a product of slow cinema. This very slowness is central to the film's central conceit regarding the distinctions between the fast-paced city and the slow, peaceful 'tribes' which populate the edgelands. We can think again of Adam's migration from London to Essex in which he remarked on the pace of life occurring in the city, or Chris's observations about the unhappiness of London's population. It might also be useful to think again here of *Finisterre*, a film which relies on the pulsating Saint Etienne soundtrack to emphasise the rhythms of everyday life in the city, compared with Hyde's ambient soundtrack which accompanies *The Outer Edges*. In the film's very form of slowness, then, Evans demonstrates that the strains of (post-)modernity can be escaped on the edges of the city itself.

Finally, by not tracking Hyde's mobile body – as in the above examples of Reygades', Tarr's or Ming-Liang's cinema – but instead using still frames to record his journey, the viewer's focus on materiality shifts from the body to the environment. This lack of corporeality is in contrast

to much of the subjective cinema I have studied in this thesis yet, as this is a film so totally invested in space and place, it draws the viewer's attention to the materiality of the Estuary edgelands. Whilst the narration persistently draws our attention to the subjective and performative essence of documentary, the camera evokes the materiality of the spaces filmed as opposed to thinking about an individual's perception of their reality. However, the body is captured in the interviews which punctuate the film. The still images that capture the subjects in *The Outer Edges* are no less photographic, causing them to become akin to portraiture. In two segments, Reid, Luke and Ebeneezer at Dagenham Amateur Boxing Club and Carly at MuscleMania, explorations of the body and self-improvement are foregrounded. As Evans only films the faces and bodies of the people who populate the edgelands, it draws our attention to the ethnographic impulse evident within the film. As Hyde (in Mason, 2013) suggests:

> *Edgeland* is a state of mind belonging to someone living on those boundaries. It's kind of a wasteland really; a place where people have almost created their own language and way of life to go with their outsider status. This is about meeting the tribes that live on the edges of the city.

The Outer Edges, Place, People & Walking

Hyde's emphasis on meeting people can be found in the final line of the film in which he states: 'now I realise, it's not about the geographic route you take, it's about the people who show you the way.' For Hyde and Evans, walking is inextricably linked to place, space, people and community. We see this in the very form of the film in which Hyde's walk is punctuated by interviews with local residents, each illuminating the places in which Hyde walks. The epigraph to this section quoted Gabrielle Finnane (2016, pp. 115-6) who, while considering *Walker* (2012) and *Melancholia* (2008), posits that 'walking is intricately bound up with the imagination of place as part of the imagination of community (or its absence) in a long historical time.' This precise attention to communities (past and present) within the imagined Essex is expressed throughout *The Outer Edges*, sometimes paradoxically. My analysis of *The Outer Edges* began by demonstrating that the film functions as a post-industrial elegy,

occasionally bemoaning the effect of de-industrialisation on these communities, such as in East Tilbury, which runs counter to the aestheticization of the place by Evans' camera. However, the elegiac narrative of the film finds a resilience in the Essex population, celebrating the 'outsiders' that populate the edgelands. The film then demonstrates that to walk, to undergo an exercise of psychogeography, is to explore how place effects community along a historical continuum. The edgelands are persistently placed in opposition to the city, both formally, in the figuration of the 'money towers' and through the film's slowness, and narratively, through the narration of Hyde and the interviews with the subjects.

On the one hand, *The Outer Edges* pertains to specific national modes of psychogeography and deep topography, on the other, the film can be aligned with contemporary global art cinemas. This section started with an exploration of psychogeography and its specificity to British culture in the new millennium. I then argued that the form of *The Outer Edges* follows not only British film culture (Keiller, *Finisterre*) but can also be aligned with contemporary movements in world cinema – exemplified by sensory realism and slow cinema. Indeed, it is this precise synthesis of modes found in British culture and contemporary global cinemas that shape this tendency in British cinema. It is through the coalescence of specifically national cultural modes with an outward-looking formal approach through which we can think of *The Outer Edges* as a product of both contemporary British cinema and contemporary global cinema.

Whilst thinking transnationally about psychogeographic cinema, it might also be productive to think about the films of Grant Gee. Like Evans, he began his career in films relating to music – in directing rockumentaries *Meeting People Is Easy* (1998), recording Radiohead's tour following the release of *OK Computer*, and *Joy Division* (2007), a film charting the rise of the Mancunian post-punk band. His follow-up to *Joy Division*, *Patience: After Sebald* (2012), is a multi-faceted project, both a portrait of writer W. G. Sebald and an adaptation of his novel *The Rings of Saturn* (Sebald 1998). The film charts Sebald's novel, primarily about a walk through Suffolk, as well as discussing the thematic impulse throughout his work with interviews

including Iain Sinclair, Chris Petit and Robert Macfarlane. Much of the film, like Sebald's work, concerns themes of migration, home, history and place. Fittingly enough then, Gee's next film, *Innocence of Memories* (2015), takes place away from home, in Istanbul. This film, a loose adaptation of Orhan Pamuk's *The Museum of Innocence* (Pamuk, 2011), is told from a minor character's perspective, whilst also exploring the museum Pamuk funded with his Nobel prize money, and Pamuk's Istanbul. In much of this film, the camera glides around deserted streets of Istanbul at night, transposing Britain's psychogeographic tendency to Turkey. Here then, we can begin to see how British film is involved in processes of cross-cultural exchange, with a psychogeographic tendency being informed by foreign novelists and maintaining a loose approach to national borders. These are ideas I will return to in the next chapter.

New British (Social) Realism: *Fish Tank* & *The Selfish Giant*

In this section, I will explicate some of the assertions I made in the introduction regarding the distinctions between this tendency of contemporary British cinema and the tradition of social realism. Indeed, *Fish Tank* and *The Selfish Giant* have more in common with social realism than other films analysed throughout this thesis.

These films are frequently compared to the films of Ken Loach. Peter Bradshaw (2014), for instance, calls Arnold's and Barnard's films 'a kind of Loach 2.0'. This is typical of the response to both films. David Forrest (2013, p. 198), for example, claims that *Fish Tank* 'interrogate[s] contemporary discourses on 'Broken Britain' and that it 'relies on a number of symbolic motifs which frame poetically the isolation of its young protagonist in a manner which recalls Loach's *Kes* (1969)'. Martin Sohn-Rethel (2015, p. 75), meanwhile, claims that Barnard's films 'refer back to documentary-drama depictions of 'broken Britain' familiar from Ken Loach and Alan Clarke'. These comparisons are indicative of how critics position British (social) realist cinema as a homogenous genre. Furthermore, as I will argue, Forrest and Sohn-Rethel over-emphasise the social aspects of the films' so-called 'interrogation' of 'Broken Britain.' In this section, I will

argue that the term social realism, often applied to Arnold's films and *The Selfish Giant,* is misplaced and is indicative of a tendency to treat British realist cinema as an insular, homogenous genre. Jonathan Murray (2016, p. 196) claims that such a critical tendency is 'an indication of a fluid set of critical equations-cum-definitions – social realism *and*, social realism *but*, social realism *or* – that circulate around Arnold's movies' and, indeed, much of contemporary British realism. If Arnold's and Barnard's forms of 'social' realism must be qualified, it would be more useful to think of these films in different terms. Indeed, throughout this thesis I have argued that contemporary British realist films are not overtly politically motivated (social) and that they move further away from objective realism than practitioners of the British New Wave or Loach - whose name, perhaps, has become shorthand for social realism, again problematizing what we mean when we think about the genre. Loach's cinema is unobtrusive, and tends towards objective realism, political motivations and didacticism; Arnold's filmmaking, however, is obtrusive, heavily subjective and less conspicuously political.

In this section then, I will demonstrate how Arnold's and Barnard's filmmaking differs significantly from Loach, and the broader social realist tradition, by arguing that it is more apt to situate these films as part of a broader movement in contemporary realism in world cinemas. As Ian Christie (2011) argues:

> Arnold has joked that Loach must be tired of hearing her compared to him, and indeed, it would be hard to set the evidence of such a small body of work against the five decades of Loach's probing analyses of mainly working-class experience in Britain. Any filmmakers working in this genre are likely to find themselves taken as spokespeople for the "condition of England [… Viewers] may wonder if Arnold is indeed offering an anatomy of "broken Britain," like her contemporaries Shane Meadows, in his dissection of the skinhead subculture in *This Is England*, and Antonia Bird, in *Safe* (1993), her devastating exposé of life on the streets. But I'm persuaded that, like the Dardenne brothers of *Rosetta* (1999) and the Agnès Varda of *Vagabond* (1985), she is more concerned with telling the story of one girl's

struggle to escape the stereotyped expectations that trap working-class youngsters.

Christie therefore disagrees with Bradshaw, Forrest, Sohn-Rethel and James. In arguing that *Fish Tank* is *not* interrogating 'broken Britain' he begins to think about the film in terms of its subject and, in doing so, is able to align it with broader projects of global art cinema. In this section, I will demonstrate how *The Selfish Giant* and *Fish Tank* are formally indebted to modes of realism utilised in contemporary world cinemas and how they move away from socio-political concerns. I will begin with an analysis of subjectivity and materiality in Barnard's and Arnold's films, which is a departure from traditional social realism and is similar to sensory realism common across contemporary world cinemas. The films' emphasis on tactility and materiality then evokes these mundane spaces: this is the focus of the second section which draws upon Tim Edensor's (2015) notion of 'sensing national spaces'. Here, I will locate continuities with older forms of social realism and think about how these two films work *interspatially* with films such as *Kes* and *Rita, Sue and Bob Too!*. Finally, I will consider the 'social' within New British Realism by comparing these two films to Ken Loach and the British New Wave. What emerges throughout this section is a sense of how these films disrupt conventional notions of realism in the British cinema and how positioning them as products of social realism offers a prescriptive view of a national tradition.

Subjectivity and Materiality in *Fish Tank* and *The Selfish Giant*

> Fascinated by landscapes and cityscapes, bodies and faces, animate and inanimate matter, these [sensory realist] cinemas are driven by a materialist impetus through which the facticity of things and beings take precedence over representational categories and functions. They display a penchant for real sex onscreen, location shooting, amateur and physical acting, and improvisational mode of production – all of which assert the reality of the profilmic event at the expense of illusionism. Their visual stress on materiality is further relayed by intricate acoustic designs that underline the purely concrete quality of sounds (De Luca 2014, p. 12).

De Luca's definition of sensory realist cinema is highly applicable to *Fish Tank* and *The Selfish Giant* in which Arnold and Barnard flaunt the materialist impulse which aligns the viewer intensely with their protagonists. Here I will demonstrate how these two films cohere with the sensory realist method outlined by Tiago de Luca as well as suggesting that this works with the filmmakers' use of perspective to affect the viewer.

The Selfish Giant opens with a shot underneath Arbor's (Conner Chapman's) bed – a place to which he escapes when feeling distressed. The camera is positioned beside him in this cramped environment. He punches the bed slats above him as we cut to a point-of-view shot of his fists hitting the bed. The quick edits, the haptic shots and the subjective camera plunge us into this cramped space with him. We hear a disembodied voice, that of his best friend, Swifty (Shaun Thomas), pleading for him to "chill out." Quickly, this opening scene of flitting rage becomes tender. Arbor's screams slowly subside and the camera position changes to outside the bed from Swifty's perspective. Hands grasp in shallow focus and finally, as Swifty manages to calm Arbor down, their hands are clutched together in focus in a longer take than the shots which preceded it. This clutching of hands is a motif returned to throughout the film which comes to symbolise the pair's close bond, and this scene is revisited at the end of the film following Swifty's death. Yet, in this opening sequence, the viewer is asked not to engage with the clutching of hands symbolically. Rather, we are directed to *feel*, through the slowing rhythms, the emphasis on touch and the quieting sounds, to engage corporeally with the images.

With the advancement of phenomenological film theory, there has been much debate of the objective validity and application of such material. Here we might recall Lucia Nagib's (2011, p. 25) argument that through the 'pure subjectivism' of this approach, 'the films themselves are almost entirely eclipsed'. However, if we analyse films through looking at their sensory mode of address, as opposed to through a purely phenomenological position, we can begin to see

how filmmakers engage our bodies through images that will later have symbolic and affective significance. Jenny Chamarette (2012, p. 232) argues that:

> The appeal to the sensory immediacy of film experience opens up the possibilities for a sensory cinematics that insists upon subjective, pre-cognitive apprehension, particularly of affect, but which also does not displace the significance of reception, context, intertextuality, affective and embodied experience *after* those initial moments of apperception.

Whilst the monograph in which this argument appears is a work of film phenomenology, Chamarette makes a case of *thinking with* phenomenology to move beyond a purely subjective position:

> *Thinking with* tests modes of thought in conjunction with the specificities of film works and their conditions of production and reception, and is attentive to the particular temporal and cultural positioning of the film work, in addition to what emerges phenomenologically from the work as a moment of encounter with a viewing subject (ibid, p. 4).

Through Chamerette's position, we can argue that the motif of the handholding in *The Selfish Giant* is, at first, affective but beyond that we can demonstrate how it works contextually, generically and narratively as a signifier of the boys' close friendship, their play and their manual labour. As demonstrated, the motif opens the film as a signifier for the pair's close relationship and contrasts with the tough, aggressive behaviour of Arbor. The sight of two young boys holding hands is softer, reminding us of the liminal age the characters occupy, between innocent child and masculine adult. The attention to hands is then associated with their 'grafting', with close-ups of hands on machinery and dealing with the wire they sell, their illegitimate activity being inscribed on their hands through SmartWater (a traceable liquid which functions as a criminal deterrent). When Swifty dies, there is a close-up of their hands, rhyming with the introduction of the pair. However, this time Swifty's skin is black and charred from his injuries but this does not stop Arbor's first instinct to slowly press Swifty's hand, again

reminding us of the childlike qualities of the pair which are both emotionally and sensually affecting. The final close-up of the pair's hands comes when Arbor, who is traumatised by his best friend's death, lies under his bed. Here, the narrative comes full circle. Arbor remembers his friend, his touch and his bodily presence as he imagines Swifty reaching under the bed to hold his hand. This motif is a major source of emotion in the film and this can then be read narratively (hands as a motif of their close childlike bond), generically (hands as a signifier of both crime and industry, both common themes in the realist British film) and affectively (hands as engaging the spectator's own sense of touch).

Similarly, the opening of *Fish Tank* has a sensory mode of address which is maintained throughout the film. Appearing on the sound track during the opening credits we hear emphasised sounds of Mia (Katie Jarvis) panting which is placed higher in the mix than similarly exaggerated sounds of wind and traffic. These are what Michel Chion (2000, p. 210) calls materialising sound indices (MSIs) which refer to 'any aspect of a sound which reflects with more or less precision the material nature of its source and the concrete history of its production.' MSIs then connect the viewer to the concrete diegesis thus anchoring us in Mia's world – the audible sounds of her panting promoting a subjectivity which is aurally and visually sustained throughout *Fish Tank*. We then cut to the first image of the film, a medium close-up of Mia, occupying the centre of the 4:3 frame. She is the main focus of the shot with the wide-angle lensing giving the effect that she is enveloped by the space around her. The shot cuts to behind Mia, following her as she gazes out of the window of what we now know is a high-rise building in an estate. The exaggerated sounds of her breaths continue, along with the council estate ambience of cars and wind, which stress the material reality of Mia and her environment. The aural motif of heavy breathing is returned to in pivotal moments in *Fish Tank*, in a similar way to the clutching of hands in *The Selfish Giant*. We hear Mia's heavy breaths in moments of pleasure and passion, particularly in relation to Connor (Michael Fassbender). When Connor carries Mia to her bed, when Mia smells him and finally when they

have sex, her breaths are more exaggerated than when she dances. In these moments too, the film has a slow-motion effect (much like the horse ride sequence in *Wuthering Heights*) which further emphasises the significance of the intimacy between the two characters and between the viewer and Mia. These breaths intimately anchor us into Mia's way of seeing her world, thus heightening her subjectivity and the material ambient sounds of her Essex estate.

Barnard and Arnold then both use exaggerated forms to plunge the viewer into their subjects' world which can be further demonstrated through their approach to perspective. Arnold's rigorous subjectivity shapes her formal project. The camera persistently tracks Mia with point-of-view shots or shots from behind her shoulder. Arnold never anticipates her movements but responds to them, creating an obtrusive realism similar to that of the Dardennes or Andrew Haigh and, throughout the film, Mia dominates the tight 4:3 frame. Even shot-reverse-shots privilege Mia's perspective. Whilst another character is talking, we are shown point-of-view shots; whereas when Arnold films Mia's reactions, the viewer sees these from the side of her body, as opposed to from the other character's perspective.

Whilst Barnard's approach to perspective is not as refined as Arnold's, she does persistently place the camera at the eye-level of Arbor and Swifty. This results in viewing adult characters through low-angle shots or at their chest and waist level. For example, during the classroom sequence, Barnard places the camera at the eye-level of the students who are sitting down. Occasionally, we are only shown the teacher's waist, or low-angle shots of his face. When Shifty or Arbor are filmed, though, it is at a level-angle, prioritising their perspective. However, occasionally in the film, we are granted access to the mothers' perspectives. Whilst this resists the totalising subjectivity of *Fish Tank*, Barnard's approach emphasises the affecting moments of the film. After Swifty dies, for example, we follow Mrs. Swift's (Siobhan Finneran's) stare towards Arbor, a moving moment but one which undermines the formal project utilised throughout the film in relation to the child's perspective.

The films, then, have an exaggerated attention towards materiality and subjectivity which, at first, might seem antithetical to their focus on representing the ordinary. To return to the comparisons to Ken Loach found in responses to *Fish Tank* and *The Selfish Giant*, we can consider how these films differ formally from Loach's. Whilst Loach's filmmaking has undergone stylistic shifts over time – from the docudrama *Cathy Come Home* (1966) to the more conspicuously stylised register of *Looks and Smiles* (1981) and finally to the unadorned restraint which has characterised his work since *Riff Raff*– we can say that his style is largely observational which utilises long-shots, on-location shooting and casting unknown actors. John Hill (1998) claims that Loach's films 'are shot from a distanced observational standpoint' whilst Jacob Leigh (2002, p. 116) argues that Loach's 'exploitation of the transparency of the film medium originates in his desire to document ordinary people.' This is in direct contrast to Arnold and Barnard who use subjective and affective filmmaking techniques to evoke as opposed to display the characters' everyday environments and emotions. Ivone Margulies (1996, p. 26) argues that:

> The very attempt to frame the everyday brushes against the conventional sense of everydayness as repetitious routine. The quotidian stands, then, both for material reality and for the impossibility to fully account for it, to represent it. Hence the desire to represent materiality either concretely, by exacerbating cinematic elements, or thematically, by inscribing the signs of this reality (banal events, mundane gestures, actions irrelevant to the plot), becomes the trademark of a realist impulse.

In Margulies' terms, Loach thematically represents the everyday through his observational mode. Barnard and Arnold, however, both concretely and thematically represent it, finding closer antecedents in French, rather than British cinema. Yet the similarities between these examples of New British Realism and Loach's films lie in the continuing representations of a nationally-specific quotidian environment or lifestyle. As Edensor (2015, p. 59) argues, 'national identity is continuously reproduced in the everyday, in the unreflexive performances of home, work and leisure that unselfconsciously undergird ways of doing, feeling and

sensing.' Indeed, these films heighten the sensory and can thus be judged to build on traditions laid out before them through transposing European art cinema aesthetics onto familiar social realist narratives.

Locating the National: Space in *Fish Tank* and *The Selfish Giant*

If these films represent ordinariness, one way that can be located is in their utilisation of mundane spaces. British realist cinema has a longstanding interest in tower blocks, mass housing and suburbia. Andrew Burke (2007, p. 177) argues that 'the tower block occupies a special place in the symbolic vocabulary of British realist cinema' and that contemporary British realist film 'wrestles with the legacy of mass housing schemes and examines the ways in which life and community persists in the allegedly inhospitable, cold, concrete surroundings of high-rises and tower blocks'. Mass housing, of course, also entails council estates, which also have a particular affinity with post-war British realist cinema. Here we can think of a range of films from the varying traditions of British realist cinema. From the British New Wave (*This Sporting Life* (1963), *Saturday Night & Sunday Morning*), to auteurs such as Ken Loach (*Cathy Come Home*, *Ladybird, Ladybird* (1994)), Mike Leigh (*Hard Labour* (1973), *All or Nothing*) and Alan Clarke (*Road*, *Rita, Sue and Bob Too!*) through to more recent examples (*Last Resort*, *Weekend*), the housing estate and the associated tower block is a space familiar to viewers of British realist cinema and is, alongside the urban, the paradigmatic space for British realism (across audiovisual British culture).

However*, Fish Tank* and *The Selfish Giant* are not just representing social housing. In both films, there is a variety of environments in which the characters perambulate. Tim Edensor (2015, p. 68) argues that *Fish Tank* 'features an abundance of ambient quotidian spaces that are usually unreflexively apprehended but are simultaneously deeply familiar' including motorways, housing estates, shopping precincts and edgeland wilderness – spaces that *The Selfish Giant* also represents. These familiar spaces, he argues, work *interspatially,* that is when 'recurrent images [that] are part of the production of the imaginary geographies of the nation'

are used to 'conjure up spaces that are familiar to the national viewer' (Edensor 2015, p. 72).

He further argues that the particularities of these spaces 'conjure up an array of familiar

smells, sounds, tastes, tactilities and textures' (Edensor 2015, p. 68). These spaces have a

specific address to British viewers in that we immediately apprehend the sensual qualities of

these spaces which the filmmakers represent. Edensor's argument forgoes a sustained analysis

of film style but he argues, as I demonstrated above, that these filmmakers have a specific

sensory mode of address, which works alongside British viewers' familiarity of these spaces to

evoke mundane national spaces.

This sensory, tactile approach to *Fish Tank* is also emphasised by Emily Cuming (2013) who

argues that it can be located with other contemporary British females writing about estates -

her case studies also feature Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003) and Lynsey Hanley's *Estates: An*

Intimate History (2007). Cuming (2013, p. 343) argues that, for these female writers:

> The estate is more than just a canvas against which these stories of
> development are cast; the effects of spatial segregation and high-density
> living inform the representative modes through which these female
> protagonists emerge: their gait, their ways of seeing, their sense of a place in
> the world (in all senses of that term).

Cuming is then attentive to how subjectivity and the sensory is utilised across different forms

(auto-ethnography, film and the novel) in detailing women in council estates in contemporary

British culture. She posits that 'Arnold presents the drama in *Fish Tank* through the point of

view of her teenage protagonist – whose name, Mia, even insists on a stubborn sense of self'

(Cuming, 2013, p. 336). Cuming notes the hand-held camera which persistently tracks Mia as

one which presents 'an intimate portrayal of the subjectivity of someone the popular media

would cast as "the underclass"' (ibid).

This hand-held tracking of Mia then also emphasises her subjectivity and how she is shaped by

her environment. Not only this, but as the camera follows her movements in and around her

estate, this subjectivity becomes deeply associated with the spaces she traverses. In these

instances of walking, or indeed the car journey she embarks on with her family and Connor, Mia, and by extension Arnold's camera, the film itself, becomes an act of psychogeography. Throughout the film, Mia is shown to be determined by her environment(s) and Arnold is attentive to the way Mia responds to what she sees and hears. In *Fish Tank*, Mia is figured as a seer: from the repeated motif of her looking outside her high-rise window, through to her watching dancers on computers and voyeuristically staring at her mother and Connor having sex. In addition to this, she persistently rejects being an object of other's looks. During the opening when she watches a group of girls dance, as soon as one of them looks at her she responds aggressively; when Connor watches her dance there is a deep sense of unwillingness and finally unease; and when she performs at her audition she is unable to dance as the camera is attentive to the looks she receives from others.

Mia's perambulations punctuate the film and are key to understanding the ways in which British cinema represents liminal spaces. When Mia walks, her observations have a profound effect on her. We can immediately think of the chained-up horse to which Mia feels an affinity. The scene in which she gently strokes the horse is an affecting, sensual moment, anticipating similar scenes I discussed in relation to Arnold's *Wuthering Heights.* When Mia walks down an Essex high street we hear the loud sounds of engines from cars before they quieten down as Mia stares at a drunk man on the other side of the street. We hear him say: "I'm gonna go in this shop, and when I come out, I'm gonna' be different! Different! Hear me? Different to anyone!" The camera lingers, following Mia's stare. As she returns to walking down the road, she peers into a shop window to see an advertisement for dancers. She then enters the café, to watch YouTube videos of street dancers. As she leaves the shop, Mia rips down the advertisement becoming 'different' to the gang of girls she saw dancing earlier in the film – who she also argues with upon her exit of the café. Here, Mia's difference is inscribed in her agency to dance for a living, to be 'different' to the girls for whom dancing is a group activity and this is inextricably linked to her observations and her occupation of space. This response

to the world she sees around her, to the way her environment shapes her, is a reminder of the psychogeographic impulse which has characterised representations of edgeland or liminal spaces in recent years. It also stems from Arnold's research method in which she drives through areas, searching for locations and cast members.[13] Here we see a coalescence of method, form and character in which Arnold's authorship is foregrounded.

These moments of solitary wanderings which permeate *Fish Tank* find continuities with other contemporary world cinemas. Tiago de Luca (2014, p. 11) argues that a common trope in contemporary world cinema is:

> The presence of solitary characters and empty environments, which provides the cue for observational scenes largely depleted of dramaticity. Reygardes's debut feature *Japon*, for example, depicts the perambulations of an unnamed man [...] The scenes of his solitary wanderings delay narrative momentum and invite the viewer to apprehend images of the empty landscapes he traverses in silent and unbroken shots. This is also what happens in Van Sant's *Last Days* [...] A considerable portion of the film is devoted to following this character in overextended shots as he staggers his way in and around his countryside mansion.

Mia's walks are rarely narratively motivated but, just as the barren landscapes in *Japon* reflect the character's empty life, Mia's is filled with opportunity and activity which often emphasises her own agency. However, her journeys are nationally specific, traversing spaces that work interspatially with other British realist films. As Edensor (2015) argues, a British viewer, unlike a European one, would immediately sense the spaces she occupies. Thus, it is in this

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[13] There are many references in interviews to Arnold's preparation including road trips, driving and the importance locations have. In relation to the use of location in *Red Road* she says: "when I was driving about Glasgow I was very struck by [the Red Road flats], they were an amazing sight. The filmmaker Tarkovsky said if you like a location and it really speaks to you then just use it and certainly the Red Road flats spoke to me" (Stephens, 2012). Furthermore, whilst discussing *Fish Tank*, she notes how she cast the film via drives around Essex, eventually finding Jarvis at a train station, having an argument with her boyfriend (Calhoun, 2009). Finally, whilst discussing the preparation for *American Honey* she claims that she went on 'six or seven road trips by myself, to make an emotional connection with America. Some of the poverty shocked me. It seemed more intense than in Britain. I did a lot of driving in the South, I was quite upset by what I saw, closed factories and shops and loads of drugs' (Cooper, 2016).

representation of specific national space, we can discern how the national persists in a transnational filmmaking climate.

Here we can think of the similar spaces Connor and Arbor occupy in *The Selfish Giant*. Although Barnard's camera does not focus intensely on the mobility of the central pair as in *Fish Tank* - Arbor's and Connor's walks are often represented through montage rather than the long tracking shots of *Fish Tank* - they occupy a similar variety of spaces, albeit in a very different place. *Fish Tank* was filmed in Tilbury, Thurrock and the Mardyke Estate in Havering, a place which was once traditionally a part of Essex but is currently undergoing developments as part of Boris Johnson's London Plan. Havering is therefore a liminal space, one which is neither quite London nor Essex. *The Selfish Giant,* on the other hand, was filmed on the Buttershaw estate in Bradford – which works interspatially with *Rita, Sue and Bob Too!* and *The Arbor*. However different these places are, there is a certain continuity between the two spaces. The landscapes – of housing estates, of A roads and motorways, of shops and edgeland wilderness – have much in common and some of these spatial features become motifs in both films (horses, travelling, the claustrophobic home). Edensor (2015, p. 64) argues that:

> Modest everyday arrangements in space merge a sense of the local with national belonging since most of the features encountered at an everyday level in the familiar environs of home and neighbourhood are spread across national space.

By comparing *Fish Tank* and *The Selfish Giant* we see how space functions similarly throughout different places in the British national cinema. Both films feature spaces of: edgeland wilderness, council estates, new, more affluent estates, and A-roads. All of these are familiar and work in similar ways in both the films. For example, council estates are figured as a place of home but one which is primed for escape. This is signified both visually and narratively in both films. In *The Selfish Giant*, for example, the boys leave home to find both play and economic independence. The only time we see them in their home is when they are about to leave, or when we see them comforting their mothers – who are rarely ever seen outside the

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confines of the home. When they leave home, there is occasionally a lingering on the space between home and street – between roads (routes outwards) and containment. When suspended from school, Arbor swings on his front garden gate for an extended period of time, then plays with the home's fence. All of this appeals to the tactility of the rundown liminal space between house and street, made material in the fencing and gate. The focus of these shots is Arbor's grip of the gate, his hands fiddling with the fence and finally grasping the concrete bollards. Barnard invites the viewer to feel the barrier between containment and escape, thus visually figuring his desire for economic independence and escape from the estate. This is similarly figured in *Fish Tank* in which Mia is often staring out of windows of her estate and occasionally running away, all of which foreground the conclusion of the film in which she finally does escape.

Edgeland spaces, on the other hand, are figured as spaces in which the characters can play. Cloke and Jones (2005, p. 311-12) argue that disordered spaces, such as the edgelands:

> Escape or even defy the ordered spatialities of adults […] childhood is associated with places and spaces which are seen to be outside of adult control and ordering, where the fabric of the adult world has become scrambled or torn, and the flows of adult order are disrupted or even abated.

When asked at the film's press conference at the Cannes film festival why she set her film in Essex, Arnold (in Anon. 2009) said that

> I fell in love with Essex, it's got a really fantastic landscape. It's got all these estates but there's little islands of estates in this wild kind of place - its got a lot of wilderness which I love […] there's a lot of sadness there as well.

The wilderness is precisely a disordered space, one outside of control. Marion Shoard stresses throughout 'Edgelands' that it is a space which is free from planning laws (Shoard, 2002). There are therefore sequences in both films which utilise the space as playful and liberating. For example, when Mia first visits the edgeland wilderness, she meets a horse and slowly,

gently strokes it. The second time the space is featured, she gets caught by some boys to whom the horse belongs. The next time she visits it, the horse has died but the gentler boy, Billy (Harry Treadaway), tends to her as they find a motor for his engine. Following this, whenever the space is featured, the relationship between Mia and Billy slowly blossoms before they both eventually leave Essex for Cardiff. Edgeland space in *Fish Tank*, then, is constantly aligned with freedom, for the horse (with which Mia identifies) and for the young couple – they find parts for their car to travel away together.

The edgeland wilderness is figured similarly in *The Selfish Giant*. It is a space of play and economic and spatial liberation, yet it is also the site for Arbor's death. Edgeland landscapes punctuate the film: shots of horses in fields on the urban-rural fringe, majestic pylons and cooling towers feature throughout. The edgeland spaces in *The Selfish Giant* have a dual function: in which the children play and work. The edgeland then functions as a space in which Arbor and Swifty find economic liberation to improve their life on the estate. And, beyond this, it speaks to the pair's agency in being able to find work they enjoy. However, the meaning of *Fish Tank's* narrative deployment of this space is reversed. It is not a space through which they find escape but one in which they are punished, as Swifty dies and Arbor loses his illegitimate job.

Here we see distinctions in Arnold's and Barnard's representations of edgeland spaces, figured in these films by motorways and wilderness. For Arnold, it is a space full of potential and narrative fulfilment in which Mia, through the extended metaphor of the horse, becomes aware of her desire for escape and finds it through the character of Billy who resides here. For Arnold, these landscapes are a space of liberation and catharsis, characterised by wilderness and growth. For Barnard, on the other hand, the edgelands are a reminder of the boys' class location: they both play and work here. It is significant that *The Selfish Giant*, the more politically explicit text, has this attitude – these spaces are full of post-industrial signifiers which link the boys' fates to their marginalised class location.

These edgeland spaces are viewed by Edensor (2015) as specifically English (or British) spaces, one which an English audience can sense immediately. Although Edensor is right to point out the specificities of mundane English spaces present in films such as *Fish Tank* or *The Selfish Giant,* we can also find contemporaries in other world cinemas. Benoit Dillet and Tara Puri (2013, p. 371) draw attention to the Dardennes' use of 'left-over spaces' such as woods and motorways and observe that 'the socially marginalised protagonist occupies spaces that lie on the margins of the city, on the borders of what are seen as productive and legitimate urban spaces.' These border spaces could further apply to the way that edgeland and estates function in *Fish Tank* and *The Selfish Giant*. Furthermore, Dillet and Puri (2013, p. 378) posit that the Dardennes challenge 'Augé's definition of non-place as a non-anthropological locus, [as] they have succeeded in turning it into a humanising space, a space of potential, where there is a hope for this world'. Barnard and Arnold also demonstrate the potentialities of motorways, A-roads, bus and train stations and left-over spaces through Arbor and Swifty's entrepreneurial efforts and Mia's self-realisation. In addition to Dillet and Puri's assertion, I would suggest that this is commonly figured through the use of teenagers or children who, as Cloke and Jones suggest, thrive in unplanned or anonymous places. In addition to this, we might also think of recent stylised French realism such as *Girlhood/Bande de filles* (2014) and *Dheepan* (2015) which take place in *les banlieues* outside of Paris and have a firm interest in how space shapes individuals. These two films, as Julia Dobson (2016) argues, both stylize *les banlieues* – although by no means glamorize them – in ways that remind us of the sensual, conspicuously stylised features of Arnold's and Barnard's cinema.

Therefore, whilst Edensor is right to argue that British spaces – in this instance, the estate and edgelands – work interspatially in a national context, it could also be suggested that Barnard's and Arnold's mode of representing this space does not necessarily find antecedents in the lineage of British cinema. Rather, it might be more productive to think about how these spaces

function in relation to the modes of filmmaking across world cinemas, from the works of Gus Van Sant and Carlos Reygadas through to contemporary French and Belgian filmmaking.

(Social) Realism & The British New Wave

One reason that these films have been grouped under the banner of social realism, then, is how they work interspatially with other British social realist texts as well as demonstrating the relationship between environment and identity. Julia Hallam and Margaret Marshment (2000, p. 184) argue that the relationship between location and character is a key feature of social realist films:

> Social realism is a discursive term used by film critics and reviewers to describe films that aim to show the effects of environmental factors on the development of character through depictions that emphasise the relationship between location and identity. Traditionally associated in Britain with a reformist or occasionally revolutionary politics that deemed adverse social circumstances could be changed by the introduction of more enlightened social policies or structural change in society, social realism tends to be associated with an observational style of camerawork that emphasises situations and events and an episodic narrative structure, creating 'kitchen sink' dramas and 'gritty' character studies of the underbelly of urban life.

Here we can begin to see how social realism is often defined by a keen awareness of societal structures – this is where we can locate the social in 'social realism'.

The Selfish Giant, Fish Tank and many films of New British Realism do not cohere with this emphasis on the social. David Forrest (2010, p. 32) argues that films of new British realism place 'socio-political impulses as the backdrop rather than the catalyst for their work'. Clive James Nwonka (2014, p. 210) argues that Forrest:

> misses something fundamental to social realist film practice. Though Forrest identifies the shifting emphasis in contemporary realist cinema, the implications on the forms of working-class representations that emerge are

largely absent. Such a de-emphasis on sociopolitical [sic] conflict produced a conceptualization of working-class existence deeply marked by the absence of context and political alignment, and by replacing with an anti-dialogical, static realism which produces a new modality of social realism where effects without cause become an important component of the New British Social Realism repertoire.

Nwonka (2014, p. 212-13) identifies the emphasis on Mia's subjectivity as restricting *Fish Tank* 'from revealing any broader contextual meaning' and thus the film 'can be interpreted as a depolitical [sic] character study devoid of its social context'. He similarly argues that *The Selfish Giant* is devoid of socio-political context but this time through the film's sentimental (even melodramatic) mode of address and that it:

> Represents a tragedy of individuals rather than an economic system. When Swifty is killed […] the spectator is encouraged to mourn the loss of an individual character rather than feel a personal anger at the oppressiveness of Bradford's social apparatus (Nwonka 2014, p. 217).

Whilst Nwonka is right to suggest that these two films eschew the overtly political, his criticisms levelled at 'new British social realism' rest on a prescriptive idea that realism must be socio-politically motivated. Indeed, he even misquotes Forrest's original definition of 'New British Realism' as 'New British *Social* Realism.' This emphasis on defining any example of British realism as inherently social exemplifies Nwonka's, and those who compared these films to Loach, problematic approach to national genres.

Forrest (2012, p. 36) also demonstrates the continuities between New British Realism and films of the British New Wave in identifying that both groups of films are an 'artistically vital medium first, and a facilitator of socio-political substance second'. We can think here of some of the critiques offered by John Hill (1986, p. 136) and Andrew Higson (1984) of the British New Wave films: they claim in separate studies that the New Wave's aestheticisation and spectacular rendering of the landscape empty the films 'of socio-economic context' which relate to Nwonka's argument regarding the prioritization of form over context in New British

Realism. Indeed, both Nwonka and Hill criticize New British Realism and the British New Wave respectively for their emphasis on the individual as opposed to the collective (Nwonka, 2014) (Hill, 1986, pp. 138-9).

There is, though, a key difference between the social and its relationship with the British New Wave and New British Realism and this lies in the former's narrative of social mobility and social extension. Hill (1986, p. 157) argues that the 'central theme and organising principle of the narrative [in the British New Wave film] is that of upward social mobility, of a working class or lower middle-class character coming to terms with an upper-middle class milieu.' Here we can think of characters such as Frank Machin (Richard Harris) in *This Sporting Life*, Joe Lampton (Laurence Harvey) in *Room at the Top* (1959) or Jimmy Porter (Richard Burton) in *Look Back in Anger* (1959). Here is one way in which we can locate the social in the British New Wave cycle. However, the narrative of the New British Realist film eschews such aspirations. Mia escapes the estate not through the traditional narrative of social mobility (cf. Hanley's *Estates*) but through literal mobility. She escapes the space with the homeless Billy who has "mates" in Cardiff but remains firmly fixed in her 'underclass' location. *The Selfish Giant,* the more socially conscious of the two texts, does offer an insight into social mobility but ultimately rejects any such opportunity for its characters. Barnard's film punishes the boys for their aspirational and entrepreneurial personalities. There is no escape available to them as there commonly was in the narratives of the British New Wave. It can be argued, here, that the everyday settings of *Fish Tank* and *The Selfish Giant* are inherently political, emphasising a value to these people, places and spaces – this is particularly true of *Fish Tank* in which we are asked to so closely empathise with an unsympathetic working-class girl. Ultimately, however, the films are not as socio-politically engaged with struggles of class which permeate the history of social realist filmmaking in Britain.

The Festival Circuit and the Eradication of the National

If we cannot locate the social in New British Realism, other than as a spatial backdrop for where the narrative takes place, it would be more productive to think of these films in other terms, alongside other trends in contemporary cinema which I have outlined throughout this section - in comparisons with Mexican cinema (*Japon*) and Belgian cinema (the Dardenne brothers). *Fish Tank* and *The Selfish Giant* premiered and won prizes at the Cannes Film Festival. This is significant as it immediately opens up ways of viewing these films as products of authorship or world cinema rather than as a national cinema. In screening *Fish Tank* alongside films from Lars Von Trier, Tsai Ming-Liang, Pedro Almodovar and Alain Resnais, or *The Selfish Giant* next to the latest Alejandro Jodorwsky and Ari Folman film, we begin to see how these films are a product of emerging trends in international global art cinema. Indeed, in relation to the European film festival, Thomas Elsaesser (2005, p. 83) claims that film festivals help European films to transcend the national, 'while at the same time reinstating it as a second-order category, and thus becoming post-national'. Elsaesser (2005, p. 104) argues that the festival marketplace is key to understanding world cinema's opposition to Hollywood. He argues that:

> Film festivals are indeed the opposite of Hollywood, even as they outwardly and in some of their structures appear more and more like Hollywood. On the festival circuit, Europe and Hollywood no longer confront each other face to face, but within and across the *mise-en-abyme* mirrors of all the film cultures that now make up 'world cinema'.

For Elsaesser then, national art cinemas have become, thanks to the film festival, superseded by a global network. If a film wins a prize at Cannes it can be marketed on the global arthouse circuit due to the cultural cachet and the art cinema credentials a prize provides. Indeed, *Fish Tank* was more successful in other European territories - reaching number eight in Sweden's box office chart, for example, compared to ranking fifteenth in its debut on British screens. In this respect, the transnational flow of film exhibition, production and distribution shapes its

reception and status as a product of global art cinema. On writing about the legitimisation of Iranian cinema as genre via the festival circuit, Azadeh Farahmand (2010, p. 277) speculates that 'while genrefication will remain an integral part of this circuit, the usefulness of nation-as-genre will gradually fade as global film consumers become less invested in national distinctions'. Through the eradication of the social in these films and the formal similarities with other world cinemas, I argue that the national is already dissolving.

This disintegration of the national could be one reason why the films forego a sustained exploration of the social. Andrew Higson (2000, p. 67) argues that in the contemporary filmmaking climate it is 'possible to identify 'British' films that seem to embrace the transnational or even quite self-consciously to dissolve rather than to sustain the concept of the nation'. This is found through both films' utilisation of form and their eradication of the social, marking similarities in its formulation of space with contemporary French film as well as with traditions of British realism. Forrest (2013, p. 208) argues that flows between European and British cinemas have always existed but in the current climate transnational structures may intensify:

> We might also consider the continued critical success of the Dardenne Brothers, the strains of poetic realism in contemporary French cinema or the assertion of the realist aesthetic in Romanian cinema as operating transnationally within a broader aesthetic and formal social realist framework which comfortably incorporates British films such as *Fish Tank*. This textual convergence has the clear potential to disseminate the realist traditions of national cinemas with fluidity in a transnational cinematic context. The kind of engagements with global cinema that saw Loach borrowing from the French and Czech New Waves, and even Scorsese influencing Meadows, can be intensified, consolidating the cross-cultural artistic potentials of the realist address.

This chimes with what Barnard sees as influences on *The Selfish Giant* in relation to realist fables. She claims she watched a series of films with her children - *The 400 Blows* (1959), *The*

*Bicycle Thieves (*1948), *The Apple* (1998), *The Kid with a Bike* (2011) and *Kes* - in preparation for the film. Here then, we can locate *The Selfish Giant* as not just following a lineage of British social realism but with a longer tradition of diverse global art cinema. I have demonstrated that though these films work interspatially with the traditions of British social realism, we can position them as a product of global art cinema. Therefore, we can think of these films and much of New British Realism as 'post-national'.

Conclusion: Liminal Realism & *Catch Me Daddy*

To conclude this chapter, I will consider how another film, *Catch Me Daddy* (2015), can help us think through many of the narrative and aesthetic principles central to these liminal realist texts. *Catch Me Daddy* is set in Calderdale, West Yorkshire and tells the story of Laila (Sameena Jabeena Ahmed) who lives with her boyfriend, Aaron (Conor McCarron), in a caravan. The film cross-cuts between scenes of their everyday life – in which they dance, work, take drugs – and two other sub-plots of gangs competing to kidnap her and return her to her father in order to complete a so-called honour killing.

Three of the films studied in this chapter come from directors who also work in other forms which have shaped their feature film projects. Duane Hopkins and Clio Barnard, for example, have worked in the space of the art gallery whilst *The Outer Edges* co-creator, Karl Hyde, is most famous for his work with electronic group Underworld. We have seen how *Bypass* and *The Arbor* utilised art film techniques whilst Karl Hyde's *Edgeland* album informs the feature film project. *Catch Me Daddy* is the debut feature-length film from Daniel and Steven Wolfe, whose background includes directing advertisements and music videos, most notably for the controversial 'Time to Dance' by The Shoes, which featured Jake Gyllenhaal playing a character slaughtering hipsters in Dalston. This emphasis on musicality is evident throughout *Catch Me Daddy* and demonstrates how a director's given background can shape their filmic texts, too.

For example, in one sequence, Laila begins dancing to Patti Smith's 'Land' and the camera – so often static throughout the film – begins to frantically follow her movements as Aaron, so encouraged by this vivacious display of femininity, smiles and joins her. There are some brief cross-cuts to the gangs, driving in the Calder Valley, when the rhythms of the song ebb away. We then return to the couple in the caravan as Laila and Sam return to their sofa, breathless and euphoric as the music fades, gazing at each other lovingly. In a film which displays little physical intimacy between the couple, it is through such musical sequences which the romance between the pair is foregrounded, which can be traced to Wolfe's background in working on music videos. The fluctuating institutional background of directors in new British realism, by working between different forms, come to shape their feature projects.

Catch Me Daddy then, in some ways, takes the form of a musical through the occasional use of songs and actions to add to our understanding of the central narrative, though the film does not have a specific generic framework. Throughout the first hour, Sam and Laila's narrative is akin to a musical or romance film, whilst the journeys of the gangs reminds the viewer of the road movie. The final act takes the form of a thriller, with multiple car chases and scenes of startling violence. Elsewhere, Daniel Wolfe (in Anon 2015) has said he thinks of it as a 'contemporary western' and that they 'didn't want to do a realist take on the material, we wanted to present something a little more mythological'. This fluid approach to the application of genre can be found throughout the films in this chapter, particularly the crime and thriller elements of *Shifty* and *Bypass* but also the blurring of document and documentary in *The Arbor* and *The Outer Edges*. Elsewhere I found that more traditional films identified as 'social realist' texts in *Fish Tank* and *The Selfish Giant* have a more complicated relationship with the genre than many critics identified. Thus, contemporary British independent cinema is shaped by a generic hybridity between popular genres and a realist tenet, again marking these films as liminal.

Catch Me Daddy's utilisation of the road movie is inextricably linked to the liminal as the movement of the characters symbolises the very in-between-ness of the characters. Laila is scarred by inter-generational effects of migration – marked as British-Asian – and not being able to reconcile these effects with her family's faith. Simon Ward (2012, p. 186) suggests that:

> In thinking about the concept of the 'liminal' in relationship to the British road movie, it is not just enough to think about the fundamental liminality of the films' narrative structures, but how the films configure both the world of domestic order and the particular sacred qualities of the landscape within which the liminal phase is enacted: what kind of tests emerge from the landscape, and what are the consequences for the subjectivity of the protagonist who encounters them?

Catch Me Daddy's mise-en-scène during the road trip sequences is comprised of motorways, road signs, storefronts, service stations and landscape shots revealing the fissures between nature and non-places. For example, many of the landscape shots of the M62 foreground the picturesque wilderness of the rolling hills yet there is a tension here with the man-made motorways and cars which run through it. This then lies in stark contrast to the moors where Sam and Laila live which, at the beginning of the film, take on a mythical quality through the dense patches of rolling fog and the vivid, colourful sunsets. In these scenes, Laila talks nostalgically about her childhood and how her father treasured black forest gateau. By the film's conclusion, the landscape of the moors becomes much more sinister. Set at night time in pitch-black, the landscape is rendered invisible at the same instance in which Laila gets abducted. Thus, through the form of the road movie, via the gangs' arrival, the landscape, once beautifully mythical, becomes disordered and un-knowable. Although the generic signifiers of the road movie are not utilised throughout the other films analysed in this chapter, they all represent how the characters' traverse space – usually through walking. These acts of mobility work to emphasise the subjects' mobility and stasis, both literally and metaphorically. For example, I argued that in *Fish Tank*, Mia's intense movement was linked to her own sense

of agency which resulted in her eventual escape. Furthermore, this was linked to the various spaces she inhabits: the high street, edgeland spaces and the estate. This diverse range of spaces represented throughout the films is inextricably linked to the themes of escape, (the lack of) social mobility and inter-generational changes that have emerged through analysing these liminal films.

Finally, throughout this chapter I have argued that there has been an emphasis on the material reality of the characters' everydays. Although these marginal places may not represent every viewer's own recognition of their everyday they draw attention to similar quotidian lifestyles which shape these left-over spaces. I have argued for a materialist reading of British cinema throughout this thesis and what emerges is an evocation of diverse everyday lives. Within liminal spaces there is an emphasis on *things* that tie these spaces together which are evoked sensuously by the directors, for example: concrete, edgelands, drugs, wilderness, cigarettes, graffiti and the suburban home. This emphasis on the everyday objects evokes marginal lives and show us the differences between them. For example, we can think of the colourful interiors of Mia's flat in *Fish Tank* or the expensive technology that permeates Shifty's bedroom. In *Catch Me Daddy* there is a strong contrast between the things that fill Laila and Sam's caravan and Tony's (Gary Lewis) house. For example, Sam and Laila's home is vibrantly coloured, their home is lit by flashing, multi-coloured butterflies, there are close-ups of neon blue nail polish, a deep-pink milkshake, close-ups of stars which are found throughout their home: through lights, imprints on the carpet and through Laila's jewellery. Tony's home, however, is starkly lit and the first shot of his interior is of his coffee table which is cluttered with keys, a full ash tray, a packet of cigarettes, a wallet, a Tesco Clubcard and a packet of sweets. Wolfe's carefully constructed *mise-en-scène* draws the viewer's attention to a multiplicity of *everydays* found in liminal spaces whilst giving an insight into the characters' material lifestyles.

To conclude, throughout this chapter there has been a focus on the ways in which these films cohere with wider aesthetic trends of slowness and sensuality in global art cinema. However, the attention towards the banal spaces specific to Britain, particularly these liminal spaces, demonstrates that the national can persist in a globalised world, becoming what Thomas Elsaesser (2005) terms the post-national. These liminal realist texts transgress between generic frameworks, global art film practices, traditional binaries of realism/subjectivity and are influenced by an array of other media including art, photography, music and music videos.

Chapter 4

Transatlantic British Film

Introduction

Throughout this thesis I have argued that contemporary British independent cinema utilises various different forms of transnationalism: many films are produced with other nations (see my discussion of *Red Road*); others circulate at European film festivals (*Fish Tank* and *The Selfish Giant*); and some British films are made by foreign directors (*Bright Star*) or directors who have recently worked abroad (*Under the Skin*). I have demonstrated how, by aligning themselves with other modes of global realism, particularly sensory realism, these films manifest transnationalism in textual forms. However, I have also argued that this relationship with the national is not completely eradicated by these kinds of industrial and textual factors: there remains an interest in the specificity of British everydays; an evocation of space and place inherently knowable to a British viewer; and an interrogation of identity – specifically what it means to be British in the 21st century. However, in this chapter, I will turn my attention to spaces outside Britain, to other nationally-specific everydays, and identity within other cultures as I demonstrate that we can still locate a British sensibility, specific to this tendency of British cinema, outside of these particular structures. This demonstrates a specific aesthetic and representational method that has come to shape this tendency and also foregrounds the transnational structures in contemporary British cinema.

Within the tendency of British cinema I have identified throughout this thesis, it has become increasingly popular to set British-funded films abroad. The films – and, in the case of *Looking*, television series – I analyse in this section a move away from Britain to represent America, sometimes in a generic register associated with the country – which I will analyse in relation to the road movie *American Honey* and Western trail film, *Slow West*. Elsewhere, Steve McQueen

has not set any of his feature films within Britain: *Hunger* takes place in Ireland, *Shame* is set in New York, and *12 Years a Slave* in the historic antebellum South, and Lynne Ramsay's *We Need to Talk About Kevin* deals with the culturally-specific topic of American high school massacres. The films I analyse display varying degrees of cultural specificity. *Slow West* foregrounds its post-nationalism through its (im)migrant narratives. Conversely, *Shame* avoids nationally-specific referents: it could be set in any modern metropolis which speaks to the conditions of globalisation, which, reversibly, enable these films to be set abroad.

Anglo-Hollywood Film

Of course, British directors have, since the film industry began, often moved to Hollywood. Ian Scott's *From Pinewood to Hollywood* (2014) instructively argues that British filmmakers contributed to and significantly shaped the Hollywood film industry. For example, in the post-war period, he demonstrates that British filmmakers introduced 'a harder-edged, more serious and melodramatic force' to Hollywood productions, resulting in 'ideological menace and avant-garde suspense' (Scott 2014, pp. 121-126). We can think here of many influential writers and directors who moved from the UK to Hollywood with some notable examples including: Alfred Hitchcock, Graham Greene, Charlie Chaplin, Anthony Asquith and Noel Coward. As Scott (2014, p.1) notes in his introduction, this has continued throughout the 20th and 21st century, claiming that 'Christopher Nolan is so immersed into Hollywood and wider American film sensibilities that it is often forgotten' that he was born in London. He also points to a host of other famous names – Ridley and Tony Scott, John Boorman, Michael Apted, Peter Yates, John Schleisinger, Edmund Golding and James Whale – who 'bring British taste and sensibility even to the most American of subjects' (ibid.).

There is then a long history of a British-American filmmaking sensibility which is usually centred around Hollywood. As well as British directors working within Hollywood, popular British cinema has recently been dominated by partnerships with American production companies. We might think here of the partnership between Working Title and Universal

which reduces Britishness or Englishness to a cultural brand (as found in the films of Richard Curtis, often centring on middle-class Londoners anchored in tradition), which can then be sold abroad. We might think back to *Wuthering Heights'* and *Bright Star's* (relatively) low-budget production backgrounds which allowed for a disruption of the heritage film. Still, this precise marketability results in the persistence of a certain type of Englishness, as Andrew Higson (2011, pp. 92-3) suggests:

> Is this an unacceptable loss of cultural integrity, a threat to the representation of local cultural identities and stories, a dilution of the indigenous in order to overcome the problem of cultural discount? Or is it a way of ensuring a certain cultural diversity, a way of ensuring that a range of different types of film, representing different tastes and sensibilities, can be effectively produced, circulated and consumed?

British filmmakers and Hollywood then have an affinity, whether that is the way British writers and directors have influenced Hollywood or, reversibly, the ways in which Hollywood dominate local, in this instance, British, national markets.

However, Hollywood's dominance has repercussions on the representation of America itself. In 'Tinsel and Realism', Peter Wollen (1998, p. 134) concluded:

> The problem with the American dominance of global cinema, from an American point of view, is not that it prevents Britain (and other countries) from developing cultural identities for themselves, but – and this is not so often realised – it also threatens to deprive America itself of views of America from outside. American dominance simply reinforces America's own powerful, yet provincial cinematic myths about itself, locking itself into a national culture entirely of its own making, structured around terrifying misrecognitions and appallingly narcissistic fantasies.

Just as this tendency in British cinema subverted assumptions about British heritage, space myths and generic signifiers, the films in this chapter also disrupt representations of America as produced by the nation itself. The acceleration of British-funded films to represent America

is tied up in this reluctance to politically polemicize issues around nationhood. This is reflected in these films, as we will see, post-identity politics is foregrounded (through the post-national elements of *Slow West* and the critique of supermodernity offered in *Shame*, for example). Throughout this section I will continue to consider issues of space and the specificity of place, heritage and nationhood, the phenomenological impulse of subjectivity, the sensory and the everyday. This then maps the contemporary British sensibility onto foreign spaces, demonstrating the fluctuating attachment to the national.

British Americana: *Slow West & American Honey*

The Transnational Road Movie

'They went out looking for America — and found nothing there' – *Easy Rider's* Tagline

Americans themselves can't [write about the American dream]. They're confused. They don't know what's happening to them. First their dream is stolen from them, and then it's sold back to them day by day. Blunted by too many false images and sounds of their dream, by too many empty forms and soothing formulas, it now happens that they'd rather believe in these false images and let them become a new standard of their way of life than dare to doubt their state philosophy of "entertainment," a real "American Superpower." "American identity": a gaping wound. (Wenders 1991, pp. 149-150)

The road genre, across a range of media, has typically been figured as quintessentially American. Brian Ireland (2003, p. 474), for example, succinctly suggests why the genre is inextricably linked to American-ness, linking it to the narrative of the American Dream:

Americans are a restless people, imbued with a kind of nervous energy that manifests itself culturally through the mediums of literature, film, and music. Indeed, the ''road'' genre is a microcosm of America itself. The journeys undertaken in these stories frequently are associated with the search for the

elusive ''American Dream,'' and the obstacles (or roadblocks) hindering the search for the Dream—racism, class division, government or police oppression, gender discrimination, and cultural differences, for example—are obstacles that America as a whole has yet to overcome. Of course, not every American is a restless wanderer, and the trail is not limited solely to Americans. Nevertheless, it does play a large enough role in American culture to justify the generalization.

This emphasis on the American-ness of the road is reflected in many of the studies of the film genre. Typical of such analyses are David Laderman's *Driving Visions* (2010) and Steve Cohan and Ina Rae Hark's (1997) edited collection *The Road Movie Book.* Laderman's monograph explores the Hollywood precursors of the road movie and charts its evolution in America, devoting a chapter to each decade from the 1960s through to the 2000s. His central thesis is that 'the most fundamental theme expressed by the road movie is post-war youth culture rebellion' or, more specifically, the '*tension* between rebellion and conformity' (Laderman 2010, pp. 19-20). Meanwhile, *The Road Movie Book*, like Laderman and Ireland, has a specifically American focus, as Cohan and Hark (1997, p. 1) argue that 'the ongoing popularity of the road for motion picture audiences in the United States owes much to its obvious potential for romanticizing alienation as well as for problematizing the uniform identity of the nation's culture'. Thus, much of the literature on the road movie genre identifies that the countercultural rebels challenge America's dominant societal structures. These two books largely focus on the American road movie other than Laderman's (2010, pp. 247-281) final chapter, 'Traveling Other Highways' which focuses on six European road movies, yet this is overshadowed by the dominant American focus throughout his study. As David Orgeron (2008, p. 7) suggests, 'while elsewhere acknowledging the American cycle's debt to Europe […] Laderman's] structural foregrounding of American films is misleading'.

Orgeron's monograph, *Road Movies* (2008)*,* seeks to correct the Americentrism prevalent in accounts of the road movie genre to date. He traces the road movie back to the earliest experimentations of the motion picture (such as Auguste and Louis Lumière, Georges Méliès

and Eadweard Muybridge) through to the centrality of journeys and travel in Classical

Hollywood genres (particularly film noir and the Western) before analysing the importance of

the road movie across a range of national and historical contexts (his case studies include

Breathless/A bout de soufflé (1960)*, Easy Rider* (1969)*, Kings of the Road/Im Lauf Der Zeit*

(1976)*,* Oliver Stone, David Lynch and Abbas Kiarostami). Whilst his examples are not

exhaustive, Orgeron (2008, p. 2) 'makes a case for the cinema's trans-national, trans-historical

and trans-generic attraction to the subject of transportation'. In a similar advancement to

Orgeron, Ewa Mazierska and Laura Rascaroli's monograph, *Crossing New Europe* (2006, p. 9),

argues that journeys and travel have been central to the history of European film:

> European travel films and road movies have mirrored the ever-increasing
> mobility of the population and have served as a reflection on the many and
> elusive shifts of borders, identities and cultures that we have been
> experiencing.

Therefore, there is a tension in the pre-existing literature on the road movie. On the one hand,

the genre is widely acknowledged as quintessentially American, on the other, it has been

proven to be intensely mobile and adaptable. This is evident during the New Hollywood era in

which the genre reached its zenith. Such films, most famously including *Bonnie & Clyde* (1967)

and *Easy Rider*, have repeatedly been argued to be influenced by the French New Wave (and

other manifestations of European art cinema) whilst, reversibly, Laderman (2010, p. 247)

argues that 'many contemporary European road movies seem a reaction to, or reformulation

of, the American genre'. In this way, Orgeron (2008, p. 76) points out that the road movie

genre is an expression of the Franco-American exchange articulated in one of the most

influential road movies, *Breathless*. These processes of cross-cultural exchange, he continues,

are central to the road movie:

> The three filmmakers – Jean-Luc Godard, Dennis Hopper, and Wim Wenders
> – have all participated in this practice of cinematic reference and borrowing,
> drawing from cinematic history generally as well as from each other in their

repeated cinematic explorations of the journey. [...] The road, in the work of these three filmmakers, emerges as a mechanism by which to critique a *global culture* that has rendered stability impossible – a threateningly and perversely modern *world* that has served, perhaps irreparably, its relationship to both community and communication and has cast its inhabitants out, on the road.

Thus, Orgeron argues that the road movie is a global genre, connected to processes of transnational exchange between cinematic auteurs which, I will argue, now extend further, in examples such as Andrea Arnold borrowing from pop music videos and a debut director, John Maclean, exhibiting an indebtedness to American filmmakers, such as from Joel and Ethan Coen.

In addition to this, the American road is frequently addressed by outsiders. In *America*, Jean Baudrillard (1986), a French philosopher, records his road trip through the country, often equating America with the cinema. Perhaps, for this reason, Baudrillard's *America* has frequently been discussed in relation to the road movie – *Road Movies* and *The Road Movie Book* both begin with discussions of the book. *America* (1986, p. 1) opens:

> Nostalgia born of the immensity of the Texan hills and the sierras of New Mexico: gliding down the freeway, smash hits on the Chrysler stereo, heat wave. Snapshots aren't enough. We'd need the whole film of the trip in real time, including the unbearable heat and the music. We'd have to replay it all from end to end at home in a darkened room, rediscover the magic of the freeways and the distance and the ice-cold alcohol in the desert and the speed and live it all again on the video at home in real time, not simply for the pleasure of remembering but because the fascination of senseless repetition is already present in the abstraction of the journey. The unfolding of the desert is infinitely close to the timelessness of film…

The inexorable link between film and America, for Baudrillard, is motion: speed and time. For my purposes, too, it may be useful to emphasise the sensory appeal of film for Baudrillard, 'the unbearable heat […] and the ice-cold alcohol' (p. 1) can only be represented through film.

Throughout the book, Baudrillard argues that America is a simulacrum of the real. We can see this in the opening, Baudrillard's America is imagined as a film, a simulation of reality: 'culture exists there in a wild state: it sacrifices all intellect, all aesthetics in a process of literal transcription into the real' (Baudrillard 1986, p. 99). This sentiment is strikingly similar to the Wenders quote in this section's epigraph, in which he argues that 'false images' (the hyperreal) blunts Americans to their own self-prescribed Dream, a condition that can only be deciphered by outsiders.

Indeed, the similarities between *America* and Wenders' film *Paris, Texas* (1984) have been remarked upon most instructively by Norman K. Denzin (1991, p. 126) who argues that *America* 'has not been read for what it is; Baudrillard's vision of Wim Wenders's *Paris, Texas'*. Ireland (2003, p. 482), meanwhile, claims that *Paris, Texas* is a film that only an outsider can make:

> Wenders displays a fascination for the everyday detail of American popular and junk culture manifested in roadside diners, advertising hoardings, and urban and rural backdrops. Wenders notices and makes a *conscious display* of Americana (those items relating to American history, folklore, or geography or considered to be typical of American culture), which a non-outsider may not notice or think worthy of display. In his movies, Wenders therefore exhibits American culture in a way that perhaps only a non-American can do.

This 'conscious display' of Americana is the core of *Paris, Texas* which 'provides a cogent site for the deconstruction of the way contemporary Western society represents itself' (Aitken & Zonn 1999, p. 4). Outsiders have typically represented America in similar ways. Discussing Wong Kar-Wai's American road movie, *My Blueberry Nights* (2007), alongside *Paris, Texas, Zabriskie Point* (1970) and *Twentynine Palms*, Asbjørn Grønstad (2009, pp. 107-8) argues that:

> A tradition also exists in which established [European] auteurs have fashioned a kind of recycled topography deeply informed by popular iconography. […] A profound fascination with this landscape as image rather

than as pre-filmic space seems to permeate almost every frame of these films. [*My Blueberry Nights*] shares with them the outsider's slightly awkward perspective on the emblematic visual tropes that have come to suggest a self-contained cultural taxonomy of images.

Thus, these clichéd images of Americana, for Grønstad, are ones which foreign directors are drawn to, emphasising the postmodernity inherent in popular conceptions of America and the road which circulate around the world.

In this section, I will consider two films which display these kinds of outsider perspectives on America, and which subsequently refigure the genre. *American Honey*, Andrea Arnold's expansive British-produced film, traces young protagonist Star (Sasha Lane) as she joins a crew of marginalized youths who travel America selling magazine subscriptions. The crew is headed by Krystal (Riley Keough) and its top salesman is Jake (Shia LaBeouf) and the three characters become entangled in a love-triangle. Meanwhile, *Slow West* charts the horseback journey undertaken by Scotsman, Jay (Kodi Smit-McPhee), to find his lover and her father, Rose (Caren Pistorious) and John (Rory McCann) respectively. Jay is joined by Silas (Michael Fassbender), a bounty hunter searching for Rose and John who are wanted for murder which, in a twist of dramatic irony, Jay is unaware of. Both films are united by cinematographer Robbie Ryan, a key figure in contemporary independent British film, yet they have distinctly different forms. *Slow West's* utilisation of a static camera, I will argue, deconstructs popular American myths. Conversely, Arnold's immersive, sensory, mobile camera creates an intimate connection with contemporary impoverished American youths. Despite their divergent forms, both films share an ideological core which, I will argue, centres on post-identity politics.

Slow West as Post-National Film

Whilst *Slow West* is undoubtedly a self-conscious re-formulation of the Western genre (something I will return to), it is also a 'trail film', a film which charts a journey through Western America. Indeed, Maclean (in Lionsgate 2015) claims that 'it's not a very typical western. I was more interested in surrealism and fairy tales and putting that into a western so

hopefully it avoids all the clichés of the genre. I would say it's more of a European road movie'. Many Westerns share the road movie's key concerns and narratives. Some of John Ford's most acclaimed films – *Stagecoach* (1939)*, The Grapes of Wrath* (1940) and *The Searchers* (1956), for example – can be figured as proto-road movies. Orgeron (2008) even uses *The Searchers* as a case study for a pre-*Easy Rider* road movie. Meanwhile, in assessing Clint Eastwood's career, Shari Roberts (1997) argues for the conflation between the road movie and the Western. She claims that:

> In the transference from the Western to the road film, the frontier becomes the road, the horse becomes the car, and the hero becomes a desire, perhaps Quixotic, for heroism. The road itself at once incorporates the two most striking aspects of the Western, its American and masculine qualities. (Roberts 1997, p. 66)

In this section, I will demonstrate that the film's thematic preoccupation of post-nationalism reflects *Slow West's* institutional transnationalism. Following this, I will argue that Maclean purposefully deconstructs the Western which provokes the viewer to question ideas about America's heritage and the nation's own mythmaking.

Although funded solely by Film4, *Slow West* is a resolutely transnational film: it is about America, told from a Scottish perspective, funded by a British company, filmed in New Zealand and with a nationally diverse cast. It is Scottish director John Maclean's (formerly best known as being a member of The Beta Band) debut feature film, following his BAFTA award-winning short *Pitch Black Heist* (2011). Although the film is set in Colorado, principal filming was undertaken in New Zealand, and the cast includes a German-born Irish actor (Fassbender), and two Australians (Smit McPhee and Ben Mendelsohn (Payne)). I will argue here that these same post-national impulses can also be read in the film text itself and thus reformulate the Western/Road 'trail film' as a post-national genre, as opposed to an intensely American one.

Firstly, the film narrates Maclean's own outsider perspective through the employment of the Scottish protagonist, Jay. This is announced before any image appears on screen as

Fassbender's disembodied voice-over tells us that Jay 'travelled from the cold shoulder of Scotland to the baking heart of America.' The first image then appears on screen, a static shot of the starry night sky from Jay's point-of-view, as he identifies constellations – later in the film Jay remarks 'same stars, same moon.' Immediately then, the American West, even to the outsider, has familiar, universal traits. This theme of universality is evident in many of Jay and Silas's encounters, not least their first in which they ride past a group of Congolese singers. Immediately this seems antithetical to the Western – and particularly to the desolate landscape in which they are found. As Jay hesitates to watch the band finish their song, the lead singer asks him in French 'did you enjoy our music?' Jay responds in the affirmative, in French, before the Congolese singer explains it is a song about love. Finally, Jay laments 'love is universal, like death.' Jay's understanding of French demonstrates a specific cultural fluidity that is inherent to America which, in this film, is figured as idealistic or even utopian: this is a nation of immigrants who share a mutual outlook on the world.

Such short-lived encounters between people from diverse national backgrounds are interspersed throughout the film. This complicates, in its revisionist Western fashion, the idea of American heritage in much the same way that filmmakers revised English heritage (as discussed in Chapter Two in which we saw how Jane Campion, a New Zealander, used an outsider perspective to engage with themes of English heritage). As with most historical fiction, such as Arnold's *Wuthering Heights* or Campion's *Bright Star*, Maclean is using the myth of the frontier as a mirror for contemporary social issues: the impact of globalisation and rising nationalist sentiment within America. Specifically, like many Revisionist Westerns, *Slow West* refigures the role of the Native American. Particularly, here, we can think of the character of Kotori (Kalani Queypo, a Native American) who has a romantic relationship with Rose. Kotori features in two sequences. In the first, he asks for coffee from Rose as she lightly jests: "you always ask for coffee, and you always spit it out." Here, Maclean demonstrates the Native American's willingness to integrate despite the opposition faced by the officers which

opens the film. Kotori also features in the final shootout sequence and, before he goes to fight, Rose says to him: "until civilisation arrives." Here, Maclean is suggesting that America is only 'civil' when harmony between the two cultures, or acceptance of miscegenation, has occurred. Finally, the last shot of Kotori appears in a montage of still images towards the end of *Slow West*, in which Maclean shows the corpses of every dead man in the film. This reiterates Jay's suggestion that death is universal and further demonstrates Maclean's pro-cohesion, anti-nationalist perspective.

Finally, Jay's meeting with a German anthropologist, Werner (Andrew Robertt), further articulates Maclean's post-national approach with reference to Native Americans. Werner, an outsider like Maclean, is 'recording the decline of the aboriginal tribes, their customs, cultures and habits, in the hope of preventing their extinction or conversion to Christianity.' As they talk further, Werner reflects on future representations of Native Americans which can extend to the revisionist Western: "A race extinct, a culture banished, their places renamed. Only then will they be viewed with selective nostalgia. Mythologised, romanticised through the sick guise of art. [Scornfully] Literature!" Thus, Maclean self-referentially demonstrates that his representation of the past is, in and of itself, an example of 'selective nostalgia,' a mere fictive retelling of the past. In the following section, I argue that this reflexive gesture is underlined throughout the film – in its employment of stories and through its form.

Western Deconstruction

Maclean's post-nationalist impulse can also be read through the ways in which he deconstructs the Western. Through exaggerating generic elements and utilizing stories-within-a-film, Maclean's film emphasises the inauthentic power of American mythmaking and its associated nostalgia which, in the contemporary age in which race-relations have been intensified, also becomes a powerful statement about the political present. *Slow West* deconstructs elements of the genre, much like other foreign road movies (*Paris, Texas* and *My Blueberry Nights* for example). This is foregrounded in the opening monologue which begins

"Once upon a time." Thus, Maclean is initially self-referentially announcing that this is just another fictive reconstruction of the past. These kinds of postmodern gestures permeate the film both narratively and formally. In this way, I will argue, Maclean deconstructs the genre, drawing attention to the very construction of American heritage through myth.

The film is comprised of highly-composed static shots which has the effect of delineating space, eschewing mobility in favour of a highly stylised photographic method. The tableaux frames are imbued with semantic meaning which draws our attention to the film's construction. For example, there is a repeated shot of Jay from a birds-eye view perspective as he falls asleep. When he first does this, he places his gun in his pocket, clutches his compass and falls to sleep. This shot is then repeated after he has met Silas. This time, in the same shot, he cannot sleep and lies awake clutching his pistol. Elsewhere, Ryan's lensing lends certain objects an importance: a mushroom, when Jay is starving and lost is, through a low-angle and wide-angle lensing, made to look gigantic. This heavy-handed approach to symbolism, form and tableaux foregrounds the construction of the film – this then acknowledges the construction of American heritage through myth-making and story-telling.

Through not mobilising his camera, Maclean invites us to make spatial relations between given frames. For example, during the first shootout (in which Jay is saved by Silas) the sequence is comprised of eight static frames:

1. A mid-shot of Jay

2. A mid-shot of the officer

3. A side-shot of the officer

4. A close up-of Jay

5. A rear-shot of the officer

6. A long-shot of Jay which foregrounds Silas on the left of the frame

7. A long-shot which finally situates all characters together

8. A rear-shot of the officer

The effect of this is that the viewer constructs the spatial relation between the officer and Jay. They are not positioned together visually until the sequence reaches its climax, causing the viewer to become aware of the film's style. The shot-reverse shot editing pattern between Jay and the officer throughout this sequence seems straight forward. Maclean chooses to film shot-reverse shot by placing the camera between the two characters, cutting within the conversation. Firstly, this means that Maclean's visual strategy is dominated by singles, in which one character is filmed in close-up/medium-shot with emphasis on their environment, giving the viewer a greater sense of empathy with an individual. Here, for example, Jay seems small against the backdrop of the forest; the officer, meanwhile, portly and framed in a tighter close-up, seems to have a sense of control over his environment. Furthermore, until shot 7, Jay is only framed by himself in contrast to the officer, whose frame is intruded by his younger soldiers and Silas's gun. This method of shooting in singles, in which the environment is emphasised, is a common cinematic technique employed by Joel Coen and Ethan Coen (whose recent works include the Westerns *True Grit* (2010) and *No Country for Old Men* (2007) and the Americana road movie *O Brother Where Art Thou?* (2000)) who Maclean (in Lewis 2015) claims he was inspired by in creating the film. Thus, here is another example of the ways in which cross-cultural communication effects British film. The technique of utilising still frames, in which action is shown primarily through guns entering or exiting the frame, thus foregrounds *Slow West's* reflexivity: the viewer is asked to piece together the spatial relations between the characters – it is not until shot 7 that we become aware of the distance between the officer and Jay, for example.

Elsewhere, the film's production design is hyperbolic, employing clichés of Americana which creates what Aitken and Zonn (1999) term a 'place pastiche'. This is most evident in John's and Rose's home. Comprised of a small square house, a weather vane, a washing line, a scarecrow and situated in a small, perfectly-square field of barley: this is an exaggerated vision of mythic America. The production design is then purposefully inauthentic, provoking the viewer to

challenge our assumptions about America's popularised mythology. By drawing attention to surface details of America's history, similarly to the films Grønstad identified, Maclean's film suggests the unknowability of the past beyond iconography reproduced in generic accounts of America's past.

Slow West then utilises its self-reflexive form to challenge dominant myths about America's history. Of course, this is not particularly new, but it does also reflect Maclean's outsider status and the transnationality of contemporary (British) cinema. Furthermore, Maclean's utilisation of the Western challenges the genre's traditional conception which, Michael Coyne (1997, p. 3) claims, 'celebrates national aggrandizement' and has an 'implicit acceptance of racism'. Coyne goes on to suggest that: 'taken to extremes, nostalgia for an idealized, simpler age flirts with both reactionary and asocial impulses' (ibid.). In a decade which has seen the rise of rampant nationalism across the western world, Maclean demonstrates the strengths of post-nationalism and the inauthenticity of myth and nostalgia through his reflexive form.

Travel & Place: *American Honey* as Realist Film

Where *Slow West* is alienating and reflexive, *American Honey* tackles similar themes through an immersive, sensory form. Andrea Arnold's vigorous, lengthy film intensifies markers of her authorship we have come to recognise throughout this thesis: a strong interest in space and place, attuned to the subjectivity of young, economically-marginalised women; poetic renderings of everyday details; and a vivid conflation between humans and nature. Indeed, *American Honey* is Arnold's fourth film and each of her films have featured in a chapter of this thesis (*Red Road* in Chapter One, *Wuthering Heights* in Chapter Two and *Fish Tank* in Chapter Three). In this section, I will analyse, firstly, how this film is an extension of Arnold's idiosyncratic realist method. I will then move on to demonstrate how the outsider's perspective is constructed through popular music with a specific focus on the use of Rihanna's 'We Found Love.' Finally, I will argue that the *mise-en-scène* throughout the film can be read as

an extension of Arnold's authorship and avoids recycled Americana, instead providing an immersive and intimate connection with place.

I have argued in this thesis that Andrea Arnold's representation of place stems from her method of primary research in which she journeys through a given landscape (see Chapter Three, p. 60). This is intensified in her research for *American Honey* in which she went on a number of road trips through America by herself. Following the premiere of *American Honey* at Cannes Film Festival she spoke at length on this:

> It was interesting because once I started looking at it, I found I didn't really know the United States, not intimately. So I started doing a whole lot of road trips by myself, because I needed to get to know it, to make an *intimate connection* with it [...] I started off by doing the west and that was very dramatic but then I started talking to the [mag] crews and they told me that everywhere they went was really flat, so I started doing the east and Texas. And actually, it's quite interesting when you're travelling by yourself in those places and it is really open and really flat, just endlessly, it does have an impact on how you feel. I had some quite difficult times by myself travelling and being in that sort of open wilderness. [...]
>
> I take most of my inspiration for each film based on the world I am exploring so I will go into the world. I do a lot of research immersing myself in the places and with the people I'm making a film about. That's where I get my inspiration. (Festival de Cannes, 2016)

As I have argued throughout this thesis, Arnold's cinema has an intensely intimate relationship with her subjects and their spatial occupation: intimacy, empathy, people and place. The difference between *American Honey* and Arnold's other features is that the filming process, and thus the final film, is a direct expression of this research. Whilst making the film, the cast and (small) crew undertook a 12,000-mile road trip from Oklahoma to North Dakota.

Arnold's casting method and the way she worked with the ensemble during the film also heightens her approach to filmic realism. Arnold, alongside casting directors Lucy Pardee and

Jennifer Venditti, searched for their cast at county fairs, Wal-Mart car parks, strip clubs, parking lots and beaches. 11 out of the 15 ensemble cast members were non-professional actors found during these scouting sessions. Arnold (in Robinson 2016) cast these actors to maintain a link to the real, 'seeing those authentic faces', she says, 'felt really important to me'. This casting of non-professional actors, bearing in mind Arnold's phrase 'authentic faces', is very close to Sergei Eisenstein's (1949, pp. 6-11) concept of 'typage' in which non-professional actors were asked to play roles based on their facial look and physiognomy. This typage was based on photography, as Arnold asserts that: 'before we started casting, I printed lots of pictures from the internet of the kinds of kids I wanted to cast, and I would give them to the casting directors' (in Robinson, 2016). The cohort shares a distinctive look — pale, skinny and blemished – which recalls the films of Harmony Korine, a filmmaker and writer whose films also focus on American youth. Thus, the cast retain a link to Arnold's realist perception of American youth in two ways: physiologically and through their own lived experience.

Music in *American Honey*

This immersion in lived experience is further retained through Arnold's filmmaking methods in *American Honey* and, through extra-textual information, we begin to see the ethnographical impulses within the method. She says:

> I wanted us all to have a real experience. So the crew and all the cast met at the beginning, and we went on the whole trip. We travelled and stayed in the same motel[s], and had a real experience together. We lived together, we were making the film together, so it was a proper adventure. I think doing that meant that the film has more of a realistic feel (Robinson, 2016).

This real-life communal experience becomes reflected in the film itself, particularly the music which permeates the film. Whilst Arnold had songs in mind for the film (for example, 'We Found Love' by Rihanna [which I will return to] and 'Recharge and Revolt' by The Raveonettes) she largely allowed the cast to pick the music. 'We had control of the aux chord to say the least', says McCaul Lombardi (who plays Corey) (Davis, 2016). The soundtrack is largely

comprised of contemporary American hip-hop which the cast listened to – Riley Keough (Krystal) and Dakota Powers (Runt) have since tattooed lyrics to 'Choices (Yup)' by E-40 on their forearms. *American Honey's* utilisation of hip-hop reformulates one of the road movie's generic markers: 'a vigorous music soundtrack' (Laderman, 2010, p. 16).

E-40's song, played multiple times throughout the film, not only reflects what the marginalised actors listen to, but also coalesces with the film's thematic occupation of capitalist aspiration. The lyrics read:

> But I never go broke (no, no, no)
>
> Imma stay gettin' money (yeah, yeah, yeah)
>
> And I ain't gotta sell my soul (no, no, no)
>
> Imma stay gettin' money (yeah, yeah, yeah)
>
> If you broke, you ain't like me (no, no, no)
>
> Imma stay gettin' money (yeah, yeah, yeah)
>
> I give a fuck if you don't like me (no, no, no)
>
> Imma stay gettin' money (yeah, yeah, yeah)

'Choices (Yup)' first plays towards the beginning of the film as, in keeping with Arnold's subjective trademark (see Chapter 3's analysis of *Fish Tank*), the camera scans the group, from Star's perspective, as they smoke (cigarettes and marijuana) and drink alcohol. As Star is an outsider, the latest arrival to the crew, we share her perspective and similarly become attuned to both the cast's faces and their aural environment: this is where we can locate the film's realism. In becoming an intimate observer, placed within the mag crew's – and, by extension, through the cast's choice of music, a tangibly real – environment, such sequences are examples of the film's ethnographic realism. However, not all the music in *American Honey* was chosen by the cast. For example, Arnold has spoken about her own 'personal relationship'

with Rihanna's 'We Found Love', which the cast disapproved of (Festival de Cannes, 2016). It is through the use of such songs that we can locate the expressive realism of the film.

American Honey opens as Star, and a pair of (who we assume to be) younger relatives, are scrounging food from dumpsters before they attempt to hitchhike a lift home. Star notices the mag crew truck pass by, is immediately intrigued, and follows them into a supermarket. As she enters she looks around for the crew as she sends the children off to buy a drink. As 'We Found Love' begins to play on the supermarket stereo, the crew members emerge, paying for their goods. These are items Star cannot afford and, juxtaposed with the preceding scene, this demonstrates one of the key attractions for her: financial wellbeing. The everyday space of the supermarket is then transformed into a discotheque. The lighting remains natural and the editing patterns do not change (as we might expect in a nightclub sequence, for example) and the sequence remains close to Star's perspective, continuing the form established in the opening scene. Star and Jake begin to communicate non-verbally, at first through glances, then through more overt flirtatious gestures, such as sticking out tongues. As the song climaxes and the beat drops (according to EDM standards), the crew form a dancefloor beyond the checkout. Jake then jumps onto the checkout counter (which we can compare to a podium in a club) and, as he begins to dance more excessively whilst continuing to gesture towards Star, the camera follows her gaze towards him. Amidst his wild dancing, Jake's phone falls out of his shirt pocket and he gets escorted out of the shop by a security guard (to continue the analogy, as a bouncer might). This transformation emphasises the extraordinary potential of everyday spaces which is consistent with Arnold's treatment of space throughout her filmography.

As noted, the film's visual strategy does not change here – we are still inhabiting Star's subjectivity and her perception of reality. This continues the style established in the opening with hand-held camera, natural lighting and it is shot from Star's perspective. By way of comparison, another new (French) realist filmmaker, Celine Sciamma, employs a different Rihanna song, 'Diamonds', in her film *Girlhood.* In this sequence, Sciamma plays with form.

Initially, the scene is constructed as a music video: bathed in a deep blue filter, Lady (Assa Sylla) is framed centrally in a medium close-up as she mimes the lyrics. The camera slowly adjusts to incorporate Adiatou (Lindsay Karamoh) and Fily (Marietou Toure) whilst maintaining a carefully composed symmetrical frame. However, as the central protagonist Marieme (Karidja Toure) joins them, diegetic sound of the girls singing along is incorporated, effectively emphasising the distinctions between artifice and realism – indeed, Julia Dobson (2017, p. 40) argues that this sequence in the hotel room is 'avowedly non-realist' in contrast to the realist spaces of the *banlieue*. Although Arnold's use of 'We Found Love' is similar to 'Diamonds,' in that it emphasises communal experience which foregrounds working-class femininity, no such artifice is introduced in Arnold's strategy. Instead, Arnold's form marks a seamless transition which links the experimental ethnography practice with the pre-imagined scripted sequences, heightening the coalescence between ethnography and fiction in her film – much like Jonathan Glazer's conflation of documentary and science-fiction in *Under the Skin* (see Chapter One).

Arnold's employment of 'We Found Love' further emphasises the kinds of transnational and transmedia cultural exchange I discuss throughout this thesis (and will return to in this chapter's conclusion in relation to *Looking*). Rihanna's music video for the song is loaded with British working-class iconography not far removed from *Fish Tank's* diegesis: tower blocks, small flats, fast-food outlets and corner shops. Indeed, the opening shots of the video in which Rihanna stares out of the window (fig. 4.1) is almost identical to the shots which opened *Fish Tank* (fig. 4.2). The video begins with a monologue by model Agyness Dean in a strong Lancashire accent (although the video was filmed in Northern Ireland), announcing its English working-class character. However, the American-ness of 'We Found Love' is manifested in brief details throughout the video, such as the presence of American flags (which also appears throughout *American Honey*). Indeed, the parallels between the *mise-en-scène* of Rihanna's video and Arnold's film are manifold. In one particular scene, Rihanna dances with a man inside a cramped corner shop which is visually referenced in this Arnold sequence. Elsewhere,

Figure 4.1: Rihanna in 'We Found Love'

Figure 4.2: Mia in *Fish Tank*

Figure 4.3: Car sex in 'We Found Love'

Figure 4.4: Car sex in *American Honey*

Figure 4.5: Beer cans and cigarettes in 'We Found Love'

Figure 4.6: Beer cans and cigarettes in *American Honey*

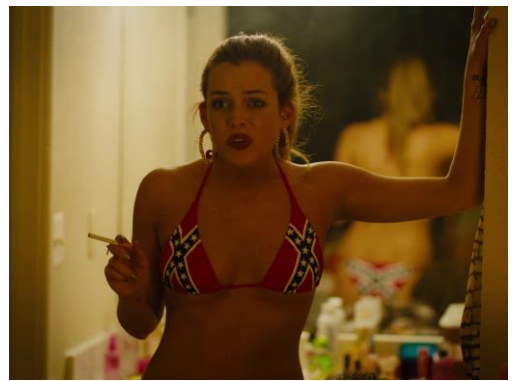**Figure 4.7: Rihanna in Stars and Stripes bikini**

Figure 4.8: Krystal in Confederate bikini

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there are other recurrent images: Rihanna on top of a boy as they park their car (fig. 4.3) in the wilderness foreshadows a similar sequence in *American Honey* (fig. 4.4, which I will return to); the presence of drug-taking is conspicuous in both; the attention to alcohol and cigarettes (fig. 4.5 & 4.6); the emphasis on cars and driving; the shots of fast food restaurants; and the presence of the American flag as costume (fig. 4.7) foreshadows Krystal's Confederate bikini (fig. 4.8). This dialogue between pop music video and British art film demonstrates the eroding distinctions between pop culture and art and the continuities between national places. This intertextuality therefore demonstrates a cross-cultural exchange which goes further than *Looking's* transmediality, here we have an art film director adopting scenes from pop videos in a reversal of national spaces.

Thus, this single sequence in *American Honey* calls attention to many themes that have emerged throughout this thesis. Firstly, Arnold's celebratory treatment of everyday spaces in which a trip to the supermarket teems with striking possibilities. Secondly, the use of 'We Found Love' provokes the viewer to think about the distinction between ethnography and fiction in her film (especially given the extra-diegetic information that this was Arnold's song choice). Thirdly, it demonstrates national differences in new realist filmmaking. Whereas Sciamma, for example, uses a highly-stylised aesthetic with her employment of Rihanna, Arnold avoids such strategies and instead integrates pop into her realist form. Finally, the use of Rihanna highlights the reversible cross-spatial exchange between divergent audio-visual media.

Imaging America: Flags, Animals and Sensing Space

In the supermarket sequence, then, Arnold utilises everyday spaces and makes sense of them in other ways (e.g. providing a kind of dancefloor and podium). Throughout the film, Arnold employs *mise-en-scène* in similar ways in which there are parties in car parks and tribal renewals by lakes. As most of the film was shot on the road, in spaces which Arnold could not control (motels, car parks, the van itself), much of the *mise-en-scène* pertains to real-life

America. However, during the sequences at Star's home the *mise-en-scène* is brimming with textual signifiers. In the first scene in the house, Star prepares a meal for the two children and her step-father – a fourth plate for herself is conspicuously absent – before the father figure begins to abuse her with unwanted sexual advances. In Arnold's trademark fashion, the sequence is punctuated with the minutiae of their living space: flies hovering around uneaten scraps of food nearby a stray unlit cigarette, photos of the children and, towards the end of this sequence, an ash tray and empty beer cans – hinting at the father's alcoholism. These shots, although drawing attention away from Star's perspective, invite us to imagine the lived-in experience of her everyday life which, through steeping us in the material-reality of Star's everyday life via a preponderance of ordinary things (as discussed in reference to the edgelands), creates an intimacy between viewer and subject. Between these close-ups are longer takes which foregrounds the sexual abuse Star faces and, poignantly, seems to expect. During these longer takes, hanging on the wall are two flags which display a keen patriotism. The first we see is the American Flag whilst the second is the more insidious Confederate flag, a symbol of segregation which was adopted by the Ku Klux Klan. Here, then, there is a political undertone: whilst this is a domestic incident (hence the peppering of close-ups of the everyday world of the living area), the Confederate flag and the pop-country music draw on popular conceptions of racism, particularly in the American South. This imagery of the Confederate flag is repeated in a bikini worn by Krystal as she emotionally abuses Star. Arnold, then, hints at the systemic abuse Star faces in contemporary American society.

Following the domestic scene, Arnold films Star on a swing before defiantly jumping off, implicitly informing the viewer that she is about to make a new start. She goes to pack up hers and the children's items and, as she does so, there are similar close-ups of their living space. Again, there is a particular focus upon animals which is returned to throughout the film. The viewer is denied a typical establishing long/medium-shot; instead, Arnold introduces us to the

children's bedroom via a montage of close-ups, whilst in the background on the soundtrack lingers the father singing whilst drunk. The images are as follows:

1. A butterfly

2. A spider crawling along the wall

3. A pair of ruby red shoes (which I'll return to later)

4. Photos of a turtle and dolphins

5. Images of foxes and wolves

6. Pictures of tigers and birds

7. An image of a dog jumping into an ocean, annotated with "AAAA!!!"

8. Tadpoles saved in the bottom of a water bottle

Many of these images come to be symbols which are returned to throughout the film, for example, Jake's wolf-howling which comes to represent his isolation as a child and consequent liberation, or the turtle which is an ambiguous symbol hinting at renewal during the film's conclusion. The meticulous *mise-en-scène* in these sequences, framed in close-up detailing their significance, demonstrates Arnold's linkage between Star and her animal urges. Throughout the film, Star saves animals, she lets wasps out of windows, says "sorry little guy" as she swallows a Mescal worm and returns a turtle to the water at the film's conclusion. For Arnold, animals are an analogy for Star's own isolation, escape and liberation, whilst also demonstrating Star's empathetic personality.

This animal imagery is sustained throughout the entire film and is a typical marker of Arnold's authorship (this seems to stem from her own world-view: Arnold is a staunch vegetarian and has spoken about animal rights in interviews (Champion, 2012)). Jonathan Murray (2016) links Clyde's (Tony Curran) sexuality to his animal instincts in *Red Road* (indeed, his name alone is symbolic of the river which runs through Glasgow). This, for Murray, is expressed throughout the film:

> *Red Road* articulates an understanding of human identity and society within
> which animalistic instincts and urges represent the unavoidable wellspring of
> pleasure and pain within people's lives. […] The extent to which that
> conception might be understood as a recurring authorial signature can be
> gleaned from its prominence within Arnold's subsequent feature work.
> (Murray, 2016, p. 204)

For Murray, animals and humans are persistently conflated in Arnold's films. Furthermore, Michael Lawrence (2016, p. 178) argues that, in *Wuthering Heights*, 'a preponderance of unmotivated shots of the countryside and its non-human inhabitants demonstrates a post-humanist distribution of attention.'

These same conflations between animal and human are interwoven throughout *American Honey*. As well as images of animals which are peppered throughout the film – birds, dogs and insects in particular – the soundtrack frequently emphasises sounds of animals. The opening image of the film is the camera looking up at the sun and an empty sky. However, the soundtrack features expressive sounds of birds chirping and cars driving. We cut to an image of Star rummaging through a dumpster before finding a chicken which she passes to Rubin (Brody Hunsaker). Immediately, through the sound, camerawork and on-screen action, Star is likened to a bird, digging for food and soon to flee the nest.

Arnold's post-human philosophy is expressively demonstrated during the sex scenes between Star and Jake. The first sex scene begins as Jake picks up Star from a group of rich Southern men and he announces himself with his wolf-howling (corresponding with the images of the animal in Star's bedroom), which he later explains: "when I was younger my dad used to drop me off in all them woods up there and they just let me free, let me roam, they taught me that wolf noise in case I ever got lost." As they begin to drive – in a car stolen from the band of men – Mazzy Star's 'Fade Into You' begins playing, establishing a soft, romantic tone and Jake drives into a field of flora. As Jake switches off the engine, the song stops playing, and the sound track emphasises the sound around them as they begin to have sex. As they scramble to take

off their underwear, Arnold's technique is expressive: the sounds of insects and birds provide a counterpoint with their own panting and grunting, the motion slows down when they kiss and it is filmed during a sunset, meaning the light is golden with moments of lens flare. The second sex scene in the film follows a similar pattern: Jake howls, Star finds him and they begin to have sex in the woods, again in magic hour. There is a focus on sex and bodies as animalistic – they pause as Star removes her bloodied tampon, bodies clash and grasp at each other. The pair have intercourse on the grass and the camera is positioned on the ground, often peering through blades of grass, and the sound of their bodies and hands clenching grass are emphasised, alongside the chirping of birds and their own grunts. Sex, for Arnold, is a natural animal urge. The way in which Jake is figured as a wolf prior to both sex scenes emphasises this, as does Arnold's expressive soundscapes and the emphasis on realist sexual behaviour which is inextricably linked to Arnold's post-humanist philosophy.

Following their second instance of sexual intercourse, Star asks Jake if he has any dreams. He responds "future dreams? Nobody's ever asked me that." This corresponds with Star's earlier encounter with a truck driver, to which she gave an identical response. Themes of the American Dream are communicated explicitly here but, for most of the film, it is an implicit thematic strain which is often expressed through references to other film texts. Arnold (in O'Hagan 2016) has said that *American Honey* is 'a mixture of what I saw and learned on those travels, but also what I grew up seeing on films – the mythical America of westerns and road movies. That's all in there, too'.

Arnold's mythical America, though, is vastly different to the outsider Americana Grønstad identified: gone are the neon-lit surfaces, deserts and casinos. There are times when Arnold represents these kinds of images, such as when the crew drive past various fast food signage and when the camera gazes at billboards. However, Arnold's representation of America insists upon an intimate connection with place. This is carefully constructed through close-ups of small details or point-of-view shots of the landscape. *American Honey* features numerous

close-ups of nature, for instance. These images – a close-up of a butterfly, a flower, a wasp, the grass – demonstrate the implacability of the environment that surrounds Star and her phenomenological perception of space. Furthermore, as the film is shot intensely via Star's perspective, it demonstrates her own curiosity about the world around her which both she (and the non-professional actress, Sasha Lane) are experiencing for the first time. By detailing the minutiae of Star's environment, Arnold's filmmaking becomes evocative of Star's experience of the world, we become attuned to what surrounds Star, what she can see, feel and hear: this is a phenomenological impulse evident throughout the film through which we come to empathise with the character.

The shots of the landscape, meanwhile, demonstrate the vastness of various places Arnold represents. For example, one sequence begins with a close-up of a butterfly on some grass, as crickets chirp loudly on the sound track before cutting to Star, staring at the grass as she urinates and pulls up her shorts – this again links to the figuration of the animal and is reminiscent of Mia's behaviour in *Fish Tank*. In the same take, the camera follows Star as she stands up and looks out onto and pans across the landscape: sweeping vistas of a canyon. Here, Arnold is situating these small details of nature into a much wider scope, demonstrating that the subject is a microcosm of this vast place. If these images are reminiscent of other road movies, as Arnold suggests, it seems she may be indebted to *Badlands* (1973). Ben McCann (2003, p. 81) argues that Malick's films use close-ups to embody

> a naturalist and humanist preoccupation with detail; not just the object
> itself, but also its relationship to, and power over, the human protagonist […
> which magnifies] meaning and lend[s] a deeper understanding to the power
> of nature.

Arnold's film then shares a debt with other filmic images of America's past (nostalgia being inherent in Americana), and the road movie genre, but this is done via a less clichéd image of America. Arnold is less concerned with deconstructing popular Americana iconography as in

Slow West, rather, she demonstrates a desire to understand it – much like the generosity with which she represents Mia's estate in *Fish Tank*.

A whole history of Hollywood film is referenced in *American Honey*. In the montage of images found in the bedroom, I noted there was a shot of ruby red shoes which are an obvious reference to *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). This reference was no doubt intentional as Kansas is the first major city the crew visits. When they arrive in Kansas, they scream "*The Wizard of Oz*!" "Dorothy!" (as well as referencing that it is the home of Superman). Indeed, *The Wizard of Oz* is a major proto-road movie, although the narrative is not like a typical road movie as there is a definite goal: to reach the Emerald city. This is in stark contrast to the loose, episodic narrative of *American Honey* in which there is no destination nor salvation for the characters. Indeed, at the conclusion of *The Wizard of Oz*, Emerald city is revealed as a humbug, everything Dorothy and her friends desired, it is revealed, was in them all along. Star's dream, however, to save enough money to buy her own lot with many children, we know is unachievable living with the mag crew. The mag crew, and Jake, like the Wizard, are her own false hopes.

At the conclusion of the film, after Star has received money for prostitution, she returns a turtle to a lake, as the crew dance around to Raury's 'God's Whisper' – a song fuelled by tribal rhythms. Star walks in the lake (we know she cannot swim), plunges her head underwater briefly and then looks out resolutely, staring at the fireflies in the distance. This conclusion is ambiguous but hints at a kind of re-birth: will she run away with Jake, turn to prostitution, or simply carry on with the mag crew? None of this matters to Arnold. Star – named because her mother told her "we are all made of stars, death stars" – is, like the rest of the cast, just as precious as a single firefly. This image of the firefly dissolves into the unconventional credits sequence which simply states "a film made by" before listing the principal cast then the crew alphabetically, with no reference to job titles or characters' names. "They went out to America and found nothing there", reads *Easy Rider's* tagline and, yet, Arnold found a crew of individuals even if they were chasing nothing: the elusive American Dream.

The Road Movie: A Mobile Genre

At the beginning of this section, I argued that the road movie is, on the one hand, an intensely American genre but, on the other, an extremely mobile genre. Yet even road movies produced in other countries (for example, *Breathless* or *Alice in the Cities/Alice in den Städten* (1974)) display a fascination with America. Perhaps, then, the road movie is an obvious attraction for outsiders: it as at once an intensely American genre but also extremely mobile.

Mobility has been a thread running through my thesis. We can think back here to the photographic psychogeography of *The Outer Edges* (Kieran Evans, UK, 2013) – which records movement through still images, much like *Slow West*. We might also think of Arnold's other films, *Fish Tank* and *Wuthering Heights*, which utilise a mobile camera to follow characters' movements. Indeed, to represent or evoke place it seems natural that filmmakers should traverse them. In order to represent America, then, it is no surprise that these British directors choose the road movie to comment upon the nation.

Maclean and Arnold take radically different approaches to their form. *Slow West* is economically told with tight plotting, comprised of a static camera and is intensely masculine. *American Honey*, meanwhile, is episodic and sprawling, with an intensely mobile, roaming form and is attentive to the subjectivity of its female protagonist. Whilst the former deconstructs American myths, the latter immerses itself in contemporary America. Yet both films share a similar ideology. *American Honey* positions its protagonists' identities as incidental – JJ's (Raymond Coalson) homosexuality, for example, is not remarked upon but we do see him midway through the film, in the background, kissing another man. Similarly, neither Star's gender nor ethnicity is remarked upon: she is just another impoverished individual in America. This is similar to *Slow West's* post-nationalist ideology. In my analysis of Maclean's film, I noted Rose's finial uttering to Kotori: "until civilisation arrives." It might seem that, today, civilisation never did arrive, as America begins to look to its 'great' past. Arnold's cinema lacks the didacticism of Maclean's but both use their outsider's perspective to

comment upon some of America's greatest tensions: wealth and poverty and the construction of myth and nationhood. As Wenders (1991) said: 'Americans themselves can't write about the American Dream' but British directors, it seems, can.

Shame: Non-Time and Non-Places

Steve McQueen and Artists' Films

Throughout this thesis, I have extended Paul Newland and Brian Hoyle's (2016, p. 233) argument that:

> Post-millennial British art cinema is not easily definable or classifiable, but is instead characterised by industrial and formal fluidity, and, often, by an ambivalence towards borders, be they generic, formal, aesthetic, cultural, industrial, technological or, indeed, national.

Indeed, my focus on space is foregrounded not only in the evocation of place or literal spaces (the urban, rural, suburban or edgelands) but also the kinds of formal and institutional borders Newland and Hoyle highlight (here we might think of Karl Hyde or Duane Hopkins). Steve McQueen has transitioned from the space of the gallery (*Bear* (1993), *Deadpan* (1997)) to the arthouse (*Hunger, Shame*), and the multiplex (*12 Years a Slave*). He is, at the time of writing, working on an as-yet untitled television series for the BBC which, following my analysis of Andrew Haigh, Duane Hopkins, and Ben Rivers, further demonstrates the fluidity between audio-visual media in the 21st century.

This fluidity has been highlighted by Amy Sargeant (2012), who argues that there has been a proliferation of artists making feature films outside of the gallery space – such as Sam Taylor-Johnson (*Nowhere Boy* (2009), *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2015)), Douglas Gordon (*Zidane: A 21st Century* Portrait (*2006*)), Banksy (*Exit Through the Gift Shop* (2010)) and Gillian Wearing (*Self*

Made (2010)). Utilizing close analysis of McQueen's *Hunger*, Sargeant (2012, p. 519) argues that:

> Categorical boundaries have been not just crossed but have become blurred, not least through the availability of selections of 'artists' films', contemporary and retrospective, in formats shared with regular features and television. *Hunger* seems to me to demonstrate that certain artists have adapted not only readily but purposefully to various sites of exhibition and distribution – both in the content of the work and its form – and that audiences are more relaxed and better prepared to accept the transfer than are some critics.

However, I would contest Sargeant's assertion that critics narrowly discuss *Hunger* as an 'artist's film'. Whilst many acknowledge that McQueen is a Turner Prize winning artist – you might be mistaken for thinking that 'artist' has become his official title – on the release of *Hunger* many journalists did emphasise his adaptability to feature filmmaking. Peter Bradshaw (2008), in *The Guardian*, argued that 'McQueen is a real film-maker and his background in art has meant a fierce concentration on image', whilst *The Telegraph's* review claimed that McQueen displays 'not only an artist's flair for framing and for isolating telling gestures and details, but a genius for dramatic set-pieces that's worthy of mid-'70s Scorsese' (Sukhdev, 2008). Within scholarship, too, Clive James Nwonka (2016 pp. 137-8) has argued that *Hunger* exemplifies the British tradition of the social art film by comparing it with the films of Ken Loach. John Orr (2010, pp. 182-84) similarly points to Loach's films as a point of comparison and contrasts it to *Control*, another British artist's film which he argues subverts the generic traditions of the biopic. Elsewhere, I have argued that *Control's* director, Anton Corbijn, like Steve McQueen, readily adapted from photography to feature filmmaking, thus emphasising the blurred boundaries Sargeant argues exist (Cortvriend, 2016).

McQueen then, like many aforementioned examples, has purposefully adapted from the gallery to the screen and, throughout his feature filmography to-date, he also moves between representing different spaces and places. His debut film, *Hunger*, is set in an Irish prison during

the 1980s; his second feature, *Shame*, explores contemporary urban existence in New York; and his most recent film, *12 Years a Slave,* focuses on the slave trade in 19th century America. McQueen then moves between time, space and place, emphasising the mobile and transnational impulse which, throughout this chapter, I have argued is a central tenet of contemporary British cinema.

Shame takes place in New York City and focuses on the everyday life of sex-addicted Brandon (Michael Fassbender) and the complications that arises when his sister, Sissy (Carey Mulligan), visits. Despite the film's setting, it was produced by British companies Film4 and the UK-Australia See-Saw Films (also responsible for *Slow West*). The film stars two actors who are identifiably British and Irish who continue to work within the independent British film industry and in Hollywood – most notably, Fassbender has appeared in the *X-Men* and *Alien* franchises – and have continued to work with established, acclaimed auteurs. Through the setting, production context and the nationality of the stars, *Shame's* transnational impulses are immediately identifiable.

Encounter, Identification, Image: New York as Global Non-Place

Shame's transnationality manifests itself throughout the film text, too. The characters are minimally defined, weakly-drawn sketches on to which the audience projects, yet we do know that they were born in Ireland before moving to Jersey. The fact that it is set in New York but foregrounds its Britishness, primarily through its cast and crew, extends to the argument I will make in relation to the film: that this is an examination of urban life more broadly. It seems incidental that the film is set in New York and, instead, foregrounds markers of urban life found in any super-modern city: non-places. Marc Augé (2008) has argued that 'non-places' are intrinsic to super-modernity and late capitalism. He defines the term as follows:

> If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place (Auge 2008, pp. 77-78).

Gilles Deleuze (2005 p. 112) adapts Augé's term when represented in film, which he names *'any-space-whatevers'*. In defining any-space-whatevers, David Martin-Jones (2011, p. 143) argues that, although there are slight discrepancies between the two terms, they are deeply comparable:

> The any-space-whatever is extremely similar to Augé's non-places. Accordingly, the any-space-whatever can also usefully be considered as expressive of the anonymous spaces of globalisation which, although possible to reterritorialize through local actions, are no longer the historically defined and definitive milieu of the nation, even while they exist within nations.

Whilst Martin-Jones goes on to argue for the synthesis of global any-space-whatevers and the local through his analysis of *Ging chat goo si/Police Story* (1985), McQueen's utilisation of non-places – hotels, global franchises, subways, open-plan offices and homogenous bars – mostly lack a relational representation to the city of New York itself. It is telling that McQueen and co-screenwriter, Abi Morgan, initially placed the film in London, moving it to New York not because of a specific thematic resonance but because, in their research, sex-addiction therapists in New York were more forthcoming about their experiences (Gritten 2012). This immediately demonstrates the similarity between these two different urban centres which is crucial in understanding McQueen's view that these two cities are essentially the same. This purposefully non-specific representation of place allows McQueen to reflect on urban life across the world. As well as this, he draws attention to the dissolution of the national in contemporary upper-middle class urban life and the eventual disintegration of personal identity – hence the lack of characterisation in the film. Indeed, Brandon corresponds to Augé's (2008, p. 105) description of those who inhabit non-places:

> The passenger in non-places has the simultaneous experiences of a perpetual present and encounter with the self. Encounter, identification, image: *he* is this well-dressed forty-year-old, apparently tasting ineffable delights under the attentive gaze of a blonde hostess.

Figure 4.9: Glass office in *Shame*

Figure 4.10: Windows in *Shame*

Figure 4.11: Mirrors in *Shame*

Figure 4.12: Glass hotels in *Shame*

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Encounter, identification, image. Any-space-whatevers in *Shame* are frequently characterised by their use of glass: mirrors, windows and doors (see figs. 4.9, 4.10, 4.11, 4.12). Indeed, as most of the film is set in these spaces the film is pervaded by glassy surfaces. One such space is the open-plan office which is wholly transparent: doors and walls are made of glass, and there is no such thing as privacy here. We also notice glass in other spaces, too. Brandon's minimalist home has mirrors and tall-windows, much like the hotel in which he experiences erectile dysfunction with Marianne (Nicole Beharie) but then is able to have sex with a prostitute whilst looking out of a window. Elsewhere, Brandon gazes out of the window on the subway; Sissy hysterically cries as her reflection in Brandon's window is emphasised; and the windows of the bars and restaurants the characters' frequent force them to look out *and* look back on themselves. McQueen's New York is therefore homogenous. There are few distinctions between work and personal lives, and between the binaries of a private and a public life – the only friend Brandon seems to have is his boss, as they extend their office hours by socialising outside of the workplace. Everything in Brandon's New York is transparent or reflected, glossy and polished but also vacant: the glass symbolises the blankness of his existence in 21st century New York. *Encounter, identification, image.* Brandon is persistently encountering himself and his image as he travels, the close-ups of his expressionless face as he stares through glass or at mirrors, reinforcing his subjectivity, his vacancy. Brandon is permanently alienated from himself as McQueen represents him as stuck in a perpetual mirror stage (Lacan 2006) promoted by structures of super-modernity.

During the film's concluding sequences, however, the representation of glass changes, as does Brandon's own identity. The film is bookended by two bravura symphonic montage sequences, nearly free of dialogue, which last for ten minutes. These sequences are set to the minimalist score by Harry Escott (who also worked on *Shifty* and *The Road to Guantanamo* (2006), and it is no surprise he has collaborated with Michael Nyman's daughter, Molly Nyman). This score, which relies on difference and repetition and builds to multiple crescendos, echoes Brandon's

Figure 4.13: Warped glass in *Shame*

Figure 4.14: Brandon's breakdown by Pier 54

Figure 4.15: Opening of *Shame*

Figure 4.16: Ending of *Shame*

own subjectivity – his sex life, his everyday rhythms and the relentless blankness of his existence. Furthermore, McQueen's achronological editing throughout these sequences reveal the cyclical, repetitious nature of Brandon's behaviour. Towards the end of the second montage sequence, before the concluding shots of his orgy with prostitutes, Brandon phones Sissy as he again looks at himself in a reflective surface. This time, the surface is distorted, imaging Brandon as carnivalesque and projecting him back as a warped figure (fig. 4.13). By familiarising himself with unfamiliar textures and spaces, as opposed to the clean, glossy glass of non-places, he begins to understand his own sense of subjectivity better than he did whilst masturbating in his large bathroom mirror, for example. The montage ends and Brandon finds Sissy, following a suicide attempt, bloody on the floor of his bathroom.

Shame's ending begins with a shot of Brandon walking by the Hudson River, sodden with rain, as his blank face transforms into a site of authentic emotion: he cries and screams before falling to the ground (fig. 4.14). The specific site of Pier 54 is significant as Brandon no longer finds himself in 'any-place-whatevers'. Rather, Pier 54 has historical import – it is where HMS Titanic was supposed to dock – and links to the natural, pre-modern Hudson River. This specific site then links America and Britain, thus acting as an avatar for McQueen's own transnational status. This organic space allows for Brandon's catharsis and demonstrates the limiting nature of contemporary existence within the urban spaces Brandon once inhabited. Like *Hunger's* many echoes, this scene rhymes with the opening shot of the film in which Brandon lies awake in his blue bed, naked, alone and almost zombie-like with vacancy. He is now, however, surrounded by organic reflective surfaces in the water around him. McQueen's use of space, his representation of glass prevalent in 'any-space-whatevers', purposefully demonstrates Brandon's self-aware lack and the existential nature of existence within a super-modern culture, which contrasts with the authentic final breakdown scene.

Following this shot at Pier 54, the film fades to black. The epilogue shows Brandon back on the subway, looking at a woman he chased after during the opening montage sequence. The scene

is, in many ways, purposefully ambiguous: the film ends just as she is about to alight from the train as Brandon stares intensely at her. In contrast to the first scene on the subway, though, there are a few marked differences. In the first sequence, the close-up of the woman's hand, bearing a wedding ring, is then joined by Brandon's. In the second, however, this shot only consists of the woman's solitary hand, suggesting Brandon does not join or chase after her. Furthermore, Fassbender's performance is slightly different. In the first sequence, like much of the rest of *Shame*, his expression is more-or-less blank but has the slightest indication of a smile whilst staring intently at the woman (fig. 4.15). In the final scene, while reprising his intense stare, his expression looks somewhat repulsed or frightened (fig. 4.16). Finally, the sound in the final scene consists only of diegetic sound of the carriage whereas in the first, when he stares at the woman, the sound of sex plays in tandem with Escott's score suggesting his desire. Thus, through close analysis of the final scene we can discern that Brandon's breakdown on Pier 54 has had a permanent impact on his identity: inhabiting natural places has helped him overcome his addiction.

Non-Time and the Digital

Richard Martin's (2016) instructive article, 'Duration Without Breaks: Marclay and McQueen Against the Clock,' uses Jonathan Crary's *24/7: Late Capitalism and the End of Sleep* (2014) to argue that '*Shame* exemplif[ies] Crary's concerns about the permanent availability and ceaseless non-fulfilment of our 24/7 digital world'. Crary (2014, p. 30) argues that:

> The effectiveness of 24/7 lies in the incompatibility it lays bare, in the discrepancy between a human life-world and the evocation of a switched on universe for which no off-switch exists. […] Since no moment, place, or situation now exists in which one cannot shop, consume, or exploit networked resources, there is a relentless incursion of the *non-time* of 24/7 into every aspect of social or personal life.

Although Crary does not refer to Augé throughout *24/7*, Martin (2016) argues for non-time as a 'temporal companion' to Augé's non-place. Non-time, in essence, is the state of never

switching off and is a condition of the digital age. Indeed, philosophers of time demonstrate that 'each historical epoch, with its new forms of socioeconomic expressions, is simultaneously restructuring its social relations of time' (Adam 2004). In this current epoch, through charting the history of clock-time, Jonathan Martineau (2016) argues that social-conceptions of time are fundamentally tied to capitalism and, more recently, globalisation, through the rise of network time. As a symptom of this, Cunningham (2016) outlines the ways in which 8-8-8 time (the structure of the 24-hour cycle as three 8-hour blocks of work, leisure and sleep) have been destabilised due to the rise of ICTs such as computers, phones and email (what I will refer to as the digital). Harmut Rosa (2016), meanwhile, suggests that this has caused an acceleration of life rhythms, the way in which, subjectively, we feel an increasing speed. Thus, in the hyper-modern age, notions of social-time (or clock-time) are linked with capitalism which the digital has augmented through making individuals accessible for work during leisure. This is what Crary means by 24/7 time, we can never be switched-off because of globalisation, the rise of the digital and the associated erosion of a structured 8-8-8 time. Indeed, the kind of places which augment non-time – 24-hour supermarkets, malls, offices and hotels – all cohere with Augé's conception of super-modernity. I will argue in this section that, for McQueen, 24/7 culture, the digital and non-places are interrelated and create a human void which is made visible in the character of Brandon.

The presence of the digital pervades *Shame* and is persistently associated with Brandon's sex addiction. He uses his iPhone to call prostitutes, his computer at work is riddled with viruses from pornographic websites, his personal laptop is used for salacious video-calls, his iPod is used as therapy for escape as he is running, and his digital alarm draws attention to his insomniac, 24/7 existence. The few remnants of analogue devices, though, are persistently linked with pleasure and respite from this lifestyle.

The *mise-en-scène* of Brandon's flat is starkly minimalist and is constructed of white walls, glass and is sparsely furnished. This home contains nothing which is indicative of character,

much like the narrative structure of the film itself, other than a surprising collection of records, books and CDs on his shelves (fig. 10). Brandon is never seen playing these records but, when he finds Sissy in his flat, she is playing Chic's 'I Want Your Love' extremely loudly almost as if she is reminding him of life outside of his non-time existence. He almost immediately turns it off – demonstrating a resistance to analogue.

Again, later in the film, Sissy pleads with him to watch her sing at a club, the Boom Boom Room at the Standard High Line NYC (home to the hotel room in which he has his unsuccessful encounter with Marianne). Sissy sings a slowed-down version of 'Theme From New York, New York' with a live pianist, filmed in a long-take close-up. This was written for Martin Scorsese's *New York, New York* (1977) which captured the tensions in representing the city – Scorsese's film is underpinned by 'the contrast between the backlot New York of the studio-era Hollywood musical and the location aesthetic of New York films of the 1970s' (Shearer 2016, p. 202). I have argued that McQueen's representation of place is purposefully non-specific yet, in this sequence, New York is foregrounded reminding us of the local/global dichotomy in this film – which recalls Scorsese's contrast between authenticity and pastiche in *New York, New York*. The slowness of Sissy's performance runs in contrast to the non-time of Brandon's everyday life which allows him to take a step back from the 24/7 digital world and, instead, reflect on his life as he begins to cry. As Martin (2016) argues:

> This sudden temporal shift in the film – a song slowed almost to a stop, a collection of lengthy pauses in the midst of a digital life accelerating to breaking point – provokes remarkable affect […] The mournful performance of the lyrics, 'I want to wake up in a city that doesn't sleep'. This is no celebration of 24-hour urban life and the endless opportunities it affords. Sissy's performance feels like a sad condemnation of the relentless rhythms of her brother's life in New York – a life lived without respite, duration without breaks – as well, perhaps, as a plea for her, for Brandon and for all of us to 'make a brand new start of it'.

Indeed, this scene of live music is reminiscent of when Brandon finally escapes the urban non-places at the end of the film. He sheds a tear, shocking to the viewer who has only witnessed Fassbender's performance of vacuity. For McQueen, the digital, 24/7, any-place-whatevers that now pervade New York and other urban places, stunt the development of personal identity. When Brandon escapes this, he begins to find his identity.

The slowness of Sissy's performance is striking and there is a constant tension in the film between stasis and movement, and slowness and speed. Like *Hunger, Shame* is a rhythmic film: Martin (2016) claims that 'McQueen's work is characterised by its striking temporal rhythms and its particular attention to bodily rhythms'. Throughout the film, the tension between stillness and movement is persistently related to the temporal. For example, in the aforementioned opening long-take on the bed, Brandon lies awake as the sound of a ticking clock grows louder before his electronic alarm clock alerts him to get out of bed. The ticking of clocks pervades the film's soundtrack which draws attention to time, yet, in these any-space-whatevers, it may also be *any-time-whatever*, which emphasises the inextricable link between non-place and non-time.

Such moments of stillness emphasise Brandon's anaemic character: as he is lying on the bed he gently blinks at the camera with an absence of expression, which distils the void that is central to the character. Furthermore, this demonstrates the sleepless world Brandon inhabits as he is never asleep, he is even awake as he waits for his alarm. Brandon is such a victim of non-time that this leads to insomnia, a result of sleep being incoherent with the logic of late capitalism:

> In its profound uselessness and intrinsic passivity, with the incalculable losses
> it causes in production time, circulation, and consumption, sleep will always
> collide with the demands of a 24/7 universe (Crary 2014, p. 10).

These moments of stillness also become a product of slow cinema which allows the viewer's consciousness to drift. There is then a disjuncture between the audience's ability to slow down and Brandon's 24/7 lifestyle.

This stillness runs in contrast to sequences of movement. We often see Brandon walking around the city, on the subway, in taxi cabs or going for a run at various times of day or night. It is in these non-places and non-times in which he thrives, in which he lives and moves. When Brandon runs through the city at night, McQueen suggests that he never stops, that 24/7 culture is linked to movement, production and the maintenance of the body. Portable technologies augment this process: you can now listen to music whilst running (again, productive), or phone a prostitute as you walk to a hotel. Thus, digital technology, non-place and non-time are all linked and create a damaged man, Brandon (his name, *Brand*-on, symptomatic of McQueen's critique), who exemplifies the burdens of super-modernity.

Contemporary urban living, then, for McQueen, is soulless. Distilled in Fassbender's blank expressions are Brandon's vacuity because of living a 24/7 lifestyle in this non-place, New York, which results in mental health problems. Brandon's mental health problem is manifested in his desire to have sex, an intimate connection with another person, which contrasts with his inability to maintain significant relationships outside of this. As I have argued, for McQueen, this isolation is a condition of super-modernity around the globe. Non-places, a product of globalisation, are the same across many modern urban cities, hence the largely non-specific representation of place throughout *Shame*. This is underlined by McQueen using British actors and British funds to make a film, originally set in London, to be filmed in New York.

In setting *Shame* amongst a variety of globalised any-space-whatevers, McQueen foregrounds issues of globalisation, to critique the contemporary era: the erosion of 8-8-8 time and the rise of the digital. This also allows him, like *Slow West*, to foreground issues of the post-national: Brandon could be in any contemporary urban centre, this is a globalised human condition. It is therefore illuminating that he decided to set this film in New York, rather than, say, London.

We can also want to think about the role of technology in *Red Road*, for example, thinking back to the construction of urban spaces as pervaded by CCTV which causes transgressive acts. In this way, then, transatlantic British filmmaking reminds us of the instability of the national in the globalised era.

Conclusion: *Looking*

To conclude, I will return to Andrew Haigh, and some of the debates which opened this study in regard to *Weekend*, by analysing Haigh's HBO series *Looking*. As I have demonstrated throughout this section, an outsider's perspective on America challenges many assumptions regarding American life which is propagated by both Hollywood and the American independent film industry. I have argued that processes of transnationalism have allowed for: an interrogation of America's history and myth (*Slow West*), an incisive; empathetic approach to impoverished youths (*American Honey*); and a critique of contemporary globalised society (*Shame*). Underlining all these texts is a criticism, in some way or another, of how America views itself. In this conclusion, I will foreground these issues of transnationality whilst, at the same time, suggesting that transmediality (between film and television) also foregrounds a fluctuating attachment to not only nationality but also to form. I will here analyse how Haigh's style demonstrates continuities between film and television and how his thematic project has continuities between representing homosexuality in Britain and America. Thus, I argue that in an increasingly transnational and transmedia industry, we can see continuities, further demonstrating the post-national and post-formal impetus which shapes not only British cinema, but global film and television. This convergence can be further identified in examples ranging from Shane Meadows' British-based *This is England* and Jane Campion's transnational production, *Top of the Lake*.

Weekend was Andrew Haigh's first full-length fiction film and, following the success of this film, he was asked by HBO to be Executive Producer of *Looking*, an adaptation of co-creator Michael Lannan's short film *Lorimer* (2011). *Looking's* central themes are similar to *Weekend* in asking what it means to be an ordinary gay man in contemporary urban spaces. Haigh directed ten of *Looking's* 18 episodes produced over two seasons, as well as working as a writer on the series. When first televised on HBO on Sunday night, *Looking* followed *True Detective* and *Girls*, two other series with substantial input from individuals involved in feature filmmaking (Cary Joji Fukunaga and Lena Dunham, respectively), thus demonstrating the convergences between television production and feature filmmaking. Following poor ratings, *Looking* was cancelled by HBO but the network greenlit *Looking: The Movie* (2016) which premiered at the Frameline Film Festival before airing on HBO. In between the second season and *Looking: The Movie,* Haigh's film *45 Years* (2015), set in East Anglia and centring upon the tensions in a marriage before a 45th wedding anniversary, was released. Haigh is due to release his third fiction feature film, *Lean on Pete* (2017), at the 2017 Venice Film Festival – a British funded film which focuses on a teenage boy in Portland, Oregon.

Haigh's Style: From Film, to Television, and Back Again

Looking's first three episodes were directed by Haigh, allowing him to establish the stylistic approach which was maintained throughout the series. The first episode, "Looking for Now" (*Looking* 2014, 1: 1), exhibits Haigh's signature style and the opening scenes are indicative of the approach he adopts throughout the first three episodes. For example, the opening shot is a long-take which lasts for 63 seconds in which Patrick is cruising in a public park. The medium shot length emphasises the public nature of his encounter in which the out-of-focus branches comprise the foreground and background of the frame which visualises the fact that it is a public display of sexuality, marking similarities with *Weekend's* use of figuring the couple within everyday life through foreground blocking. The shot is noticeably long for a series in which the average episode lasts 28 minutes. However, this diverges from the long-takes in

Figure 4.17: Trio walking in *Looking*

Figure 4.18: Russell and Glen in Nottingham, *Weekend*

Figure 4.19: Kate in Norwich, *45 Years*

Weekend and *45 Years* which can last for over four minutes, thus Haigh does adapt his style to the small screen due to time constraints.

We then cut to a shot of Patrick, Dom and Agustín – the three central characters of the series – walking through the streets of San Francisco (fig. 4.17). The camera is positioned at a distance from the characters as they walk towards the camera which is mostly still other than the slight pan or tilt to follow the characters. It is an on-location shot as evidenced by the other action occurring: cars drive around, people zig-zag through the streets and walk in front of the camera (again creating the occasional blocked foreground). This on-location long shot marked by duration is a familiar trope of Haigh's feature filmmaking. For example, in *Weekend* there are multiple shots when Russell and Glenn wander the streets of Nottingham in which the camera has a fixed position and the characters move towards or away from the camera (fig. 4.18). In *45 Years* this is further exhibited, particularly the repeated shots of Kate ambling around Norwich's high street (fig. 4.19). These shots figure the characters' in their different everyday worlds and position them and their behaviours within their real-world milieu, and yet they carry various meanings. The shots of Kate wandering alone, for example, draw attention to her growing isolation; the shots of Glenn and Russell foreground their romance; and the shot here of Patrick, Dom and Agustín demonstrates the group's solidarity and close friendship.

"Looking for Now," *Weekend* and *45 Years* also have similar approaches in filming conversation. Haigh frequently eschews shot/reverse-shot editing in favour of more idiosyncratic approaches, again often in a medium or long shot to maintain longer takes. The most conventional of these, the two-shot, is often shot from a distance in a relatively long-take, which again positions the characters within the wider diegesis, persistently reminding the viewer of the characters' environment just as the aforementioned distance shots do. This can be found in the penultimate scene of "Looking for Now" in which Patrick and Dom are talking about the party they are attending and is a familiar visual trope in *Weekend* and *45 Years*.

The other way in which Haigh records conversation is through longer takes in which focus pulls and camera movement substitute the conventional cut, for example, the scene in which Agustín and Frank (O. T. Fagbenle) initiate a threesome with Scotty (Tanner Cohen). In this shot, Scotty and Agustín are positioned in the foreground on the right and left whilst Frank is in the background in the centre of the frame. The camera pans to follow the conversation, right and left, with the addition of focus changes to focus on Frank, particularly his reactions to Scotty and Agustín's growing intimacy. By eschewing the cut through these methods, this shot becomes an example of the long-take. However, it is not necessarily realist in a Bazinian sense (which would also rely on deep focus). Instead, Haigh guides the viewers' attention, through camera movement and focus, in a way which narrates reality. Haigh (in Schmidlin 2015) has discussed this approach with reference to *Weekend* and *45 Years*:

> Judging the approach, though, I want to see the relationship unfold in front of my eyes. I want the weird, subtle emotional changes to happen within the same frame and shot, rather than the emotion being created by a reaction cutaway. When you cut too much, everything loses its importance; it's a real fine line to tread. Although if you concentrate too much on having it all in one shot, the audience can become very aware of the camera. I don't want that to happen either, so it's trying to keep it feeling natural and organic without forcing the issue.

Therefore, although Haigh is substituting the cut in a mode which is not classically realist, his long(er)-takes seek to speak to the emotional authenticity of the scene which is guided by camera movement, focus and, elsewhere, slow zooms.

With reference to the first episode, we understand that Haigh's style, which can be extended to his feature films, is reliant on a number of tropes: distance (to situate his characters within real locations and environments); long-takes (to create a sense of temporal and emotional authenticity); and camera movements and focus shifts replacing the cut (to guide the viewer's attention). I will now turn to episodes of *Looking* directed by Ryan Fleck to demonstrate how Haigh's style, by virtue of working on the collaborative medium of television, proves influential

on other filmmakers irrespective of nationality or medium. Fleck is best known for the feature films he co-directed with Anna Boden: *Half Nelson* (2006)*, Sugar* (2008) and *Mississippi Grind* (2015). It will be my argument here that, through Haigh's and Fleck's involvement on *Looking*, the series enables processes of cross-cultural exchange between directors working in realist film within different national contexts. Fleck directed three episodes of *Looking*: the fourth episode of season one (the first not to be helmed by Haigh) and two episodes of season two. Within these episodes we begin to see that Fleck is indebted to the stylistic tropes established in Haigh's episodes (which I have argued cohere with the style of his other films) suggesting that Haigh has influenced the director significantly.

This exchange of ideas is most apparent in the virtuoso rooftop scene in "Looking Top to Bottom" (*Looking* 2015, 2: 3), which would be Fleck's final episode. The long-take begins in a medium shot in which Patrick is positioned centre-frame with San Francisco's cityscape towering behind him. This echoes the long and medium-shots which Haigh frequently utilises. Kevin (Russell Tovey) walks into the shot as the camera slowly tracks into a medium two-shot. Like Haigh's mode of recording conversation, this 116-second shot eschews the cut in favour of camera movements which trace the two characters and their reactions. Patrick and Kevin are often framed in isolation or in a two-shot and the camera oscillates between these perspectives just as a traditional edit would achieve. Fleck (in Brennan 2015) has noted Haigh's influence on this shot:

> I wanted to hopefully do it in one shot, so we did this kind of roaming thing, maybe four or five takes of that. The plan was to then do the close-ups, the coverage, in case we wanted to cut into that shot. So it wasn't conceived as a one-shot thing. But *Andrew [Haigh] always encouraged me when I came into the show, he likes to do things that could play in one, so he sets up most scenes to do it in one and then also shoots creative coverage just so you can trim it in the editing room* [...] We did four takes of it, in different ways, so you could still cut into it if you needed to, but we didn't do that close-up coverage. In my cut, I just left it as one, and thankfully they left it as one too.

It is here that the mechanics of creative co-production within auteurist episodic television become visible. Although Haigh has relinquished creative control, his favoured style of one-shot shooting is adopted by other directors working on the series. As Fleck has yet to create another feature film since beginning work on *Looking*, it remains to be seen whether this will influence Fleck's feature filmmaking, and thus be transposed to American independent cinema, but Fleck indicates an appreciation of Haigh's filmmaking techniques which he then utilises himself.

Fleck is influenced by Haigh's own cinematic techniques in other ways, too. In "Looking Top to Bottom," there are many scenes which contain foreground blocking, shots taken from a distance and long-takes which use focus to narrate realism. For example, towards the beginning of this episode when Agustín visits Richie's (Raúl Castillo) barbershop, Fleck utilises their reflections in the large barbershop mirrors so that one or both characters can remain in focus during the shot. The opening shot of this episode also relies upon the movement of the camera to substitute the cut before resting in a medium-shot of Meredith giving a speech. The central aesthetic tenets of Haigh's cinema – distance, long-takes, focus pulls – have then been adopted by American filmmakers such as Fleck (and other feature film directors who work on the series: Jamie Babbit, Craig Johnson and Joe Swanberg). This problematizes Jason Mittell's (2015, p. 117) notion of the 'messy collaborative realities' of television production as Fleck acknowledges his own imitation of Haigh's style, thus producing a consistent aesthetic framework throughout the series.

As other directors, best-known for their feature films, then transpose Haigh's cinematic signatures to the small-screen, it raises questions about the fissures between film and television in the age of quality television. This is further complicated by HBO commissioning *Looking: the Movie* which premiered at Frameline Film Festival (an LGBT+ film festival held in San Francisco). In its very title, *Looking: The Movie* flaunts its 'cinematic' aspirations but I would suggest that it continues the formal project set out by Haigh and Lannan throughout the

television series. Again, the stylistic qualities which shape *Looking, Weekend* and *45 Years* are still present: long-take cinematography, reliance on focus pulls and camera movement, which anchor its characters in its real-life locations through long- and medium-shots.

However, the central divergence between *Looking* and *Looking: The Movie* is that the film largely concerns itself with Patrick's narrative and is attentive to his subjectivity. The film opens with Patrick travelling in a taxi from San Francisco airport before we find out that he is returning, after moving to Denver, for Agustín's and Eddie's (Daniel Franzese) wedding. The succeeding 82-minutes are filtered through Patrick's point-of-view. This is in stark contrast to the series, which takes the form of what Robin Nelson terms 'flexi-narrative', in which many characters have their own independent plotlines – particularly Dom and Agustín. *Looking: The Movie* is therefore similar to *Weekend* and *45 Years* in which the central protagonists, Russell and Kate respectively, are present in every single sequence. *Looking*, however, is reliant on cross-cutting between characters and sub-plots rather than having a central character working as a conduit for the action.

This narrative choice then has consequences on the style of *Looking: The Movie* compared to its serial counterpart. Firstly, it enables Haigh to intensify his long-take methods. Through maintaining a central focus on Patrick, as opposed to juggling plot-lines within a 28-minute episode, *Looking: The Movie* does not cross-cut between various sub-plots. This is most evident within the final sequence of *Looking: The Movie* which contains a 410-second shot that tracks Patrick and Richie's walk to a restaurant. The effect of this shot brings me to the second stylistic consequence of the tightly-focused narrative of *Looking: The Movie* which is that it heightens Patrick's subjectivity. The long-take functions to anchor us in Patrick's world, his experience of temporality and his perception of materiality. This is emphasised by the shot's conclusion: one second before the cut we hear a knock on a window which breaks the intimacy of Patrick and Richie's conversation as it takes Patrick aback. Finally, the shot cuts, which similarly shocks the viewer. So tightly are we implicated in Patrick's world via the long-take,

that when we are interrupted it affects the viewer as it does Patrick. Therefore, despite the textual similarities between *Looking* and *Looking: The Movie*, it is the change in narrative focus which leads to a more intensified pursuit of the techniques found in the series. In using the hybridised television-film form as opposed to the flexi-narrative of the series, Haigh reverts back to the narrative structure he pursues in *Weekend* and *45 Years*, that is an intense focus on an individual's perception and world-view, which also enables a heightening of his favoured long-take style.

Through analysing the consistencies in Haigh's style between British film and American television, we can begin to see how a British stylistic sensibility is now pervading representations of America. This has also been demonstrated through my analysis of *American Honey* which shows a refinement of Arnold's techniques – centring on subjectivity, perspective, mobile camera and a 4:3 aspect ratio. Elsewhere, McQueen's filmmaking exhibits continuities between the epochs he represents with an emphasis on repetition, symphonic sound, and the human body. Thus, throughout this chapter what we see emerging is less a nationally-specific style but an internationally-mutable one.

Haigh's Homonormative Project & Gay Marriage

> *"I love it when gays argue with other gays about being gay!"* *Doris* (Lauren Weedman), *Looking: The Movie*

> *"In America since the mid-90s a fierce debate has raged between assimilationist lesbians and gay men and radical queers. The assimilationists want gay marriage, inclusion in the military, the right to adopt children–i.e., equal status within the status quo. Queers, on the other hand, want nothing to do with the status quo, instead regarding the most vibrant and radical aspect of homosexuality as being precisely its opposition to normative sexuality and society."* (Kemp 2009, 8)

Looking is attentive to Patrick's world-view which adopts mainstream liberal thinking with regards to homosexuality: that gay men should be normalised in American society. However, *Looking* acknowledges the divisions within the LGBT+ community, namely between the assimilationist gay men (Patrick and Dom) and a more radical perspective (adopted by Brady (Chris Perfetti)). Haigh (in Nicholson 2014) has expressed his assimilationist view in reference to the discourse that has circulated around *Looking,* claiming that it should be considered a mainstream, universal piece of art:

> The fact that it's about three gay people means it automatically gets called
> 'the gay HBO show', and the only reason it annoys me is that it limits the
> audience. You make something and you want it to be a universal experience.
> We're not that different, gay people.

In this section, I will argue that Haigh's homonormative outlook is affirmed through *Looking's* central narrative tensions which continues arguments that emerge from *Weekend*. Thus, as well as being able to read Haigh's authorship in *Looking* through his style, we can also see it emerging thematically.

The gay marriage debate foregrounded the deep divisions within the LGBT+ community. A focal point of the debate rests on what Duggan (2003, p. 179) terms 'homonormativity' which she defines as:

> A politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and
> institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of
> a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture
> anchored in domesticity and consumption.

Thus, Duggan's critique of gay marriage rests upon the notion that gay men and lesbian women should not be assimilated with the neoliberal, traditionally heteronormative project. Elsewhere, there is a liberal approach towards gay marriage which argues that homonormativity in and of itself subverts popular assumptions regarding traditional gender binaries. Angela Bolte (2001, p. 40), for example, argues that 'same-sex marriage would

revolutionize the institution of marriage with regard to gender roles that support heterosexism and homophobia.'

My analysis of *Weekend* identified how its gay characters were situated within an intensely everyday environment which expresses concerns about gay assimilation – through the character of Glenn – whilst at the same time subverting the romance genre to assert Haigh's pro-homonormative stance. As Robin Griffiths (2016, pp. 597-98) argues:

> what was unique about this rather unconventional British romantic drama was not only its determinedly realistic depiction of contemporary queer experience – in all its unapologetic, cum-drenched mundanity – but, more crucially, its visibly interrogative approach to accepted neoliberal notions of the 'homo-ordinary' and the everyday […] Haigh intricately interweaves critical discourses on the complexities and underlying tensions of gay identity and politics in contemporary Britain throughout the film's narrative and thematic structure. In doing so, he reframes the ambiguities and political silences that were so typical of more homonormatively inclined filmmakers in order to make such issues the film's uncompromisingly central concern' (Griffiths 2016, 597-8).

Haigh's homonormative project extends to *Looking*, demonstrating the transnational and global reach of the queer debate on gay marriage and homonormativity. Through this, it can be suggested that the issue of gay rights is now a global or, at least, a Western concern.

Throughout *Looking*, these kinds of debates about homosexuality are frequently addressed in the scenes featuring Brady, Richie's boyfriend – and, by extension, Patrick's love rival – through Season Two and *Looking: The Movie*. Brady writes on gay issues and expresses radical positions on PrEP (a HIV preventive drug), gay stereotypes and gay marriage which persistently contradict Patrick's mainstream, assimilationist queer thinking. This is most explicitly addressed in *Looking: The Movie* in two scenes. The first of which involves a debate on marriage with many characters reflecting on how Agustín's own perspective of gay marriage has changed. Frank says that "I think his [Agustín's] exact words were, I'd rather seal up my

butthole and never suck another cock again rather than get married!" whilst Dom mockingly imitates the radical queer position previously adopted by Agustín in which he says: "I can't believe gay people are so desperate to be straight, they shouldn't even be called gay anymore." These kinds of comments are clearly deriding the radical perspective by positioning them in the past with Agustín claiming that "I was such a cunt." Following this, Brady says "soon you'll be adopting babies and going on family cruises with all the other Stepford homos." Brady then embodies a position which contradicts the other characters' embrace of homonormative structures by implicitly linking marriage with submissive suburban archetypes. After he says this, the shot pans around the group as Brady becomes removed from the frame, substituted by Richie and Patrick, framed tightly together as they reassure Agustín that getting married "is amazing."

This framing foreshadows the conclusion of *Looking: The Movie:* Brady and Richie break up – due to an argument with Patrick about being 'a good gay' – as Richie and Patrick express their love for each other and are reunited. The argument which takes place again centres around queerness, with Brady taking offence at how Patrick performs his sexuality, citing Patrick's 'femme-phobia,' and extending his arguments about gay marriage – Brady wants to get drunk so he "can forget how dull we've all become." The fact that this radical position is adopted by our protagonist's foil demonstrates Haigh's support for homonormativity. This is not a position we, the audience, are invited to sympathise with but, instead, is presented as a cynical rendering of difficult gay issues. When Brady splits up with Richie it means that the central couple we have been rooting for can finally unite and, like *Weekend*, the viewer enjoys a 'happy ending.'

These kinds of happy endings are historically reserved in American audiovisual culture for the heterosexual union, with classical Hollywood comedies often concluding with a traditional marriage. *Looking* subverts this by centring the concluding film around a gay marriage, thus, in Bolte's (2001) terms, 'revolutionising' the structures of marriage. Assimilation for Haigh results

in something to be celebrated, a final *dénouement* that argues for the normalisation of homosexuality. This extends the structure of feeling regarding homonormativity which underscored *Weekend's* affect. Stephanie Deborah Clare (2013, p. 796), for example, argues that 'with Russell, we see that homonormativity's allures appear clearly in the emotional and affective realms […] it is about being subject to romance, about feeling that he wants his life story to culminate in couple-hood.' The same argument is applied in *Looking*. The attraction to homonormativity is once again bound up with feeling: the central romance we have been investing in succeeds due to the rejection of a radical (Brady), and all of this takes place within the context of a celebratory gay wedding for one of the series' central characters.

Looking not only affirms a post-gay world through its narrative structure but also through the characterisation, particularly when Patrick and Dom talk about their own repressed experiences as teenagers. Some of the most poignant moments throughout the series see Patrick recalling how hard it was for him to accept his sexuality – he is glad his first sexual encounter, he tells Richie, happened outside of his home state because of his shame. In "Looking for a Plot" (Looking 2015, 2: 7), Patrick and Dom reflect on their closeted childhoods. Patrick stares at a lonely man at a gay bar in Dom's small hometown. They both reflect on how difficult it is for young gay men to come to terms with their sexuality as Dom and Doris deride the anonymous man, imagining how hard it must be for a closeted gay man in a small, conservative town. As the scene progresses, a man walks in and kisses the stranger, demonstrating how much has changed since Dom and Patrick were younger due to the normalisation of homosexuality. As Dom talks to guests at Doris's father's funeral, he comes out to an old friend who unexpectedly congratulates Dom's sexuality. Finally, they visit Dom's father's cemetery as he wants to finally come out to his father. They cannot find Dom's father's plot and so Dom screams out of the car window "I'm gay!" – before they eventually crash into a lorry. These correctives to the characters' feelings of shame, like Deborah Clare (2013) argued in relation to *Weekend*, is central to Haigh's emotional attachment with regards

to the homonormative. Haigh's authorship is then bound up with issues of normativity, extending the same arguments he made in a British film to an American cable television series. Haigh's post-gay world, in which homosexuality is emphatically ordinary, draws attention to but rejects radical notions regarding homonormativity.

The issues surrounding post-gay identity politics can also be read alongside my analyses of the post-national impulse in *Slow West* and the conditions of identity in the post-modern world in *Shame*. Furthermore, we have seen how Arnold's interest in identity politics and, particularly, her figuration of young working- and under-class women, has continuities between British and American film. Contemporary global cinema is then fluid: British filmmakers can transpose their thematic impulses between nations which indicates not only a post-national cinema but also hints at the conditions of a globalised world.

Conclusion

Him, Daniel Blake; I, American Honey

In 2016, Ken Loach's *I, Daniel Blake* (2016) was released one week after *American Honey*. Both films, too, were in competition at Cannes with *I, Daniel Blake* winning the coveted Palme D'Or and *American Honey* taking home the third-place Jury Prize. This result was repeated at the 2017 BAFTA awards in which *I, Daniel Blake* beat *American Honey* to win the Outstanding British Film award. The textual contrasts between these two films emphasise the differences between classical social realism and the tendency I have identified here, which brings us back to the debates which opened this thesis. *I, Daniel Blake* follows the struggles of Dan (Dave Johns) as he seeks to negotiate the Kafkaesque benefits system. Along the way, he meets other people struggling, too, most notably Katy (Hayley Squires), who has been forced to move from London to Newcastle, who begins prostituting herself to feed her two children. In its narrative construction, the film addresses many socio-political issues overtly: the welfare state, reliance on food banks, digital accessibility for the elderly and, more implicitly, the so-called 'tampon tax'.

The film opens with a black screen as we hear an interview between Dan and a healthcare professional in which Dan is asked irrelevant questions about his health. Dan's disembodied voice creates an immediate relationship with the viewer, as we are invited to sympathise with his plight and, when the credits finish and the interview is made visible, we are only shown Dan's face in close-up. This kind of opening might not be unusual for the tendency I have identified here, but the rest of the film has a marked difference to a film like *American Honey*. For example, there are few, if any, point-of-view shots in the film (which opened *American Honey*). This works in tandem with the sound design which privileges a fly-on-the-wall approach, rather than expressionistic soundscapes which speak to the interiority of the characters (and real-life subjects) which we identified in *American Honey*. This observational

form highlights the distinctions between classical modes of British social realism and new British cinema. Through textual analysis of the films surveyed within this thesis it becomes clear that, though there are various generic inflections depending on the space surveyed, such as realism within urban landscapes, there is a style that is becoming common within British art cinema. This mode relies on a close attention to subjectivity, with the filmmakers evoking the everyday world of their characters. Whilst these films do not follow a strict set of rules or criteria – it is by no means a clearly organized or devised movement – they all share an interest in the ways in which characters' make sense of their everyday lives. The films are then linked by a phenomenological tendency to represent the everyday lives of various subjects which stretch beyond space or place. In contrast to this, *I, Daniel Blake* is less interested in the micro-everyday experience of the individual and, is instead, a polemic about macro-political issues within the UK today. This was evident in the film's promotional strategy, in which much was made of Loach and writer Laverty's research into the UK's benefits system, which situated the characters not as an individual but as a symptom of broader socio-political issues. The very title*, I, Daniel Blake*, prioritizes the first-person pronoun yet Loach films Daniel's story in the third-person. Indeed, the titular speech which closes *I, Daniel Blake* begins: "I, Daniel Blake, am a citizen." He is, then, constructed as an everyman, one without his own way of seeing or feeling the world but, instead, a figure onto which Loach projects the hardships faced on the working-class during an age of austerity. A more appropriate, though less effective title, might be 'Him, Daniel Blake'.

I, Daniel Blake, then, continues Loach's authorial concerns regarding the (predominantly masculine) working-class which, again, is in stark contrast to the multiple everydays and generic registers on offer in the new British cinema. The mode evident throughout this thesis can take radically different forms to represent various subjects – from the under-class (*Bypass*) to the upper-middle classes (*Shame*) and with a more pronounced figuration of womanhood. This is complemented by the generic inflections these films take. From the oblique science-

fiction of *Under the Skin* to the (sub-)urban tropes found in *Shifty* to the anti-heritage films of *Bright Star* and *Wuthering Heights*, the utilization of genre in these films persistently and purposefully subvert representations of space. Furthermore, the style of the films shows that different cinematic approaches work to evoke dissimilar subjectivities demonstrating the multiplicities of the everyday within a single (post-)national cinema. We can think here of Andrea Arnold's roaming camera, capturing the phenomenal details of Star's suffocating home in *American Honey* which emphasise the racially-motivated sexual abuse she suffers, or the photographic quality of the landscape in *The Outer Edges* which allow the viewer to linger on details of the frame as Karl Hyde muses on deindustrialization. The forms of these films mark a departure from the lineage of British film. No longer are we witnessing a fantasy/realist dichotomy within British art cinema, but a more inclusive approach to various modes. Documentary films draw attention to their own construction, whilst a science-fiction film, such as *Under the Skin*, uses hidden cameras to capture quotidian lives in Glasgow.

This thesis has proposed that British art cinema detailing everyday lives is no longer confined to traditional observational modes of cinematic realism that we might associate with Loach, which brings us back to the debates which I highlighted in the introduction. In thinking through subjectivity what becomes clear is that these films work to formulate an empathetic first-person cinema rather than a macro-social realism. In this way, I have frequently argued that it is more useful to identify these films alongside contemporary trends of global art cinema. These films have more in common with contemporary filmmakers across the globe than their British ancestors, using modes of sensory realism and slow cinema which Tiago de Luca (2014) associates with Gus Van Sant, Tsai Ming-Liang and Carlos Reygades. De Luca's study, though, along with his edited collection *Slow Cinema*, largely precludes discussions of British cinema and, as such, my work follows arguments made by David Forrest (2013) in seeking to legitimate British cinema as art cinema.

Further Research

There are other areas of interest which have not been able to be addressed within the scope of my work. First and foremost is the issue of authorship. Although I have foregrounded Andrea Arnold, who has appeared in each chapter of this thesis, I have avoided an authorship-led structure. This has ensured a more inclusive approach, which allows for an elucidation of how these filmmakers represent space, reflecting the diverse range of talent within contemporary British independent cinema. Other filmmakers have had multiple films featured in this thesis: Clio Barnard (*The Arbor* and *The Selfish Giant*), Duane Hopkins (*Better Things* and *Bypass*), Kieran Evans (*Kelly + Victor*, *Finisterre* and *The Outer Edges*) and Andrew Haigh (*Weekend, 45 Years* and *Looking*). These figures hint at the wealth of creativity within contemporary British cinema and, in different ways, they transcend my foregrounding of sensory realism with their own unique authorial signatures. We have seen how Haigh, for example, utilises the long-take and the photographic to elucidate his thematic interests in time and sexuality. Hopkins, meanwhile, foregrounds intricate sound design and associative editing patterns to explore the economically and spatially marginalized in contemporary British society. We could also point to the ways in which a figure like Evans continually crosses cultural borders to collaborate with musicians and literary figures which speaks to the cross-pollination within contemporary British culture. More work must then address the multiple and distinctive filmmaking talents which have emerged in Britain to further our understanding of contemporary British independent cinema.

It is not only directors who have contributed to the thriving independent British film scene. Many cast and crew members also contribute much to contemporary British independent film. In particular, I would single out Robbie Ryan, the cinematographer who has worked on every Andrea Arnold feature film, *Catch Me Daddy* and *Slow West*. However, he has also worked with the old guard of British cinema, such as his frequent collaborations with Ken Loach (*The Angel's Share, Jimmy's Hall* and *I, Daniel Blake*), as well as his work on Stephen Frears' *Philomena* (2013) and Sally Potter's *Ginger & Rosa* (2012). The divergences between the

filmmaking styles of these directors are stark. Here, we can think of the intensely subjective style of Arnold in contrast to the objectivity of Loach's latter-day work, or *Catch Me Daddy's* mobile, neon-lit cinematography versus Frears' purposefully simplistic approach. Much can be revealed through Ryan's approach between, for example, a Loach and an Arnold film. Arnold's films are handheld, often shot on digital and in 4:3 and, as argued, are persistently expressive of her characters' subjectivity. The films Ryan has worked on for Loach, though, are more objective in keeping a distance from the characters. Ryan (in Champetier 2016) has said:

> Working with Ken [Loach] is exactly what you say, he's a director who knows really, really what he wants. I think being a DoP [Director of Photography] you have to be attuned to whatever a director wants, whether they really want you to create a visual look and do whatever you bring to it, or on the Ken [Loach] level, you kind of adapt to whatever Ken wants to do, and try and see what he's thinking. He's been doing it for so long now that he kind of has a set kind of approach, to making a film, so as a DoP you sort of slot into that style.

Ryan indicates that Loach has a set style and is less adaptable to new external influences and creative partnerships. Indeed, Ryan's cinematography throughout *I, Daniel Blake* is largely unobtrusive, cohering with Loach's recent output, which is complemented by the film's natural rhythms. His work throughout this film, though, does use framing to accentuate the characters' sense of entrapment through the preponderance of door frames, corridors and alleyways within which they are filmed. His work with Loach generally contrasts to much of his other work with younger, often debut filmmakers, who prove more adaptable directors. If we compare this with his partnership with Arnold we find a more liberated Ryan as he says that working with Arnold is: 'like having an adventure together, learning something new' (Connolly, 2011). This is reiterated by Arnold (in Collin 2016) who claims that: 'From the early days I was always asking Robbie [Ryan] 'OK, can you get the ladybird?', but now when I say, 'Robbie, there are starlings!' he'll shout back 'Already got 'em''. His work with Arnold is then characterised by spontaneity and a kinetic cinematographic method which allows us to engage

with characters' subjectivities. The divergences between the old and the new, between social realism and this sensory realism, can be revealed through Ryan's involvement in a diverse range of contemporary British cinema. More work could be done to elucidate the specificities of Ryan's work and how this can be used to detail the multiple filmmaking practices and textual divergences of contemporary British independent cinema. Furthermore, through close analysis of his work, we may be able to argue for a cinematographer as auteur paradigm.

Many stars, such as Michael Fassbender (*Slow West, Hunger, Shame* and *Fish Tank*) and Kate Dickie (*Red Road, For Those in Peril, Catch Me Daddy*), have also demonstrated a commitment to this tendency within British cinema. These actors balance their filmographies with larger American productions. Fassbender, for example, has starred in the *Alien* and *X-Men* franchises, whilst Dickie features in *Game of Thrones, The Witch* (2015) and *Prometheus* (2012). It may develop our understanding of transnational structures by situating how their stardom circulates around the world and whether this attracts foreign audiences beyond the arthouse to British cinema.

Concluding Remarks: Making-Sense of the World

> Just as the entire mode of existence of human collectives changes over long historical periods, so too does their mode of perception. The way in which human perception is organized – the medium in which it occurs is conditioned not only by nature but by history. (Benjamin 2008, p. 23)

In recent acclaimed, high-budget Hollywood filmmaking, there has been an uptake of a certain kind of 'immersive' cinema. In particular, I am thinking of three films – *Gravity* (2013), *The Revenant* (2015), and *Dunkirk* (2017) – which purposefully contain a void of characterisation in order for the audience to project themselves into these highly-charged, intensely sensory environments. They utilise styles found in the sensory realist film to achieve this: the long-take, generic inflections, and intricate sound design. These films, too, express, in different ways, a fluctuating attachment to the national: *Gravity*, for example, directed by Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón, is a patriotic flag-waving of American heroism; *The Revenant,* again made by

one of the 'three amigos' (Shaw 2016), Alejandro González Iñárritu, interrogates and destabilizes America's heritage through the genre of the western (in much the same way as *Slow West*); whilst *Dunkirk*, again, is a nationalistic celebration of British heroism during the Second World War. This then signals that the concerns throughout my thesis – the post-national, transnational and a sensory evocation of space and heritage – are extending outside of art cinemas and are, in fact, circulating across many different forms.

Cultural texts, such as film, shape the way we make sense of the world and, in the contemporary age, culture is dominated by mediums which emphasise the sensory – particularly across a wide range of cinema. This is further demonstrated by the uptake of a material turn in the humanities, which has been a theoretical strain analysed throughout this thesis; the phenomenological position of the filmmakers persistently draws our attention to the sensory, time and an experiential evocation of space. The sensory turn in cinema may just be a reflection of the conditions of hypermodernity which were critiqued throughout *Shame* – Lipovetsky (2005, pp. 10-11), for example, argues that, in the hypermodern age, 'commodities must do more than just function efficiently, they must awaken sensual pleasures, offer a high-quality sonic or olfactory experience, or provide a more pleasurable tactile one.'

Cinema, as a major part of our national and global culture, helps us make sense of nationhood and our world and these films do so, quite literally, through *making* sense: appealing to touch, smell, sight and sound. These films evoke a multiplicity of everyday spaces, give voice to others, to those we do not know. Rather than judging them, or suggesting that individuals are symptomatic of macro-social issues, these films emphasise their subjectivity, allowing us to inhabit an other's world whether familiar or distant.

Through the course of writing this thesis there has been an upsurge in political debate which has shaped my thinking on British national cinema. There has, on the one hand, been a rise of nationalism in the election of Donald Trump in America and Britain's exit from the EU (I still have misguided hopes that this nationalism might stir a more widespread appreciation for

British film). Conversely, this has led to an intensification in support for globalisation in the election of rampantly pro-EU Emmanuel Macron in France and increasingly vocal anti-fascist sentiments in the UK and America. Watching, thinking, reading and writing about British cinema has helped me make sense of such events, particularly Brexit and its response. We can think, for example, of the post-national impetus present throughout these films: that conflicting sense that the national can still persist and not be subsumed by globalisation; the attention to the everyday lives of frequently left-behind post-industrial spaces (as analysed in Chapter Three), through their sense-making, leading to an understanding of the dissatisfaction of these communities; the relationship we have with our heritage (Chapter Two) helping us to understand the myths which are sold to us (which these films, thankfully, destabilize); and, finally, the ways in which we are increasingly turning to America, resulting in an erosion of specifically British culture, which could lead to some feeling unrepresented. I am excited to see what sense British filmmakers can make of such substantial socio-political events in the coming years and whether this tendency will continue. Thus, the value of culture, of cinema, is to help us make sense of our world; the specific value of contemporary British cinema, I have argued, is to also make-sense of everyday spaces.

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10 (2002) Directed by Abbas Kiarostami. Iran.

4.3.2.1. (2010) Directed by Noel Clarke and Mark Davis. UK/USA.

9 Songs (2004) Directed by Michael Winterbottom. UK.

A Field in England (2013) Directed by Ben Wheatley. UK.

A Man Escaped (1956) Directed by Robert Bresson. France.

A Taste of Honey (1961) Directed by Tony Richardson. UK.

A Thousand Clouds of Peace (2003) Directed by Julián Hernández. Mexico.

Act of Killing, The (2012) Directed by Joshua Oppenheimer. Denmark/Norway/UK.

Adulthood (2008) Directed by Noel Clarke. UK.

Ae Fond Kiss… (2004) Directed by Ken Loach. UK/Belgium/Germany/Italy/Spain.

Age of Innocence, The (1993) Directed by Martin Scorsese. USA.

Alice in the Cities/Alice in den Städten (1974) Directed by Wim Wenders. West Germany.

All or Nothing (2002) Directed by Mike Leigh. UK.

American Beauty (1999) Directed by Sam Mendes. USA.

American Honey (2016) Directed by Andrea Arnold. UK/USA.

An Angel at My Table (1990) Directed by Jane Campion. Australia/New Zealand/UK.

Another Country (1984) Directed by Marek Kanievska. UK.

Another Year (2010) Directed by Mike Leigh. UK.

As Long as They're Happy (1955) Directed by J. Lee Thompson. UK.

Atonement (2007) Directed by Joe Wright. France/UK/USA.

Badlands (1973) Directed by Terrence Malick. USA.

Beautiful Thing (1996) Directed by Hettie Macdonald. UK.

*Berlin: The Symphony of a City/Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Grosstadt (*1927) Directed by Walter Ruttmann. West Germany.

Better Things (2008) Directed by Duane Hopkins. UK.

Billy Elliot (2000) Directed by Stephen Daldry. UK.

Blade Runner (1982) Directed by Ridley Scott. USA.

Blood on Satan's Claw (1971) Directed by Piers Haggard. UK.

Bonded by Blood (2010) Directed by Sacha Bennett. UK

Bonnie & Clyde (1967) Directed by Warren Beatty. USA.

Brassed Off (1996) Directed by Mark Herman. UK.

Breathless/A bout de soufflé (1960) Directed by Jean-Luc Godard. France.

Bright Star (2009) Directed by Jane Campion. Australia/UK.

Bullet Boy (2004) Directed by Saul Dibb. UK.

Bypass (2014) Directed by Duane Hopkins. UK.

Captain America: The Winter Soldier (2014) Directed by Anthony Russo & Joe Russo. USA.

Carrington (1995) Directed by Christopher Hampton. France/UK.

Catch Me Daddy (2015) Directed by Daniel Wolfe & Stephen Wolfe. UK.

Cathy Come Home (1966) Directed by Ken Loach. Written by Jeremy Sandford. BBC. UK

Chariots of Fire (1981) Directed by Hugh Hudson. UK.

The Man with a Movie Camera/Chelovek s kino-apparatom (1929) Directed by Dziga Vertov. Soviet Union.

Chronicle of a Summer/Chronique d'un été (1961) Directed by Edgar Morin & Jean Rouch. France.

Close-Up (1990) Directed by Abbas Kiarostami. Iran.

Control (2007) Directed by Anton Corbijn. Austalia/Japan/UK/USA.

Dance Hall (1950) Directed by Charles Chrichton. UK.

Dheepan (2015) Directed by Jacques Audiard. France.

Django Unchained (2012) Directed by Quentin Tarantino. USA.

Dockers (1999) Written by Jimmy McGovern & Irvine Welsh. Channel 4. UK.

Dog Soldiers (2001) Directed by Neil Marshall. UK.

Donkeys (2010) Directed by Morag McKinnon. Denmark/UK.

Dunkirk (2017) Directed by Christopher Nolan. France/Netherlands/UK/USA.

Easy Rider (1969) Directed by Dennis Hopper. USA.

Eden Lake (2008) Directed by James Watkins. UK.

Elizabeth (1998) Directed by Shekhar Kapur. UK.

Everyday (2012) Directed by Michael Winterbottom. UK.

Falling, The (2014) Directed by Carol Morley. UK.

Field in England, A (2012) Directed by Ben Wheatley. UK.

Fifty Shades of Grey (2015) Directed by Sam Taylor-Johnson. USA.

Finisterre (2003) Directed by Kieran Evans & Paul Kelly. UK.

Fish Tank (2009) Directed by Andrea Arnold. UK.

For Those in Peril (2013) Directed by Paul Wright. UK.

Police Story/Ging chat goo si (1985) Directed by Jackie Chan. Hong Kong.

Ginger & Rosa (2012) Directed by Sally Potter. Canada/Denmark/UK.

Girlhood/Bande de filles (2014) Directed by Celine Sciamma. France.

Gravity (2013) Directed by Alfonso Cuarón. UK/USA.

Half Nelson (2006) Directed by Ryan Fleck. USA.

Hard Labour (1973) Directed by Mike Leigh. UK.

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban (2004) Directed by Alfonso Cuarón. UK/USA.

Here Come the Huggets (1948) Directed by Ken Annakin. UK.

High Hopes (1998) Directed by Mike Leigh. UK.

Hot Fuzz (2007) Directed by Edgar Wright. France.UK/USA.

Howards End (1992) Directed by James Ivory. UK.

Human Traffic (1999) Directed by Justin Kerrigan. UK.

Hunger (2009) Directed by Steve McQueen. UK.

I Want You (1998) Directed by Michael Winterbottom. UK.

I, Daniel Blake (2016) Directed by Ken Loach. Belgium/France/UK.

Imitation Game, The (2014) Directed by Morten Tyldum. UK/USA.

In the Dark Half (2012) Directed by Alistair Siddon. UK.

Innocence of Memories (2015) Directed by Grant Gee. UK.

It's a Free World… (2007) Directed by Ken Loach. UK.

Japón (2002) Directed by Carlos Reygades. Germany/Mexico/Netherlands/Spain.

Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles (1975) Directed by Chantal Akerman. Belgium/France.

Jimmy's Hall (2014) Directed by Ken Loach. France/Ireland/UK.

Joy Division (2007) Directed by Grant Gee. UK.

Keep the Lights On (2012) Directed by Ira Sachs. USA.

Kelly + Victor (2012) Directed by Kieran Evans. Ireland/UK.

Kes (1969) Directed by Ken Loach. UK.

Kidulthood (2006) Directed by Menhaj Huda. UK.

Kill List (2009) Directed by Ben Wheatley. UK.

Kings of the Road/Im Lauf der Zeit (1976) Directed by Wim Wenders. West Germany.

Koyaanisqatsi (1982) Directed by Godfrey Reggio. USA.

Ladybird, Ladybird (1994) Directed by Ken Loach. UK.

Last Days (2005) Directed by Gus Van Sant. USA.

Last Resort (2000) Directed by Pawel Pawlikowski. UK.

Late Night Shopping (2001) Directed by Saul Metzstein. UK.

Leviathan (2012) Directed by Lucien Castaing-Taylor & Verene Paravel. USA.

Like It Is (1998) Directed by Paul Oremland. UK.

London (1994) Directed by Patrick Keiller. UK.

London Orbital (2002) Directed by Christopher Petit & Iain Sinclair. UK.

London Overground (2016) Directed by John Rogers. UK.

Look Back in Anger (1959) Directed by Tony Richardson. UK.

Looking (2014-2016) Created by Michael Lannan. HBO. USA.

Looking for Eric (2009) Directed by Ken Loach. Belgium/France/Italy/Spain/UK.

Looks and Smiles (1981) Directed by Ken Loach. UK.

Lucy (2014) Directed by Luc Besson. France/USA.

Mankamana (2013) Directed by Stephen Spray & Pacho Velez. USA.

Match Point (2005) Directed by Woody Allen. Luxembourg/UK/USA.

Maurice (1987) Directed by James Ivory. UK.

Meantime (1983) Directed by Mike Leigh. Channel 4. UK.

Meek's Cutoff (2010) Directed by Kelly Reichardt. USA.

Meeting People is Easy (1998) Directed by Grant Gee. UK.

Melancholia (2008) Directed by Lav Diaz. Phillipines.

Mississippi Grind (2015) Directed by Anna Boden & Ryan Fleck. USA.

Mr. Turner (2014) Directed by Mike Leigh. France/Germany/UK.

My Beautiful Laundrette (1985) Directed by Stephen Frears. UK.

My Blueberry Nights (2007) Directed by Wong Kar-Wai. China/France/Hong Kong.

My Name is Joe (1998) Directed by Ken Loach. UK.

My Summer of Love (2004) Directed by Pawel Pawlikowski. UK.

Nanook of the North (1922) Directed by Robert J. Flaherty. USA.

Neds (2010) Directed by Peter Mullan. France/Italy/UK.

New York, New York (1977) Directed by Martin Scorsese. USA.

Nil by Mouth (1997) Directed by Gary Oldman. France/UK.

No Country for Old Men (2007) Directed by Ethan Coen & Joel Coen. USA.

Nowhere Boy (2009) Directed by Sam Taylor-Johnson. UK.

O Brother Where Art Thou? (2000) Directed by Ethan Coen & Joel Coen. USA.

Orlando (1992) Directed by Sally Potter. UK.

Orphans (1998) Directed by Peter Mullan. UK.

Paris, Texas (1984) Directed by Wim Wenders. France/West Germany.

Passion of Remembrance (1986) Directed by Isaac Julien. UK.

Patience: After Sebald (2012) Directed by Grant Gee. UK.

Patriot, The (2000) Directed by Roland Emmerich. USA.

Penda's Fen (1974) Directed by Alan Clarke. Written by David Rudkin. BBC. UK.

Perfect Sense (2011) Directed by David Mackenzie. Denmark/Ireland/Sweden/UK.

Philomena (2013) Directed by Stephen Frears. UK.

Piano, The (1993) Directed by Jane Campion. Australia/France/New Zealand.

Pickpocket (1959) Directed by Robert Bresson. France.

Pitch Black Heist (2011) Directed by John Maclean. UK.

Playing Away (1986) Directed by Horace Ové. UK.

Pressure (1976) Directed by Horace Ové. UK.

Pride (2014) Directed by Matthew Warchus. France/UK.

Pride and Prejudice (2005) Directed by Joe Wright. France/UK/USA.

Prometheus (2012) Directed by Ridley Scott. UK/USA.

Ratcatcher (1999) Directed by Lynne Ramsay. France/UK.

Red Road (2006) Directed by Andrea Arnold. Denmark/UK.

Rain/Regen (1929) Directed by Joris Ivens. Netherlands.

Rita, Sue and Bob Too! (1987) Directed by Alan Clarke. UK.

Road (1987) Directed by Alan Clarke. Written by Jim Cartwright. BBC. UK.

Robinson in Ruins (2010) Directed by Patrick Keiller. UK.

Room at the Top (1959) Directed by Jack Clayton. UK.

Room with a View, A (1985) Directed by James Ivory. UK.

Rosetta (1999) Directed by Jean-Pierre Dardenne & Luc Dardenne. Belgium/France.

Safe (1993) Directed by Antonia Bird. Written by Al Ashton. BBC. UK.

Saturday Night & Sunday Morning (1960) Directed by Karel Reisz. UK.

Self Made (2010) Directed by Gillian Wearing. UK.

Sense & Sensibility (1995) Directed by Ang Lee. UK/USA.

Shallow Grave (1994) Directed by Danny Boyle. UK.

Shame (2011) Directed by Steve McQueen. UK.

Shifty (2008) Directed by Eran Creevey. UK.

Sightseers (2012) Directed by Ben Wheatley. UK.

Six Feet Under (2001-2005) Created by Alan Ball. HBO. USA.

Sleep Furiously (2008) Directed by Gideon Koppel. UK

Small Faces (1996) Directed by Giles Mackinnon. UK

Stagecoach (1939) Directed by John Ford. USA.

Starred Up (2014) Directed by David Mackenzie. UK

Stranger by the Lake (2013) Directed by Alain Guiraudie. France.

Sugar (2008) Directed by Anna Boden & Ryan Fleck. USA.

Sunset Song (2015) Directed by Terence Davis. Luxembourg/UK.

Sweet Sixteen (2002) Directed by Ken Loach. Germany/Spain/UK.

Sweetgrass (2009) Directed by Illisa Barbash & Lucien Castaing-Taylor. USA.

Taekwondo (2016) Directed by Marco Berger & Martín Farina. Argentina.

Taste of Cherry (1997) Directed by Abbas Kiarostami. Iran.

The 400 Blows (1959) Directed by Francois Truffaut. France.

The Angel's Share (2012) Directed by Ken Loach. Belgium/France/Italy/UK.

The Apple (1998) Directed by Samira Makhmalbaf. Iran.

The Arbor (2010) Directed by Clio Barnard. UK.

The Bicycle Thieves (1948) Directed by Vittorio de Sica. Italy.

The Big Money (1958) Directed by John Paddy Carstairs. UK.

The Blue Lamp (1950) Directed by Basil Dearden. UK.

The Borderlands (2013) Directed by Elliot Goldner. UK.

The Conversation (1974) Directed by Francis Ford Coppola. USA.

The Essex Boys (2000) Directed by Terry Windsor. UK.

The Full Monty (1997) Directed by Paul Cattaneo. UK.

The Grapes of Wrath (1940) Directed by John Ford. USA.

The Kid with a Bike/Le gamin au vélo (2011) Directed by Jean-Pierre Dardenne and Luc Dardenne. Belgium/France/Italy.

The London Perambulator (2009) John Rogers. UK.

The Revenant (2015) Directed by Alejandro G. Iñárritu. USA.

The Rise of the Footsoldier (2007) Directed by Julian Gilbey. UK.

The River/He liu (1997) Directed by Tsai Ming-Liang. Taiwan.

The Road to Guantamno (2006) Directed by Mat Whitecross & Michael Winterbottom. UK.

The Searchers (1956) Directed by John Ford. USA.

The Selfish Giant (2013) Directed by Clio Barnard. UK.

The Theory of Everything (2014) Directed by James Marsh. UK/USA.

The Unloved (2009) Directed by Samantha Morton. 2009

The Wicker Man (1973) Directed by Robin Hardy. UK.

The Wind that Shakes the Barley (2006) Directed by Ken Loach. Ireland/UK.

The Wizard of Oz (1939) Directed by Victor Fleming. USA.

This is England (2006) Directed by Shane Meadows. UK.

This Sporting Life (1963) Directed by Lindsay Anderson. UK

Top Boy (2011-) Written by Ronan Bennett. UK.

Top of the Lake (2013-) Directed and written by Jane Campion & Gerard Lee. BBC/BBC UKTV/Sundance TV. Australia/New Zealand/UK/USA.

Trainspotting (1996) Directed by Danny Boyle. UK.

Transparent (2014-) Created by Jill Solloway. Amazon Productions. USA.

True Grit (2010) Directed by Ethan Coen & Joel Coen. USA.

Twentynine Palms (2003) Directed by Bruno Dumont. France/Germany/USA.

Twin Town (1996) Directed by Kevin Allen. UK.

Two Years at Sea (2012) Directed by Ben Rivers. UK.

Under the Skin (2013) Directed by Jonathan Glazer. Switzerland/UK/USA.

Vagabond (1985) Directed by Agnes Varda. France.

Wake Wood (2010) Directed by David Keating. UK.

Walker (2012) Directed by Tsai Ming-Liang. Taiwan.

Wasp (2003) Directed by Andrea Arnold. UK.

We Need to Talk About Kevin (2011) Directed by Lynne Ramsay. UK/USA.

Weekend (2011) Directed by Andrew Haigh. UK.

Wilde (1997) Directed by Brian Gilbert. UK.

Witchfinder General (1968) Directed by Michael Reeves. UK.

Wonderland (1999) Directed by Michael Winterbottom. UK.

Wuthering Heights (2011) Directed by Andrea Arnold. UK.

You Were Never Really Here (2017) Directed by Lynne Ramsay. France/UK/USA.

Young Adam (2003) Directed by David Mackenzie. UK.

Zabriskie Point (1970) Directed by Michaelangelo Antonioni. USA.

Zidane, un portrait du 21e siècle/Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait (2006) Directed by Douglas Gordon. France/UK.