‘Movie-Made Generation’: Cinema-Going and the Novel in Post-War Britain

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ABSTRACT

'Movie-Made Generation': Cinema-Going and the Novel in Post-War Britain.
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This thesis examines how the reading and writing of the post-war British novel is altered by the emergence of an 'everyday' cinema-going culture amongst young people in the 1920s, 30s and 40s. The thesis demonstrates how viewing and reading practices converge in the twentieth-century and how the resulting modification of the visual literacy of this new, 'movie-made' generation of 'cinesthetic' writers and readers refigures realism in this period. Such cinesthetic realism can be differentiated from the modernist mode of the 'camera-eye' by how it elicits interactive (and often sexist) affects and leads to techniques such as 'indexical characterisation' and a consideration of 'extratextual' narratives. Thus, the thesis argues for the post-war period as one of literary innovation as opposed to the regressive, anti-modern epoch it is still widely labelled.

The work encompasses a broad range of novels and novelists: 'Invitations to a Candy-Floss World?' explains how John Braine's 'documentary' fiction engages with cinematic escapism, how Colin MacInnes incorporates cinema-going as an emblem of marginalisation, and how Alan Sillitoe positions cinema as a 'valid' literary influence; 'I Could Have Bitten Her' examines the influence of Philip Larkin's addiction to cinema in his debut novel, John Wain's investigation of the cinesthetic reification of the post-war novelist, and Kingsley Amis' extratextual and (surprisingly) feminist endeavours; 'Passionate Detachment' explores Muriel Spark's employment of cinema to represent a crisis in feminine ipseity, Lynne Reid Banks' use of 'sexist' cinema as a proto-feminist trope (in conjunction with an interview with Banks), and Iris Murdoch's relationship with cinema as 'Plato's Cave', which leads to refigurations of realism and feminist forms of escape.

Ultimately, this thesis aims to foreground an underestimated aspect of the transition between the 'late modernist' and the 'contemporary' in British fiction.

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1. DARK CORNERS, BACK ROWS: THE 'MOVIE-MADE GENERATION' AND LITERARY CRITICISM

> *It is true that Robbe-Grillet himself invokes the film to define the 'new realism' he wants to impart to the novel; and other novelists have invoked the film medium in a similar spirit. The narrator of J. D. Salinger's* Zooey *describes the story as a 'sort of prose home-movie'. The main character of Doris Lessing's* The Golden Notebook *– that anguished account of a writer's effort to fix, identify and express reality – finds herself constantly alluding to the cinema to indicate the completely truthful, mimetic quality she is seeking in her writing; and her final, most satisfactory insight into her own experience comes in the form of a hallucination in which she seems to see her life as a film which she has directed herself. These are however rhetorical strategies – the visual medium is invoked to reinforce a verbal communication.*
>
> - David Lodge, 'The Novelist at the Crossroads' (1969)[1]

> *Slipping the point of his knife under the upholstery, Harry made a long slit in the seat between his legs. Amber now emerged from behind the screen in a carelessly tied negligee. As she bent forward to pick up a slipper she paused, and the cameras lingered on her drooping breasts. Harry swallowed, and his spit was like bile in his throat. He wanted a tart like that and a car like that and a swank apartment like that, Christ, how he wanted them. He pushed his hand through the slit and grabbed a handful of Amber's sorbo tits. Savagely he tore out a great lump and kneaded it between his fingers.*
>
> - David Lodge, *The Picturegoers* (1960)[2]

Such was the importance of cinema to twentieth-century aesthetics and so vital is the status of cinema as a nexus for interdisciplinary literary criticism, it is difficult to imagine that one could find a critic who would fundamentally reject Colin MacCabe's striking dictum that 'it is impossible to give a serious account of any twentieth-century writer without reference to the cinema'.[3] This being

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[1] David Lodge, 'The Novelist at the Crossroads' [1969], in *The novelist at the crossroads: and other essays on fiction and criticism* (London: Routledge, 1986), p. 17.

[2] Lodge, *The Picturegoers* [1960] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), p. 68.

[3] Colin MacCabe, 'On Impurity: the Dialectics of Cinema and Literature', in Marina MacKay & Lyndsey Stonebridge (eds.), *British Fiction After Modernism: The Novel at Mid-Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 16

acknowledged, it is thus even more difficult to understand how post-war British novelists have done such a good job of evading such consideration. It appears that they have been hidden behind two heavy curtains of critical thought: the practical idea that significant cinematic influence on literary form is found in modernist texts; and the lingering notion that post-war realism represents, at least to some degree, a return to the empirical, analogical forms of nineteenth-century classic realism. It has seemed easy to overlook the fact that the 'return' to realism in the post-war period is led by a generation of writers who grow up when cinema-going is at its absolute height, at a time when perceptions of the medium see it as, simultaneously, an ontologically real aesthetic and the pleasure machine of escapist fantasy. Indeed, the briefest of glances at the novels of the period and the responses of their readers suggest fundamental shifts in the influence of the cinematic and a consequent refiguration of classic realist discourse. In order to understand why these shifts appear to be disconnected from ongoing critical debates and how they might contribute to our understanding of the twentieth-century British novel, this thesis investigates the ways in which the widespread culture of 'everyday' cinema-going in mid-twentieth-century Britain influences a generation of novel-readers and novel-writers. To see these 'movie-made' readers and writers most clearly, one must begin by winding the curtains back and establishing the post-war novel's current critical relationships with realism and cinema.

Realism and the Novel Since the War

In any discussion of the British novel, one rarely strays too far from a debate on realism. Within this debate, attempts to define the precise nature of the realism presented by a significant swathe of novels in the two decades after the Second World War have proved remarkably problematic. The post-war realist novel is undoubtedly a reflection of a society facing a daunting array of tensions and shifts: from 'Austerity Britain' to the 'Age of Affluence'; from the glory of Empire to the shame of the Suez Crisis; from the joy of VE Day to the fear of atomic war. In the face of such turbulence, it is little wonder that a generation of seemingly 'Angry' writers emerges. As nebulous as this grouping was, at the time it seemed clear to all that, in contrast to the High Modernists, new novelists were effecting an explicit engagement with the contorted social realities of the era. More recent critical works such as Alan Sinfield's *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain* (1989), D. J. Taylor's *After the War: the Novel and English society since 1945* (1993), and Sinfield's and Alastair Davies' *British Culture of the Postwar: an Introduction to Literature and Society, 1945-1999* (2000) have continued to chart the close relationship between the post-war British novelist and the socio-political tensions of the time. Clearly, many of the novels of this period – and their apparent proliferation of kitchen sinks, lathes and benefit forms – demonstrate a keen eye for society and its issues and, as such, can be broadly defined as works of social realism. It is less clear, however, why the 'kitchen sink realism' of this period is so often tied to the mimetic frameworks of nineteenth-century realism.

This unfortunate parallel, with all it connotations of regression and consolation, has yet to be washed down the plughole. The ongoing debates defining the nature of mid-century realism demand further scrutiny.

For critics trying to place these works into the context of a longer literary tradition, it seemed clear that the re-emergence of explicitly realist technique represented a backwards step in the development of the novel. For decades, the dominant reading of the new post-war novel was of its feckless rejection of the experimental forms of Modernism and its lazy return to Victorian naturalism. More recently,[4] Malcolm Bradbury has claimed that a triumvirate of American critics were responsible for this trend: James Gindin, Frederick R. Karl and, particularly, Rubin Rabinovitz, whose *The Reaction Against Experiment in the English Novel, 1950-1960* (1964) claimed that many writers of the 1950s 'participated in the rejection of experimental forms and a return to a more traditional style'.[5] Bradbury argues that these critics influence Bernard Bergonzi's seminal claims that 'English literature in the fifties and sixties has been both backward- and inward-looking' and that, infamously, the novel was 'no longer novel'.[6] This is true to a certain extent, yet similar claims were being made before Bergonzi's statement. Walter Allen's *The Novel Today* (1955) sees a 'renewal in the

[4] See Malcolm Bradbury, *The Modern British Novel 1878-2001*. Rev. edn. (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 275.
[5] Rubin Rabinovitz, *The Reaction Against Experiment in the English Novel, 1950-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 5.
[6] Bernard Bergonzi, *The Situation of the Novel* [1970] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 67. Bergonzi's first chapter is entitled 'The Novel No Longer Novel'.

influence on contemporary writers of the Victorians', who are thus 'attempt[ing] a return to something like nineteenth-century modes'.[7] In 1961, Raymond Williams claims that the '1950s could fairly be characterized […] as a period of return to older forms'.[8] Even the revised edition of G. S. Fraser's *The Modern Writer and His World* (1964) cites 'plain straightforward writers, using old-fashioned story-telling methods' who offer 'without being wildly ambitious […an] obviously accurate portrayal of some cross-section of contemporary life'.[9] The notion that post-war realism is technically regressive was all-pervasive.

A shift in this regressive critical stance only becomes possible when definitions of realism are slowly disentangled from the empirical modes and conventions of nineteenth-century classic realism and naturalism. Of the critics engaged in discussion of contemporary fiction at this time, it is perhaps only Williams who explicitly distances his definition of realism from naturalism. In his 'Film and the Dramatic Tradition' (1954), Williams states that:

> the term *realistic* has shifted its sense – now no longer merely, or wholly, the convention of verisimilitude in representation, but including ideas of 'normality' and of 'probability' – [and] one must, I think, further observe how complicated the whole issue of realism has become.[10]

[7] Walter Allen, *The Novel Today* (London: Longmans, 1955), p. 29.
[8] Raymond Williams, 'A Changing Social History of English Writing', *Audience*, 8:76 (Winter 1961), quoted in Rabinovitz, pp. 9-10.
[9] G.S. Fraser, *The Modern Writer and His World.* Rev. edn. (London: Andre Deutsch, 1964), pp. 29, 169.
[10] Williams, 'Film and the Dramatic Tradition', in Williams & Michael Orrom, *Preface to Film* (London: Film Drama Ltd., 1954), p. 30.

Furthermore, Williams's 'Realism and the Contemporary Novel' (1958) – whose discussion of the realistic novel makes it clear that he does not refer to the forms of naturalism, as 'you don't realize this vision by detailed stocktaking descriptions of shops or back-parlours or station waiting-rooms'[11] – defines 'social' and 'personal' splits (which suggests an awareness of Auerbach's discussion of Modernist mimesis rarely felt in British criticism of the Fifties) in the tradition that have led to a fundamental problem in contemporary realism, including the debut efforts of Wain and Amis:

> The paradox of these novels is that on the one hand they seem the most real kind of contemporary writing — they were welcomed because they were so like our actual feelings — and yet on the other hand their final version of reality is parodic and farcical. The fact illustrates very well the general dilemma: these writers start with real personal feelings, but to sustain and substantiate them, in their given form, the world of action in which they operate has to be pressed, as it were inevitably, towards caricature. To set these feelings in our actual world, rather than in this world farcically transformed at crisis, would be in fact to question the feelings, to go on from them to a very difficult adjustment to reality. Instead of adjustment, what we actually get is a phantasy release: swearing on the 'phone, giving a mock lecture, finding a Buchan-type figure on which social aggression can be concentrated. Because these are our liveliest writers, they illustrate our contemporary difficulty most clearly. The gap between our feelings and our social observation is dangerously wide.[12]

Williams' notion of a 'gap' in the tradition raises interesting questions about the nature of mid-century realism and infers a dislocation from the philosophical conventions of nineteenth-century naturalism and its rigid mimetic framework.

[11] Williams, 'Realism and the Contemporary Novel', *University Left Review*, 4 (Summer 1958), p. 22.
[12] Williams, 'Realism and the Contemporary Novel', p. 24.

However, before the issue can be fully discussed and resolved in relation to Fifties fiction, a gap similar to that between 'observation' and 'phantasy' begins to emerges in criticism of the novel.

By the late 1960s, the term 'realism' is again condensed by the emergence of the concept of 'realist' and 'experimental' strands in the novel. Chiming as it does with the divides posited in Iris Murdoch's 'Against Dryness' (1961) and Robert Scholes' *The Fabulators* (1967), it is David Lodge's 'The Novelist at the Crossroads' (1969) which presents the most resonant account of this apparent split. Lodge sees the two representational strands of authentic 'personal experience' and 'empirical standard[s] of accuracy and plausibility' – similar to Williams' notions of the 'personal' and 'social' divisions of realism and Murdoch's 'crystalline' and journalistic' – as 'two opposite imperatives' in contemporary fiction, and that, thus, a truly realist 'compromise' between these two strands is not being achieved by the novel of this time.[13] Lodge's argument is perceptive and his definition of ideal realism is certainly more progressive and less reliant on naturalism than that of many of his critical contemporaries; Lodge sees literary realism as depicting 'the individual experience of a common phenomenal world'.[14] However, Lodge is too quick to write off the existing 'realist' strand of British contemporary fiction as too close to old, empirical modes

[13] Lodge, 'The Novelist', pp. 32-3.
[14] Lodge, 'The Novelist', p. 5.

of the tradition and thus damns it to the same accusations that Bergonzi soon will, claiming that 'it is difficult to avoid associating the restoration of traditional literary realism with a perceptible decline in artistic achievement' and that 'in the 'fifties, indeed, unambitiousness was built into the literary programme of the Movement'.[15] Lodge appears unwilling to peer into the 'gap' identified by Williams to investigate the mimetic framework of these novels. British realist novels of the Fifties – works that would mostly fall into the category that Lodge had earlier defined as 'contemporary', a category that many of the novels discussed in this thesis, including the earlier works of 'modern' Iris Murdoch, might qualify for[16] – are effectively exorcised from Lodge's debate. Lodge's discussion of British fiction briefly visits the apparently futile compromise of the 'problematic novel' (works, including Amis' *I Like It Here* and Spark's *The Comforters*, which foreground the problem of reconciling fiction and reality and offer little else),[17] but conveys far more interest in the experimentalism of B. S. Johnson *et al.* As the 'realist' and 'experimental' divide begins to take hold of British literary criticism, the debate on unfashionable Fifties realism is surreptitiously boxed and left to gather dust.

This gap in the consideration of mid-century realism is only partially remedied by the gradual refutation of such a stark schism between the 'realist'

[15] Lodge, 'The Novelist', pp. 7-8, 26.
[16] See Lodge, 'The Modern, the Contemporary and the Importance of Being Amis', *Critical Quarterly*, 5:4 (December 1963), pp. 335-54.
[17] Lodge, 'The Novelist', pp. 24-6.

and the 'experimental'. By the early 1990s, Lodge reconfigures his crossroads and instead argues for a brand of 'crossover fiction' that has 'an astonishing variety of styles on offer'.[18] It was now widely accepted that realism and experimentalism often co-existed in twentieth-century fiction. Dominic Head offers a clear account of how the 'viability of the realist/experimental dichotomy has broken down' in recent decades,[19] which rightly places the work of Steven Connor and Andrzej Gąsiorek, among others, at the centre of this shift in criticism of the British novel. However, though they both may be thought of as representatives of new 'crossover' criticism (that now broadly equates to the assimilatory field of 'late modernisms'), Connor's and Gąsiorek's works are still suffused with the lingering hues of the 'experimental' and 'realist' divide, as well as its inherent reluctance to examine the nature of 'traditional' Fifties realism in more detail. When Connor's *The English Novel in History 1950-1995* (1996) argues that 'the image of a simple retreat from modernist experimentation in fiction after the War is a good deal *too* rough and ready',[20] it instead posits that:

> In returning (in modest and sceptical enough fashion, to be sure) to the social-realist ambitions of the nineteenth-century novel, certain examples of the postwar novel are in fact furthering the debate carried on within the novel form throughout the twentieth century, as to its own adequacy to account for and answer to the disturbing social forces it took as its subject.[21]

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[18] This argument is presented most clearly in Lodge's 'The Novelist Today: Still at the Crossroads?', in Malcolm Bradbury & Judy Cooke (eds.), *New Writing* (London: Minerva, 1992).
[19] Dominic Head, *Modern British Fiction, 1950-2000* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 259.
[20] Steven Connor, *The English Novel in History 1950-1995* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 45.
[21] Connor, p. 45.

Connor's qualified acceptance of the 'nineteenth-century' realism exhibited by some post-war novels represents a degree of progress, as it also implies the potentially experimental tradition of self-referentiality. However, this is little more than Lodge's definition of the 'problematic novel' and Connor shares with Lodge – and also with the related critical field of late modernism – an aversion to a detailed discussion of the technical and semantic shifts that distinguish Fifties realism from its superannuated counterparts, beyond the idea of an apparently ironic regurgitation of their modes. Connor's limited discussion of such works instead harks back to their social contexts, referencing Sinfield in order to help define the 'Condition of England' fiction of this period: Amis' *Lucky Jim* is only mentioned briefly as an example of a campus novel;[22] Connor's intelligent discussion of the work of Colin MacInnes is read almost solely in the context of immigration.[23]

Gąsiorek's *Post-War British Fiction: Realism and After* (1995) – which sees the 'realism/experimentalism dichotomy' as 'inadequate' and instead argues for a '*rapprochement* between experimentalism and realism'[24] – offers a more realist inflection of the 'crossover' debate, although it must be stated that this text also shares a lack of interest in the more 'empirical' offerings of post-war social realism. Gąsiorek prefers to focus on the more experimental work of writers such

[22] Connor, p. 70.
[23] Connor, p. 89.
[24] Andrzej Gąsiorek, *Post-War British Fiction: Realism and After* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995), pp. v, 2.

as Ivy Compton-Burnett and Henry Green, whom he discusses in a chapter entitled 'Late Modernism as Social Critique'. Crucially, though, Gąsiorek does make a clean break between old and new realisms, arguing that many writers in the post-war period 'go beyond nineteenth-century forms and techniques in an attempt to break free from an ahistorical conception of realism'.[25] According to Gąsiorek, the post-structuralist definitions of realism posited by Roland Barthes, Catherine Belsey, Colin MacCabe *et al* rely 'on an untenable theory of language, which casts its representations as reflections that "mirror" the world, passing off its accounts as self-evidently veracious (natural) when they are in fact contingent (historical)'.[26] This 'classic realism', with its over-reliance on the work of George Eliot as its standard, is too 'conventionalist' and denies the multiplicity of realism; 'flexible, wide-ranging, unstable, historically variable, and radically open-ended' and more akin, for example, to Wittgenstein's ideas of 'a *family* of members' of realistic writings.[27] This departure is crucial to the process of rehabilitating mid-century realisms, as it weakens the inhibitive structuralist tradition of seeing these novels as unrefined products of their society and it also challenges the notion of a fixed hierarchy of discourses that does not take into account the changing role of the post-war reader as consumer and their access to shared discursive codes beyond those of the classic realist text. When Gąsiorek states that he wants to move beyond 'correspondence theories' of realism

[25] Gąsiorek, p. 5.
[26] Gąsiorek, p. 9.
[27] Gąsiorek, p. 14.

towards an 'analogous' reading of mimesis, in which it does not merely mirror the world, but 'configures it in order to transfigure our understanding of it',[28] it proves to be a fruitful approach. It is important to note that one must not abandon 'correspondence theories' of realism totally if one wants to understand the mimetic framework of the post-war realist novel; assumptions of correspondence (but as part of a more indexical, rather than purely symbolic and analogical, realism) are a crucial component of mimesis and the discourse between writer and reader in an age of cinema-going, as will be discussed in the next chapter. However, Gąsiorek's invocation of Paul Ricoeur and his reading of the *Poetics* is particularly useful in the context of this argument. As an ostensible phenomenologist, Ricoeur's sense of the interpretation of discourse is naturally more subjective than many other critics working in and around the post-structuralist tradition. In *Time and Narrative* (1983-5), this leads to an understanding of mimesis which embraces the reader's subjective 'refiguration' of what is represented (Volume Two specifically places mimesis in the context of Jauss and Iser on reception and reader-response). This stage of refiguration, or 'mimesis$_3$', is not wholly dependent on the shared codes of classic realism and can thus more readily incorporate the phenomenal shifts in understandings of time and narrative of those who have grown up with a variety of modernist aesthetics. The more subjective nature of this mimesis, and its capacity for 'realisms', has been remarkably persuasive; even Bergonzi comes to believe that

[28] Gąsiorek, pp. 16-7.

novels now 'do the realism in different voices'.[29] In order to address the extant gap in our understanding of the post-war novel and to aptly define its realism, then, it is helpful to discuss it in relation to the dominant realist aesthetic of the mid-century: cinema.

Cinema and the Novel Since Modernism

Gąsiorek rightly suggests that 'if one wants to understand particular realist works in their historical contexts, they should be seen in relation to the socio-cultural "forms of life" in which they participate'.[30] However, Gąsiorek and others have rarely countenanced the influence of the culture of cinema-going in this debate. Indeed, though many exciting and fruitful connections between cinema and literature have been made in recent years, this investigative thread rarely ventures beyond the bounds of cinema's influence on modernist form. Critical readings of links between the mechanics of cine-cameras and fiction, particularly in relation to American modernists, grow in number and quality throughout the twentieth century. By the early twenty-first century, the central preoccupations for those engaged in this debate within critical circles in Britain are well-represented in Julian Murphet's and Lydia Rainford's collection, *Literature and Visual Technologies: Writing After Cinema* (2003), which draws

[29] Bergonzi, 'The Novel in 1960', in MacKay & Stonebridge (eds.), *British Fiction After Modernism*, p. 211.
[30] Gąsiorek, p. 12.

together an array of key contributors, including Tim Armstrong, Colin MacCabe, Laura Marcus, and Michael North. Ominously, Murphet and Rainford introduce the essays with a reiteration of Tolstoy's prediction of the decline of the realist novel in the face of cinema.[31] The essays then proceed to focus on modernist engagements with the medium that contribute to the re-shaping of the novel's realist form, particularly in terms of how the novel might represent the perception of the 'camera-eye' and concepts of cinematic signifiers that can elucidate and represent modern consciousness. These ideas and their relationship to British fiction are then more fully explored in 2007 by David Trotter's *Cinema and Modernism* and Marcus' *The Tenth Muse*, which both argue for a reciprocal model of influence between the media. Marcus' focus on the dialectic of 'Bergsonian' understandings of cinema – its mechanical illusion and its status as vital to our understanding of time and consciousness – and how this dialectic forms a basis for writing about film is particularly illuminating. In the final chapter of *The Tenth Muse*, Marcus goes on to discuss Graham Greene's *It's a Battlefield* (1934) and *Brighton Rock* (1938). Marcus quotes Greene's insistence that he wrote the former novel under the influence of 'the moving eye of the cine-camera […] following my characters and their movements',[32] before demonstrating that this use of a 'camera-eye' perspective, shared by

[31] Julian Murphet & Lydia Rainford, 'Introduction', in their *Literature and Visual Technologies: Writing After Cinema* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 1.

[32] Graham Greene, *Mornings in the Dark: The Graham Greene Reader*, ed. David Parkinson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), p. xxxii, quoted by Laura Marcus, *The Tenth Muse: Writing About Cinema in the Modernist Period* (Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 428.

contemporaries such as Christopher Isherwood, was now also dependent on the medium's aural apparatus, in direct relation to the coming of sound to the cinema. The incorporation of this element, as Marcus states, 'extended the cinematographic dimensions of Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*'.[33] A further development beyond readings of purely optical influences in the relationship between cinema and literary modernism is suggested when Marcus discusses Greene's *Brighton Rock*, in which:

> [A] film [watched by Pinkie and Rose] is represented – and appears to Pinkie – as a machine whose sole function is to get a man and a woman into bed together, but it is also one, Greene suggests, whose sounds and sentiments have the power to make hard men weep. Leaving the cinema is, moreover, not a departure from a filmic world: Greene the novelist and/as film scenarist constructs a different film to the one Pinkie and Rosie have been watching, composed of the coloured lights of the town, the flaring match and the couple it illuminates, and the 'blonde with the Garbo cheeks' whose self-image is continuous with the film-world.[34]

This reading suggests that further corporeal dimensions might be implicated in the relationship between literature and cinema: cinema can influence sexual contact and even one's sense of being in the physical world. However, this strand of the reading is not Marcus' subject-in-question and is thus not pursued; Marcus instead turns to further analysis of the relationship between sight and sound in Isherwood's *Prater Violet* (1945). This corporeal element does, though, represent one of the many 'new valencies' between the two media that Marcus' conclusion predicts.[35] However, many of the new critical works which help to illuminate this

[33] Marcus, p. 429.
[34] Marcus, p. 430.
[35] Marcus, p. 437.

period of late modernism, such as Marina MacKay's and Lyndsey Stonebridge's collection *British Fiction After Modernism* (2007) and David James' collection *The Legacies of Modernism* (2012), see more fruitful valencies elsewhere in the post-war period; the most detailed acknowledgment of cinematic influence in either collection is John Mepham's claim that 'the shift from silent film to talkies suggests a significant context for this new strand of talk-focused action',[36] which merely reinforces the existing line of argument on how cinema influences the syntactical strategies of modernism. It would seem that from the 1940s onwards the relationship between the novel and comfortably-entrenched sound cinema offers little that is new and critically significant and that, furthermore, as Lara Feigel's insightful *Literature, Cinema and Politics 1930-1945: Reading Between the Frames* (2010) concludes, the significance of the interdisciplinary relationship wanes even further after a war in which 'the camera-eye witness had been left helpless'.[37]

Considering that those involved in analyses of late modernism see little of note regarding new influences of cinema in the post-war period, it is perhaps small wonder that the discussions of post-war realism which were outlined above tend to grant cinema marginal status. Gąsiorek offers little to challenge his introductory observation that many writing in this period felt that 'fiction was

[36] John Mepham, 'Varieties of Modernism, Varieties of Incomprehension: Patrick Hamilton and Elizabeth Bowen', in MacKay & Stonebridge (eds.), *British Fiction After Modernism*, p. 64.
[37] Lara Feigel, *Literature, Cinema and Politics 1930-1945: Reading Between the Frames* (Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 236.

becoming journalistic, and its story-telling function was being taken over by cinema'.[38] Head elaborates this position by explaining that:

> This has principally to do with the contrasting angle of vision identified with written and filmic narrative respectively. The camera may not provide a reliable 'all-seeing' eye, but it has the capacity to imply either the grand vista, or the partial view, and to switch easily between these alternatives. The filmic mode of documentary realism may sometimes conceal a partisan view; but it is the impression of authoritative social coverage in this genre (or in allusions to it) that requires novelists to rethink what kind of claim to social coverage is viable in fiction. The capacity of the camera, then, displaces the convention of third-person omniscience in the novel, and the mode of fictional realism associated with it, so that the reworking of socially engaged fiction has depended upon the avowedly incomplete or partial perspective that a first-person narrator can supply.[39]

Head credits the dominance of this 'mode of documentary realism' as one of the catalysts for the move away from the 'grand social vista' of traditionally realist novels towards the more subjective (and perhaps more ostensibly 'postmodern') first-person narratives of the later twentieth century.[40] Connor offers a similar theory and his discussion of cinema's influence thus skips over the immediately post-war period to the more 'contemporary' Salman Rushdie and Angela Carter, who represent later responses to cinema's apparent destabilization of the novel's realist modes. Rushdie and Carter are indeed excellent subjects for such an investigation, but the question remains as to why novels written in the two decades after the war – written by writers who come of age during the golden era of documentary cinema and the cinema-going boom of the 1930s and 1940s,

[38] Gąsiorek, p. 1.
[39] Head, p. 239.
[40] Head, p. 240.

and who, broadly, 'return to realism' in their work – have been excluded from debates that seek to understand the effect of cinema's 'challenge' to literary realism.

In the context of this question, the most puzzling stance is that of Lodge. As this introductory chapter's epigraph suggests, Lodge rightly challenges the assertion that cinema leaves literary realism redundant and acknowledges that cinema can stimulate intriguing formal contributions to literature. However, his claim that the use of cinema in fiction of the Fifties and Sixties merely represents a 'rhetorical strategy' to 'reinforce a verbal communication' of a 'truthful' realism is surprisingly reductive when placed in relation to Lodge's earlier novel, *The Picturegoers*. At first glance, it seems clear that not only does this novel reject cinematic and modernist form, but that its purpose is to make a crude sociological point about cinema-going as an escapist practice which has similarities with outmoded church-going. Indeed, the unsubtle image of a priest genuflecting as he enters his cinema-seat, the 'trance-like communion with the screen' and the repeated insistence that 'it was in a way a substitute for religion' have done little to challenge such a reading and much to marginalize this novel within Lodge's fictional canon.[41] This novel does, however, show signs of a more sophisticated understanding of the influence of cinema in the post-war era. Harry's relation to Amber Lush (as this chapter's epigraph details) is certainly crude, but suggests a

[41] Lodge, *The Picturegoers*, pp. 34, 58.

haptical sense of realism that exists outside the modernist axis of visual consciousness and verbal communication. Elsewhere in the novel, Harry recognises that, to a child, the cinema-going experience is 'real' and 'he envied the primitive intensity of her dramatic experience';[42] indeed, Harry's own experience of Amber is so intense that he later plans to rape Bridget to satisfy his interactive desire. Lodge also ends the novel with an account of an audience's interactive response to the film *Rock Around the Clock*, which had actual film audiences dancing and rioting in September 1956. Lodge even moves from the documentary towards the hyper-real with his description of how Agnes mourns 'James Dreme', a simulation of James Dean who stars in '*The Young Can Suffer*' (read *Rebel Without a Cause*), '*This Side of Paradise*' (*East of Eden*) and '*Mammoth*' (*Giant*), and who also dies while driving a white Porsche.[43] The novel thus demonstrates an implicit understanding that notions of the real and veracity, and how mimesis is perceived and accessed, are being subtly moved beyond the simply empirical and analogical by cinema in the post-war period; but this understanding is not made explicit by Lodge or others in their criticism. Clearly, there is something to be gained from drawing the discussion of cinematic influence on the post-war novel from its dark corner, and from promoting discussion of post-war realism from the back row of the critical debate.

[42] Lodge, *The Picturegoers*, p. 54.
[43] Lodge, *The Picturegoers*, p. 189.

The 'Movie-Made Generation'

The following chapters will thus examine the ways in which the culture of cinema-going – which had become ubiquitous in 1930s and 1940s Britain, as will be discussed – informs and influences the post-war novel and its realist mode. It is important to note that the term cinema-going does not merely refer to an engagement with the cinematographic form itself, which influences modernism so profoundly, but the extended cultural phenomenon that the cinema had become by the post-war period, with its corresponding film-posters, magazines and interviews, as well as its span across mainstream and avant-garde genres. Admittedly, the importance of such cinema-going culture as an aesthetic influence upon post-war novelists is not, at first glance, entirely obvious. The novelists discussed are not practitioners of self-consciously cinematic techniques, unlike their explicitly 'spectroscopic' late modernist predecessors, such as Christopher Isherwood and Graham Greene. As nearly all of these writers also explicitly express disinterest in the medium at various points in their careers, it seems to have closed the door on an examination of the relationship between their work and the movies for good. However, Annette Kuhn's study, *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory* (2002), offers the most significant reminder that the post-war generation are simply not as excited by the artistic possibilities that the cinema offers, as it had become part of everyday reality. Unlike the earlier generation of writers who saw the medium as an inspirational 'tenth muse' (as detailed by Marcus), these writers more naturally see it as

quotidian, an 'everyday magic' (as documented by Kuhn), and are thus less inclined to wear the 'cinephile' label on their sleeves than their literary antecedents. However, the majority of these writers are born in the 1920s (and of the exceptions, only Colin MacInnes is born before 1918), falling into what Kuhn calls 'the first movie-made generation'.[44] Such a label is apt for these post-war novelists; the following chapters will detail the extraordinary extent to which cinema-going influences concepts of character, movement, gender, the 'literary', the body, the text and realism itself in their novels.

As the next chapter, 'The Emergence of the Cinesthetic Reader', explains, the cultural dominance of cinema in this period creates a generation of readers whose relationship with the novel had been significantly influenced by their cinema-going. The chapter initially attempts to rehabilitate the concept of 'escapism' as a credible literary concern, as it is a crucial component of an understanding of the reading affects of the movie-made generation, as well as of an understanding of aspects of our writers' relationship with the medium which are conditioned by its label as a 'lowbrow' cultural and aesthetic form. The chapter then delves back into the history of reading affects, in order to understand why readers express their reaction to novels in strikingly similar ways to the reactions of cinema-goers in the mid-twentieth century. A tendency

[44] Annette Kuhn, *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), p. 1.

for readers' affects to converge with emergent techno-social forms is noted ('being transported' with the railway boom, 'identification' with the rise of photography), before the 'desire to interact' demonstrated by readers in the cinema-going age is examined in more detail. The chapter turns to film theory in order to explain this particular convergence, arguing that early understandings of ontological realism, semiotic concepts of indexicality, and what Vivian Sobchack terms 'cinesthetics' can all contribute to explaining the causes of interactive affects. Furthermore, it suggests that the relationship between reading and writing emulates these forms of cinematic representation to appeal to an emergent cinesthetic reader whose sense of reality sees the potential of the text as an index to physical reality rather than an outmoded collection of analogical signifiers; an appeal which the novelists of the post-war period naturally engage with.

The following section, 'Invitations to a Candy-Floss World?', connects the Leavisite debate on escapism to the debate on the cultural status of cinema in the age of Cultural Studies, which is intertwined with the issues of class and social realism in the 1950s. As such, this section examines the early works of John Braine, Colin MacInnes, and Alan Sillitoe, exploring the ways in which cinema-going informs the concepts of the 'working class' and the 'literary' in the novel of the Fifties, and also how it can be read as a potentially more tangible impetus for a 'return to realism' in comparison to the socio-political pressures of the era;

a realism whose forms of representation are thus more complicated than the 'truthful' correspondence of classic realism. The chapter on Braine focuses on how his realist representations of working-class life do not merely rely on classic and documentary modes, but on a post-cinematic negotiation between real and ideal lives, and between the realist and escapist affects felt by the cinesthetic reader who understands the 'candy-floss world' as a form of reality. The chapter on MacInnes acknowledges his more privileged background, but focuses on how a complicated sense of cinema's simultaneously realist and escapist aesthetic becomes an essential element of his 'documentary' representations of social margins in his 'London Trilogy'. The chapter on Sillitoe shows how he openly embraces cinema as not just a cultural but a literary influence, and examines the extent to which an awareness of widespread immersion in cinema-going leads to cinesthetic modes of representation that become normalised, rather than marginalised, elements of social realism.

The next section of this thesis, 'I Could Have Bitten Her', argues that the relationship between Movement writers Philip Larkin, John Wain, Kingsley Amis, and cinema-going can be seen as an unexpectedly significant development in the relationship between literature and cinema. The opening chapter on Larkin charts his addiction to cinema and examines the effects of this in the characterisation of the perspective of his protagonist in his debut novel, *Jill* (1946). This chapter concludes by suggesting that it is Larkin's understanding of cinema

culture – particularly the indexicality inherent in the 'film star' concept – that contributes to his decision to abandon the novel form in favour of poetry, as he realises he cannot inhabit the public persona of the 'movie-made' novelist. The chapter on Wain examines his open disapproval of the social effects of 'low' cinema culture, but also how his novels drift into cinematic modes of representation, ultimately in an effort to examine the concern that the cinesthetic reader's new reified relationship with the author may be distorting literary form. The chapter on Amis focuses on his exploration and uniquely tangible exploitation of this indexical distortion by examining both the text and extratext of his debut novel, *Lucky Jim* (1954). The chapter goes on to analyse the influence of cinema-going in creating cinesthetic representations of character, and examines the prospect of an unlikely emergence of a feminist sensibility in this context in Amis' subsequent work.

The penultimate section of this thesis, 'Passionate Detachment', looks at the extent to which three women writers of the post-war era – Muriel Spark, Lynne Reid Banks, and Iris Murdoch – engage with a cinema-going culture that prioritises the remarkably sexist, 'fleshy' cinesthetic modes of representation, as demonstrated by the male writers of the previous chapters. By foregrounding the apparently paradoxical, but widely felt, notion of 'passionate detachment', this section consistently questions the extent to which women writers of this era can merely engage with or reject its popular appeal. The chapter on Spark examines

her early novels in the context of her cinema-going and pays particular attention to how the cinema is consistently utilised to represent both unwelcome fear and desirable 'to-be-looked-at-ness' as simultaneous elements of female ipseity, thus suggesting the role of cinema-going culture in creating a paradoxical and oppressive *Stimmung* which objectifies the female body and discredits the female mind; a reading which culminates in a discussion of Spark's *The Public Image* (1968). The chapter on Banks places her work into the context of her previous career as an actress and television presenter (Banks was one of the first female news reporters on British television). Supported by an interview (included in the Appendix) with Banks, the chapter examines the influence of childhood cinema-going and the extent to which both the composition and reception of Banks' potentially 'proto-feminist' fiction is perhaps surprisingly informed by engagements with an apparently sexist cinema-going culture. The chapter on Murdoch examines how the development of her use of the cinematic shifts, from a consideration of how cinema-going can inspire dreamlike refigurations of realist narrative in *Under the Net* (1954), to a formal and inherently feminist escape from such dominant cinesthetic forms in *The Bell* (1958).

2. THE EMERGENCE OF THE CINESTHETIC READER

> *And then the hut rushed at me – that's the only way I can describe it, honestly it is – and there I was inside it and there was Sonia, Felicity Storm, not somebody in a picture but quite solid and real, looking at me.*[1]

It is at this point of J. B. Priestley's *Albert Goes Through* (1933) that spectator Albert Limpley embarks on a vivid, genre-hopping adventure with Sonia, an onscreen film character whom he is unable to separate from his notion of the living actress, Felicity Storm. As his name suggests, Limpley is a pusillanimous protagonist and, evidently, his escapade has been hard to take seriously. Indeed, E. E. Mavrogordato's review for the *Times Literary Supplement* dismisses the novel as a 'Christmas book' and claims that Priestley 'has had the wisdom not to reduce its range of acceptance by refining upon' his idea.[2] Even more tellingly, the work has been expunged from many Priestley bibliographies and is referred to as a 'novelette' on the rare occasions it can be found.

Such an indifferent response is indicative of the state of the relationship between literary criticism and the notion of escapism seen in this work, particularly in the 1930s. However, the value of Priestley's work can be found in its status as a rare pre-war example of a literary figure documenting how cinema-going and its related practices – poster-viewing, interview-reading, trend-following – had made the previously vague notion of escapism a much more

[1] J. B. Priestley, *Albert Goes Through* (Kingswood: Windmill Press, 1933), p. 16.
[2] E. E. Mavrogordato, 'Albert Goes Through' (Review), in *Times Literary Supplement* (14 December 1933), p. 894.

complicated matter. Whether earnestly or otherwise, Priestley expertly expresses the processes which create this sense of interactive escapism, revealing how Limpley 'used to write Felicity Storm on bits of paper, and sometimes [he]'d write Felicity Storm - Albert Limpley and think how well they went together. And [he]'d make up stories about [them]'.[3] This emanates from 'dozens of photographs and pages and pages about' Felicity Storm collected from the press, which also creates a public mood where, when she 'would disappear for weeks and weeks', 'everybody was frightened and thought she was gone for good'.[4] Priestley shows that Limpley's desire to interact with Felicity Storm emerges not only from viewing her acting on screen, but on a variety of aesthetic, emotional and physical processes – based on the screen and off it – which are synthesised by Limpley to create an affect which is experienced not just visually, but phenomenologically. As cinema had now reached the age of the 'talkie' and Felicity Storm could also 'speak' to Limpley, his senses are engaged to a point which begins to blur the boundaries between escapism and reality. Perhaps it would have surprised Priestley as much as any of his contemporaries to learn that this distinctly cinematic sense of escapism – which is understood by many at this time as a cheap, one-dimensional, lowbrow thrill experienced by mass audiences – is also starting to be felt by what-have-been-called 'serious' readers of novels in this period. This chapter will focus on how and why the escapist

[3] Priestley, p. 6.
[4] Priestley, p. 5.

affects (used throughout in its psychological sense) demonstrated by novel readers and cinema-goers start to converge in the 1930s, and how the power of 'cinesthetics' begins to open up new expressive possibilities for the reading and writing of the post-war realist novel. As the previous chapter outlined, such a reading hardly has a strong critical pedigree. So, in order to understand how the 'cinesthetic reader' emerges and why their particular expression of escapism starts to take on literary significance, one must firstly re-visit the problematic relationship between novel-reading, escapism and literary criticism.

Escapism and Literary Criticism

Although it has always been at the heart of debates regarding the aesthetic impact of the cinema – as will be discussed below – the concept of escapism has never had an easy relationship with literary criticism. This was certainly still the case in the second half of the twentieth century. Even though the rise of reader-response criticism overwhelms the concept of the 'affective fallacy' and creates many new lines of inquiry into the study of reading affects, the issue of escapism persistently skulks in the background. Though critics know it is there, it nearly always appears to be skirted around and dismissed, like the last pick for one's team before a playground game. Perhaps the clearest origins of reader-response criticism's aloof attitude towards escapist reading affects can be found in the 1920s, with the publications of I. A. Richards' two major works: *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) and *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgement*

(1929). The earlier work makes an innovative attempt to allow emotional response into the process of literary interpretation, yet it cannot bear to even mention the word 'escapism'. Its vehement attack on the 'second-hand experience of a crass and inchoate type' reported by novel readers – and, tellingly, 'Cinema People' – offers an ill-defined warning against the 'threat' of 'the severance and disconnection between "aesthetic" and ordinary experience [which prevents] the value of the arts from being understood'.[5] As will be discussed in the following chapter, the inherent class-cultural bias which devalues the literary value of connections to the cinematic and escapist, such as that displayed by Richards and also F. R. Leavis (indeed, this strand of cultural criticism comes to be known as 'Leavisism'), can be seen to inhibit 'literary' representation of 'working-class' subjects in following decades. In purely critical terms, however, it is important to note that this unfortunate attitude forms the basis of Richard's pseudo-scientific study, in *Practical Criticism*, of the emotional response of Cambridge students when reading poetry, which in turn serves as a signal to many Formalist critics that subjective affects have no place in literary criticism. As Jane Tompkins pithily notes, 'paradoxically, the critic whose work is responsible for making the discussion of emotional response […] illegitimate in academic criticism is I. A. Richards, the most-response-centred critic of his time'.[6] One can draw a clear line between the contemporary response to Richards'

[5] I. A. Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism* [1924] (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 217.
[6] Jane P. Tompkins, 'The Reader in History', in Tompkins (ed.), *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 219.

work and the Formalist origins of the Konstanz School's reader-response criticism, whose approach to escapist reading affects is damagingly dismissive. When Wolfgang Iser influentially states that escapist affects emanate mostly from the reading of 'texts that we generally do not like to classify as literary',[7] this superior 'we' seeks to represent all critics. Undoubtedly, the influence of this stance succeeds in relegating – and, in many cases, eliminating – the significance of escapist affects in critical studies which aim to understand the twentieth-century reader of literature.

Though the concept of escapist reading may fail to attract detailed critical attention, it is clear that escapism is a relevant literary issue in mid-twentieth century Britain. The importance of escapism is expressed in many ways and at many times by writers in this period, such as George Orwell's insistence that the next 'major work' of literature produced would be 'escapist',[8] or Kingsley Amis' argument that 'escapist' fiction 'isn't necessarily devoid of the virtues in which primarily enlightening fiction is rich'.[9] A clue to understanding these writers' emerging respect for the escapist affect can be found in the results of a wide-ranging survey of readers conducted in 1944, 'Books and the Public', which reports 'the very strong conscious element of escape' as a reason for reading,

[7] Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns in Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), p. 283.
[8] George Orwell, letter to *Partisan Review* (July-August 1941) [http://georgeorwellnovels.com/journalism/london-letter-to-partisan-review-july-august-1941/] (Accessed: 24 December 2011).
[9] Kingsley Amis, *The James Bond Dossier* (New York: New American Library, 1965), p. 138.

'even among really serious readers'.[10] This survey does what reader-response critics tend not to do: ask an 'ordinary' reader of novels – positioned socially and historically – what they feel when they read. With this in mind, it would seem that in order to understand the significance of escapist reading affects in post-war Britain, one should align oneself with a hitherto marginalised strand of reader-response criticism: the search for the 'ordinary reader'.

The 'ordinary reader' strand of reader-response criticism takes a more sociological approach to the concept of the reader; focuses predominantly on Britain; and is typified by works such as Jonathan Rose's *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (2003). Rose argues that the focus of his work on reading, the 'response of the actual ordinary reader in history', has been 'remarkably neglected by reader-response critics',[11] and credits the development of this alternative approach to Richard Altick and his *The English Common Reader* (1957). Rose has previously acknowledged the difficulties that this approach presents, as historical first-hand accounts of 'ordinary readers' detailing their experiences are few and far between.[12] However, Rose is more optimistic in his recent 'Altick's Map: The New Historiography of the Common Reader' (2011),[13] contending that

[10] Mass-Observation, 'Books and the Public', M-O File Report 2018 (February 1944), p. 83.
[11] Jonathan Rose, 'How historians study reader response: or, what did Jo think of *Bleak House*?', in John O. Jordan & Robert L. Patten (eds.), *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth century British Publishing & Reading Practices* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 195.
[12] Rose, in Jordan & Patten (eds.), p. 195.
[13] See Rosalind Crone & Shafquat Towheed (eds.), *The History of Reading, Volume 3: Methods, Strategies, Tactics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 15-26.

the evidence can be found mainly in autobiographical records, and goes on to cite David Vincent's *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom: A Study of Nineteenth Century Working Class Autobiography* (1981) as an excellent source for such a study. When one consults these works, it is clear that a strong socio-political focus on the 'ordinary reader' results in a greater acceptance of the worth of escapism, as first-hand accounts of such affects are to be found throughout these studies. For 'ordinary reader' critics, it appears that overcoming the sense of cultural bias against escapist reading found in much previous criticism is an important element of their approach. In his study of British publishing and reading habits between 1914 and 1950, Joseph McAleer laments the fact that 'mass reading habits have not been the subject of much sustained historical enquiry' during or since that period.[14] Recognising that much of the historical material that deals with escapism is conditioned by cultural prejudices would appear to be a positive step towards understanding the emergence of the cinesthetic reader. Primarily, as much of the evidence that documents escapist affects is prominently labelled as being provided by 'working class' subjects, one might assume that a cultural bias has hitherto hindered an examination of the personal and *literary* (as opposed to solely 'class-cultural') importance of such affects (and, as we will see, this is a necessary consideration when contemplating affects expressed by cinema-goers, too). An ignorance of this issue can certainly be detected in the

[14] Joseph McAleer, *Popular Reading and Publishing in Britain 1914-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 6.

works of the acknowledged ancestors of this strand of criticism; Altick, Richard Hoggart, Q. D. Leavis. However, it is also an issue that more recent 'ordinary reader' critics have struggled to overcome fully, however aware of it they claim to be. Though the socio-political bias inherent in the quest to find the 'ordinary reader' (and also, as will become clear, the *cinesthetic* reader) may be necessary to overcome an existing cultural bias in criticism, this approach is still problematic. Though instances of escapist affects are noted by these critics, the resulting analysis of these accounts – by Rose, Vincent, McAleer and others – tends to maintain a quantitative, cultural focus on which books and authors are being read, rather than the literary nature of the affect produced. Admittedly, more qualitative aspects are harder to find, as such evidence is not abundant. Yet the reasons why there is a lack of such evidence and why even 'ordinary reader' critics are reluctant to approach existing evidence from a qualitative perspective are indicative of an entrenched ignorance in the wider culture of literary criticism of the *nuances* of escapist affects.

As long as there have been novels, attempts to catalogue and analyse the curious affects experienced by their readers have been on precarious ground. The critical triangle of novels, critics, and escapism is seen to be particularly troubled when one charts its history in Britain. In the eighteenth century, critics are clearly fascinated by the affects of the new, psychological dynamic in the relationship between writing and reading, formed by the simultaneous rises of the novel and

the first reading 'public'.[15] Lord Kames' *Elements of Criticism* (1762) states that a reader now 'conceives every incident as passing in his presence, precisely as if he were an eyewitness'.[16] Archibald Alison's *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790) also notes this sense of escapism, equating reading to losing 'ourselves among the number of images that pass before our minds'.[17] This form of criticism, later known as associationism, is swiftly attacked by critics such as S. T. Coleridge though, who believes that, although 'much has been said well and truly; the principle itself is too vague for practical guidance'.[18] However, the concept of associationism still appears valuable to Coleridge's work; he later claims that his own writing of 'Kubla Khan' relies on the dream-like processes which, as Peter Schwenger notes, are undeniably similar to those outlined by Kames and Alison.[19] Nevertheless, the legacy of Coleridge's attack is clear. As the eighteenth century progresses, the critical debate surrounding associationism and the escapist affects of the novel contracts in literary circles, in response to the Romantic agenda.

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[15] In 'The Reader in History', Jane Tompkins cites the 'the breakdown of the patronage system [and] the increase in commercial printing' as the most significant causes of the development of a wider network of readers (p. 214), which in turn creates a shift in the relationship between writers and their readers. Tompkins convincingly argues that where once a work of literature was intended to make social or political points to a known audience – the close circle of a royal court, perhaps – the eighteenth century writer has to try and make a more psychological connection to strangers who are reading their work.

[16] Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism* [1762], in *Literary Criticism in England, 1660-1800*, ed. Gerald Wester Chapman (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), p. 311.

[17] Archibald Alison, *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* [1790] [http://www.archive.org/stream/essaysonnaturepr01alisuoft/essaysonnaturepr01alisuoft_djvu.txt] (Accessed: 2 January 2012).

[18] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'On The Principles of Genial Criticism', in J. Shawcross (ed.), *Biographia Literaria, with his Aesthetical Essays, Volume 2* (Oxford University Press, 1907), p. 222.

[19] Peter Schwenger, *Fantasm and Fiction: On Textual Envisioning* (Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 107.

Intriguingly, though, if one turns to towards the social history of the period, the importance of escapist affects expands as it takes on political proportions. Altick notes that the rise of the novel was felt by those 'who opposed the spread of literacy' in the late 1700s to be creating a type of reader who 'cultivated habits of idleness and lost themselves in unwholesome, overheated dreams'.[20] The spectre of 'morality' is certainly present here and Altick's sub-chapter on 'Religion' stresses its importance as a moderating idea for responding to fiction,[21] particularly regarding the effects of the popular novel. This seems to have influenced the creation of a distance between 'culture' and the affects of novel-reading; 'literacy' and 'betterment' were the only standards to be reached, not escapism. This stance was still widespread and high on the agenda of many social commentators well into the nineteenth century. For example, Alfred Austin's essay 'The Vice of Reading' (1874) argues that novel-reading 'has become a downright vice, a vulgar, detrimental habit, like dram-drinking' and 'a softening, demoralising, relaxing practice'.[22] Of course, this was not the only view of escapist reading in this period. Altick praises Sir John Herschel and Charles Dickens for demonstrating the understanding – rare at the time – that the new mass reading public's desire for escapism was a positive motivation to read.[23] Interestingly, Herschel and Dickens have more in common than Altick or others

[20] Richard Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900* [1957], 2nd edn. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998), p. 64.
[21] Altick, pp. 99-128.
[22] Alfred Austin, 'The Vice of Reading', *Temple Bar Magazine*, 42 (September 1874), p. 251.
[23] Altick, p. 96.

realise. Both men play an important role in the establishment of a visual culture in Britain: Herschel is widely credited with introducing the terms 'positive' and 'negative' to photography, as well as spurring the invention of the thaumatrope;[24] much has been made of Sergei Eisenstein's insistence that Charles Dickens has a significant influence on cinematic form.[25] That the preponderance of the visual in the imagination of these men should correlate with an interest in escapist affects offers a glimpse of the importance of this relationship to the expression of novel-reading affects, which will be examined below. Unfortunately, however, the cultural impasse created by the broadly moral, rather than aesthetic, understanding of escapism in nineteenth century Britain does not lend such an insight to the literary field at this time. Indeed, Altick notes that 'by the middle of the century occasional lip-service was given to the idea that it was the teacher's duty not only to impart "the mechanical power to read" but to establish a link with the "pleasurable emotion derivable from it"'.[26] However, this does not seem to have flourished in practice, with 'rote learning' dominating the new teaching discipline of 'English literature', rather than any emotional engagements with texts. What then emerges is a 'top-down' sociological debate continuing into the early twentieth century, laden with earnest statistics at the expense of the views of 'ordinary readers'. The legacy of this can be noticed in Altick's own

[24] See Maurice Rickards & Michael Twyman, *The encyclopedia of ephemera: a guide to the fragmentary documents of everyday life for the collector, curator, and historian* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 324.
[25] See Sergei Eisenstein, 'Dickens, Griffith and the Film Today' [1944], in *Film Form; Essays in film theory*, trans. Jay Leyda (London: Dennis Dobson, 1949).
[26] Altick, p. 162, quoting Joseph Kay, *The Education of the Poor in England and Europe* (1846), p. 306.

methodology, which heavily prioritises reading-related facts and figures provided by various schools and libraries. Crucially, this does not lead to a consideration of the motivation to read and, in turn, how readers are affected by novels. Critics such as Rose and McAleer find it hard to move beyond this quantitative approach. It appears that, in order to overcome this critical bias, one must continue to scour for evidence provided by 'ordinary readers' (in the most universal, rather than purely class-cultural sense) and also prioritise the search for the 'ordinary' *expression* of reading affects, then judge them qualitatively. By approaching records of novel-reading in this way, it quickly becomes clear that our rather monotonous historical understanding of escapist reading affects is in need of refinement.

Refining the History of Escapist Reading Affects

Although the socio-historical approach of 'ordinary reader' criticism is useful to a certain extent, the overwhelming legacy of Victorian prejudices continues to confine this critical acceptance of escapist reading affects to a very particular sense of its character. This sense is best described as one of a pleasurable, yet passive, view from the sidelines. Admittedly, such a passive sense of escapism consistently dominates records of escapist reading affects up until the late Victorian period. In line with his focus on working-class autobiography, David Vincent quotes Thomas Wood, an apprentice mechanic, who believes that

reading 'lifted [him] for a time […] into another world'.[27] It is clear this feeling is not limited to the 'working-class mind', either. A letter from Mr Creighton, an Oxford academic of the nineteenth century, explains to Mrs Humphry Ward that he has 'read "Miss Bretherton" with much interest […and…] found myself carried away'.[28] Regardless of the social connotations of escapism in the period, the nature of this experience seems clear to all and is vividly captured in an 1867 edition of *Sharpe's London Magazine*:

> In reading the mind is often nearly in a passive state, like that of a dreaming or a reverie, in which images flit before the mind without any act of volition to retain them. In rapid reading [the mind] is nearly in the same state as yours is when you are whirled through a country in a railway-carriage.[29]

The notion of one's mind being 'whirled through' a scene as 'in a railway-carriage' suggests the idea that the novel is allowing its readers to sense an affect that begins to simulate the optical and haptical aspects of an experience of modern life in the nineteenth century. As we will see, the novel's ability to elicit affects that reflect the techno-social experiences of its epoch will continue into the twentieth century and, inevitably, the nature of escapist affects will evolve with the changing times.

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[27] Thomas Wood, quoted by David Vincent, *Bread, Knowledge and Freedom: A Study of Nineteenth Century Working Class Autobiography* (London: Europa, 1981), p. 123.
[28] Mr. Creighton, letter to Mrs. Humphry Ward, in Janet Rose Trevelyan, *The Life of Mrs. Humphry Ward* (London: Constable & Co., 1923), p. 44 [http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/UK/record_details.php?id=24051] (Accessed: 19 January 2012).
[29] Anon., 'Reading as a Means of Culture', *Sharpe's London Magazine*, n.s. 31 (December 1867), p. 317.

For now, though, let us consider this link between escapist novel-reading and the aesthetic of a new mode of transport. The nature of this affect is well defined by Richard J. Gerrig's use of the metaphor of 'transportation'. In a bid to understand the expression of novel-reading affects, Gerrig also extends this metaphor, stating that a reader's experience is 'often described as *being transported* by a narrative by virtue of *performing* that narrative'.[30] Gerrig develops this idea, presenting what he calls 'participatory responses', or 'p-responses', from readers. However, the nature of this participation – for example, 'at a performance of *Othello* one might entertain the proposition "I wish someone would expose Iago"[31] – is not particularly interactive, instead focusing on the arousal of morality-driven 'preferences about the outcome of events'.[32] On the surface, then, this idea seems very similar to the idea of participatory reading found in most work on reader-response theory. However, though Gerrig acknowledges that his 'p-responses' 'emerge in symbiotic relationships with inferences', he insists that 'they do not in any direct sense serve to bridge gaps in a text',[33] which contrasts against Iser's concept of how the reader negotiates the 'gaps' of meaning between what is written and unwritten in a text, creating a 'virtual dimension' of meaning in relation to the 'intentional sentence correlatives' of the text in question. The significance of the 'dimension' of

[30] Richard J. Gerrig, *Experiencing Narrative Worlds: On the Psychological Activities of Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 2.
[31] Gerrig, p. 27.
[32] Gerrig, p. 71.
[33] Gerrig, p. 96.

participation will be examined below, but clearly the stability of the term 'participation' in relation to reader-response must be questioned, particularly as it seems to incite both passive and active meanings simultaneously. Admittedly, Gerrig does acknowledge some of the flaws inherent in the 'performance' aspect of his 'transportation' metaphor, particularly regarding the implied 'aura of passivity':

> The disparity of the metaphor and the active complexity of the processes that make the experience of the narratives possible suggest that an adequate theory in this domain must concern itself with the illusion of effortlessness.[34]

However, when one examines the vast majority of reading affects recorded before the *fin-de-siècle,* it is clear that passivity *is* the integral characteristic of the novel-reading experience. This apparent oversight might suggest an alternative explanation for any 'flaw' in Gerrig's hypothesis. Though Gerrig claims his definition of escapist 'transportation' is arrived at through 'close analyses of phenomena that figure prominently in reader's reports of their experiences'[35] (an approach markedly similar in intention to that of the 'ordinary reader' critics), it is clear that gathering a wide socio-historical range of readers is not an integral part of Gerrig's methodology. With this in mind, it is justified to note that Gerrig's appreciation of 'p-responses' may be limited because the material he uses as documents of the experience of a 'reader' sometimes derives from fictional-characters-as-readers, like Billy and Bo's 'paradise of recollection', in E. L.

[34] Gerrig, pp. 12-13.
[35] Gerrig, p. 1.

Doctorow's *Billy Bathgate* (1989).[36] Gerrig tries to defend the use of fictional affects by claiming that 'we can trust the phenomenological reports of most characters in realistic fiction as accurately reflecting the types of mental experience real people have'.[37] Even so, Gerrig's 'nonfictional source' comes from a response to a painting, Jacques-Louis David's *The Oath of the Horatii* (1785),[38] which is obviously problematic. However, in relation to the lack of socio-historical discrimination in Gerrig's work, one must also acknowledge that the problem of defining 'participation' in reader-response criticism might be solved by expanding its definition, incorporating the possibility that it might mean different things to different readers at different times. It is clear when one consults records from the late nineteenth century onwards that expressions of 'participatory' escapist reading affects are beginning to evolve. Though Gerrig's sense of 'transportation' persists to a certain extent, it is possible to suggest alternative metaphors for the different expressions of escapist affects that can be seen to emerge in distinct historical phases.

By the end of the nineteenth century, it is clear that the monotonous sense of escapism, which is taken for granted by 'ordinary reader' critics and is given the one-size-fits-all label of 'transportation' by Gerrig, is accruing new layers of expression. Consider the view of Percy Wall, a labourer born in 1883 who puts

[36] Gerrig, p. 8.
[37] Gerrig, p. 9.
[38] Gerrig, p. 9.

up with his 'drab, poorly lit' local reading room as it offers 'a wonderful escape from a dull Welsh village':

> I could view the future through the words of H. G. Wells, participate in the elucidation of mysteries with Sherlock Holmes [...] or penetrate darkest Africa with Rider Haggard as my guide. I could laugh at the comic frustrations of coaster seaman or bargee at the call of W. W. Jacobs. What a gloriously rich age it was for the storyteller![39]

Wall's expression of his escapist experience helps explain why Gerrig's metaphor cannot be applied indiscriminately after a certain point in history. Although Wall actually uses the word 'participate' in his description of his experience, its tone is conditioned by the physically passive modes of 'viewing' and being 'guided'. This sense of escapism is more accurately understood as 'identificatory', particularly as, at the point of Wall's 'participation', it seems more an identification with Holmes' foil, Watson, than an active sense of participation. However, this element of 'identification' is indeed a new aspect of the character of escapist novel-reading affects and it begins to emerge in many accounts of reading at this particular point in history. Just as the notion of 'transportation' mirrors the techno-social aesthetic of railway travel, perhaps the emergence of 'identification' can be explained by a corresponding increase in the social understanding of photography. Roland Barthes alludes to the 'identificatory' potential of photography when outlining how the medium allows him 'to accede to an infra-knowledge', offering ethnographical and biographical information –

[39] Percy Wall, quoted by Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 243-4.

termed 'biographemes' – of people he has not encountered before.[40] Whether this sense is elicited by the novel or its reader, it is certainly detectable as a new 'layer' of expressing escapist reading affects in this period.

It is in the late 1880s when a strikingly consistent shift towards 'identificatory' expressions of escapist reading affects occurs. When one examines the material relating to reading affects in the late nineteenth century, there is a clear movement away from the 'transportation' metaphor towards a sense of passive identification. This takes many forms. For example, when Edward Salmon writes that girls in the late nineteenth century read in order to gain 'a sympathetic knowledge of scenes wherein their brothers live and work' in 1886,[41] there is the implicit assumption that young, working-class girls will read in order to identify with the opposite sex. In the period, there is much disagreement regarding the social benefits of this reading experience, yet, crucially, the implicit assumption that novel-reading elicits identificatory affects is consistently present. Thus, when George Humphery pompously claims in 'The Reading of the Working Classes' (1893) that 'the effect of [reading] is seen in the exalted opinions the young people entertain of themselves, even to the disuse of ordinary politeness […and…] out of ten boys who applied for work, only one

[40] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* [1980], trans. Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 30.
[41] Edward Salmon, 'What Girls Read', *The Nineteenth Century*, 20 (July-December 1886), p. 524.

said "Please" or 'Thank you"',[42] the implication is that such readers are 'getting above their station' by identifying with the lives of fictional characters from higher social classes. Also, when Helen Bosanquet notes how, at the turn of the twentieth century, a cashier-boy 'relieves the monotony of counting out other people's change by snatches of breathless excitement' and 'the shop-girl soothes away the irritation of the long day's toil by soaring with a heroine (in whom she finds a glorified self) into a heaven of luxury and sentimentality',[43] one can clearly see how that 'transporting' sense of escapism is starting to take on 'identificatory' properties. The consistency of this sense of identification is comprehensively confirmed by the survey material that exists from this period. McAleer cites an example from the 1897 survey conducted by *The Academy*; a reporter's appraisal of a waitress' experiences of reading as 'a suggestion of what her own life might be with a little more money and the requisite hero'.[44] This again evokes a suggestion of 'transportation' that is evolving into a sense of 'identification'; here, moving to another life is again achieved by the specific dream of self-identifying as a 'well-off' character. In his initial response to this material, McAleer appears to suggest an understanding of the historical 'evolution' of the expression of escapist affects:

> In some respects, the character of escapist reading changed markedly after the First World War. […] Given the shift in emphasis towards more

[42] George R. Humphery, 'The Reading of the Working Classes', *The Nineteenth Century*, 33 (January-June 1893), pp. 692-3.
[43] Helen Bosanquet, 'Cheap Literature', *Contemporary Review*, 79 (May 1901), p. 674.
[44] C. R., 'What the People Read', *The Academy*, 52 (16 October 1897), p. 303. Quoted in McAleer, p. 29.

> 'realistic' plots, escapism represented, to an increasing degree, aspiration.[45]

By aspiration, McAleer means a desire not only to transport oneself to a new setting, but one containing characters that one could *identify* with in a world that was 'not absurdly out of reach'. Thus it appears that McAleer would agree with the idea that the late nineteenth century witnesses a transition in the expression of escapist affects, from the transportation-metaphor to an identificatory one. However, it is clear that McAleer does not see this transition as part of a continuously evolving process across history. McAleer suggests that the findings of *The Academy*'s survey, 'What the People Read', offer conclusions 'similar to those gathered by Mass-Observation during the Second World War'.[46] McAleer argues that the Mass-Observation archives suggest that reading habits, which include explicit discussions on the appeal of escapism, changed little in the period between the wars.[47] However, as we will see, the Mass-Observation material collected from the early 1940s onwards actually suggests a further evolution that is corroborated by other nearly-contemporary sources, which necessitates another new metaphor to explain the character of its expression. This sense, one of 'interaction', is of particular interest in the search for the cinesthetic reader.

[45] McAleer, p. 249.
[46] McAleer, p. 29.
[47] McAleer, p. 99.

In the 1930s, a sense of interaction emerges strongly in accounts of escapist reading affects. Q. D. Leavis' *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932) offers the most comprehensive study of reading affects in the early 1930s and it cites numerous reader responses expressing the notion that characters now 'live with' them as '*real men*'.[48] Leavis finds it difficult to comprehend why readers feel this way about these novels, stating with a hint of surprise that 'apparently, all a novelist need do is to provide outlines, and the reader will co-operate to persuade himself that he is in contact with "real people"'.[49] However, the approach to escapist reading affects in this study is skewed by the insistence that they are always related to what Leavis calls 'Class D' novels, or 'bestsellers'.[50] As will be discussed below, this 'Leavisite' sense of cultural bias is the most plausible justification for Leavis' inability to connect the explanation for these affects to the strikingly similar reports of cinema-goers that she touches upon. With this in mind, perhaps the most relevant document of 'interactive' escapist reading affects appears in the 1940s with the work of 'Mass-Observation' projects, as they examine the nature of reading, note escapist affects and, refreshingly, try to place their significance into a critical context.

The Mass-Observation documents suggest that 'older' forms of escapist expressions – transportation and identification – are on the wane. As noted

[48] Q. D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public* [1932] (London: Pimlico, 2000), p. 59.
[49] Leavis, p. 59.
[50] Leavis, p. 58.

above, 'Books and the Public' (1944) reports 'the very strong conscious element of escape' as a reason for reading, 'even among really serious readers'.[51] However, there appears to be a notable 'generation gap' inherent in this issue. Expressions of transporting and identificatory affects can be found, but are fading out, as demonstrated by their almost exclusive use by older respondents. This is certainly the case for the uses of transportation metaphors. A fifty year old lady notes that, during the Blitz, knitting provided little distraction, whereas reading 'would take my mind away'.[52] A forty-five year old man reads Westerns because he 'want[s] a book to escape from [the war] for a few hours at least'.[53] Other middle-aged and older readers express similar affects, such as the 66 year old man who wants 'to be taken clean out of humdrum life' when he reads,[54] or the '61 year old Marine Engineer' who believes that 'reading is the quickest way out of Glasgow'.[55]

Identification is also expressed rarely, but appears to be slightly more relevant at this point in time, consistent with the historical model. 'Selection and Taste in Book Reading', a Mass-Observation report from 1940, notes a 30 year old female who, reading the life of Joan of Arc, feels that she 'could really live the life

[51] M-O, 'Books and the Public' (1944), p. 83.
[52] Mass-Observation, 'Books and the Public', M-O File Report 1332 (July 1942), p. 70e.
[53] M-O, 'Books and the Public' (1942), pp. 70e-70f.
[54] M-O, 'Books and the Public' (1944), p. 84.
[55] M-O, 'Books and the Public' (1944), p. 85.

of that girl'.[56] 'Books and the Public' (1942) goes on to outline occurrences of what is termed 'self-identification', such as 'the likeness between [Conrad's 'Lord'] Jim and myself',[57] yet all these seem to be garnered from readers of a particular age, such as the 'crippled woman' and 'retired schoolmistress'. These respondents are part of a generation of readers who have progressed beyond the feeling of 'being transported'. As the Mass-Observation report notes, 'it is clear that this self-identification is not at all synonymous with escapism. There are very few instances of what could definitely be classified as reading to escape from reality'.[58] When the report uses the term 'escapism', it appears to be used in the way Gerrig would apply it, with its distinct, non-refined sense of 'transportation'. This would be consistent with the way escapism had always been defined up until this point and the use of the term 'identification' is a notable development. However, the same report also states that 'identification' is waning too, arguing that only 'occasionally [do] people identify themselves with the events and characters of a book in a more immediate sense […]. Instances are rare'.[59] Crucially, 'Books and the Public' (1944) finds that 'the war was only occasionally mentioned as having affected the extent of "escapist" reading, and the general impression gained was that people were describing long-standing habits'.[60] This appears to confirm that the trend away from transportation and identification is

[56] Mass-Observation, 'Selection and Taste in Book Reading', M-O File Report 48 (Jan-February 1940), p. 21.
[57] M-O, 'Books and the Public' (1942), p. 170.
[58] M-O, 'Books and the Public' (1942), p. 171.
[59] M-O, 'Books and the Public' (1942), p. 168.
[60] M-O, 'Books and the Public' (1944), p. 85.

not a hiatus in such forms of expression, caused by the traumatic experience of war, but a move towards the new expressive possibilities of the 'interactive' metaphor.

The interactive sense of escapist reading affects that emerge at this time is largely defined by the expression of a greater sense of 'reality' than 'escapism'. 'Books and the Public' (1944) ends its section on 'escapism' in reading by asking for a definition from an 'intelligent reader' of novels (whose age is not given), who replies that 'some say this is an escape from reality. I believe it to be an escape *into* reality'.[61] 'Selection and Taste in Book Reading' states that in its findings, 'there is a definite, if not very large, group of people who prefer the more serious types of fiction, especially the sort that is described as being "like real life"'.[62] This is also found to be the case two years later in 'Books and the Public' (1942), which summates its findings on reading affects very clearly, stating that 'people like books in which the characters appear to be real rather than fictitious' and that '[this] applies to the character of the author, in many types of book as well as those in which the author is actually a central figure in the book'.[63] Consider this significant extract from 'Books and the Public' (1942):

> Many people feel that the characters in a book have an actuality which takes them out of the realm of fiction. It would appear that one of the things which impress people about a non-factual book is its apparent factualness. […] In other cases the identification is more immediate. The

[61] M-O, 'Books and the Public' (1944), p. 86.
[62] M-O, 'Selection and Taste in Book Reading' (1940), p. 30.
[63] M-O, 'Books and the Public' (1942), p. 168.

> characters are thought of as individuals whom the reader has actually met, as personal friends. […] A young woman goes even further in likening book [i.e. novel] characters to personal acquaintances:
>
> > "[…] The characters became so real after a while that they almost began to walk around the house, and I felt I knew all sorts of things about them the authoress never mentioned".
> > […]
> > "[…] The people were real too, and the love scenes and dialogue was undoubtedly taken from the life of the modern young that are my contemporaries".
> > […]
>
> It is [also] well exemplified in this description from a young metallurgical chemist:
>
> > "A book that I read in March which made a lasting impression on me was J. B. Priestley's 'Angel Pavement'. I found it so amazingly realistic because I 'knew' the characters […]".[64]

The striking sense of the 'actuality' of the characters encountered in reading makes the possibility of interaction much more acceptable to these younger readers. The compilers of this particular report find this troublesome; the 'rather narrow distinction between the "escapist" and "real life" reading […] bear an exceedingly ambiguous meaning'.[65] However, it is clearly acknowledged that such 'ambiguity' is largely the result of 'a social convention',[66] which can be linked to the markedly tight age range of the respondents expressing such interactive affects. What is even more striking, however, is how closely such expressions of novel-reading affects mirror the contemporaneous responses of the seemingly real 'escapist' affects elicited by cinema-going. Just as 'transportation' converges with railway travel and 'identification' converges

[64] M-O, 'Books and the Public' (1942), pp. 168-70.
[65] M-O, 'Books and the Public' (1944), p. 93.
[66] M-O, 'Books and the Public' (1944), p. ix.

with photography, this sense of 'interaction' is clearly converging with the techno-social aesthetic of cinema-going; both the view on the screen and the surrounding material practices off it. As Vivian Sobchack argues, the 'radical difference between the transcendental, posited moment of the photograph and the existential momentum of the cinema, between the scene to be contemplated and the scene as it is lived',[67] creates what can be labelled as a 'cinesthetic' appreciation of characterisation. By refining the history of escapist reading affects, it becomes clear that the experience of novel-reading in the 1930s and 1940s is being expressed less in terms of photographic 'identification' and more in terms of cinesthetic 'interaction', a shift which suggests new ways of 'refiguring' realism in the mimetic process. By examining this convergence of novel-reading and cinema-going affects, a definition of the cinesthetic reader begins to come into view.

The Convergence of Novel-Reading and Cinema-Going Affects

In his 'Epic and Novel' (1941), Mikhail Bakhtin notes that there are genres of the novel that go beyond the traditional epic in their ability to offer a sense of engagement to the reader. Bakhtin argues that 'we can experience these adventures, identify with these heroes; such novels almost become a substitute

[67] Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (London: University of California Press, 2004), p. 145.

for our own lives'.[68] Bakhtin goes on to suggest that, through such reading, 'we may ourselves actually enter the novel'.[69] Bakhtin labels this escapist desire as a type of 'Bovaryism', yet Madame Bovary would simply be unable to express her reading experiences using so many different characteristics of escapism. This distinction is suggested most emphatically in Woody Allen's short story 'The Kugelmass Episode' (1980), in which Emma's wish to be 'transported' to another place is juxtaposed with modern-day Professor Kugelmass' ability to be transported into the novel, in order to physically interact with Emma.[70] Bakhtin's layered, simultaneous concepts of 'transportation', 'identification' and the 'interaction' of 'entering' the novel neatly offers an almost geological cross-section of the strata one finds when cutting through the history of escapist affects. As has been outlined above, the latest layer, the interactive affect, begins to solidify in the 1930s. When one consults records of how cinema-goers are made to feel by the medium, a similar sense of interaction is consistently present. By examining records of cinema-going affects, one can start to see a process of 'convergence' emerging, as escapist reading affects begin to engage with the aesthetic and material practices of cinema-going in the 'talkie' era.

As the twentieth century moves from its youth to its middle age, cinema-going increasingly becomes one of the most influential social practices of the

[68] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 32.
[69] Bakhtin, p. 32.
[70] See Woody Allen, 'The Kugelmass Episode', *Side Effects* (New York: Random House, 1980).

time. Although the 1920s and 1930s have been read as a problematic age for the British film industry, weighed down as it is by the success of Hollywood and the need for 'quota quickies' (as prescribed by the 1927 Cinematograph Films Act), audiences are still flocking to the picture palaces. Crucially, the tone of British cinema-going in the 1930s is energised by the success in 1929 of films such as *Blackmail*, *The Clue of the New Pin* and *A Romance of Seville*. These features are evidence of the swift introduction of simultaneous sound and colour film to British cinemas. Thus, in 1930, *Harmony Heaven* becomes the first all-colour, all-'talkie' British film. This glamorous and robust new aesthetic proves overwhelmingly popular for audiences in the following decades. Kathleen Box's 'Cinema and the Public' (1948) uses a survey conducted in 1946 to show how prevalent cinema-going is as a social habit, with 51% of respondents going at least once a month and 69% of 16-19 year olds going more than once a week.[71] This trend is consolidated in the post-war period, with Mark Abrams' survey 'The British Cinema Audience, 1949' (1950) finding that in 1949, 57% of adults go to the cinema at least once a month, with 72% of 16-24 year olds going at least once a week.[72] However, while these studies are useful, as they show the dominance of cinema as a social medium and suggest the breadth of its influence, they do not focus on affects. As has been stressed above, records of affect are a crucial component in detailing the presence of the cinesthetic reader. Therefore, it is

[71] Kathleen Box, 'Cinema and the Public', *Social Survey*, n.s. 106 (March 1948), pp. 3-4.
[72] Mark Abrams, 'The British Cinema Audience, 1949', *Hollywood Quarterly*, 4:3 (Spring 1950), pp. 253-4.

necessary to consult such records that do exist. Though these records are still sparse, it is fortunate that the pioneers of film studies are much more accepting of notions of escapism and document their presence far more systematically than their counterparts in literary studies.

Siegfried Kracauer is one of the increasing number of significant film critics who focus on cinema-going affects in this period. Kracauer cites numerous cinema audience surveys, such as Wolfgang Wilhelm's *The Uplifting Effect of Film* (1940),[73] which exemplifies the idea that a visit to the cinema is driven by a desire 'to get in touch with people and with "life"', and *Menschenhunger*, a 'hunger for people'.[74] As will be discussed below, the sense of interaction expressed by these cinema-goers is assumed by many contemporary critics to be an exclusive product of this medium and helps form the sense of cinema's 'ontological realism' detailed in Kracauer's *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (1960). However, in post-war Britain, the most effective collator of cinema-goers' affects is Jacob-Peter Mayer. Notably, Mayer explicitly distances his approach to his research from that of Q. D. Leavis, whom he regards as showing 'contempt for the masses';[75] his thorough quest for what might be called the 'ordinary viewer' yields impressive results. Mayer argues that 'the shock and terror experience [documented in responses to his surveys] must be related to the

[73] Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* [1960] (Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 169.
[74] Kracauer, p. 169.
[75] J. P. Mayer, *British Cinemas and their Audiences* (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1948), p. 248.

phenomenon of *participation mystique*',[76] first outlined in Mayer's *Sociology of Film* (1946). To explain this in more detail, Mayer cites a 15 year old schoolboy's insistence that 'I forget that what I am watching is really a string of photographs and I *join* (our italics) in the situations with the characters' and that, in his eyes, film 'takes a third dimension' (Document 12).[77] Mayer also reminds his reader that a 21 year old contributor often dreams that her screen idol, Tyrone Power, kisses her instead of his leading lady (Document 49).[78] These affects abound in Mayer's documents and are often linked to the allure of 'film stars', such as Mayer's insistence that Document 23A's recollection of how one 'lived with them, thought with them, [… as if one] were living in that film' is 'a striking example of *participation mystique*'.[79] As has been examined above, the use of the term 'participation' is problematic, and the inability to refine what is meant by 'mystique' is symptomatic of the absence of a critical structure for explaining these escapist affects, yet the sense of interaction in the stressed 'joining-in', 'kissing' and 'living with them' is clear. It is perhaps ironic, but certainly significant, that these affects are expressed in an almost identical way to the affects explained by Q. D. Leavis' 'reading public'.

More recently, Annette Kuhn's study, *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory* (2002) places similar findings in the context of our modern

[76] Mayer, p. 150.
[77] Mayer, p. 150.
[78] Mayer, p. 150.
[79] Mayer, p. 243.

understanding of the importance of the rise of the 'talkie' and the significance of cinema as an everyday reality for the post-war generation. Those born in the mid-1920s and hitting their twenties in the post-war period fall perfectly into what Kuhn calls 'the first movie-made generation'.[80] Kuhn's findings make it clear that the broad aesthetic expectations of this generation, especially its sense of effective characterisation, are drastically altered by immersion in the culture of the 'talkies'. Kuhn offers numerous examples of how males in particular would regularly participate in 'identificatory fantasy',[81] by impersonating the movements and mannerisms of film stars like Humphrey Bogart as a way of interacting with their image. Most tellingly, one of Kuhn's subjects explains that these impersonations allowed this generation to '*associate*' with the stars in a way that blurs the boundary between the film fiction and the lived reality.[82] Kuhn convincingly demonstrates how this generation turns a formerly private relationship with cinema into a strategy for interacting with the wider world, by bringing 'into their daily lives something of the otherworldliness, the magic, of what they saw on the cinema screen'.[83] Again, the issue of labelling such 'participatory' affects arises. What is understood as 'identification' by Kuhn and 'association' by one of her subjects is inherently interactive, though, as suggested most clearly by the presence of the blurring of escapism and reality that

[80] Annette Kuhn, *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), p. 1.
[81] Kuhn, p. 108.
[82] Kuhn, p. 107.
[83] Kuhn, p. 134.

characterises the interactive reading affects documented by Mass-Observation reports. This striking convergence in the expression of novel-reading and cinema-going affects marks an important development in the increasingly entwined relationship between these two aesthetic practices.

It would appear that this convergence is not just an historical coincidence, where it has merely become a fashion of the times to describe one's own perception through the use of interactive metaphors. There are several material indicators that the practices of cinema-going are influencing and conditioning reading culture. Though the extent of this influence is obviously hard to conceive at this time, its effects are clearly recorded. 'Books and the Public' (1942) shows that 'the most frequently *bought* fiction books […] are definitely those which have been filmed',[84] which supports Geoffrey Grigson's prior claim that 'those who [want] to read nothing but novels, and only those which are "hot huddles of sensation"' are actually 'a new public, a cinema-going public'.[85] As with the novel-readers questioned by Mass-Observation reporters who most often demonstrate interactive affects, this 'new public' is a new generation who are, as Kuhn argues, 'movie-made'. It is thus easy to agree with McAleer's claim that children surveyed by Mass-Observation projects consistently demonstrate that they sought 'excitement and adventure in their reading to complement the action

[84] M-O, 'Books and the Public', (1942), p. 59.
[85] Geoffrey Grigson, 'Novel, Twopenny Libraries and the Reviewer', *The Bookseller* (20 March 1935), p. 286.

and immediacy of the cinema',[86] yet surely Kuhn's findings show that this becomes an influence endemic within aesthetic culture, rather than the merely interesting commercial whim which McAleer alludes to. Indeed, 'Books and the Public' (1942) goes on to note that 'having seen a film, some people like to keep it in some permanent form by buying the book',[87] which suggests that an imperfect physical desire for an enduring cinematic experience is conditioning the book-buying industry at this time. This industry quickly assumes a position where its consumers' choices are being governed by another medium and is uncomfortably aware that they are experiencing a sea-change in the way books are read and written. Consider Eileen H. Colwell's shock in her 'What the Children Want From the Publishers' (1935):

> In a census taken recently among girls, fifty percent voted unreservedly for the mystery story. 'I like mystery and murder', said one. 'I like murders and kidnapping' said another, aged eleven! This seems a strange demand from a girl. […] I can only conclude that it results from the undue publicity given to the sensational, and to the prevalence of the 'gangster' film.[88]

Though publishers may have found it difficult to accept the overwhelming influence of cinematic 'identificatory fantasy' (in Kuhn's sense) on reading affects, it is clear that there is some sense of acceptance from the literary field in this period that cinema-going is affecting the way novels are consumed by their readers.

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[86] McAleer, p. 147.
[87] M-O, 'Books and the Public' (1942), p. 59.
[88] Eileen H. Colwell, 'What the Children Want From the Publishers', *The Bookseller* (4 September 1935), p. 841.

This realisation is not confined to disgruntled publishers. For example, Leavis quotes a novelist who is 'selling a million copies a year':

> I am reading a very interesting history of the genesis and development of motion pictures, which contains a most illuminating suggestion of the attitude of the general public towards entertainment. […] The general public does not wish to think. [… I have] endeavoured to make all my descriptions so clear that each situation could be visualised readily by any reader precisely as I saw it.[89]

To a certain extent, Leavis understands how this new effect is achieved, noting that in most bestsellers, 'the author is himself – or more usually herself – identified with the leading character, and the reader is invited to share the debauch'.[90] Though manipulating such identification in the ways Leavis suggests is surely a simplistic, and hardly literary, technique, it is only effective when the reader responds to such an invitation. This requires a new type of reader who is visually attuned to such a convention, which Leavis partially acknowledges:

> [The reader is] familiar with the details of such a story, having met it on the screen and in their reading nearly all their lives, and are satisfied to believe that the novelist has created what he has in fact merely tricked them into remembering.[91]

Leavis stresses that, in this endeavour, 'the cinema has several advantages over the novel: the reader has not to make the effort of translating words into images' and 'the public today prefers communal to private pastimes'.[92] Leavis goes on to predict that:

> the film – still more the 'talkie', which does not even offer captions – is unlikely to displace [the reading of fiction as the premier aesthetic habit]

[89] Leavis, p. 49.
[90] Leavis, p. 236.
[91] Leavis, p. 243.
[92] Leavis, p. 55.

> for at least another generation, though the increase in the rate of change of habits that the last thirty years shows makes even this not impossible.[93]

All in all, this crude interpretation of how bestselling writers exploit the 'working class' preference for cinema-going is not far wrong. In fact, it is corroborated by the later Mass-Observation reports. 'Books and the Public' (1942) finds a large amount of lower class readers 'often read books because they are interested in the personality of the author'.[94] 'Books and the Public' (1944) goes further, stating that 'there is often a personally felt attachment between reader and author' when it comes to the reasons that lower class readers will consider buying, rather than borrowing, a book.[95] Though some writers in this period wish to exploit the clear demands of the cinema-going public, it is far from the literary engagement with this new aesthetic that can be found in the post-war years. However, it is clear that the feeling of 'interacting' with an author when reading a novel is beginning to reflect the dynamic between 'film star' and cinema-goer at this time. Though the possibility of the two media converging in such a fundamental way may have seemed unlikely in the 1930s, concepts for how the novel starts to create its own sense of cinematic interaction – where a viewer can feel as if they can physically interact with film stars 'as *real men*' – can be extrapolated from an examination of influential 'film-thinking' of the time.

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[93] Leavis, p. 56.
[94] M-O, 'Books and the Public' (1942), p. 173.
[95] M-O, 'Books and the Public' (1944), p. 150.

By the advent of sound cinema, the relationship between young members of audiences and the characters they see on screen begins to take on a physical dimension, with such attachments demonstrating how an interactive sense of escapism becomes part of the many off-screen practices that cinema-going evokes. When interviewed by Kuhn, Jimmy Murray explains how cinema-goers in the 1930s readily adopted film fantasy as a part of everyday reality:

> You'd be doing a Bing Crosby, holding the pipe, in the corner of the mouth, or wearing a trilby like Edward G. on the side of the head. Bogart or something. Bogart. That's how you associated with them. In a way.[96]

The figure of Humphrey Bogart persistently emerges as a preferred subject of such physical imitation. This sense of interaction is not just mimicry, however, but an acknowledgement that Bogart has become a 'real' part of many people's everyday lives. When Stanley Cavell cites Bogart as the prime example of the film 'type',[97] he goes on to argue that such characterisation – which allows an audience to assume what a character's motivations are through their knowledge of the public perception of the actor, and not a developed plot – is intrinsically linked to the psychophysical perception of visual media. Cavell's theories are closely linked to the practice of post-war cinema and particularly Kracauer's and André Bazin's theories of cinema's 'ontological' realism. Kracauer and Bazin come to similar conclusions regarding the spatio-temporal effect of the camera shot's ability to move up to and around its subject, focusing on the effects of the 'close-

[96] Jimmy Murray, quoted in Kuhn, p. 107.
[97] Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film - Enlarged Edition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 33.

up' and how fragmented presentation of the body redefines one's association with the '*Totale*'. Bazin declares that these techniques bring 'the spectator into a relation with the image closer to that which he enjoys with reality'.[98] Kracauer and Bazin share a fascination with how these realisations become adopted by directors and producers in the period, both citing examples from the emerging mode of Italian *neorealismo* particularly often. The most famous theorists of *neorealismo*, Cesare Zavattini and Guido Aristarco, believe that cinema has to respond to a new, post-war, 'hunger for reality'. For Zavattini, this involves a sole focus on 'the real protagonist. […] To see his eyes. […] To speak to him',[99] while Aristarco argues for a more explicit rendering of the film-making process that is almost Brechtian in its implementation.[100] Despite their differences, both Zavattini and Aristarco believe they are responding to a demand for realism that emerges from the social and political strains of the war. However, as similar demands can be found from the subjects of Q. D. Leavis' study of pre-war readers, one must question whether this 'hunger for reality' is completely the result of post-war social conditions, instead of an indicator of the expansion of a desire conditioned by cinema itself. Explaining how two distinct media could relate to reality in such a way necessitates a turn to the theory of 'indexicality'.

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[98] André Bazin, *What is Cinema?* Vol. 1, trans. Hugh Gray (London: University of California Press, 1967), p. 35.

[99] See Cesare Zavattini, 'Some Ideas on the Cinema', *Sight and Sound*, 23:2 (October-December 1953), pp. 64-9.

[100] See Guido Aristarco, 'Dal neorealismo al realismo' (editorial), *Cinema Nuovo*, 53 (25 February 1955).

The first use of the term 'index' in its semiotic context is by Charles Sanders Peirce, who defines his concept of the index as:

> a sign, or representation, which refers to its object not so much because of any similarity or analogy with it, nor because it is associated with general characters which that object happens to possess, as because it is in dynamical (including spatial) connection both with the individual object, on the one hand, and with the senses or memory of the person for whom it serves as a sign, on the other hand.[101]

Though Peirce originally conceives the index in relation to logic and the philosophy of language, it is a concept that has been applied to explain the perceptions of cinematic realism since film theory's 'semiotic' turn in the 1960s. The work of Kracauer and Bazin is published after Peirce's lifetime and before the semiotic turn in film theory and it would appear that 'indexical' is a term that Kracauer and Bazin should also have applied to their concept of cinematic realism, as it goes beyond 'analogy' and towards a relationship with the viewer's memory and senses. Kracauer believes that the 'hunger for people' that he notes in cinema audiences is conditioned by the photographic nature of cinema, which takes the light from the physical world and transfers it directly to the celluloid, thus offering 'direct correspondences [to] the physical world'.[102] Though this conception of ontological realism has since been derided as 'naïve' in the wake of developments in cinematic post-production, Miriam Hansen rightly argues that this ontological emphasis is better understood in the more semiotic terms of

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[101] C. S. Peirce, 'Index', in *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Vol. 2, Book 2, Chapter 3, §5 [http://ezproxy.ouls.ox.ac.uk:5048/xtf/view?docId=peirce/peirce.02.xml;chunk.id=div.peirce.cp2.1038;toc.depth=1;toc.id=div.peirce.cp2.12;brand=default;query=index#index] (Accessed: 15 December 2011).

[102] Kracauer, p. 263.

the '*indexical* dimension of film, the trace of a material bond with the world represented'.[103] For Hansen, this indexicality 'qualifies and circumscribes […] the *iconic* dimension of film, its ability to represent something as "real" through a relation of resemblance or analogy'.[104] In relation to reading, it is clear from the reading surveys of the 1930s and 1940s that *literary* indexicality emerges not just from the perceived 'reality' of the novel's setting, but on the connections forged between character and 'real life' author. In order for the closed text of the novel to make such a clear indexical connection to the outside world, it appears to rely on cultural apparatus that only becomes socially entrenched with the advent of cinema's 'star' concept.

Contemplating 'the typical Hollywood star', Kracauer notes that he 'acts out a standing character identical with his own or at least developed from it, frequently with the aid of make-up and publicity experts'.[105] Crucially, the star's 'presence in film points beyond the film',[106] highlighting the increasing importance of indexical characterisation. For Bazin, Charlie Chaplin is the clearest example of this concept in action, where 'the living Charlie remains the creator and guarantor of Charlie the character',[107] both of which are related to the

[103] Miriam Hansen, 'Introduction', in Kracauer, p. viii.
[104] Hansen, in Kracauer, p. viii.
[105] Kracauer, p. 99.
[106] Kracauer, p. 99.
[107] Bazin, *Cinema?*, vol. 1, p. 144.

'black-and-white form printed on the silver nitrate of film'.[108] Bazin uses the examples of Monsieur Verdoux and the film *Limelight* to argue that the public mythology of Chaplin's life conditions the reception of his characters and that, crucially, 'never since the world began had a myth been so universally accepted'.[109] Bazin is in no doubt why this occurs at this time: 'Only the age of cinema, doubtless, allows the actor and his character to merge to this extent'.[110] *Limelight*, which Bazin believes reveals 'how intimately the work depends on its author' in this era,[111] also conditions Bazin's development of *auteur* theory. Bazin later warns against his emphasis on the film director descending into a 'cult of personality',[112] yet all over the world – from the French *nouvelle vague*, English Free Cinema, New American Cinema, *Neues Deutsches Kino*, the Latin American *Cinema Novo*, *Tercer Cine* and beyond – the universal demand for a real-life, famous figure to be linked to the work was clear, echoing the same demands of Leavis' readers. Though *auteur* theory begins with Alexandre Astruc's concept of the *caméra-stylo* as the film director's way of finally competing with the novelist, now this symptom of cinema's indexical realism helps condition the terms that any new writer must accept if they are to appeal to a mass readership.

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[108] André Bazin, *What is Cinema?* Vol. 2, trans. Hugh Gray (London: University of California Press, 1971), p. 104.
[109] Bazin, *Cinema?*, vol. 2, p. 105.
[110] Bazin, *Cinema?*, vol. 2, p. 127.
[111] Bazin, *Cinema?*, vol. 2, p. 127.
[112] See André Bazin, 'Comment peut-on être Hitchcocko-hawksien?', *Cahiers du Cinéma*, 44 (February 1955), pp. 17-8.

As well as encouraging indexical links to the real life of film figures, it is clear that cinema is also eliciting a physically interactive affect that is expressed by cinema-goers in precise, corporeal terms. How this sense of the real awakens a potentially sexual 'hunger' for interaction in film viewers is clearly demonstrated in post-war surveys conducted in England; for example, one of J. P. Mayer's subjects expresses a keen desire to not only marry film star Deanna Durbin, but to make sure their physical relationship continues successfully.[113] Kuhn's chapter, 'This Loving Darkness', also shows how cinemas became the prime venue of 'courtship' for this generation, which, as will be discussed below, goes some way to explaining the conflation of indexicality and sexuality. Indeed, Cavell argues that 'the ontological conditions of the motion picture reveal it as inherently pornographic (though not of course inveterately so)',[114] and that 'an inescapable demand' for voyeurism has been created.[115] Bazin states this condition more explicitly, and in relation to his participatory sense of cinematic realism, in his definition of 'an ontological pornography': 'The cinema unreels in an imaginary space which demands participation. […] The actor winning the woman gratifies me by proxy'.[116] Albert Limpley's engagement in such a process is an early marker of the potential of this being a common indexical process between the cinematic and literary media. How, though, can the obvious physical indexicality of the cinema – the light from the scene trapped by silver nitrate and

[113] J. P. Mayer, *Sociology of Film* (London: Faber & Faber, 1946), p. 182.
[114] Cavell, p. 45.
[115] Cavell, p. 45.
[116] Bazin, *Cinema?* vol. 2, pp. 173-4.

delivered directly to the eye – be conveyed by the word, which is merely symbolic (in a Peircean sense) in this visual context? The convergence in the affects expressed by novel-readers and cinema-goers suggests that 'movie-made' readers are refiguring the old, analogical realism of the novel and its Saussurean signifiers and constructing a new, *physical* potential of the literary text, using a cinematic model. Though both Bazin and Kracauer write extensively on the body as symbol and icon, the importance of the corporeal element of indexical aesthetics is not exactly fleshed out by the mid-century theories of ontological realism. It is possible to continue using 'film-thinking' as a model for new literary processes, however, if one looks towards later developments in film theory.

Though the theory of film-viewing has certainly been refined since the publication of Bazin's and Kracauer's works, it is undeniably revisiting its fundamental fascination with the body. When ontological realism fell out of fashion, perceived as naïve and ignorant of cinema's sophisticated 'language', film theory passed through cycles of interest in the semantic and cognitive. Now, though, it is under the broad influence of phenomenology and haptics. It is under this influence that the notion of physical interaction, which is so clear in accounts of cinema-goers, has again become a crucial component of our understanding of the medium. Though the concepts that have emerged – Jonathan Crary on the 'carnal density' of spectatorship;[117] Steven Shaviro on the 'visceral event' of film

[117] See Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992).

viewing[118] – have heralded a welcome return to the corporeal, Vivian Sobchack argues that this focus is still over-dependent on semantics and formed upon dubious physical analogies. Instead, Sobchack argues for an understanding of a literal, 'carnal' sense of the body's role in the interpretation of film, termed as 'the cinesthetic subject'. As we will see, Sobchack's notion of cinesthetics is founded upon the idea of a cinema-goer who is increasingly aware of real physical sensations when relating 'escapist' affects, creating a clear common denominator with the theory of convergence. Sobchack's concept also implicitly suggests the possibility of a medium-neutral model of indexicality, which, after some modification and much extension of focus, can be used to explain how readers might adapt their experiences of cinema-going practices in order to enhance their reading of the novel.

In *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (2004), Sobchack argues that by a process of 'sensual catachresis', one's real body connects to the 'as-if-real' bodies on screen; 'that is, it fills in the gaps in its sensual grasp of the figural world by turning back on itself to reciprocally (albeit not sufficiently) "flesh it out" into literal physicalized sense'.[119] This concept is certainly problematic, but Sobchack does attempt to refine these terms:

> This ambivalence has a precise phenomenological structure that is grounded in the nonhierarchical reciprocity and figure-ground reversibility of 'having sense' and 'making sense'— meaning thus

[118] See Steven Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
[119] Sobchack, p. 82.

> constituted as both a carnal matter and a conscious meaning that emerge simultaneously (if in various ratios) from the single system of flesh and consciousness that is the lived body. This is another way of saying that the body and language (whether film language or 'natural' language) do not simply oppose or reflect each other. Rather, they more radically inform each other in a fundamentally nonhierarchical and reversible relationship that, in certain circumstances, manifests itself as a vacillating, ambivalent, often ambiguously undifferentiated, and thus 'unnameable' or 'undecidable' experience.[120]

Sobchack is suggesting that a clearly 'subversive body' is actually the natural site of 'meaning', where physiological and psychological responses to film meet. This body then becomes the 'cinesthetic subject', 'a neologism that derives not only from cinema but also from two scientific terms that designate particular structures and conditions of the human sensorium: synaesthesia [a 're-wiring' of sensual responses] and coenaesthesia [the sensual awareness of one's body]'.[121] Sobchack explains that 'both of these structures and conditions foreground the complexity and richness of the more general bodily experience that grounds our particular experience of cinema', as they invoke a notion of all the senses working towards corporeal awareness, and 'also point to ways in which the cinema uses our dominant senses of vision and hearing to speak comprehensibly to our other senses'.[122]

This foregrounding of the physical response to cinema initially appears simplistic, but Sobchack stresses how this concept is a reconfiguration of our

[120] Sobchack, p. 73.
[121] Sobchack, p. 67.
[122] Sobchack, p. 67.

understanding of the links between film and phenomenology. Sobchack broadly attacks extant film theory for splitting the understanding of its 'ambiguous and unruly, subjectively sensuous' affect into two dimensions: 'on the screen as the semiotic effects of cinematic representation and the semantic property of cinematic objects'; and 'off the screen in the spectator's phantasmatic psychic formations, cognitive processes, and basic physiological reflexes that do not pose major questions of meaning'.[123] Looking to these 'binary and bifurcated structures of the film experience', Sobchack posits 'the film viewer's lived body as a carnal "third term" that grounds and mediates experience and language, subjective vision and objective image'.[124] To explain this, Sobchack draws on a term that Maurice Merleau-Ponty uses in his last essay, 'Eye and Mind' (1964): the chiasmus. Sobchack argues that the 'body functions as our own chiasmatic site in the matter of meaning and the meaning of matter: that is, it sustains discrete and oppositional figures (such as language and being) but also provides the synoptic ground for the suspension of both their discretion and their opposition'.[125] Sobchack also draws on Barthes' concept of the 'pleasure of the text' to argue that the body is a 'third term'; 'as Barthes has shown us, "it would be wrong [...] to imagine a rigid distinction between the body inside and the body outside the text, because the subversive force of the body is partly in its capacity to function both figuratively and literally"'.[126] Sobchack believes that such a

[123] Sobchack, pp. 59-60.
[124] Sobchack, p. 60.
[125] Sobchack, p. 60.
[126] Sobchack, p. 67.

'chiasmatic relation' between the subjective body and objective representation may be 'especially heightened by and privileged by the medium of cinema', as it uses 'lived modes' of perception and sensory experience as its form of representation.[127] This is convincing, but within Sobchack's prose lurks the notion of an equivalent indexical model for literature. Cinema is characterised as 'verb-driven', 'in the present tense' and as having a 'post hoc fixity of already-perceived and now expressed images that stand as equivalent to noun forms'.[128] What is clear is that there are links to the literary field which can be drawn, starting with a perhaps surprising return to the work of Wolfgang Iser.

The notion of convergence serves as a perfect analogy for spotting the similarities between Sobchack's and Iser's sense of 'interactive' media – a sense that also chimes with the Ricourean 'refigurative' mimesis which informs our broader argument – and it allows one to see the feasibility of a reader's ability to construct a similarly 'chiasmatic relation' to their medium. The notion of a 'third term' of mediation and meaning between two points in a potential subversive relationship is echoed in Iser's concept of the relationship between the literary text and its reader. In his 'Interaction Between Text and Reader' (1980), Iser posits a frame of reception between 'artistic' and 'aesthetic poles', which symbolise the author's text and its realisation through the reader.[129] Iser argues that the

[127] Sobchack, p. 74.
[128] Sobchack, p. 74.
[129] Wolfgang Iser, 'Interaction Between Text and Reader' [1980], in Vincent B. Leitch (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (London: Norton, 2001), p. 1674.

existence of the work is 'situated somewhere between the two' and 'must be inevitably virtual in character'.[130] This sounds promising as an analogy for the interactive practices elicited by film, but the development proves to be frustrating. Though Iser starts to acknowledge that the 'virtual' element arises from the necessity of such a 'dyadic interaction' needing a '*tertium comparationis*'[131] – a two-way relationship needing a third, regulative point – he can only find it *within* the text itself, in the 'implications' of the gaps between what is 'explicit' and 'implicit'.[132] Furthermore, Iser explicitly argues that a third point *within* the text is preferable to the cinesthetic alternative. In reference to the 'film of the novel' *Tom Jones*, Iser states that while a reader can 'visualise the hero virtually for himself', 'with the film he is confined merely to physical perception, and so whatever he remembers of the world he had pictured is brutally cancelled out'.[133] There is a clear assumption here that 'virtual' characterisation has a greater appeal than cinema's 'physical' alternative. However, the tension inherent in this distinction also recalls the 'subversive' nature of the cinesthetic experience (its 'catachretic confusion'), where the 'chiasm' between 'real' and 'as-if-real' allows binary distinctions – physical v. virtual; escapism v. realism – to be challenged. Only by subconsciously breaking down these distinctions could a viewer such as Albert Limpley, for example, possibly 'interact' with a film star. Such a process would also explain why Mass-Observation reports begin to note

[130] Iser, 'Interaction', p. 1674.
[131] Iser, 'Interaction', p. 1675.
[132] Iser, 'Interaction', p. 1676.
[133] Iser, *The Implied Reader,* p. 282.

an increasing lack of distinction between 'realism' and 'escapism' in the minds of novel-readers. The overwhelmingly physical sense of this virtual reality seems like an aesthetic paradox, hence the catachretic confusion inherent in Limpley's plaintive, 'that's the only way I can describe it honestly it is'. However, as we have seen, this new, interactive affect is facilitated by cinema's fundamentally indexical 'third point': 'the *real* world'.

In order to explain the converging sense of interaction in reading affects, then, one must assume the development of a cinesthetic index in literary realism. In fact, Iser implicitly accepts that the 'third point' between reader and writer begins to form such an index. Iser argues that readers bring their 'own faculties' to the 'intentional sentence correlatives' of the written text to 'create' the 'virtual dimension of the text, which endows it with its reality',[134] a concept which influences Ricoeur's model of mimesis, and an indexical process in all but name. Also, the extent to which the reader 'actively provides the unwritten part of the text' is strikingly similar to Bazin's notion of 'participation' on the part of the viewer, which leaves open the possibility of bringing visual experiences to reading.[135] Iser does indeed suggest that the reader's interaction with virtual 'gaps' in the text works like a 'viewfinder'.[136] Crucially, Iser also acknowledges that 'identification' – which, as has been discussed above, is a concept related to

[134] Iser, *The Implied Reader*, p. 278.
[135] Iser, *The Implied Reader,* p. 281.
[136] Iser, *The Implied Reader*, p. 278.

participation and interaction – 'is not an end in itself, but a stratagem by means of which the author stimulates attitudes in the reader'.[137] By overcoming Iser's lingering critical bias and looking at how the 'ordinary reader' is 'stimulated', it is clear that one can chart an intriguing evolution in the character of what Iser himself might label as 'escapist' novel-reading affects. These changes reveal an almost parasitic tendency in the nature of these affects, as those who experience them latch on to modes of expression based on the visual and material potential of new technologies. Thus, the strikingly swift convergence between the type of affects experienced by novel-readers and cinema-goers in the 1930s onwards suggests not only the cultural influence of the 'talkie' and its attendant aesthetic practices, but also how it begins to influence the way people experience the novels that they read. In order to find the sources of such 'stimulation' and demonstrate how literature creates its interactive, cinesthetic index, clearly one must turn to the post-war novel and its writer.

Novel Writing and the Cinesthetic Reader

Considering the difficulties that the 'virtual' aspect of cinesthetic indexicality presents in identifying a tangible type of reader, it is tempting to regard the emergence of the cinesthetic reader as a hopeful hypothesis. Naturally, the following chapters will analyse, where available, the public reviews and the

[137] Iser, *The Implied Reader*, p. 287.

private letters that detail readers' affects felt in response to specific novels and novelists, in an attempt to prove the existence of a cinesthetic reader who expresses a desire to 'interact' with particular literary characters. However, the ultimate definition of proof in this context must establish whether this definition is one that is conceived of and upheld by a 'movie-made' generation of British novelists and their novels.

It is certainly clear that these writers form a generation whose relationship with their readership is fundamentally 'new', particularly in how it conceives the links between their art and reality. In *The Rules of Art* (1992), Pierre Bourdieu offers an influential model of the development of a literary 'art of living', documenting the rise of the artist as a cultural commodity. This approach clearly has a credible historical pedigree: beginning with the Flaubertian 'enterprise of *objectification of the self*';[138] developing through the rebellious rise of the 'bohemian' class of writer in opposition to bourgeois values; refining itself under the hedonistic guidance of Charles Baudelaire.[139] In essence, the 'art of living' compels the artist to live in ways that not only maintain the framework that has been built to ensure their independence as a social class, but also to reinforce their material means of survival. This, in turn, depends on the writer's self-definition as a cultural commodity in the 'market for symbolic goods'.[140] This 'bohemian'

[138] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 25.
[139] See Bourdieu, pp. 57-60 ('The rupture with the "bourgeois"'), 60-8 ('Baudelaire the founder').
[140] Bourdieu, p. 141.

model of the writer's existence comes from 'new forms of domination' and the 'structural subordination' felt by writers under Napoleon III's intellectual censorship,[141] which is mediated by 'the market' and 'affinities of lifestyle and value systems'. This sound sociological framework has been largely maintained by critics probing the significance of the author in relation to their text, yet the historical specifics of this model have altered, which has obvious consequences concerning the validity of this approach. One clear example: a socio-political institution that wields the same influence as the 19th century Parisian 'literary salons', which are crucial to Bourdieu's argument, does not exist to the same extent in the mid-twentieth century. Its closest relations in the post-war period are the 'small book buyers' and the 'tight network of advertisers and reviewers' that Richard Ohmann cites as the 'gatekeeper intellectuals' of the 1950s book world.[142] If one introduces the prospect of a cinesthetic reader to this model, it would follow that such an influence would also create aesthetic and socio-economic considerations that result in a crucially *altered* balance within Bourdieu's model of the 'market' and 'value systems' as artistic mediators.

So, though Bourdieu's model explains the social foundations of the modern writer's relationship to their text, his explicitly textual model is in need of an overhaul. Bourdieu's model fails to countenance the idea that the writers'

[141] Bourdieu, p. 48-9.
[142] See Richard Ohmann, 'The Shaping of a Canon: U.S. Fiction, 1960-1975' [1983], in Leitch (ed.), *Norton*, pp. 1880-94.

sovereign state of Bohemia may itself face pressure from another medium, which can certainly be seen to happen in the mid-twentieth century. Bourdieu acknowledges the importance of the powerful 'autonomy of the properly "iconic" representation [... via] its own specifically pictoral laws', yet only sees how 19th century writers 'eliminate the picture and the picturesque' of painting 'in favour of the literary'.[143] However, though Bourdieu's chapter 'The Social Genesis of the Eye' does explicitly state the difficulty he finds in developing a theory of 'the perception of a work of art [...] as a practice',[144] it is clear that he is willing to make some inroads into understanding the consumption of visual media. However, Bourdieu quickly explodes the possibility of any contemporary relevance for his visual theories by retreating to the distant and relatively esoteric world of Botticelli and 'the Quattrocento eye',[145] demonstrating a clear contempt for the 'realist' tastes of the 'culturally deprived people' of today.[146] However, Bourdieu's assertion that one 'must reconstruct the "moral and spiritual eye" of the Quattrocento mind' does offer some hope for our argument.[147] Bourdieu again laments the difficulty of doing this, citing Michael Baxandall's assertion that 'a society's visual practices are, in the nature of things, not all or even mostly represented in verbal records'.[148] The consequent conclusion that one must then instead acquire such understanding 'through the practices of everyday life' and

[143] Bourdieu, p. 138.
[144] Bourdieu, p. 314.
[145] See Bourdieu, pp. 315-19.
[146] Bourdieu, p. 315.
[147] Bourdieu, p. 316.
[148] See Bourdieu, p. 317.

'by listening to lectures, speeches or sermons, measuring piles of wheat or lengths of cloth, or by resolving the calculations of compound interest or maritime insurance',[149] almost seems like Bourdieu is settling for a critical second-best. However, this potential flaw is easily addressed if one applies this methodology to our understanding not only of cinesthetic reading, but also of cinesthetic writing.

Most obviously, one must analyse the significance of representations of cinema-going *within* the novels of the post-war period. Just as convergence suggests the arrival of a cinesthetic reader, it clearly follows that there is a 'movie-made' generation of writers, who have grown up with cinema as an 'everyday' aesthetic experience. As we will see, these post-war writers display an intrinsic sense of the cultural importance of cinema-going, creating narratives that offer a glimpse of how its culture (particularly as a representation of 'low living') can be inducted as a literary convention; MacInnes, for example, can be seen to use the paradoxical tensions that are inherent in perceptions of the medium to inform his development of marginalised voices. Considering the discernibly corporeal terms of the cinesthetic index, one of the clearest cinematic themes that emerges in these novels is how the cinema acts as a cultural space for sexual activity, or 'courting'. Kuhn's chapter, 'This Loving Darkness', shows how cinemas become the prime venue of 'courtship' for this generation, which offers a clear template

[149] Bourdieu, p. 318.

for explaining the conflation of indexicality and sexuality in the works of post-war writers. In practice, this ranges from obvious indexical indicators (and, as such, their inclusion is more functional than Lodge's label of 'rhetorical strategies' would suggest) – characters go to actual cinemas and watch actual films – to more pervasive formal elements, such as when love-scenes are depicted in (consciously cinematic) monochrome tones in Amis' novels, or how even outdoor love-making is constantly framed by the sense of back-row darkness and claustrophobia in the work of Sillitoe. The increasing dominance of such a voyeuristic and objectified sense of sexuality can also be seen to condition representations of gender in the post-war novel and, as will be discussed, the often inherently misogynistic results begin to inform the feminist turn in British fiction from the Sixties onwards, such as in Banks' depiction of the simultaneous yearned-for fantasy and disappointing reality of the male.

Though the presence of cinematic themes becomes easier to discern in the post-war novel, it is, however, the aspect of an indexical element that is the more intriguing literary innovation in the context of mid-century realism, particularly as a potential conditioning factor of a reader's subjective 'refiguring' (again, in Ricouer's sense of 'mimesis$_3$') of realism. As has been discussed, cinesthetic indexicality is dependent on a link to a *real* body which acts as the 'third point' between the producer and consumer of a text, the 'space' where the virtual potential for interaction is created. Cinema itself has quite clearly created a 'star'

concept to this end, yet cinesthetic literature has a corresponding feature: the author. This would suggest that one must look at the oft-bemoaned 'biographical' material linked to each novelist, which often acts as the proverbial millstone, straining at the neck of interpretation. However, when one considers that indexical sources would be a necessary element of cinesthetic literature, the scope of the interpretation of this material must be modified.

So far, the most helpful literary definition of this material is that of the 'epitext'. Gérard Genette defines the epitext as 'any paratextual element not materially appended to the text', which means that it can be located in 'a virtually limitless physical and social space';[150] temporally, it can be 'preceding', 'original' or 'later or delayed'.[151] According to Genette, 'the sender is most often the author', acting independently or through an intermediary, but 'may equally well be the publisher […] or some *authorized* third party',[152] a scenario that nearly always leads to the production of what Genette terms 'the semiofficial allographic epitext',[153] which is intended to guide critics to particular conclusions. However, Genette's broader conclusions bring into question how such a specific aim could be controlled in practice. Genette stresses that 'the addressee is never only the reader (of the text) but is some form of the public, including perhaps non-readers

[150] Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* [1987], trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 344.
[151] Genette, p. 345.
[152] Genette, p. 345.
[153] Genette, p. 348.

of the text'.[154] As such, Genette argues that such paratexts '[bear] less on the author's work than on his life, his habits, the people he encounters' and that this is a 'paratextual *effect* (rather than a function)'.[155] Genette believes that 'the publisher's epitext' is merely tolerated by the author because of the 'needs of the trade'.[156] However, for the 'movie-made' novelist who begins to recognise the emergence of the cinesthetic reader, there is a formal desire to create the 'third point' of cinesthetic indexicality. This must be related to the actual world and certainly to a 'real' body, which is most likely to be that of the author. With this in mind, it would seem that the concept of *extratext* is necessary for the consideration of post-war, cinesthetic literature, as it acknowledges a much greater degree of control on the part of the author to introduce their own physical existence as an indexical indicator. To this end, it has a specifically cinesthetic function, like the cinematic apparatus of character. Therefore, one must also consider how extratextual material – which would incorporate publishers' letters, promotional posters, magazine interviews – demonstrates the conception of a literary strategy for encouraging 'interaction' with the author. Most crucially, specific elements of indexicality can be found, where 'semi-autobiographical' characters within novels look and act in ways that mirror the public presentation of a novelist's persona. Charting and analysing how certain readers respond to this technique – such as Marghanita Laski's trepidation when introduced to

[154] Genette, p. 345.
[155] Genette, p. 346.
[156] Genette, p. 347.

Kingsley 'Lucky Jim' Amis – will also allow us to put a face to the cinesthetic reader. What emerges is the notion that the indexical relationship between the character in the text and the novelist in the extratext becomes understood as that which 'confirms' realism in the way smoke signals fire, or perhaps more aptly, as the presence of ink is an index of the fact that you could hold the pen, which starts to supplant the 'mirror of life' model employed by older forms of analogical classic realism.

So, in order to quantify the existence of the cinesthetic reader, one must consider a broad range of material: readers' articulations of the affect felt in response to particular writers and novels; how perceptions of cinema-going are depicted in the novels; how the life of the writer creates a template for the reading of novels. As these textual and extratextual elements are uncovered in the following chapters, it will become clear that the emergence of the cinesthetic reader acts as a unifying concept, which helps to organise and explain many of the formal and thematic shifts that the British novel experiences in the post-war period. Often the implied question will be: *is this novel assuming a cinesthetic reader*? This approach allows a consideration of how the influence of cinema-going creates a shift in the dynamic between writer and reader and how it fosters a new literary sensibility in the post-war period.

3. INVITATIONS TO A CANDY-FLOSS WORLD?: BRAINE, MACINNES, SILLITOE

> *The hedonistic but passive barbarian who rides in a fifty-horse-power bus for threepence, to see a five-million-dollar film for one-and-eightpence, is not simply a social oddity; he is a portent.*[1]

Debates held on the shifting sands of social, moral and cultural standards are a fundamental element of life – and novels – in post-war Britain. However, though the well-to-do figure of D.H. Lawrence's Lady Chatterley is effectively the subject of prosecution in 1960 for the way in which she offends public morals, adultery, abortions and homosexuality had actually already become part of a celebrated literary tradition in the 1950s. The success of John Braine, Colin MacInnes, and Alan Sillitoe in this period represents the reading public's growing appetite for a window into life at the 'gritty' social margins. Their early works continue to be read as pertinent examples of a social realist tradition that strives to represent the life of 'lower-class' figures in this era. However, their representations of class, morality, and realism, as well as their very definitions of 'the literary', are all affected by a social phenomenon which is rarely discussed in relation to these writers: cinema-going.

The fact that Braine and Sillitoe are 'working-class' writers has continued to fascinate critics of their fiction. Unfortunately, it has led to a swathe of myopic readings of their work. G. S. Fraser's revised edition of *The Modern Writer and His*

[1] Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957), p. 205.

World (1964) is indicative of the early critical response to these writers when it argues that 'John Braine and Alan Sillitoe can be dealt with more briefly' than other writers.[2] Fraser concedes that 'critics who, in this age of sociology, look to the novel as a document were excited by Braine and Sillitoe, because they dealt not with lower-middle-class protest, as Wain and Amis were thought to do, but with genuine working-class protest'.[3] However, Fraser's class-centred comments on these writers are reductive, particularly when he states that Sillitoe 'is not interested in the warmth, the solidarity that impress Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart' and that 'John Braine, also, cuts across the formula about working-class life one might have got from Hoggart and Williams; the formula that for the traditional working classes, money and power do not matter, happiness and group loyalty do'.[4] Effectively, Fraser consistently asks merely one question: Can we label this work 'working-class', as it is defined by Hoggart and Williams? The cultural definitions provided by Hoggart and Williams, however, can also provide an appropriate starting-point for an expansion of this reductive paradigm.

Firstly though, it has to be acknowledged that as definitions of class have been refined since the 1950s, so too, to a certain degree, has the debate on 'class fictions'. A good example of this is the presence of MacInnes in this argument.

[2] G.S. Fraser, *The Modern Writer and His World.* Rev. edn. (London: Andre Deutsch, 1964), p. 179.
[3] Fraser, p. 179.
[4] Fraser, pp. 179-80.

Admittedly, MacInnes might appear to be an odd subject for analysis in this context; not only because, being born in 1914, he is slightly too old to be offered automatic entry to the 'movie-made generation' (yet, as will be explained, he is merely a 'late starter'), but also because, as Ian Haywood pithily suggests, a writer who creates a novel with a character called '"the Hoplite", a term used for a footsoldier in ancient Greece' is 'unlikely to emerge from within working-class discourse'.[5] However, particularly when we see the Boy of *Absolute Beginners* in the socio-economic context of Mark Abrams' *The Teenage Consumer* (1959), for example, it becomes clear that MacInnes is a vital element of an increasingly nuanced understanding of post-war class fictions. John Kirk persuasively argues that such a novel uses 'the myth of classlessness [to form] the ideological cement of the text, transposing class structure into the cultural performance of "youth"'.[6] As such, MacInnes has joined Sillitoe and Braine as a writer involved in the debate on representations of the struggles for social mobility in the new 'Age of Affluence'. John Hill summarises the new trend in this criticism when he states that 'there can be little doubt that the key to understanding Britain in the 1950s resides in the idea of "affluence"'.[7] Indeed, Kirk uses MacInnes, Braine, and Sillitoe as prime examples to argue that 'the ideology of post-war affluence

[5] Ian Haywood, *Working-Class Fiction from Chartism to* Trainspotting (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1997) p. 116.
[6] John Kirk, *Twentieth Century Writing and the British Working Class* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), p. 61.
[7] John Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism* (London: BFI Publishing, 1986), p. 5.

produced a new rhetoric of class, one linked paradoxically to ideas of *classlessness*'.[8]

Though this does represent progress, this approach is still problematic. When Dominic Head agrees that the 'working-class' and 'gritty realism' labels of these novels, particularly Braine's and Sillitoe's, 'are now insecure' as the 'them'/'us' distinction (which Hoggart outlines) had been eroded by social mobility in the period,[9] he also raises a thorny issue that has not been fully grasped by this new turn in the debate on class fictions:

> What each of these instances demonstrate is the bemusement of the character whose class-consciousness has not kept pace with social change. […] The technical 'tinkering' with realism, to convey, for example, a quasi-existential helplessness for Arthur Seaton, demonstrates the apparent impossibility of regenerating a constructive working-class realism.[10]

For a long time, there had been an assumption that the fictions of mid-twentieth century working-class life return to older models of literary realism that had a clear socio-political framework. For example, Paul West places Braine and Sillitoe in the tradition of Wells and Gissing rather than Bennett or Galsworthy,[11] thus emphasizing a sense of shared socio-political sensibilities. This political sense of social realism continued to hold sway in the early twentieth-century and it is defined in its baldest terms by Bertolt Brecht in his essay 'The Popular and the Realistic' (1938):

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[8] Kirk, p. 76.
[9] Dominic Head, *Modern British Fiction, 1950-2000* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 52-3.
[10] Head, pp. 67-8.
[11] Paul West, *The Modern Novel*, I (London: Hutchinson, 1963), pp. 126, 141.

> *Realist* means: laying bare society's causal network/showing up the dominant view-point as the viewpoint of the dominators/writing from the standpoint of the class which has prepared the broadest solutions for the most pressing problems affecting society/emphasizing the dynamics of the development/concrete and so as to encourage abstraction.[12]

In the Fifties, even liberal readings of literature shared with Marxist criticism (which, it has to be noted, is not all as politically strident as Brecht's) the structuralist notion that the novel was defined by socio-political considerations, as typified by Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) and its argument that the rise of the novel was synonymous with that of the middle class. Thus, when Head suggests that readings of post-war social realism might now look beyond the notion of 'working-class realism', he simultaneously implies the difficulty of re-defining the 'tinkering' with realist tradition that these works achieve, beyond the existing political discourse. This section suggests that one way of reading the realism of these class fictions outside a purely political discourse (an outmoded approach evidenced, for example, by Haywood's reading of MacInnes as outside 'working-class' territory) is by 'refiguring' them in the cultural context of cinema-going.

As has been discussed in the previous chapter, 'escapist' cinema-going had been ostracised from dominant Leavisite definitions of 'culture', which was significantly related to the fact that it was seen as a predominantly working-class

[12] Bertolt Brecht, 'The Popular and the Realistic' [1938], in John Willett (ed. & trans.), *Brecht on Theatre* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1964), p. 109.

activity (a nexus which is investigated and exploited, as we will see, by the writers in this section). Even though the next generation of cultural critics are more open to 'mass culture' than I. A. Richards, and F. R. Leavis' *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture* (1930), for example, they still imply that cinema is a 'low' form. The most influential works of British cultural criticism in the 1950s make it very clear that cinema-going is not and should not be regarded as a 'cultural' activity. Although Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) casually states in both its preface and conclusion that the shifts in working-class culture caused by reading habits could also be seen to be caused by other forms of mass media, including cinema,[13] discussion of cinema-going is limited to a few aloof statements regarding its lack of refinement. Hoggart does mention the 'moulded false-fronts' of the 'marzipan super-cinemas' as part of his argument for the working-class preference for exotic, 'baroque' architecture: 'It loves the cornucopia, all that is generous and sprawling, that suggests splendour and wealth by sheer abundance and lavishness of colour'.[14] The gaudy artificiality of the cinema-going experience, according to Hoggart, engenders nothing of cultural and artistic value; 'mass-entertainments', in which Hoggart includes cinema, 'belong to a vicarious, spectators' world' and 'they offer nothing which can really grip the brain or heart'.[15] However, this is the extent of Hoggart's examination of cinema-going (even though the title of Chapter VII, 'Invitations to a Candy-Floss

[13] Hoggart, pp. 11, 270.
[14] Hoggart, pp. 119-21.
[15] Hoggart, p. 277.

World: The Newer Mass Art', would suggest a far more significant engagement) and one can infer that Hoggart sees this topic as unworthy of serious cultural debate. Indeed, Hoggart's strikingly condescending proclamation that working-class people value 'group warmth' is also applied to his brief discussions of cinema-going,[16] and the piscine metaphor he applies betrays his cultural bias:

> There can be an added pleasure in the warm dark super-cinemas, from the fact that the 'you' who is cajoled, invited to laugh, flattered, is not simply 'you', but a great composite 'you' of the unexceptional ordinary folk; minnows in a heated pool.[17]

As will be discussed, this communal feeling becomes particularly significant in the work of Sillitoe. The cultural prejudice exhibited here, however, reflects notions that were widely shared in cinematic and literary circles of the time. Lindsay Anderson, for example, cites a 'moronic mass audience' and invites critics to 'spend their Sunday evenings in front of cinema queues just looking at them' in his article 'A Possible Solution' (1948).[18] In a similar vein, Angus Wilson goes as far as citing his distaste for 'films about poor people – tramps, orphans or peasants' as one of his 'main difficulties in acquiring a serious interest in cinema as an art form'.[19] Hoggart's influential study does much to perpetuate such attitudes towards cinema-going culture.

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[16] Hoggart, p. 69.
[17] Hoggart, p. 156.
[18] Lindsay Anderson, 'A Possible Solution', *Sequence*, 3 (Spring 1948), p. 9.
[19] Angus Wilson, 'What I See in Cinema II' [1956], in Josephine Ross (ed.), *The Vogue Bedside Book* (London: Vermilion, 1984), p. 189.

Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society* (1958) offers a less damning but similarly prejudiced line on the cultural value of cinema-going. Williams does take F. R. Leavis' reaction against 'low' forms of culture such as cinema to task, but explains it as a rational defence of what Leavis understands to be culture. Williams also seems to suggest that cinema as a mass-communication form will slowly be absorbed into our idea of culture, offering the tentative suggestion that 'it is still much too early to conclude that a majority culture is necessarily low in taste'.[20] Clearly though, this tentativeness is part of a refusal to see cinema as *current* culture. This is surprising considering that Williams' own involvement with the cinema extended to him owning a film production company, Film Drama Ltd. However, his contribution to the 'manifesto' for this company, 'Film and the Dramatic Tradition' (1954), illuminates Williams' position on the matter at this time (for it is not until the late 1960s – tellingly, post-*The Popular Arts* – that Williams begins to view cinema in a more nuanced way). In this essay, Williams bemoans the proliferation of films that are 'merely inferior substitutions' for novels;[21] notes that its 'audiences are disproportionately immature as individuals';[22] and criticises the 'false actuality' of film, which out of 'habit' rather than a studied use of the 'convention' of naturalism, represent the external world

[20] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* [1958] (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. 309-10.
[21] Williams, 'Film and the Dramatic Tradition', in Michael Orrom & Williams, *Preface to Film* (London: Film Drama Ltd., 1954), p. 3.
[22] Williams, 'Film and the Dramatic Tradition', p. 13.

exactly, but lacking the psychological realism of its superior template: drama.[23]

In contrast to the value of drama, Williams argues that cinema,

> in the darkened auditorium the dominating screen, with its very large, moving figures, its very loud sound, its simultaneous appeal to eye and ear, can, it seems obvious, exercise a kind of 'hypnotic' effect which very readily promotes phantasy and easy emotional indulgence.[24]

It is perhaps a result of Leavisite prejudice that Williams does not afford the 'gap' between cinema's realism and 'phantasy' the same status as that afforded to literature in his 'Realism and the Contemporary Novel' (1958). It is important to note, though, that for Williams at this time, the 'low' position of cinema is a cultural rather than a socio-political imperative. However, just as Williams refuses to acknowledge the idea of separate working-class culture (as the working classes do not control society, so their narrow, distinct forms of culture cannot dominate, according to Williams), he also – less progressively – sees 'cinema' *tout court*, as one cultural entity. This standpoint in cultural studies is not rectified until Paddy Whannell and Stuart Hall's *The Popular Arts* (1964), which acknowledges a debt to Hoggart and Williams, but stresses that judging the cultural value of certain aesthetics 'is not a struggle *against* the modern forms of communication, but a conflict *within* these media'.[25] Indeed, *The Popular Arts* offers a progression for Cultural Studies that helps to validate the cultural parameters of work such as that of J. P. Mayer and Annette Kuhn, through not

[23] Williams, 'Film and the Dramatic Tradition', p. 40.
[24] Williams, 'Film and the Dramatic Tradition', pp. 12-3.
[25] Paddy Whannell & Stuart Hall, *The Popular Arts* (London: Hutchinson, 1964), p. 15.

only its acceptance of all cultural forms as valid cultural subjects, but also an acceptance (with explicit reference to the work of Siegfried Kracauer) that the cinema's star system engages the audience in a new way:

> The stars quickly passed beyond the limits of the screen. They carried over into real life qualities which the camera had bestowed on them. [...] This interaction between life and the illusion of the screen goes some way to explaining the compulsive power of the stars.[26]

This nexus between class culture and interactive realism serves as our reminder that cinema-going in the novel should now be seen not as a socio-political, 'rhetorical strategy' pertaining to working-class life, but that its designation as a 'low' cultural form collides with its significant influence on one's sense of being to create new understandings of character and realism in the work of certain post-war writers. Braine's, MacInnes', and Sillitoe's engagements with cinema-going accord it a cultural status that is more significant than a mere vehicle for escapism, and often specifically challenge ideas of the medium's cheap illusion. That is not to say that *all* writers of class fictions adopt this approach at this time. Keith Waterhouse's *Billy Liar* (1959), for example, does offer the interesting idea that escapist 'No. 1 thinking', signalled by the theme tune 'March of the Movies', is different to reality's 'hideous reel of No. 2 thinking';[27] this idea is not developed though and thus merely places the type of

[26] Whannell & Hall, p. 209.
[27] Keith Waterhouse, *Billy Liar* [1959] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), pp. 5, 15, 17.

escapist cinema-going that one can find in the novels of Elizabeth Bowen, Patrick Hamilton, and J. B. Priestley's *Albert Goes Through*, for example, into a 1950s working-class context. In contrast, Braine does not merely look down on the working-class man who understands – as Kirk suggests, in a Hoggartian way[28] – that 'His Girl had been Untrue' through exposure to mass media, but struggles against the 'illusions' of reality that cinema had perpetuated. MacInnes not only uses cinema as a shorthand for cheap thrills, but also uses cinema-going as representative of an emergent 'classless' worldview. Sillitoe's mode of address does not just engage the 'us'/'them' dynamic that is, as Peter Hitchcock suggests,[29] synonymous with that of Spivak's subaltern, but challenges the very foundations of the position of cinema-going culture as a symbol of social and literary marginalisation. The following chapters thus argue that these novels can be read not just as simulations and, ultimately, repudiations of assumptions of working-class and socially-marginalised lives, but also as explorations of and confrontations with notions of their movie-made 'candy-floss world'.

[28] Kirk, p. 68.

[29] See Peter Hitchcock, *Working-Class Fiction in Theory and Practice: A Reading of Alan Sillitoe* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989).

4. JOHN BRAINE'S 'CLEAREST LENS'

> *Always write as if the action of your novel were taking place before your eyes on a brightly lit stage. This was the advice of Ford Madox Ford […]. Indeed, you might well replace Ford Madox Ford's stage with a cinema screen. The rule for the novel is the same as for the film: nothing is shown or said without a purpose. If nothing is seen, strike it out.*[1]

So writes John Braine in a chapter of his *Writing a Novel* (1974) entitled 'Writing is Seeing'. The casual 'indeed, you might well replace' would seem to suggest that as long as one sees a vision in the mind's eye when writing, its platform – be it stage or screen – could be irrelevant. Indeed, the assumption that Braine's novels represent basic visual analogues is at the heart of his reputation as a realist, which has diminished since his late-1950s heyday. Frederick R. Karl sums up the critical consensus on Braine which emerges as early as the late 1960s: 'The problem with Braine's work […] is not in his intention but in his execution, not in his ideas but in his inability to "see" his material before publishing it'.[2] The problem with Braine, it seems, is that his apparently unthinking naturalism fails to inspire the imagination of critics; his debut is intriguingly visceral, but other contemporaries – Amis, Sillitoe – apparently do it better. G. S. Fraser, David Lodge, and Anthony Burgess are a few of many who forward this notion. This might explain why the only book-length critical work on Braine, James W. Lee's *John Braine*, was published as long ago as 1968. Now, if Braine is mentioned in

[1] John Braine, *How to Write a Novel* (London: Methuen, 2000; first published as *Writing a Novel* [1974]), pp. 51-2.
[2] Frederick R. Karl, 'The Angries', in his *A Reader's Guide to the Contemporary English Novel*. Rev. edn. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), p. 231.

critical works, it is only with reference to how *Room at the Top* helps to illuminate the class issue in the 1950s. Indeed, not much has changed in Braine studies since Burgess proclaimed in 1967 that *Room at the Top* is 'a study in provincial hypergamy',[3] the tone for which was set by Geoffrey Gorer's article 'The Perils of Hypergamy' in May 1957,[4] a review which demonstrates how quickly the class issue was taken up in response to the work of Braine and other 'working-class' contemporaries. Recent articles that engage with Braine's work still focus almost solely on his representation of class, or his status as a provincial writer, such as Jane Mansfield's study of 'northern-ness', 'The brute-hero: the 1950s and echoes of the North'.[5] In reality, he is a marginalised writer.

However, the clear dominance of visual perspective in Braine's early novels, preached ambiguously in his 'Ways of Seeing', may have more critical value than it at first appears. When examining elements of the cinematic in these novels, it becomes clear that Braine in fact perceives a very clear distinction in his early fiction between placing the action 'on a stage' and 'on a cinema screen'. Born in 1922, Braine is a member of the 'movie-made generation' and the presence of the cinematic in his first two novels points to a deeply-ingrained relationship with the medium. What emerges is a concerned consideration of not

[3] Anthony Burgess, 'A Sort of Rebels', in his *The Novel Now: A Guide To Contemporary Fiction* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967), p. 149.
[4] See Geoffrey Gorer, 'The Perils of Hypergamy', *New Statesman* (4 May 1957), pp. 566-8.
[5] See Jane Mansfield, 'The brute-hero: the 1950s and echoes of the North', *Literature and History*, 19:1 (April 2010), pp. 34-49.

only the extent to which the cinema influences 'working-class' life and thought, but also cinema's relationship with literary-realist representations of post-war working-class experience.

Braine and Cinema-Going

There is little published material which directly leads one to suggest that Braine has a particularly productive relationship with cinema-going. Indeed, before the publication of his novels, the only mention of cinema-going in Braine's work seems to be in a small piece of fiction for the *New Statesman* entitled 'Number Nine Rock', in which the 'neon light of the cinema' (and the 'other and more garish' courting-venues that it 'advertises') is dismissed as an unsatisfactory arena for amorous young couples.[6] However, an examination of Braine's Yorkshire-based archives reveals a more promising picture.

Firstly, Braine's diaries reveal a few basic preferences that might illuminate various aspects of the writer's fiction. It is certainly clear that he prefers realistic seriousness to light-hearted comedy on screen; for example, Daniel Mann's marital drama *Come Back, Little Sheba* (1952) is praised as 'almost unbearably good',[7] whereas Hal Walker's colourful comedy *Road to Bali* (1952) is

[6] Braine, 'Number Nine Rock', *New Statesman* (29 March 1952), pp. 370-1.
[7] Braine, Diary, 14 October 1953, John Braine Archive, Leeds University Library, GB 26 Brotherton Collection MS 20c Braine D3.

curtly dismissed as 'weak'.[8] Braine also feels that films should avoid theatrical tendencies; Laughton's performance as the lead in William Dieterle's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1939) is criticised as 'immature' because of its 'stagey' qualities.[9] Most obviously of all, Braine sees himself as a connoisseur of the female-form-on-screen. When praising *Ivanhoe* (1952) for being 'action, colour, spectacle, not words, not a photographed play', Braine quickly turns his attention to the 'toothsome' Elizabeth Taylor in the remainder of his review.[10] *Paleface* (1948) leaves one particular impression: 'Impressed by the unattractiveness of Jane Russell – a sort of dull sluttishness my main impression'.[11] According to Braine, *Intimate Relations* (1954) is a 'lousy *film*, except for Elsie Albin, who's wonderful'.[12] Tellingly, Braine goes on to fantasise about Albin in the interactive terms so typical of those of the movie-made generation, opining that 'she's the sort of girl one might meet at some concert in London'.[13] Overall, Braine's records of his cinema-going reveal clear interests in the realism of film, particularly in contrast to the theatrical, as well as its representations of female sexuality. As will be discussed, these cinesthetic tendencies will both inspire and constrain his fiction.

[8] Braine, Diary, 2 January 1954, Leeds University Library, GB 26 BC MS 20c Braine D3.
[9] Braine, Diary, 18 January 1952, John Braine Literary Manuscripts, West Yorkshire Archive (Bradford), 1D75/21/3.
[10] Braine, Diary, 9 September 1953, Leeds University Library, GB 26 BC MS 20c Braine D3.
[11] Braine, Diary, 15 September 1953, Leeds University Library, GB 26 BC MS 20c Braine D3.
[12] Braine, Diary, 8 September 1953, West Yorkshire Archive (Bradford), 1D75/21/9.
[13] Braine, Diary, 8 September 1953, West Yorkshire Archive (Bradford), 1D75/21/9.

Braine's archives also reveal a more profound engagement with cinema-going culture than mere film preferences. Braine is certainly involved with the culture in the 1950s. The scribbled reminder 'SIGHT & SOUND' at the top of a page in his 1956 diary seems to suggest that he is at least a reader of such cinema magazines.[14] Speculation that Braine's involvement with cinema goes beyond attending films seems confirmed by the mysterious reference to an application to 'the Film Institute' for a job in or around September 1950, one he did not manage to get.[15] It is certainly clear that Braine's desire to interact with cinema culture predates his fiction. In what appears to be Braine's earliest extant film review – in a school exercise book dated 4 October 1936 – he sums up *Captain Blood* (1935) 'as a well-acted film, maybe not for highbrows but to most people's taste'.[16] However, his 'movie-made' desire to interact with the dashing Errol Flynn might even appear to be creeping into his prose at this early age; his teacher reminds him to 'keep to *one* tense' in the margins, as his review starts in the past tense but constantly slips into the engaged present. However, by his early twenties, Braine has clearly developed a more complicated relationship with the medium and the culture. In a poem dated 'pre-1952' entitled 'Childhood', Braine appears to acknowledge the 'Technicolour dreamchild' of the movie-made generation and makes an early reference to the deceptive and illusory nature of the cinema's moving image:

[14] Braine, Diary & notebook c.1956, Leeds University Library, GB 26 BC MS 20c Braine N1, p. 39.
[15] Braine, Diary, 10 September 1950, West Yorkshire Archive (Bradford), 1D75/21/2.
[16] Braine, School exercise book, c. 1936, West Yorkshire Archive (Bradford), 1D75/21/1.

> Where others through the lying lense [*sic*] of talk
> see a Technicolour dreamchild and remember
> icecream and Christmas trees and catching sticklebacks
> I with the clearest lens [*sic*] see through the longago [*sic*]
> a blind puppy, caught in the same old trap.[17]

The young Braine here distances himself from the 'lying lense' of the 'Technicolour' cinema, instead endowing himself with 'the clearest lens'. The difference in spelling is conscious, as it is repeated in various drafts. The less common 'lense' conveys a sense of distortion when contrasted to the more established 'lens'. A tension is created between an appreciation of cinema's ability to clearly represent the action of real life, which one can often discern in Braine's diaries, and the disheartening realisation that such representation is enjoyable but fundamentally illusory, both in terms of the on-screen 'act' and the technological 'miracle' of the apparent movement of still images. This tension will inform Braine's fiction as he turns towards the medium of the novel.

By the mid-1950s, Braine begins to find creative potential in such tension. In his 'Diary circa 1956', he attaches an intriguing note to a draft of 'The Bughole', which describes life in a working-class area:

> Even these films – the low-grade B features that will never even make the grade on a film critic's enthuse, have an enchantment here – an enchantment that reminds us that the worst film is, after all, a succession of technical miracles.
>
> Crackling sound, cuts clearly discernible, even main projector seizes up, effect of indecency – Reel 1 etc.[18]

[17] Braine, 'Childhood' (originally 'Poem 26'), 'pre-1952', Leeds University Library, GB 26 BC MS 20c Braine B21657.
[18] Braine, 'The Bughole' (draft), in Diary c. 1956, Leeds University Library, GB 26 BC MS 20c Braine N1, p. 88.

Here Braine is not only contemplating the reception of cinema as a realist illusion, and the representation of a working-class area in 'crackling' cinematic terms, but seeing such an area as a cinema itself; the 'Bughole' chimes with a phrase which has often been used to convey the experience of working-class cinema-going, the fleapit. In a much earlier version of this piece, Braine notes 'the fact that, with all their faults, places like the Bughole give one the *flavour* of cinema'.[19] Now, one particular aspect of this flavour has been emphasised; everything about cinema seems inferior and disjointed, yet this appears to hold an 'enchanting' power to represent the reality of the 'Bughole'. It is important to note that 'enchantment' is a concept that Braine often collocates with the cinematic in his personal papers. For example, he notes Leslie Caron's 'enchanting innocence' in *Lili* (1953),[20] a phrase which he will impressively recall in relation to Caron – such is the apparent vividness with which Braine's mind perceives the cinematic – in a review of the film of Lynne Reid Banks' *The L-Shaped Room* nearly a decade later.[21] For Braine, the cinema represents escapism, enchantment, dreams, and illusion just as much as it can document 'gritty' reality. When one applies Braine's immersion in such ideas of cinema-going to the development of his fiction, it becomes apparent that his work presents a far more interesting take on the realistic representation of 'working-class life' – and its negotiations between

[19] Braine, Diary, 8 August 1953, West Yorkshire Archive (Bradford), 1D75/21/9.
[20] Braine, Diary, 17 October 1953, Leeds University Library, GB 26 BC MS 20c Braine D3.
[21] Braine, 'I'm always hungry for this kind of Caron!', *Daily Express* (15 March 1962), West Yorkshire Archive (Bradford).

affluent fantasies and austere realities – than merely illuminating 'the perils of provincial hypergamy'.

Room at the Top

The realism of Braine's debut novel *Room at the Top* (1957) has always been seen as a dominant element of its literary value, yet a definition of its precise nature is not the simple task that many, such as G. S. Fraser, have believed it to be. On publication, the novel's celebration of material detail and its explicit class-consciousness pushed it to the forefront of the Fifties' 'return' to realism. The novel's current critical reputation, however, has suffered as definitions of realism have moved beyond prizing such empiricism as the primary indicator of the convention. G. S. Fraser famously castigates the 'faintly whorish *chic* of the style' and sees a 'weakness' in Braine's proximity to his character: 'Braine is not emotionally detached from Joe Lampton, but half-admires him for doing what any lad of guts or spunk would do in his place'.[22] Even James W. Lee, who is moved to write a whole book on Braine, believes that the impact of the novel is 'greater perhaps than the merit of the novel should have justified'.[23] Most notably, David Lodge cites Joe describing an Aston-Martin as an example of the relatively unsatisfying realism of Braine's work. Joe insists that the car has 'a quality which is difficult to convey without using the terms of the advertising

[22] G. S. Fraser, *The Modern Writer and His World.* Rev. edn. (London: Andre Deutsch, 1964), p. 181.
[23] James W. Lee, *John Braine* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1968), p. 116.

copywriter'.[24] Lodge asserts that such writing can only ever evoke a 'mild "thrill of recognition" […] which act[s] in society as an index to class and status'.[25] Lodge goes onto criticise the passage as dated and superficial, arguing:

> As the significance of such details fades still more, the lack of verbal realization in the passage will become still more evident. For even if some learned scholar of the future devotes a footnote to explaining the significance of a vintage Aston-Martin as a status symbol in the early 1950's, there is little in the text which will assist the reader to see and feel the car in the imagination. The reader must himself have observed an Aston-Martin of the appropriate period in order to compensate for the vagueness of the writer's description.[26]

Lodge's argument suggests that Braine has created a transient type of realism which requires a contemporaneous 'view' of the world that is being portrayed. As such, Lodge assumes to a significant extent that Braine's novel strives for the status of social document. There are two fundamental problems with this line of argument, however.

Firstly, it is important to note that the Aston-Martin described is not a contemporary status symbol, as Lodge argues, but a status symbol from a decade earlier. As Humphrey Carpenter notes in 2002, though 'the blurb of a recent paperback edition […] describes Joe as "the original 'angry young man' of the Fifties"', 'in fact the novel is set in 1946. Braine told Kenneth Allsop: "Joe

[24] Braine, *Room at the Top* [1957] (London: Arrow, 2002), p. 28. Further references to this novel correspond to this edition.
[25] David Lodge, 'The Modern, the Contemporary and the Importance of Being Amis', *Critical Quarterly*, 5:4 (December 1963), p. 339.
[26] Lodge, 'The Modern', p. 338.

Lampton isn't meant […] to be of this period"'.[27] Braine is not portraying the world of 1957 and yet his writing has clearly conveyed not only the sense that Lampton exists in the contemporary world, but that he is observing the same things that his readers are assumed to be viewing in their day-to-day lives. This realisation prompts interesting questions regarding Braine's notion of his realism and the extent to which it might be seen as an objective documentary – a cinematic record of a gaze which foregrounds its Metzian 'absence as presence' – or a more fallible, 'dreamlike' record of a subjective history.

Secondly, one must question Lodge's implication that such an 'index to class and status' merely evokes a 'mild "thrill of recognition"' when the context of the cinesthetic reader is considered, to whom such indices have the power to evoke an interactive, affecting realism. It is clear that contemporary reviews of the novel often praise its realistic qualities in ways which seek a bridge between empirical indices and 'real life' characters and can identify a sense of realism which goes beyond an appreciation of the social document. The *Coventry Evening Telegraph's* review title 'This Novel Has Life – Plus Real People in Real Settings' is surprisingly representative of the immediate response to Braine's work.[28] David Holloway of the *News Chronicle* feels that 'the book crackles with life'.[29] Writing in the *Times Literary Supplement*, John Bayley argues that 'an

[27] Humphrey Carpenter, *The Angry Young Men: A Literary Comedy of the 1950s* (London: Allen Lane, 2000), p. 160.
[28] See *Coventry Evening Telegraph* (21 March 1957), West Yorkshire Archive (Bradford).
[29] David Holloway, *News Chronicle* (14 March 1957), West Yorkshire Archive (Bradford).

extraordinary vitality pulses through' the book.[30] Elizabeth Bowen is so moved by its reality that she deems it 'too well-written: once embarked upon, the reader cannot break free'.[31] It is the sense of life detected in the novel's hero, Joe Lampton, which captures the most positive responses. A reviewer for *The Times* argues that the merit of the novel lies in the fact that 'Mr Braine has allowed Joe to tell his own story'.[32] *Punch* believes that Joe 'is alive and young and of our own time, and he rings true'.[33] In response to such reviews, Peter Fjågesund has more recently argued that 'it is obvious that *Room at the Top* was read almost like a documentary, and that thousands of young people in Britain saw their own reflection in the portrait of Joe Lampton'.[34] It is seems plausible that the indices of Joe's class and status appeal fundamentally to a cinesthetic understanding of character, which 'sees' Joe in relation to real symbols of working-class life and then can 'flesh out' his existence as a 'real' working-class man. By examining the 'ways of seeing' documented in the novel, it becomes clear that Braine's realist technique is far from a facsimile of the classic realism of, for example, Stendhal (as is often argued), but instead an exploratory development of a realism that exploits the discourses surrounding 'candy-floss' cinema-going culture, and that begins to embrace the ways in which a cinesthetic generation fills in the 'gaps' of

[30] John Bayley, 'Uphill Fight', *Times Literary Supplement* (5 April 1957), p. 205.
[31] Elizabeth Bowen, *Tatler* (10 April 1957), West Yorkshire Archive (Bradford).
[32] Anon., 'New Fiction', *Times* (14 March 1957), p 13.
[33] See *Punch* (17 April 1957), West Yorkshire Archive (Bradford).
[34] Peter Fjågesund, 'John Braine's *Room at the Top*: The Stendhal Connection', *English Studies,* 80:3 (June 1999), p. 247.

the medium, between the documentary and the dream, the ontological and the illusory.

Braine immediately engages cinema-going culture to accentuate Joe's authenticity as a 'real' working-class man. At the beginning of the novel, Joe feels that his visual preferences are at odds with those of his middle-class hosts. Thus, when describing the Thompson's house, it reflects the feeling of unreality that his class-based alienation provokes; he feels that the house would 'have served as a film set for any middle-class comedy' (23), rather than directly observing that it is merely a typical middle-class house. Here, the application of the 'film set' description signals that Joe's previous experience of such houses has been by proxy, via the cinema. Joe also notes that 'the white bearskin rug on the parquet floor was, I suppose, strictly Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, but it fitted in, added a necessary touch of frivolity, even a faint sexiness like scented cachous' (19). John Kirk sees the M-G-M rug as a symbol of 'embourgeoisement' and a 'middle-class marker',[35] which is certainly correct in terms of analysing the class-based parameters of Joe's vision, but this also reveals that Joe sees middle-class environments as an abstract reality. Furthermore, it simultaneously positions cinema as a trusted representation of such reality for a working-class man; its apparent realism has had its fidelity tested and has been found to offer a true

[35] John Kirk, *Twentieth Century Writing and the British working class* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), p. 66.

representation of the way others live, according to Joe's narrative. However, not only does Joe soon get used to his surroundings, but his own perception of his class also starts to shift. Consequently, the nature of his visual perspective begins to alter and his natural, 'working-class' acceptance of analogical realism is challenged. This shift is linked to a cinematic sensibility which not only allows Joe to 'see' beyond his working-class background, but also affords Braine the opportunity to explore the relationship between classic literary realism and cinematic modes of representation.

The first aspect of this exploration is based on the relationship between the cinema and perception. It is a theme that is rooted in the conception and birth of the novel in Braine's own mind. In a letter to BBC producer Paul Stephenson, written in 1952 while he was recovering from a bout of tuberculosis at Grassington Sanatorium, Braine reveals that he has started to draft the novel that would become *Room at the Top*. The letter also makes clear that, at the time that Braine is assembling the novel, he is also occupied with thoughts of another medium:

> Films are the main deprivation (though in another two months I'll be allowed to visit the hospital cinema) and I spend a great deal of my time unreeling ones I've seen – in my mind, that is. Particularly *Miss Julie*.[36]

Braine's cinematic sensibility is clearly transferred to his protagonist in this period. Though the single cinema in Joe's home town of Dufton has had to

[36] Braine, letter to Paul Stephenson, 1 May 1952, BBC Written Archive Centre.

compete for his attentions with 'fourteen pubs' (16), it appears to have had some effect on Joe's outlook:

> As I put my hand to the door of Sylvia's cafe I had a mild attack of pins-and-needles and one leg gave way under me. I swayed forward and put my other hand against the wall to steady myself. It was the most minor of mishaps and I recovered within a second; but the incident seemed, for a second, to jar my perceptions into a different focus. It was as if some barrier had been removed: everything seemed intensely real, as if I were watching myself take part in a documentary film – a really well-produced one, accurate, sharp, with none of the more obvious camera tricks. (26)

Joe's sensation may well originate from the physical relief that 'unreeling' cinematic visions offered Braine during the period of his recovery and the writing of the novel, but Braine now uses the cinematic, 'documentary' vision as a moment of 'purity' in Joe's sense of perception. This is more than just a 'rhetorical strategy' of a 'truthful' realism, however, which is made clear by Joe's rapid disavowal of this mode of perception. A description of the street follows, with the comment:

> Everything was immensely significant, yet neither more nor less than itself. There were no tricks with the lens or microphone... Not one inch, one shade, one decibel was false; I felt as if I were using all my senses for the first time and then, turning into the cafe, I returned to normality as smoothly as a ski-jumper landing. (27)

For a brief moment, it seems that the 'lying lense' of 'Childhood' is replaced with Joe's own 'clearest lens'. Significantly, the return to normality coincides with the moment that Joe notes the Aston-Martin, which is also the moment when Joe resolves to pursue the material goods that will result, he believes, in him moving up the class system. In order to do this, the 'purity' of his old working-class life must be compromised, and he must perceive the middle-class Warley of M-G-M

rugs partly through the 'lying lense' of cinematic illusion, to be able to begin to accept it and engage with it as his new reality. Thus, for example, Joe can now see the leader of the 'Thespians', Bob Storr, not as an intimidating ambassador of the middle class, but instead as speaking like movie star Ronald Colman, which 'put him on the same level as the millhand with the Alan Ladd deadpan and the millgirl with the Veronica Lake hair style' in Joe's eyes (31). The more documentary cinematic sensibility which is related to his old 'way of seeing' does resurface from time to time, but its return is uniformly unwelcome while Joe is working towards entry to a higher class: 'I had no desire to revive old memories but instantly, unbidden, the events of that morning in 1941 – the Bad Morning, the Death Morning – unreeled themselves like a film' (91). This cinematic vision is recalled in conjunction with another dominant sense, with Joe remembering that it was 'the smell which had me most... on the Bad Morning it had been chokingly strong' (91). This essentially cinesthetic sensibility reveals itself as both the natural form of Joe's memory and an unwelcome – but, to the reader, realistic – indicator of his old life and class. Therefore, with this cinematic context considered, when one hears the 'deep, healthy roar' (28) and sees the 'tail-end' (29) of the Aston-Martin, one might understand that they are not merely confronted with an inadequately analogical realist symbol, as Lodge would have it, but a sign of Joe's complex cinematic refiguration of realism and illusion, which evokes the M-G-M lion of cinematic fantasy as much as it represents an actual symbol of social status.

The novel also considers the influence of 'candy-floss' cinema-going culture on perceptions of sexuality. Often in the novel, Braine overtly conflates issues of sexuality with those of reality, in order to probe its aesthetic dynamics. What emerges is a further cinematic complication of the novel's apparently naturalist rendering of sexuality, particularly in relation to what is often assumed to be the guarantor of such realism: the body and its senses. To begin with, sex seems to be the 'baseline' for Joe's complicated understanding of reality. For example, when Eva states that she adores 'mucky books', Joe retorts: 'I like my pornography in real life' (45). When he shifts to a conversation with Alice Aisgill, Joe describes her breasts as a 'guarantee of her reality. I imagine myself touching them' (48). The overt desire for sex to be 'real' may seem to be an obvious one, yet the collocation of such a desire and the imagined progression from vision to touch in a sexual relationship raises the possibility of cinema's inducement of sensory 'catachretic confusion' in its viewers as an increasingly significant modifier of sexuality. Joe demonstrates a cinesthetic understanding of the relationship between cinema, sex, and reality through his attitude towards Alice. Initially, it seems that Alice represents an escape into a preferably *uncinematic* reality, away from both the drab 'Bughole' of Dufton and the M-G-M inauthenticity of Warley's Theatricals. After they have had sex, Joe's recollection emphasizes the 'natural' reality of the event above all else, stressing that:

> the sort of sex I was used to was sex as it would be if human beings were like screen characters – hygienic, perfumed, with no normal odours or tastes – as if flesh were silk stretched over rubber, as if lips were the only sensitive part, as if the natural secretions were shameful. (98)

In his influential essay '*Room at the Top*: The Morality of Affluence' (1984), Stuart Laing uses this passage as an example of what he perceives as the 'human' inflection of Braine's social realism. Laing believes that:

> The reference to 'screen characters' creates a contrast with Joe's view of Susan ('conventionally pretty', 'like the girl in the American advertisement') and stresses the contradiction in his desires, one of which is precisely to live like men in advertisements.[37]

Laing develops this stance to argue that 'this opposition between social values and authentic human values forms the basis of the novel's presentation of different concepts of "the real"'.[38] Intriguingly, though, Laing also implies that the 'human' values of the novel are socially-defined too, arguing that 'the "human" qualities found in Joe's relationship with Alice' are related to 'the world of his working-class origins'.[39] Laing's emphasis on the 'human' elements of Joe's socially-contextualized perspective of his relationship with Alice suggests that Braine's realism is a singular, 'working-class' naturalism here. However, it becomes clear that the notion that Joe uses Alice as an escape from cinematic illusions of social climbing, back into a 'real', 'human' world, as Laing's reading suggests, is problematic. In fact, when Joe and Alice's relationship develops, their behaviour readily adopts the identificatory fantasies conditioned by the apparently 'unreal' world of the movies. In response to Alice's assertion that he is 'uncomplicated' (98), Joe cites a cinematic trope as a rebuttal: 'As they say in

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[37] Stuart Laing, '*Room at the Top*: The Morality of Affluence', in Christopher Pauling (ed.), *Popular Fiction and Social Change* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), p. 161.
[38] Laing, p. 162.
[39] Laing, p. 175.

the films, I'm just a crazy mixed-up kid' (98). Intriguingly, Alice responds in a similar fashion. When Joe promises to get more alcohol, Alice retorts with the Dietrichesque, 'Vat, are you in the racket too?' (100). Significantly, Joe's narrative believes that it is documenting the detail of a relationship 'which was uncompromisingly real' (99) here, even though they are both performing cinematic models of sexual behaviour. This blurring of physical reality and cinematic fantasy is a sign of Braine's recognition of the fact that a singularly naturalistic mode is now untenable if one wants to render accurately how those of the 'movie-made generation' perceive and refigure their reality in increasingly cinesthetic terms. Indeed, we later learn that, for Joe, Alice represents another chance to enact the cinesthetic fantasy of a woman that he had missed out on possessing after joining the R.A.F., 'at an age when a kiss should have been Technicolored excitement' (170). He refers to Alice's body as 'an arrangement of colour and light – as if an arrangement of colour and light could cut its finger with a bread knife, get married, make love, receive my most secret confidences' (121), and Alice wilfully submits herself to Joe's cinesthetic gaze, assuring Joe that 'if it gave you pleasure you could watch me doing anything. I don't care how you see me, as long as you do see me' (180). As such, the increasingly 'cinematic' nature of their relationship, and the abandonment of its naturalist narrative, are not merely signs of a misguided and fantastical attempt at hypergamy, but an indication that such cinesthetic fantasy can now be understood to represent elements of the physical reality of the sexual relationships of those of any class.

So, Braine's realistic rendering of Joe Lampton's existence is not merely an exercise in bringing an acutely empirical, documentary, and working-class perspective to this tale of social advancement, but an examination of how such a realistic worldview is now altered and conditioned by the incorporation of cinematic fantasy into the reality of everyday life. The fundamental importance of this refiguration to Joe's representations of reality is demonstrated most clearly at a crucial moment in the novel; when Joe hears the news that Alice has been killed. In a bid to seek solace, Joe escapes from Warley and, tellingly, finds himself 'in a news theatre until half past five… keeping a barrier of warmth and darkness and coloured shadows between himself and pain' (223). By choosing to view a newsreel – an essentially documentary form – as a form of escapism, Joe re-establishes the sense of comfort found in cinematic representations of reality that he had arrived in Warley possessing. However, when soon after he meets Mavis and subsequently runs into her boyfriend, he finds him 'enjoying what a thousand films and magazines had assured him to be righteous anger: His Girl had been Untrue' (227), and he scoffs at the unquestioning, indexical understanding demonstrated (and, indeed, Joe will later use cinema to characterise 'low' forms of life in this novel's 'sequel', *Life at the Top* (1962)). Joe's simultaneous craving for realistic escapist cinema-going and desire to highlight the reality of the social effects of cinema's illusion epitomises the increasingly complicated framework of post-war realism. As such, it would appear that an understanding of the contradictory aesthetic influences of post-war cinema-

going culture encourages a more nuanced, refigured appreciation of Braine's realist rendering of Joe's alienated 'working-class' perspective.

The Vodi

When the film version of the novel *Room at the Top*, directed by Jack Clayton, was released in January 1959, it was an undoubted success. Not only was it a top-three box office hit for the year, it also won three BAFTA Awards and two Academy Awards (Best Actress in a Leading Role; Best Writing (Adapted Screenplay)). Now, it is widely proclaimed to be the breakthrough film for Britain's cinematic New Wave. Yet rather than encouraging the line of argument pursued above, which sees Braine's realism influenced by elements of cinematic and cinesthetic refiguration, the film has instead done much to condition a view of Braine's novels as mere foils for its more engaging brand of cinematic social realism. Indeed, it does seem that Braine felt that the cinema had rendered his vision of his debut novel in an appealing way. In a letter to the editor in response to C. A. Lejeune's (less than flattering) review for *The Observer*, Braine praises the film and claims that he 'can't remember any other British film which has so faithfully interpreted a novel'.[40] The suggestion that Clayton's film was able to capture an element of Braine's own perception of the novel points to the conclusion that it had always been envisaged 'on a cinema screen', which might

[40] Braine, letter to the editor, *Observer* (8 February 1959), p. 19.

be a significant hallmark of a 'movie-made' writer, but could also add fuel to accusations of its unsophisticated, analogical vision of realism. Significantly, though, Braine's less lauded second novel, of the same year, offers further evidence of an increasing awareness of the fact that post-war cinema-going culture does not merely encourage the creation and consumption of novels that offer visual analogues, but also necessitates an engagement with the more haptical elements of the medium and its cinesthetic culture.

Considering the enthusiastic reception of the dynamic Joe Lampton (of novel and film), the hero of Braine's second novel, *The Vodi* (1959), comes as a surprise to many. For most of the novel, Dick Corvey is confined to his sickbed in a sanatorium, recovering from a severe bout of tuberculosis and remembering his childhood. On its publication, such a departure bewilders the critics, whose sense of Braine's realist style had not only been influenced by his successful debut novel, but also the release of Clayton's 'gritty' film version. *The Times* notes that Braine 'abandons a well-proved formula' to deliver a story about 'Gremlins from an infant fantasy' in which 'children talk like adults'.[41] Jocelyn Brooke pines for Braine 'at his best', when 'he is an honest and intelligent observer of the social scene'.[42] Perhaps unsurprisingly, considering the consistent critical efforts to pigeon-hole Braine as a 'working-class writer', Anthony Burgess' later

[41] Anon., 'New Fiction', *Times* (19 November 1959), p. 15.
[42] Jocelyn Brooke, 'Combating Malevolence', *Times Literary Supplement* (20 November 1959), p. 673.

reappraisal offers a clue as to why this stance is taken, implying that *The Vodi* fails to garner 'the same enthusiasm for the novel' as Braine's debut because it 'was less rich in class overtones'.[43] However, for all its apparent faults, the novel also reveals Braine's own immersion in the world of the cinema and meditations on the nature of its realism. Though Braine had distanced himself from any practical involvement in the production of Clayton's film of *Room at the Top* and proclaimed only a passing interest in the cinema more generally (only later would he become a film critic for the *Daily Express*), Dick's recollections betray the hint of a penchant for French film. Furthermore, Braine's own private, mental 'unreeling' of films while in Grassington Sanatorium appears to be directly transposed to form the way in which Dick's memories 'leapt to his mind',[44] forming a cinematic basis for the novel's narrative style.

In comparison to Joe Lampton, Dick Corvey is a *cinéaste*. During their childhood, Dick's and his friend Tom's extra-curricular fantasies of the malevolent Vodi centre on a local area called Nightingale Green, which the boys label 'the Kasbah… after watching *Pepe le Moko* [*sic*]' (38). This is a 1937 film directed by Julien Duvivier, set predominantly in the casbah of Algiers. Ostensibly, this is a gangster film; Pépé is a criminal who has fled from France with his associates in order to hide out in the labyrinthine casbah. Just like Pépé,

[43] Burgess, p. 149.
[44] Braine, *The Vodi* [1959] (London: Magnum, 1979), p. 13. All further references to this text are taken from this edition.

the young boys consider the Kasbah to be their 'shelter' (41), as they escape away from the harshness of the 'grown ups' in their lives. It is also their prison, as it proves to be for Pépé; this is where the Vodi have their 'HQ'. The friendship of Dick and Tom is built upon identification with the conflicting emotions that the space of the casbah provokes and both boys mimic the behaviour of the gangsters in the film as a learned method of coping with such emotions. This leads to superficial identification, particularly regarding their use of French terms of endearment, such as 'mon cher' (41), 'mon ami' (42) and '*mon copain*' (82). This is striking in the context of a northern English town in the Forties, but the boys' fantastical identification with the life of Pépé also points to far more profound issues regarding Braine's own relationship with film and its representations of the body and reality.

Just as Pépé's eventual demise is driven by his desire to meet the alluring *Parisienne* Gaby, the relationship that the boys form within the Kasbah is compromised by their interaction with women. Once they begin to go dating together, Dick is alienated by Tom's treatment of women, noting with alarm that 'they'd long since agreed that the treat-'em-rough technique was O.K. for Cagney and Bogart but not them' (92). However, Dick lives in a world where perceptions of love and sex are founded upon cinematic models. Even Evelyn Mallaton – who emerges as Dick's 'love interest' – thinks of her boyfriend Harry as a film type. When Harry asks for his cigarette to be lit, Evelyn opines that that was actually

'the sort of thing which Tyrone Power was always doing in white tails', whereas she sees him to be 'the pipe-smoking Jack Hawkins type' (190). It becomes clear, however, that Dick's perception of women has not developed beyond that learned from cinema either. Visions of the body and its reality are issues at the heart of Braine's protagonist's sexual sensibility. When Dick describes Lois as having 'big breasts which seemed subcutaneously waxed like a film star's but which weren't, which were as real and springy as her yellow hair' (27), he is demonstrating a cinesthetic sensibility, in so far as a sensory catachretic confusion is at the centre of his reification of the female body. While this may seem humorous and perhaps ironic to the twenty-first century reader, it is uncomfortably unlikely that Braine is instead so immersed in sexist models of cinematic sexuality that this is not the case. Unlike Amis and Larkin, for example, who come to cinema at a slightly later age and are thus capable of toying with and mocking its inadequacies, Braine is in the cinema from a much younger age, which leads to the rather unenlightened attitude expressed, for example, in a later draft of 'Confessions of a Male Chauvinist': 'women are sex objects to men but men aren't sex objects to women. They enjoy *looking* at handsome men'.[45] That this model of sexuality is essentially cinematic in the novel is confirmed by later fantasies of Nurse Mallaton, whose 'actual presence would have turned those fantasies into simpering, unreal little B features' (157). Not only is Dick

[45] Braine, 'Confessions of a Male Chauvinist', 1 January 1975, Leeds University Library, GB 26 BC MS 20c Braine J4, p. 4.

necessarily drawing on a cinematic comparison to validate the reality of a woman, but there is also the suggestion that Evelyn is subconsciously perceived as real in the way only a superior 'A feature' might be. It is unsurprising then when what appears to be the end of Dick and Evelyn's relationship is described using a cinematic simile: 'It was like those films he used to see at the old Electric Palace in which some grizzled old desert rat […] would expire in the hero's arms, gasping *The treasure's in the…*' (158). Though the prospect of a relationship with Evelyn had contributed to Dick's escape from death's doorway, its loss – and, one suspects, the very real possibility of a relapse – is perceived as if watching a film. The reality of life is usurped by cinema's influence on Dick's perception of it.

The choice of Duvivier's film as a key component of the novel also suggests a wider engagement between Braine's novel and the significance of the cinema. *Pépé le Moko* is now widely acknowledged as an important precursor of Hollywood *film noir* and a key text of Thirties French cinema's 'poetic realism', which widely influences the apprehension of reality found in both the Italian *neorealismo* and the French *nouvelle vague*. One of the elements that poetic realist films have in common is an emphasis on 'recreated realism'. For example, one would be very hard-pressed to note differences between Duvivier's anthropologically-focused and documentary-styled introduction to the casbah at the beginning of the film and Gillo Pontecorvo's use of the same setting in his *La*

battaglia di Algeri (1966). However, whereas the latter movie was filmed almost completely within the casbah itself, Duvivier's casbah was recreated as a film set. The film only reveals this fact completely in its final throes, when Pépé walks through the casbah for the final time and the setting blurs into an off-centre film reel behind his back. This sense of an escape from the unreal can be found in Dick's attempts to convince himself that the Vodi are a fantasy, particularly when he exits the Kasbah and declares that 'out of the Kasbah the shops became real, brightly lit, clean and prosperous' (55), with the primary adjective emphasising the *unreality* of what the boys had believed to be real, just as the unreality of the casbah is finally signalled to the viewer of *Pépé le Moko*.

Braine makes further reference to the misleading 'reality' of cinema – which is played upon by poetic realism – in another nod to the genre. When Dick later notices that the 'the Film Society was showing *Les Enfants du Paradis*' (62), a masterpiece directed by prominent poetic realist Marcel Carné, he is now disillusioned, stating his desire that the 'film projector [should] break down' and that 'the world should have stopped when my life stopped' (62-3). Dick's reaction conveys frustration and disillusionment with the illusion created by cinema's 'absence as presence'. This sense of Braine's own disillusionment with cinema is further stressed by Dick when he states that 'it'd be damned funny to die just after seeing *Orphéé*' (121), which is a reference to Jean Cocteau's 1950 film. Death is played by María Casares in the film, who piques Dick's desire: 'Wouldn't mind

meeting Death, though… God, wasn't she a smasher' (121). Dick is reverting to his interactive sense of desire, which means he must still believe in the pure indexical reality of the film. As author, Braine punishes him for such an assumption; the cough which triggers the conversation is an early sign of the tuberculosis that will consign Dick to the sanatorium. Ironically, it is just after this moment that Dick finally acknowledges the unreality of film in his appraisal of Tom as 'the hero of one of those serials they used to see at the old Electric Palace, he always escaped the avalanche, the dinosaur, the flooded tunnel, his aeroplane would never crash' (121-2). It appears that Braine also has a more acute appreciation of the issues related to the application of a cinematic 'way of seeing' as the basis for documentary realism than one might give him credit for. The stylistic departure of *The Vodi* actually represents an awareness of and acceptance of the problems that the seemingly 'natural' relationship between working-class experience and cinematic perspective can present when one wants to represent reality.

In light of this relatively sophisticated attitude – in comparison to many of his literary peers – towards cinema-going culture, perhaps Braine's appointment as a film critic for the *Daily Express* now seems less of a publicity stunt than it did at the time. In this role, his understanding of the medium's ambiguity and its significance in terms of representing the working-class experience is at the forefront of his thinking, such as when he states that 'a good film is a letter

addressed to you personally – and yet it's for everyone, and I mean everyone' when reviewing the Forbes film of *The L-Shaped Room*.[46] An investigation of the cinematic in his early novels reveals that rather than providing technically-regressive, analogical representations of 'working-class reality', as he has been accused of, Braine instead simultaneously exploits the refigurations of the cinesthetic reader in order to accentuate the realism of his 'working-class' texts, and also parades the irony of such a 'natural' recourse to a fundamentally illusory medium. Thus, it would seem that Braine's innovative attempt to 'rise above' 'candy-floss' sensibilities deserves just as much critical consideration as his protagonists' attempts to 'rise above' their class, as it offers a much 'clearer lens' for viewing the social realism of this period.

[46] Braine, 'I'm always hungry for this kind of Caron!'

5. COLIN MACINNES' TEENAGE FLICKS

> *(As a lad in the 1920s, when my target was six films a week, I saw hundreds that are now viewed with awe at the National Film Theatre – quite unaware I was seeing masterpieces, but very conscious that every adult and pedagogue I knew disapproved of my addiction.)*[1]

In accounts of the lives of post-war writers, it is striking how many parenthesise and marginalise cinema-going in this way. Here, in the brief tirade against the aesthetic and cultural value of cinema found in his *No Novel Reader* (1975), Colin MacInnes almost guiltily sneaks in an admission of a phenomenal addiction to cinema-going in his youth. It is the marginalisation of this statement which offers an important insight into the relationship between cinema, literature, and culture in post-war Britain. As MacInnes slips off the critical radar for decades and because his fictions have strengthened the illusion of a culturally marginalised author, it is easy to forget that, in the post-war period, MacInnes represents a figure of the literary and cultural establishment: MacInnes is a relative of Burne-Jones, Kipling, Stanley Baldwin, and his mother is novelist Angela Thirkell; John Braine reports 'listening to Mr. Colin MacInnes on TV' in 1961 in his role as a prominent arts critic;[2] biographer Tony Gould reminds us that 'for three or four years at the end of the Fifties and beginning of the Sixties, he achieved near-celebrity status'.[3] In this context, MacInnes' parentheses represent partial self-

[1] Colin MacInnes, *No Novel Reader* (London: Martin Brian and O'Keeffe Ltd., 1975), p. 41.
[2] John Braine, 'Journalism Lecture Notes – Circa 1961', John Braine Archive, Leeds University Library, GB 26 Brotherton Collection MS 20c Braine J1.
[3] Tony Gould, *Inside Outsider: The Life and Times of Colin MacInnes* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1983), p. xiii.

censorship and its necessity in a still largely Leavisite literary culture. It would seem, then, that MacInnes represents an odd subject for the current discussion. Not only does his birth in 1914 make him slightly too old to be a *bona fide* member of the 'movie-made generation', but his social heritage and cultural notions position him far from the 'working-class' culture that Braine and Sillitoe can be seen to share. However, as we will see, not only does MacInnes' frantic cinema-going allow him to be seen in a cultural and aesthetic context that is not often applied to his work, but the tension between perceptions of cinema-going that he articulates becomes an important component of how his realist novels document social and cultural margins.

When Nick Bentley claims that MacInnes 'attempts to combine the documentary with the fictional',[4] he encapsulates a critical paradigm that is at the centre of a re-emerging interest in MacInnes' fiction**.** Indeed, MacInnes' work has long been associated with the social realist mode of 'documentary fiction', a label which has specifically journalistic overtones. The back page of the 1964 edition of his *June in Her Spring*,[5] for example, gives some indication of the extent to which MacInnes' reputation was bound to this label. All of the review-quotations of his 'London Trilogy' refer to the almost sociological value of MacInnes' novels: *City of Spades* is 'worth a dozen solemn investigations of the Colour Problem',

[4] Nick Bentley, *Radical Fictions: The English Novel in the 1950s* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 232.
[5] See MacInnes, *June in Her Spring* [1952] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), p. 176.

according to Kenneth Allsop of the *Daily Mail*; the *New Statesman* believes *Absolute Beginners* to be 'worth five hundred pamphlets, reports [etc…] on the subject of British youth'; and the *Evening Standard* sees *Mr Love and Justice* as 'a penetrating, riveting, and convincing analysis of the relations between the criminal and the Force'. A sense of sociological 'worth' is also felt by John Wain, who argues that 'the highly successful documentary novels of Mr. Collin McInnes [*sic*]' read 'like animated versions of his intelligent and observant articles in the weekly and monthly press'.[6] Randall Stevenson's *The British Novel Since the Thirties* (1986) reduces the whole of MacInnes' trilogy to one sentence, claiming that they 'show through realistic dialogue and documentary observation of life among immigrants, petty criminals and the disaffected young caught up by the jazz and race riots of the later fifties'.[7] Such readings suggest a remarkable acceptance of these novels as an index of reality; they seem to show that MacInnes was there. However, this initial reading has been refined by critics who wish to acknowledge the ostensibly fictional elements of MacInnes' mode. Francis Wyndham's introduction to the publication of the London Trilogy in 1969, collected as *Visions of London*, remarks that 'the word "visions" suggests a subjective (and possibly even hallucinatory) approach to "documentary" material'.[8] John McLeod picks up Wyndham's line of argument and seeks to reel

[6] John Wain, 'The Conflict of Forms in Contemporary English Literature' (Part 2), *Critical Quarterly*, 4:2 (June 1962), p. 108.
[7] Randall Stevenson, *The British Novel Since the Thirties: An Introduction* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1986), p. 127.
[8] Francis Wyndham, 'Introduction', in MacInnes, *Visions of London* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1969), p. viii.

it away from the more traditional documentary-orientated readings of MacInnes, claiming that 'the subjective, hallucinatory elements of his fiction, although much overlooked, are vital'.[9] However, by examining MacInnes' relationship with and his uses of cinema-going culture in this context – and the simultaneous documentary and fictional approaches of the medium at its heart – it becomes clear that MacInnes' form of 'documentary' instead represents a sense of post-cinematic realism which seeks to be optically subjective and socially objective, borne from the symbiotic realist and escapist affects felt by a social mass whose understanding of life and the 'real' is influenced by cinema-going culture.

MacInnes and the Movie-Made Generation

An intriguing anecdotal encounter between a young MacInnes and cinema-going culture survives in Tony Gould's biography of the writer, *Inside Outsider: The Life and Times of Colin MacInnes* (1983). It relays MacInnes' own account of a discussion with his grandmother's cousin, who happened to be British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin:

> He was less impressed, though, by Baldwin himself, who showed him an H. M. Bateman drawing of a cinema audience in which seated next to an excitable young couple, there was an emotionless, bowler-hatted and walrus-moustachioed gentleman. 'That's the man whose vote I've got to get', the once and future Prime Minister remarked. 'Those other two are easy enough'.[10]

[9] John McLeod, *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the Metropolis* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 43.
[10] Gould, p. 49, citing MacInnes, 'Finding a Family', BBC Home Service, 7 July 1952.

Gould is obviously more fascinated by the presence of the Prime Minister than the issue of cinema-going, but offers no comment on what this scene suggests about cultural attitudes towards cinema-goers at this time. Why is it that the cinema offers such an apt metaphor for Baldwin's campaign? On Baldwin's part, are the young couple foolish because they go to the cinema, as a Leavisite might argue at the time, or wise because they vote for him? Might MacInnes be 'less impressed' by Baldwin because he makes light of a serious subject by relating it to cinema-going, or because of a perceived prejudice against cinema-going? What this anecdote does illustrate, however, is that the cinema was at the heart of social debate in the 1930s and that MacInnes has some awareness from a young age that cinema-going was a powerful new element of social dynamics and cultural expression.

With this in mind, it is in some ways unfortunate that it is MacInnes' *No Novel Reader* (1975) which survives as the most detailed record of his attitudes towards the cinema. In it the cinema appears in passing as one of the many problems facing the present and future of literary culture; gone are the days when MacInnes targeted 'six films a week'. It conveys the polemical tone that one might expect from a writer fighting the dying of the light (MacInnes died in the year after its publication). Though it demonstrates erudition, it bears the hallmarks of a cultural bias. For example, 'novels are not for educated people' (11) according to MacInnes, and 'press, film, radio and television' are dismissed as 'bourgeois

"popular art"' (12).[11] As such, it is understandable that those looking for a conscious and creative relationship between the post-war novel, the cinema, and representations of the social margins might be deterred from looking up, with strained neck, to MacInnes on his promontory of esotericism. However, the text does offer clear lines of enquiry for such an investigation, dealing as it does with the nature of one's focus on contemporary culture; the evolving relationship between a novelist and the reading public; and the proximity of the novel and screenwriting.

Firstly, MacInnes' suggests that his famed documentary approach is founded on the notion that representations of 'real' life are intertwined with issues of class and culture. MacInnes lays out the credentials of the working-class elements of his fiction through an attack on 'bourgeois writers, up till our own day, [who] have been positively obsessed with descriptions of their "betters"' (16). MacInnes implies that the contemporary novel should also focus on one's 'inferiors', which is problematic, but consistent with the Leavisite tone of his argument. In his haughty way, however, MacInnes begins to demonstrate a certain understanding of how 'others' might learn their understanding of the novel from other arts:

> Most novel readers, especially women, do not enjoy the privileges, and inhibitions, of an academic education; and they derive their concept of verbal art from radio, TV, film and the popular press – all of which, despite any blemishes of philistine crudity […] are quite uninhibited about using

[11] References to *No Novel Reader* are taken from the 1975 Martin Brian & O'Keefe (London) edition.

> form quite unconventionally. 'Uneducated' novel readers can therefore accept, perhaps without being aware of their own daring, the unconventional. (33)

MacInnes goes on to argue that this 'is especially so of paperback readers who, since they don't expect the novel to "be" anything in particular, may be compared to the earliest viewers of silent films; who accepted the convention of the medium, provided it "worked" for them' (33). Throughout this section of the text, MacInnes is implicitly suggesting that for a contemporary novelist to appeal to the mass public, an understanding of cinema-going culture and its evolution might be beneficial.

MacInnes goes on to note that 'many an "educated" person who is profoundly contemptuous of the novel, may be equally admiring of cinema' and goes on to ask 'why the novel has never had a highbrow appeal comparable to the cult of the film' (41). MacInnes offers three reasons. He firstly argues that because the 'educated' are 'increasingly doubtful of their own values' they become obsessed 'with popular (and "primitive") cultures of all descriptions' (41), which acknowledges cinema as a lower form of culture, but does suggest its use as a literary fad. MacInnes acknowledges that 'the film-makers [influence literature] by tightening and accelerating the techniques of the contemporary novel' (41), but does not believe, however, that the 'technical' approach to the use of cinematic form taken by experimental novels of the time represents a development of the novel form, claiming, for example, that 'the *nouveaux romans*

turn out […] to be film scripts – thereby revealing that the real talent of the writers, as their subsequent films bear witness, lies in the working of the cinema' (30). Interestingly, though, MacInnes' argument turns from form to affect; he then firmly argues 'that to see a film requires no imaginative effort in any way comparable to that of seeing a play, or reading a novel', because, according to him, 'the script-writer's, director's and actors' vision so pre-determines the impact of the film, that all one has to do is sit and take it in' (41). This Leavisite stance is undermined, however, when MacInnes concedes that 'a film can, however wide it may seek to make its appeal, explore fresh areas of human experience with extraordinary daring' (41). Finally, MacInnes states that 'the last reason is that watching a film is enjoyable; so that by believing he is undertaking a stern intellectual duty (unlike the wasteful contemplation of the footling novel), the film critic can have a good time with a clear conscience' (41). Surprisingly, this is a feeling which MacInnes himself shared in his youth. Apart from the vague, guilty account of his prolific 1920s cinema-going, in his 1933 journal of a trip through Europe, entitled 'Let Me Tell You All About It', MacInnes writes: **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**.[12] This is likely to have been – ironically, or perhaps inevitably – a film called 'Movie Crazy' (in Italy: *Follie del cinema*), which is about a young man obsessed with the movies. It was released in Europe in early 1933, a few months before MacInnes embarked on

[12] MacInnes, 'Let Me Tell You All About It' (September 1933), MS, Colin MacInnes Papers, University of Rochester, D.140/1/7, p. 53.

this tour. By drawing a line from MacInnes' own guilty pleasure of cinema-going to his stance in *No Novel Reader*, it raises many questions about not only MacInnes' stated bias against the cinematic (and the cultural reasons for this), but also our own notions of his documentary fiction. It becomes clear that his use of cinema-going culture is more sophisticated than the bluff *No Novel Reader* suggests. Indeed, the apparently oxymoronic stern joy that cinema-going elicits and the ironised but irresistible lure of its figures will become an integral part of his famed representation of marginalised cultures.

To the Victor the Spoils and *June in Her Spring*

On the occasion of Penguin's re-release of most of the MacInnes novels in 1986 – presumably spurred by the popularity of the David Bowie-dominated *Absolute Beginners* film – Jill Neville contends that *To the Victor the Spoils* (1950) and *June in Her Spring* (1952) are 'lifeless' and 'conventional', particularly in relation to the 'creative energy and pulse' of the later 'London Trilogy'.[13] Indeed, it is the London novels that have brought MacInnes' first two novels into the eye-line of cursory critical glances, rather than their own merits. However, in the context of assessing the influence of cinema-going upon MacInnes' work, these novels do suggest that the interplay of the documentary and fictional in the London novels has its roots in MacInnes' early considerations of the cinematic.

[13] Jill Neville, 'In and out of the bone', *Times Literary Supplement* (7 November 1986), p. 1254.

MacInnes' debut novel, *To the Victor the Spoils*, offers an apparently first-hand account of the climax of the Second World War. It appears to have been lost in the large crowd of 'war memoirs' published in this period, yet its narrative offers an intriguing consideration of the problematic balance of realist documentary and fictional escapism that the cinematic entails. Crucially, the novel places this debate in the context of the cinematic in more ways than one. Firstly, in terms of its sense of 'documentary' perspective, MacInnes' novel can be read as a post-war response to Christopher Isherwood's pre-war vision of Germany. At the beginning of his *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939), Isherwood's narrator famously proclaims: 'I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking. […] Some day, all of this will have to be developed, carefully printed, fixed'.[14] MacInnes' narrator is also a semi-autobiographical figure, Sergeant Mac, who like the novelist himself has 'lived over there [Germany] in pre-Hitler days, just after [he] left school' (71).[15] Initially, despite the drastic change in his circumstances – Mac is now a military intelligence officer operating in post-D-Day Germany – he aims to maintain the Isherwood-narrator's affectless neutrality when recording his experiences in the country, declaring his wish to 'see the sights our life uncovered, without being implicated in all the acts that made them visible' (42). For most of the novel, Mac is able to maintain this passive recording of his perspective, describing the 'traces of the

[14] Christopher Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin* [1939] (New York: New Directions Press, 2012), p. 3.
[15] References to this novel are from the 1966 Penguin edition.

battle – smashed girders, bits of airplanes, abandoned guns and burnt-out metal' (196), as well as the 'broken trees, and great areas where there was just nothing' which 'completed the picture' (198). As Mac traipses behind the front line, his 'open shutter' documents what he sees.

However, it is at this point in the novel, as Mac approaches the battle lines, that the supposed neutrality of his perspective is challenged. An early indication of this is the command that 'any pictorial examples of the glorification of war are to be eliminated' (185) by Mac and his team as they enter Germany. Where their job had previously been to question local people about military activity, picking up truckloads of black-market loot on the way, their work begins to focus on controlling the menacing visual culture left behind by the Nazis. As they push deeper into Germany, 'the Captain told them about gathering in arms, cameras and binoculars' (284); cameras are clearly as dangerous as weapons in this war, far from the 'passive' instrument wielded by Isherwood. For Mac's colleague Norman, cameras are even more significant. As the war begins to draw to a close, Norman appeals to Mac: 'Has it occurred to you that this is our last chance to get a cine-camera? [...] It's all I came to Germany for' (301). The novel implies a clear connection between the cine-camera and German culture; it is synonymous with the danger of the enemy and the biased propaganda of the Göbbels-controlled *Reichsfilmkammer*. Significantly, it is the final 'spoil' sought by the group of soldiers and the double-meaning intended by the title can be applied most aptly

to what the cine-camera comes to symbolise. Norman and Mac are later pictured in a room that 'was piled knee-deep with them' (308). Norman is described stepping 'about like a gardener plucking strawberries' and, simultaneously, a policeman is 'turning over cameras as a child searching for crabs on a rocky shore' (308). The imagery of strawberry-plucking and crab-hunting suggests that cameras might seem to offer a similarly escapist pleasure, but that their use can also distort and damage nature; this menacing undertone is reinforced when even the British soldiers find the images of the 'heaps of bodies' at Belsen concentration camp (364) – on display in the town hall as an early sign of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* – difficult to believe. MacInnes is foregrounding the understanding that the cine-camera can no longer be neutral or a passive document-maker and, in doing so, suggests that cultural and literary adoptions of its 'documentary' perspective have to be understood as 'spoiled'.

As such, MacInnes also makes it clear that cinema's relationship with escapism is equally tarnished and that the consequently damaged distinctions between realism and fiction in the medium can be used to represent the perspectives – both visual and emotional – of this 'spoiled' era. In the middle of the novel, there appears to be a brief window into MacInnes' own cinema-going in the 1930s. When Mac and others want 'an opportunity of seeing rare social specimens and of prying into their private lives' (121), apparently to relieve the boredom of their routine and the tension created by their impending entry into

Germany, they form an intense interest in a Count and his mistress whom they have met at a hotel called 'the Universal' (121). This striking conjunction appears to be a reference to America's oldest film studio and Tod Browning's famous film version of *Dracula* that it had released 1931. In this film, Bela Lugosi establishes 'the Count' as a sophisticated, genteel and mysterious 'foreigner', a template that MacInnes' Count, the 'rather elderly gilded youth' (117) with a 'face [that] had the look of one who is promiscuously friendly' (121), seems to conform to, particularly when he makes a torch-lit entrance (121) to the 'moonlit' château (120). The film also famously makes use of the 'howling wolf' sound effect as a *leitmotif* for the Count's transformation (which was overseen by the 'original' foley artist, Jack Foley), so it seems more than a coincidence that it is at this point in the novel that Dennis chides Mac for fearing the wolves he will encounter once he has entered Germany: 'Werewolves! They'll eat of our hands, you'll see' (120). Mac's narrative is demonstrating an escapist desire to avert his fear of conflict and by juxtaposing Mac's real fear of war with the memory and re-creation of what we can assume is MacInnes' own childhood, escapist cinema-going, MacInnes continues to develop the idea that cinema-going has blurred old distinctions of fiction and reality for those who have been influenced by its culture.

An understanding of this cultural shift has marked consequences – as it does for all of the 'movie-made' novelists – for MacInnes' representation of his generation's sexuality. MacInnes' next novel, *June in Her Spring*, takes the time

and place (Ballan, or 'Ballantyne', Australia[16]) of MacInnes' own boyhood as its setting and concerns itself with the development of teenage sexuality. Considering the prevalence of trauma and the homosexual sub-plot (a daring representation in 1952), it can be read as a product of the author's own 'closet homosexuality' in this period,[17] as Neville does. However, it is also during his teenage years that MacInnes' cinema-going reaches its peak and the novel's brief moments of association with the cinematic suggest that cinema-going exercises a strong influence on the development – and, consequently, representation – of sexuality. In *To the Victor the Spoils*, the Count's mistress – an object of the soldiers' escapist fantasies – had been referred to as his '*femme fatale*' (137), but it was also stated that she was 'no Cleopatra' (137). This objectifying visual reference can be linked to Cecil B. DeMille's film *Cleopatra* (1934), in which Claudette Colbert had created a risqué figure of the queen for modern culture; the film was iconic for its suggestions of sex and nudity as it was one of the last major films made before the implementation of the censorious Hays code. *June in Her Spring* again channels the influence of DeMille's *Cleopatra*. Not only does it open with a naked young woman bathed in light – DeMille's film begins with an apparently naked slave girl holding lanterns; June appears 'rubbing her body in the morning sun' after washing in the river (9) – but it also features a character called Cleopatra. This Cleopatra is explicitly characterised as the type of girl who insists on going

[16] This is verified throughout his brother Graham's *The Road to Gundagai* (London: Hamilton, 1965).
[17] Neville, 'In and out of the bone'.

to the Ball 'with practically nothing on me but a piece of perfumed muslin' (125), which echoes the popular perception of Colbert's heroine. The influence of this cinematic context for sexuality is then seen in the teenage characters' own perception of sexuality. Benny's impression of June here has a remarkable affinity with the cinesthetic; his 'close-up' of an apparently infinite world causes him to want to engage with the object of his vision. June is aware of Benny's gaze, 'catching his eye fixed on her' (82), but Benny's vision develops from the fixed gaze, zooming-in 'close to', and then it 'wandered round her hips' (82). In turn, Benny's desire begins to develop from these visual impressions towards a desire for interaction, claiming that: 'Her breasts, when she walked, were just those breasts girls have; now they seemed an infinite world of comfort and welcome' (82). Moreover, as their relationship progresses, their perception of their sexual partnership takes on cinema-going overtones; as they are about to have sex for the first time, 'they saw the landscape from the darkness as if in a cinema' (92). However, their cinematic imaginations prove to be a poor indication of reality. The first utterance after they have sex is June's: 'Well, Benny, that's not like the film stars do it, I suppose' (97). Once the cinematic illusion is destroyed, their relationship begins to deteriorate, compromised by Arthur's attempt to rape his sister June, June's father's suicide, and Henry's declaration of love for Benny. The cinematic ideal of the young, blissful, heterosexual couple is not only pointedly shown as a fantasy, but is used to stress how it marginalises desires and cultures that fail to conform to its 'mainstream'. By these cultural standards, even the

socially privileged MacInnes is an outsider; as a young homosexual, he cannot learn the rules of 'candy-floss' courtship in the way that one finds Braine's characters doing, for example. As such, we can start to understand the 'subjective documentary' of his subsequent attempts to document outsider cultures in light of MacInnes' early reflections on the meaningful illusions and biased 'realities' he sees as fostered by cinema-going culture.

The 'London Trilogy'

In 1957, MacInnes published what was to become the first novel of his 'London Trilogy', *City of Spades*. In this novel MacInnes begins to use cinema-going to help delineate competing cultural perspectives within the text. Initially, instances of the cinematic seem to emphasise the culture as a subject ripe for parody. Narrator Montgomery Pew changes in to a suit that he self-deprecatingly describes as making him 'look like an Ealing Studio gangster' (35) and he also uses the cinema to note the ridiculousness of others, such as seeing Dorothy 'posturing like someone in an historic German film' (161).[18] The parodying of the medium continues in moments such as when Dorothy's dress sense is described as 'smart as any film star' and club manager Mr. Cochrane begins his objection to this with the words, '"Flim star or no flim star", said Mr. Cochrane (and he did say "flim")'

[18] All references to the 'London Trilogy' novels are taken from *The Colin MacInnes Omnibus: His Three London Novels* (London: Allison & Busby, 1986).

(84), with his remarkable mispronunciation further stressing a perceived flimsiness and ridiculousness of films and their culture.

However, this parodic tone is only applied by those in dominant social and cultural positions, particularly by the prim Pew's narrative. To those on the margins, cinema represents something much more profound and physically affecting. When one learns, for example, that Ibrahim Tondapo's father 'owns two small cinemas that regularly catch on fire and burn up portions of the audience' (126), a reader's initial assumption of the speaker's cultural prejudices (towards supposed African corruption, or inadequacy) might be valid if this was Pew's narrative, but this is instead the voice of marginalised immigrant Johnny Fortune. The 'burning' can actually be read as a metaphor for an almost sexual affect that the medium produces for those who belong to the 'lower' culture of cinema-going, particularly if read in conjunction with Johnny's visits to the flicks towards the conclusion of the novel. In his time of crisis, Johnny 'visit[s] cinemas and sit[s] there by [him]self' (236), using the cinema as a physical and spiritual refuge. Johnny's most detailed recollection of this cinema-going reads as follows:

> So I sat in the darkness of the Tottenham Court picture palace this day, thinking; when near me a white boy asked me for a match [...] and other silly business of holding my hand too long [...] so that I know what his foolish hope is, and say to him, 'Mister, behave yourself, or else you come out with me and I push your face in'. (236)

The burning match is juxtaposed with Alfy Bongo's – 'one of these foolish men who try to mess about with Spades in picture-houses' (237) – desire and,

ultimately, sexual contact. Thus cinema-going not only represents Johnny's escape from his social problems, but is also used by MacInnes to signify and 'document' a sexual subculture that, it is fair to assume, most of his readers would not have been aware of. The importance of cinema in understanding Johnny's 'outsider' cultural perspective is enhanced when one remembers that this is where Johnny 'escapes' to even though it was the cinema that had deceived Johnny into going to London in the first place; he feels betrayed because he has found not only the 'red buses like those shown to us in the cinema' in Nigeria, but also the 'people with glum clothes and shut-in faces' that were not shown (13). Mr Karl Marx Bo is similarly deceived:

> When in a cinema we see the London streets shining, gleaming and beckoning, we stop and think, 'Here am I, shut in my prison, cut out from where there is creation, and riches, and power in the modern world. There, in that distant place, the life is bigger, wider, more significant. That is something I must see, and show I can be master of it'. [...] Find almost always great deception. (79)

The use of 'we', coupled with the fact that two African characters share the sense that the cinema has tricked them into thinking that London is a glamorous place, a candy-floss world, is intended to suggest that this is an 'African' sensibility and MacInnes uses it to differentiate these 'outsiders' from the English characters in the novel (though it is tempting to assume that MacInnes may also have felt this sense of betrayal when returning to London after years in Australia). As such, the illusions stoked by cinema-going render it an instrument of colonialism, as well as a means of signifying the perspective of its victims.

MacInnes' next novel, *Absolute Beginners* (1959) – the second of his 'London Trilogy' – is widely regarded as his most successful work. It has also represented the heart of debate regarding MacInnes' documentary mode, primarily because, as Bentley helpfully states, 'the decision to make the teenager hero a photographer has thematic importance as it foregrounds the "documentary" nature of the text'.[19] It is interesting to note, though, that the visual medium foregrounded in the opening scene is not photography, but the cinema. The Boy – this narrator is never named – has a 'splendid outlook over London' (11) that he encourages the reader to take in by 'twisting slowly on your bar stool from the east to the south, like Cinerama' (11). Steven Connor has helpfully complicated the debate on the text's documentary mode by arguing that the open form of address to the reader in this novel helps the reader to feel part of the subcultures that the Boy details. In doing so, Connor claims, the novel 'retains in its form a kind of memory of the generalising function of the realist novel',[20] but that 'we are never quite sure whether we are to read the novel as a display, parodic or exemplary as it may be, of such an address', particularly because the narrative attempts to refuse reference to the wider social context, but finds this stance untenable. As such, it 'becomes readable partly as a reflection on the conditions under which such a narration or form of narrative address might come to emerge'. However, this form of narrative is not only borne of MacInnes'

[19] Bentley, p. 234.
[20] Steven Connor, *The English Novel in History, 1950-1995* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 92.

own apparent reflection that the classic realist novel is now outdated, refusing, as it seems to, the 'implied continuity between the form of the realist novel and the form of social life itself' (as Connor states),[21] but also of an age where such a character naturally expresses a worldview which is assumed to be shared by an overwhelming mass of cinema-goers. As such, the novel's realism is not just parodying or challenging the discourses of classic realism, but is engaging with the new shared cultural discourse of cinema-going, a discourse which assumes that you know the physical conventions of the medium and its culture, and that you might have already seen what is being shown.

Boy's assumption that his reader sees the world in the way he does is demonstrated most clearly in his description of riots in London. Tony Gould is not alone in noting that it is the novel's detailed rendering of the riots, which apparently echo the Notting Hill race riots of the time, that supports claims of this work as a piece of documentary fiction. Gould stresses that 'throughout the riots MacInnes took notes from these [*Manchester*] *Guardian* reports [of the riots], which he used extensively, but with fictional licence, in writing the novel'.[22] Again the conflation of documentary and fiction rears its head, yet in many cases Boy's narrative actually refuses such distinctions by often imploring the reader to 'picture this' and 'see!' throughout this description,[23] as though he is writing

[21] Connor, p. 94.
[22] Gould, pp. 134-5.
[23] See, for example, pp. 151, 178.

for those who have already seen it on the newsreels, or, as he suggests, for those who watched the event 'just like at home at evening, with their Ovaltine and slippers, at the telly' (177). Furthermore, the descriptions of the riots found in the novel are actually not as detailed as the label of 'documentary' would deserve. The Boy's references to the setting itself are vague, with the action taking place 'along another road I was prospecting' (176) and the action being conveyed using fantastical cinematic similes such as when 'two of those delivery vans I spoke of sandwiched it like the law cars do in US crime films' (176). In his essay 'Sharp Smutter' (1959), MacInnes does distance himself from the idea that this is documentary fiction, claiming that in the London novels he 'tried […] to re-invent, from reality, a more "real"',[24] yet in the same essay he offers a clue to the foundations of this 'real' when he attributes teenage fashion largely to 'the prestige of American films which created "youthful" heroes' and 'the increased prestige of the Continental film'.[25] In this context, it is intriguing to note that the Boy's description of a bend of the Thames is more detailed than his 'documentary' rendering of the riots: the bend 'lies curled firm and gentle round the river like boy does with a girl, after it's over'; you 'see the fairy advertising palaces on the south side beaming in the water'; again, it is 'like your own private Cinerama, except that in this one the show's never, never twice the same' and 'the magic always works' (80). Just as the Boy can see remembered imprints of a

[24] MacInnes, 'Sharp Smutter' (*The Twentieth Century*, August 1959), in his *England, Half English* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1961), p. 147.
[25] MacInnes, 'Sharp Smutter', p. 154.

US crime film on his vision of a riot, or the reader should be able to understand the perspective of Cinerama, MacInnes is using the effects of mass cinema-going to convey the apparently anti-social (and, as a 'closed' discourse, potentially anti-Realist) outlook of these 'outsiders'.

Cinema-going has a remarkable influence over the way that these marginalised youths see the world, often serving as an immediate reference point to explain their 'idiosyncrasies', but also revealing a more profound sense of social alienation. The sense of identification is particularly apparent when they address one another. Consider a conversation between Suzette and Boy: '"Hi, darl", she said. "Hi, hon", I answered. That's how we heard two movie stars address each other at a film we went to ages ago that rather sent us' (17). The hint of a transportative affect is there in the phrase 'sent us', but most importantly it shows that even basic forms of address are seen in relation to cinematic models. This is taken to almost preposterous lengths when Boy believes that when Jules says 'Oh yeah?', he 'must have got [it] from old Clark Gable pictures, like the ones you can see revivals of at the Classics' (36). One's appearance is also subject to cinematic fashions in an area in which 'shirt-stores and bra-stores with ciné-star photos on the window' (65) abound. Suzette, according to Boy, 'looked dreamy, and actually flipped her eye-lashes in the Italian starlet manner' (18). Boy compliments Hoplite on his 'rugged, shaggy, Burt Lancaster appearance' (51). Boy sometimes interlaces irony with these comments, such as when he

describes his Mum 'like someone in a Tennessee Williams film show', addresses her as 'Madame Blanche' and 'for a moment she started to look flattered, like women do if you say something sexy to them [...] until she saw I was ice-cold and sarcastic' (38). Boy also over-emphasises the apparent authenticity of his cinematic comparisons at certain points, such as when it is claimed that Wizard has a 'true-blond Marlon Brando hair-do' (16). These hints of irony are not foregrounded by the narrator though; they are instead an integral part of a generational perspective that has been gorged on and desensitised to the deceptive illusions of the cinema.

Simultaneously, the Boy implies that this cinematic culture is alien to his own and that, in many ways, it represents a form of cultural control by social superiors. As such he describes the intimidatingly posh Holland Park terraces as fearful 'great white monsters, like the shots you see in films at the Cote de France' (92). The restrictive canal lock system is seen as if 'you form up in a queue, just like at the Odeon' (151). The cinema itself is a 'picture-palace' (163) or a 'super-cinema' (162), emphasising the Boy's own inferiority in relation to it. Indeed, even Windsor Castle itself is 'just as you see it on the cinema screen when they play "the Queen"' (149), drawing attention to the cinema as a place of subservience. However, this 'subcultural' discourse does not just challenge and 'problematise' 'the "hierarchy of discourses" produced in "classic realism"' in (as

Bentley argues[26]) the social sense that Spivak suggests for the speaking subaltern (an argument that has relevance to the following chapter on Sillitoe, too), because, as we have seen, the identities of the Boy and his peers are completely invested in this dominant culture. The curious simultaneity of seeing cinema as 'corny', as an alien and dominant culture in opposition to one's own, and as life itself is seen in the Boy's account of Soho:

> You don't go into Soho to see films, because Soho *is* a film, and anyway, most times I go to cinemas I walk out half way through because all I see is a sheet hanging up there, and lots of idiots staring at it, and hidden up behind all this there's just a boy operating machinery with a fag hanging out of us mouth even when he puts the record on for the 'God Save', and the cattle down there rise up on their corns, but not he, no! *Life* is the best film for sure, if you can see it as a film. (79)

The Boy is keen to show that he is aware of the illusion of the cinema, the mere sheet and projector. The Boy's exclamatory effort to show that he is distinct from those who rise to sing the national anthem is later undermined when he finishes the line during his description of Windsor Castle. However, ultimately, these tensions are components of his own perspective, one that equates being (in this case, in Soho) with being in a film; the odd syntax of the last sentence leaves open the suggestion that life is only life if it can be seen as a film, instead of firmly stating that it is doubtful that life is a film. Indeed, throughout Boy's narrative, MacInnes uses responses to cinema-going culture in a way that transcends the simple issue of 'authenticity' that dominates much of the debate on his fictionalised documentary. Cinema-going has created a mass of young people

[26] Bentley, p. 236.

who intrinsically accept the fact that the aesthetic is false if seen as symbolic mimesis and as correspondingly 'real' culture, but real when seen as indexical mimesis and a sign of how young people are actually living. This is why the narrative, with its simultaneous acceptance and rejection of the perspectives of cinema-going culture – a theme which has slowly developed in MacInnes' work – is not just a refusal of classic discourses of realism, but part of a new realist discourse.

Of course, the final, awful irony is that this new sense of cinematic identity is on the verge of extinction. Even though the cinema might have been forced upon this generation by those who are the same age as the 'old' Gable, Grant, and Cooper (90), the new 'king' in society is 'that little television box' (145). However, when Boy tries to take advantage of its capacity to provide 'a sort of non-university education' (143) he finds that even 'when they do put on a programme about something I really know about – which I admit is little, but I mean jazz, or teenagers, or juvenile delinquency – the whole dam [*sic*] thing seems utterly unreal' (143). Boy is completely alienated by the new culture and his social position cannot be redeemed by the cultural education that the television provides. The significance of this generation's relationship with doomed cinema-going – whose spectre can first be seen to have risen in *June in Her Spring* when Benny states that he might run off to join the cinema's orchestra in the dying days of silent film (168) – is waning; it is telling that in the final novel of the London

Trilogy, *Mr Love and Justice* (1960), the cinema is depicted as a female domain as it cannot realistically represent the perspectives of its 'macho', single-minded protagonists, who seem to be reduced to cinema 'types' themselves. However, the brief pinnacle of MacInnes' literary relationship with cinema-going seen in *Absolute Beginners* can not only help explain this novel's refusal of a 'classic-realist' narrative, but also how a supposedly documentary novel can get away with offering 'candy-floss' visions of 'gritty', subcultural London in the post-war period. So, while Bergonzi might believe that MacInnes shares a place in a very specific genre with Lynne Reid Banks, which he terms 'Socio-Cultural Marginalization in Inner West London in the lates 1950s',[27] it seems it is more helpful to look at the elements of MacInnes' representation of 'marginalised' culture that are more cinematic than sociological for a more detailed insight into the narrative perspectives of the post-war realist novel.

[27] Bernard Bergonzi, *Wartime and Aftermath: English Literature and its Background 1939-1960* (Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 175.

6. ALAN SILLITOE AND THE 'FILM-MAKERS'

> *Most of my first literary influences – if they can be called such – came from the cinema.*[1]

When one reads the many critical works, interviews or obituaries written on the subject of Alan Sillitoe, one is very likely to find the phrase 'working class' in the first paragraph and equally likely to find no reference to his deep attachment to the cinema in any paragraph. If the cinema is discussed, it is merely to document Sillitoe's involvement in the production of films based on his early work. There are indeed some critics who touch on Sillitoe's screenwriting as an important influence on the cinematic British New Wave,[2] but the literary works themselves are discussed in no detail within this context. Most frustratingly, this debate is consistently curtailed and subsumed by its noisier bedfellow: the persistently present 'class debate'.

Consider one of Sillitoe's earliest major interviews, tellingly entitled 'Working class novelist'. A photograph of Sillitoe is presented with the caption: '"Going to the pictures on Saturday afternoons" he says, "was such a rarity and marvel that I began to make up my own cinema shows. Left to entertain my

[1] Alan Sillitoe, 'Writing and publishing', *London Review of Books* (1-14 April 1982), pp. 8-10.
[2] See, for example: John Hughson, 'The "Loneliness" of the Angry Young Sportsman', *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies*, 35:2 (2005), pp. 41-48; Stephen C. Shafer, 'An Overview of the Working Classes in British Feature Film from the 1960s to the 1980s: From Class Consciousness to Marginalization', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 59 (2001), pp. 3-14; Yael Zarhy-Levo, 'Looking Back at the British New Wave', *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 27:2 (2010), pp. 232-247.

brothers and sisters I told stories aloud to keep them quiet"'.[3] The interviewer then goes on to wonder 'if Sillitoe has the imagination to be original instead of recording the things he has seen'.[4] This inference – with its roots in Leavisism and its effects also being felt by Braine – that Sillitoe's working-class attachment to cinema leads to an inferior and somehow unworthy documentary mode in his fiction needs to be challenged on two fronts. Firstly, it is necessary to examine the extent to which Sillitoe's understanding of and engagement with the 'marginalised' cultural status of cinema (which the parenthesised proviso of the epigraph – if the literary influence of cinema 'can be called such' – suggests) constitutes a universally-accepted social *and* literary influence which informs the perspectives of his characters, rather than inhibiting the originality of his realism. Secondly, one must investigate the nature of cinema's influence on Sillitoe in light of the notion that he and his readers are 'film-makers'; members of a movie-made generation. As one can see in the works of Braine and MacInnes, this influence certainly provokes far more complex literary issues than a mere realist 'recording'. It will become clear that not only does Sillitoe's engagement with cinema and cinesthetics condition both the behaviour and perception of his characters, but it also suggests, in contrast to the 'socially-marginalised' elements of its use in the work of Braine and MacInnes, an increasing acceptance of the

[3] Anon., 'Working class novelist', *Books and Bookmen*, October 1958, p. 16.
[4] Anon., 'Working class novelist', p. 16.

cinesthetic as a normalised element of the composition and reception of social realism.

Sillitoe and Cinema-Going

Judging the importance of cinema as a 'literary influence' on Sillitoe creates problems for critics, primarily because the nature of this influence strays beyond the debate inherited from enquiries into the relationship between literary modernism and cinema. As has been discussed in the Introduction of this thesis, the focus of this debate is, in its broadest terms, on how the visual 'language of cinema' can inform the language written by Modernists. This seems the obvious and most significant criterion for any consideration of literary influence and yet in Sillitoe's case cinema-going creates a tangibly different mode of influence. Consider two accounts of cinema-going. The first, Modernist account is from Virginia Woolf's essay 'The Cinema' and details her experience of watching *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* in 1926:

> A shadow shaped like a tadpole suddenly appeared at one corner of the screen. It swelled to an immense size, quivered, bulged, and sank back again into nonentity. For a moment it seemed to embody some monstrous diseased imagination of the lunatic's brain. For a moment it seemed as if thought could be conveyed by shape more effectively than by words. The monstrous quivering tadpole seemed to be fear itself, and not the statement 'I am afraid'.[5]

[5] Virginia Woolf, 'The Cinema' [1926], in Rachel Bowlby (ed.), *Selected Essays: The Crowded Dance of Modern Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), p. 56.

The second is from Sillitoe's autobiography, in which he reminisces about what he believes he felt after watching *The Last Days of Pompeii*, a rather dramatic RKO feature from 1935:

> In a corner, or suddenly across the middle, ran a pure white speckle against the black, of magician-like dolly mixture symbols – dots, triangles, squares and stars – so quickly as to make me doubt I had seen them […]. The relief and entertainment was in knowing that you could be safe on your seat watching disaster overtaking others, caused by someone or something with, after all, no real name.[6]

Sillitoe's account of 'dots, triangles, squares and stars' is strikingly consistent with Woolf's recollection of colours and shapes. Yet while both experiences suggest formal similarities, there is a difference in the type of significance that these writers place upon such symbols. Woolf is fascinated by the expressive possibility of these symbols, known as 'hieroglyphs' in much writing on cinema in this period; 'as if thought could be conveyed by shape more effectively than by words'. Sillitoe, on the other hand, denies the link to language – these shapes have 'no real name' – and instead references both the body's senses and the distinctly escapist notion of 'entertainment'. Sillitoe's reference to the 'disaster' also alludes to the 'reality' reflected as a criterion for judging the quality of the film, even though the film is clearly a recreation of an ancient event. Overall, the perceptual differences between the positions of Woolf and Sillitoe are neatly conceptualised by their respective attitudes towards fear in these accounts; Woolf considers the visual symbolism of fear, whereas Sillitoe takes pleasure in

[6] Sillitoe, *Life Without Armour: An Autobiography* (London: HarperCollins, 1995), p. 26.

watching the fear of others. Sillitoe's more corporeal sensibility might suggest that he possesses what Woolf calls 'the ordinary eye, the English unaesthetic eye, [that] is a simple mechanism which takes care that the body does not fall down coal-holes',[7] which, it can be inferred, is an intrinsically 'lower' reaction to the medium, particularly if one is viewing Sillitoe purely in the context of his apparently 'lower' social class. It is certainly possible that Sillitoe's retrospective account is tailored to combat such assumptions and that Sillitoe might feel the need to project a certain image within the literary establishment that could potentially challenge his reputation of being a 'good working-class writer'. Tellingly, this is a late amendment added to the work; it is not included in early drafts.[8] An unwillingness to parade his working-class influences is an issue that is clearly intertwined with cinema in Sillitoe's work and one that we must return to in this context, particularly with regard to Sillitoe's relationship with this readership. However, it is important to stress the clear possibility that Sillitoe's more explicitly corporeal experience is an indication of a new, widely-shared, cinesthetic sensibility.

In order to understand Sillitoe's relationship with cinema more clearly, it is first necessary to establish his experience of cinema-going. Sillitoe is certainly part of the movie-made generation and aspects of his life point to clear cinesthetic

[7] Woolf, 'The Cinema', p. 52.
[8] See Alan Sillitoe Archive, Lilly Library, Indiana University, MSS.II/2/12.

tendencies. Most obviously, Sillitoe has great experience of the 'loving darkness' which Annette Kuhn sees as a badge of the movie-made generation and is a cornerstone of the interactive aesthetic affects that the cinesthetic reader and writer might be expected to experience. It is as an evacuee in Worksop when Sillitoe's relationship with cinema begins to take on a sexual dynamic, with the freedom of evacuation leading Sillitoe to explore the potential of cinemas as venues for 'courting'; indeed, when spending time with wartime girlfriends, their 'main entertainment was the cinema'.[9] To supplement such interests, it was also apparently 'easier to get into the adult cinema, and also cheaper than in Nottingham'.[10] This is a pattern that is continued throughout Sillitoe's adolescence and seems to be engraved into his consciousness by the time he reaches military service, when he would see 'a film such as *Cairo* or *Watch on the Rhine*, followed by an evening with taxi-dancing Eurasian girls' with friends while on shore leave in Penang.[11] Sillitoe connects cinema-going and sexual contact in his own life and it is the cinesthetic sensibility formed by this which conditions a desire for some form of physical connection when one apprehends the cinematic medium itself.

In the cinematic medium, such connections are formed on an indexical basis. This is clearly a concept that Sillitoe is conscious of. In his autobiography,

[9] Sillitoe, *Life*, p. 69.
[10] Sillitoe, *Life*, p. 44.
[11] Sillitoe, *Life*, p. 118.

Sillitoe states that 'the "pictures" were a solace and a consolation, and it was a poor week if I didn't get the few pennies necessary to take myself to a matinee on a Saturday afternoon'.[12] Perhaps more interesting is the fact that, if a 'poor week' materialised, Sillitoe pursued the next best, indexical substitute, which was collecting advertisement cards from local cinemas 'in the hope of one day seeing their films'.[13] This form of connection then takes on its particularly physical aspect when the concept is extended towards Kuhn's notion of 'identificatory fantasy'. Later in the autobiography, Sillitoe recalls the thrill of watching the films 'of James Cagney, Humphrey Bogart and Paul Muni'.[14] Again, Sillitoe is conforming to Kuhn's model of the movie-made generation, for whom Bogart particularly stands as a figure of identificatory fantasy. Interestingly, however, in his novels Sillitoe seems to identify more readily with the slightly left-field figures of Bela Lugosi, Boris Karloff, and Tarzan, which one can assume stems from his immersion in 'H for Horror films such as *Dracula* and *The Vampire Bat*' and 'Tarzan films'.[15] With these biographical fragments considered, the origins of the complicated cinesthetic nature of Sillitoe's physical understanding of an escapist medium that leaves him 'safe in his seat' becomes more clear.

Early, unpublished works suggest a relatively productive relationship with this physical culture of cinema-going, particularly in the manuscripts of

[12] Sillitoe, *Life*, p. 25.
[13] Sillitoe, *Life*, p. 25.
[14] Sillitoe, *Life*, p. 41.
[15] Sillitoe, *Life*, pp. 44, 111.

what Sillitoe considered his first novel, 'By What Road' (1950). Protagonist John exists in a world where cinema is not only shorthand for dubious sexual endeavours – when he asks girlfriend Ada **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**[16] – but also for luxury and intimacy. Ada and John approach **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**.[17]

Furthermore, the cinema provides a physical sense of **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**.[18] Intriguingly, this cinesthetic experience is not personal and individual, but understood to be felt communally, by all who watch the film unfold:

[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions].[19]

This 'mass jollification' is not that derided by Hoggart, but a positive indicator of social identity. John's repetitive affirmation of a 'genuine genuine feeling' that 'was often hard to come by' also offers a prototypical indicator of Sillitoe's understanding of how the experience of watching an 'escapist' film can lead to a sense of what is universally deemed as realistic.

However, Sillitoe's relationship to cinema is contorted and complicated when it comes into contact with the apparently more middle-class arena of the

[16] Sillitoe, 'By What Road', Sillitoe Archive, Lilly Library, MSS.II/3/5, p. 134. N.B. The collection's online catalogue marks this incorrectly as Folder 4.
[17] Sillitoe, 'By What Road', pp. 142-3.
[18] Sillitoe, 'By What Road', p. 143.
[19] Sillitoe, 'By What Road', p. 144.

literary circuit (after he 'makes it') and one's status as a writer. As the by-now-famous Sillitoe writes of this cinema-going period in his autobiography:

> Scala, Hippodrome, Savoy, Ritz, Plaza, Elite, Grande – names to be surmounted, left behind, even scorned, but never forgotten because of the dreams they generated and the joy they gave when dreams and joy were cushions against despair.[20]

Here Sillitoe acknowledges his membership of the movie-made generation but distances it from his status as a writer. Even the composition of this sentence strives to distance Sillitoe from the influence of cinema-going culture; an earlier draft preferred a first-person account.[21] Indeed, as we will examine, the obvious tension between Sillitoe's cinesthetic perception – a sensibility that he knows is widely-held – and what are thought to be the values of the literary establishment – which seem to dismiss such a sensibility – becomes fundamental to one's understanding of not only the place of the 'working-class' figure in post-war literary culture, but also the muted and fragmentary acceptance of the cinesthetic reader in the period.

Saturday Night and Sunday Morning

In Sillitoe's astoundingly successful debut novel, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958), cinema is far from 'left behind'. Primarily, cinesthetic visual perspectives emerge as a keystone of the novel's narrative. The novel's anti-hero,

[20] Sillitoe, *Life*, p. 25.
[21] Sillitoe, 'Life Without Armour typescript', Sillitoe Archive, Lilly Library, MSS.II/2/18, p. 30.

Arthur Seaton, is introduced as a visual spectacle by the first sentence of the novel: 'The rowdy gang of singers […] saw Arthur walk unsteadily'; then 'Brenda and two other women […] saw him push back his chair and stand up'.[22] Intriguingly, Sillitoe's narrative implies that Arthur is being watched by a cinesthetic audience, as it adopts the perspective of viewers who relay the details of visible action, but do not supply the language of physical description, typically assuming that one can already 'see' this for oneself. Meanwhile, Arthur himself demonstrates a visual sensibility which is particularly physical, as his 'eyes filmed over' and he 'felt electric light bulbs shining and burning into the back of his head, and sensed the opening and closing flash of a second that his mind and body were entirely separate entities inconsiderately intent on going their different ways' (10). There are also elements of the narrative that explicitly call to mind the 'camera-eye', such as when Arthur scans Jack with 'his eyes a camera that slowly fitted the picture into his brain' (53). Though such an approach might imply the influence of the late modernist spectroscopic perspective that one finds, for example, in Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939), Sillitoe's narrative does not glorify such a perspective as radical and experimental, but instead describes a world in which seeing as a camera is an overwhelmingly physical, primary sense of perception.

[22] Sillitoe, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* [1958] (London: Harper Perennial, 2008), pp. 9-10. Further references to this text are from this edition.

Cinema-going also acts as an important social reference point in the novel. While watching television is something that is regularly criticised by Arthur in the novel as harmful and socially-alienating, going to the cinema is something that all of the novel's characters have in common. This is clearly depicted after Arthur notes 'two smart Sunday-afternoon couples on their way to the pictures' (71) and later learns that his family – the 'Tribe' - have also 'gone to't pictures' (73) at the same time. In Sillitoe's Nottingham it does seem that 'everybody was out at the pictures' (169). However, when cinema-going is described in the novel, it not only helps to define the vital social role that cinema plays in the lives of Sillitoe's characters, but consistently serves to emphasise how the process contributes to the expressions of cinesthetic sensibilities. For example, when Arthur and Fred visit 'a cheap matinée at the pictures', the cinema is 'filled with old-age pensioners, truant children, shop assistants on half-day, shift-workers, and those off sick like themselves' (121), which emphasises the importance of cinema-going to the community that Arthur lives within. However, the visit is followed pointedly by a description of Arthur's enhanced sensibilities and how it naturally leads to 'interaction': 'Coming straight out of it, the sound of six-guns still blazing, thud of avenging hooves breaking through bleak sunshine and a thriving wind, he bumped into Brenda' (121). Not only is the novel positioning the cinema as an important social instrument, but also demonstrating its ability to encourage cinesthetic sensibilities in its attendees, particularly in its heightened sense of the importance of identificatory fantasy and how the impact

of such behavioural patterns alters the physical interactions between young men and women.

Identificatory fantasy is rife throughout the novel and cinematic figures actually appear to act as role models for the men in Arthur's community. There are the expected clichés, particularly concerning cowboys. When Arthur drinks brandy, he feels 'doubly better by giving an imitation before the mirror of Bill Hickock knocking it back in a Wild West saloon' (48). Interestingly, Fred's description of one of Arthur's fights as 'a wonderful free-for-all in a cowboy film' is offered as an 'objective picture' (107), which is an indication of the extent to which cinematic forms have created an almost universal visual culture. However, as a slightly more liberated spirit, Arthur's preferred role model appears to be the haunting figure of Boris Karloff. Arthur (like Sillitoe) has clearly been exposed to Karloff films from a young age. When Arthur states that he 'had often heard Friday described as Black Friday', it is attributed to the memory of 'a Boris Karloff film of years ago' (24). Arthur copies the characteristics adopted by Karloff in many of his most popular films on more than one occasion. He particularly likes to relay stories of films to his little cousin William by using this characterisation, starting 'Well, this man's name was Boris Karloff', then making 'weird noises with his throat' (63). Of course, Arthur conflates the figure of Karloff the actor and the various horrific characters that he plays on screen, which

is a classic trait of identificatory fantasy that is a symptom of the indexicality of cinema and the catachretic confusion between body and character that it invokes.

Such identificatory fantasy conditions how the young men of the town interact with the young women, particularly with regards to how the prospect of sexual contact is perceived. Arthur has a particularly acute sense of 'the loving darkness' of the cinema. After three cinema dates, Doreen 'had told him more than once on the back row of the Granby to keep his hands to himself' (156). Later, when a bed-bound Arthur suggests renewing their weekly cinema date, he simultaneously 'held her firmly around the neck and waist, both hands out of bed' (187). Even at this most unlikely of moments, Arthur wants to satisfy the cinesthetic desire of seeing and then wanting to touch. Indeed, the notion that cinema-going might *not* be intertwined with sexual interaction is difficult for Arthur to comprehend. One can see this when he suggests to Doreen that they should go to the movies together. Doreen states that he is 'fast worker', but ultimately consents, with one qualifying criterion: 'All right, but not on the back row'. Arthur responds: 'Why not? I can't see unless I sit right on the back row. If I get near the front the picture goes all blurred. Something's wrong with my eyes, I suppose' (151). Here, Arthur's senses of vision, inferiority, and social interaction have been neatly conflated, which demonstrates the aptness of using cinema-going to inform the perspective of a 'marginalised' character for a wider audience.

Most obviously, love scenes and feelings of lust are described from Arthur's perspective and draw upon the experiences and affects of cinema-going, created in spaces that are noticeably cramped, silent, and dark with only a glimmer of electric light. When Arthur returns to Brenda's house for the night it is described as a 'small dark area of isolation' where 'Brenda hissed and told him to be quiet, and they crept like to thieves into the living room, where the electric light showed the supper things' (18). When Arthur is out with Brenda, there is a detectable sense that he would prefer to return to the back seat of the cinema and 'interact' with her in the way he fantasises about female figures on screen, as 'he went out to meet her, taking hold of her and drawing her into the shadows' (50). Winnie is also subject to Arthur's cinesthetic perception. As

> he watched her drink; her full small lips seemed spiteful and changed with trouble; her breasts, large and out of proportion in size with the rest of her body, pushed the folds of her purple jumper forward. You touch me, they said, and see what a smack you get. Mounds of mischief. (95)

The automatic and cinesthetic assumption of vision equalling touch is very prominent here and the more that Arthur feels this interactive desire, the more he sees Winnie as a black-and-white, *femme fatale* figure on screen. When 'she was dressed-up to kill, with smart white blouse and black suit and hair just permed', Arthur 'couldn't keep his eyes from her' (143-4); later, 'he saw Winnie walking along Woolworth's darkened window', framed by the dark screen of glass and glaring 'at him with coal-black eyes'. Arthur cannot resist 'pulling her into the wall' (154). This predatory aspect of Arthur's view of women is clearly problematic, but, intriguingly, it is consistent with the representation of sexual

relationships found in the work of many 'movie-made' writers of the period, including Braine, the Movement writers, and Lynne Reid Banks. The reified and misogynistic perspective of women encouraged by cinema-going appears to be a distinct and universal element of the 'ordinary eye' of the post-war period.

It is perhaps fitting that, in the 'Age of Affluence', the normality of such cinema-going influence is emphasised by its disposability. Arthur signals this when he claims blithely: 'I even forget the picture unless it's a real smasher, with Boris Karloff or somebody like that. I must have seen thousands of pictures, like everybody else, but I'll bet I can't remember half a dozen' (152). Arthur then claims to remember 'Henry the Fifth', as he 'saw it six times' and 'read that long speech he does on his hoss before the fight […in his] brother's book'. When Doreen presses him on the issue – 'Can you say it then?' – the narrator usurps Arthur's reply with the third-person: 'Some of it. Certain phrases came in the king's loud voice, but he could not speak them' (152). It would seem that Arthur is slighted for possessing a merely visual memory and offering identificatory duplication rather than understanding the literary basis of the performance, but it is this fragmentary and distinctly cinematic – directly opposed to literary – influence that is characteristic, and indeed realistic, in this period. This is most clear when Richard Bradford discusses Sillitoe's own recollection of viewing

Olivier's *Henry V*,[23] noting a link to a similar experience had by Philip Larkin. Bradford demonstrates that Larkin also seized on a distinctly cinematic element, rather than a literary phrase – 'the flights of arrows disappearing into the sky and, somewhere else, annihilating apparently superior French forces', which, crucially, Shakespeare 'had not envisaged in its performance' – to use in his own work, *The Whitsun Weddings*.[24] As such, one can begin to argue that Arthur's apparent 'ignorance' is not intended as a badge of his class, but of his 'movie-made' generation.

The existence of widely-held cinesthetic sensibilities is implied by the complicated and potentially indexical relationship between perceptions of Arthur's life and Sillitoe's own. Firstly, it seems that Sillitoe is aware that linking Arthur's existence to his own life can enhance his realism. In 1955, Sillitoe had noted in a private diary:

> How to describe oneself is a problem. One hopes that the adventures, events, will delineate your character sufficiently at least psychologically to let people know what you are like, and this often happens, so that the ghost takes on a soul, but it still remains for the most part intangible for want of a direct physical description. The only way I can see out of this embarrassing dilemma is to fictionalise myself, but only slightly, to use detail where necessary, be there but not quite there, let the character and narrator switch roles.[25]

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[23] Richard Bradford, *The Life of a Long Distance Runner: A Biography of Alan Sillitoe* (London and Chester Springs: Peter Owen, 2008), p. 60. This is consistent with Sillitoe's version of this story (See Sillitoe, *Life*, pp. 92-3).
[24] Bradford, p. 60.
[25] Bradford, p. 133, quoting from Sillitoe, 'Private notebook, 1955'.

In his autobiography and elsewhere, Sillitoe claims that 'little of the book was autobiographical', but this claim that the character and narrator must switch roles and the sense that real life must be consciously 'called in for use' suggests that Sillitoe may actually craft extratextual links between Arthur's life and his own. It is true that both live in Nottingham, working at the Raleigh factory, with the initials A. S., and that these connections are readily available to the readership of the novel. For example, in 'The pen was my enemy', the article is presented with a captioned photo: 'he was born in a Nottingham slum and left school at 14 to work in a bicycle factory, later became a capstan-lathe operator'.[26] Sillitoe is indeed very aware that 'advertisements were beginning to appear for my novel' and jokes with agent Rosica Colin 'about the old notion of erecting barbed wire around the house to keep off biographers'.[27] He also states that his 'policy was to accept all interviews, since writing a book was one phase, and helping its sales was another. […] I was interviewed by the *News of the World*, and photographed by Mark Gerson'.[28] This indexical information is constantly repeated next to photos of Sillitoe, to the extent that it begins to condition readers' responses to his work and sets the bar for judging its 'actuality', leading Richard Bradford, for example, to surmise that 'Arthur has a presence that we usually only encounter outside fiction in real people'.[29] Intriguingly, Sillitoe's own reactions to the wide-spread acceptance of these connections between Arthur and himself also

[26] See Sillitoe, 'The pen was my enemy', *Books and Bookmen* (January 1959), p. 11.
[27] Sillitoe, *Life*, p. 251.
[28] Sillitoe, *Life*, p. 254.
[29] Bradford, p. 123.

demonstrates the strong effect of such indexical connections. For example, Sillitoe conflates his and Arthur's existence when writing to Rosica Colin of how 'it was *I* [not his publishers] who made it [the extratextual publicity] successful' by his 'manner of impressing journalists and interviewers' when he 'could just have easily have kicked them down the stairs'.[30] Indeed, this extratextual conflation is almost too effectively felt it seems, to the extent that in an interview in 1960 he feels compelled to counteract such physical identification: 'He held out his hands, palms upward. "Look", he said, "they're soft. I'm not working class anymore"'.[31]

The film version of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, directed by Karel Reisz and released in 1960, did little to dampen the public's interest in Sillitoe's proximity to Seaton and was to prove very successful indeed. The production process of the film also offers some insight into the cinematic nature of the novel. Sillitoe retells a conversation with producer Harry Saltzman that makes a clear suggestion for a major reason for the film's success:

> The book was so cinematic in the unrolling of its sequences that he wondered if it had been written with a film in mind. I told him it had not, though perhaps it was natural that my work should give that impression, since I must have seen as many films as I had read books.[32]

Furthermore, Sillitoe's complaint that it was 'obviously impossible to find an actor who matched the appearance of the person so vividly pictured when

[30] Sillitoe, letter to Rosica Colin, 18 November 1958, quoted in Bradford, pp. 151-2.
[31] Anon., 'Alan Sillitoe – he went from making bicycles to writing best sellers', *Modern Woman* (December 1960), p. 74.
[32] Sillitoe, *Life*, p. 256.

writing the book' betrays a particularly cinesthetic perception of character,[33] while also explicitly claiming that he wanted the film 'to be exactly the one [film] set going in [his] mind's eyes during that [writing] process'.[34] It is interesting to note that Sillitoe's recollection of sitting in the cinema for the premiere of the film is dominated by the memory of watching Arthur Seaton at the Raleigh factory 'as if he too had been there since he was fourteen'.[35] The mistake in this recollection – Sillitoe clearly means Albert Finney, the actor, rather than Seaton – conflates the identity of writer Sillitoe, character Seaton, and actor Finney in a particularly cinesthetic way. In this recollection, Sillitoe also imagines a seemingly cinesthetic reader for his work:

> My feelings also reflected the fact that whereas I had total control of a novel, with a film there was, despite writing the script, not very much. I suppose that finally my embarrassment was little more than chagrin at not being powerful at all, but there was some comfort in the fact that the book existed for whoever cared to read it, and in knowing that the reader of fiction becomes his or her own film-maker, setting their particular and idiosyncratic cameras moving after the first word of novel or story registers in their brain, thus completing the work of the writer. There is no substitute for that unbeatable combination.[36]

Intriguingly, though, on the same page of his autobiography, Sillitoe also claims that film is not so compatible with the novel, but 'made out of something different. Such reality was a peculiar form of art because it left little to the viewer's imagination, giving nothing to do except supinely watch'.[37] Again, the

[33] Sillitoe, *Life*, p. 261.
[34] Sillitoe, *Life*, p. 266.
[35] Sillitoe, *Life*, pp. 268-9.
[36] Sillitoe, *Life*, p. 266.
[37] Sillitoe, *Life*, p. 266.

tension between cinema and 'high' cultural forms would appear to be at the heart of Sillitoe's literary beliefs, with Sillitoe seemingly embracing the Leavisite public position of other writers, such as Colin MacInnes. Yet this writer is in fact returning to his physical, cinesthetic sensibility. In a literary context, supine might suggest cultural inferiority, but in the context of cinesthetic culture, it also emphasises a corporeal recollection of cinema-going, with Sillitoe once more aware of the reality of being 'in his seat' at the movies.

'The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner'

The publication of Sillitoe's next major work, a collection of stories entitled *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1959), was overshadowed by the Reisz film of his debut novel and, later, Tony Richardson's 1962 film version of 'The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner' story. It is ironic then that it suggests further developments in Sillitoe's relationship with cinema-going and its social status. Fascinatingly, the unpublished 'continuation' of 'The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner' (which was originally intended to be combined as a novel entitled 'A Man's Life', according to the head of the typescript), is intensely engaged with cinema-going culture. Colin is now out of Borstal but is instead physically attached to another institution:

> **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**.[38]

[38] Sillitoe, 'A Man's Life' (draft), Sillitoe Archive, Lilly Library, MSS.II/10/14, p. 204.

In such a context, Colin – who is marginalised socially, as a 'trouble-maker' – laughing at a potential tragedy might appear sinister, whether it is reflecting the angry affects felt, for example, by Braine's Joe Lampton, or the sense of social alienation felt by MacInnes' Boy. However, this is actually understood as a more universal impulse: **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**.[39] Colin goes on to say that he'd **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**,[40] suggesting not only a cinesthetic narrator, but also an intriguing indexical relationship between the 'screen' of one's perception and cinema-going. The importance of the universal physical understanding created by the conventions of this medium is also stressed when Colin returns to this film at the very end of the novel to explain his implication in a bank robbery, claiming **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**.[41] Indeed, the fact that the novel ends with a cinematic image that is entwined with the prospect of a return to jail is particularly poignant when one remembers that it was cinematic images which Colin had used to describe his escapist hopes and dreams when he had been in Borstal, where:

[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions].[42]

As such, cinematic perspective does not make Colin an outsider or of a 'lower' class, as was expected of the 'working-class' cinema-goer in the literary culture of the time (and can be seen in the work of MacInnes and Braine), but is an

[39] Sillitoe, 'A Man's Life' (draft), pp. 204-5.
[40] Sillitoe, 'A Man's Life' (draft), pp. 204-5.
[41] Sillitoe, 'A Man's Life' (typescript), Sillitoe Archive, Lilly Library, MSS.II/10/15, pp. 207-8.
[42] Sillitoe, 'A Man's Life' (typescript), p. 144.

indication of his aspirations to stay out of jail and become a 'normal' member of a contentedly cinesthetic society.

Key to the Door

After writing *The General* (1960), an apparently unsuccessful departure from the 'vision' that his readers had come to expect,[43] Sillitoe published *Key to the Door* (1961). In this novel, not only does Sillitoe 'go back' to Nottingham, but he also resurrects the 'working-class' Seatons. Strikingly, the novel also reacquaints Sillitoe's fiction with the cinema and emphasises this by retracing the establishment of a member of the 'movie-made generation' in great detail. Though Vera Seaton, Brian's mother, remembers 'the man dressed up as Charlie Chaplin' that she had seen at the vaudeville at the Empire,[44] and finds such cinematic identificatory fantasy alienating but amusing, her son Brian is brought up in a world where cinema is not only a fundamental part of his social existence, but also forms the boundaries of reference for notably cinesthetic behaviour and sensibilities. There are many obvious references to identificatory fantasy, such as when Brian 'charged like Ben-Hur' (124). However, constant cinema-going soon begins to have a less abstract impact on the way young Brian begins to live his life. When Brian is taken to the theatre by the older Lydia, he is surprised that he

[43] Indeed, as Sillitoe notes, 'some of the reviewers of the novel suggested that I "get back to Nottingham", in other words write only about what they had decided I knew best' (*Life*, p. 264).
[44] Sillitoe, *Key to the Door* [1961] (London: Grafton, 1986), p. 21. Further references to this novel correspond to this edition.

will not be seeing 'Cowboys and Indians' or 'lions and tigers and snakes', as, at the cinema, 'he been so certain of seeing unique and astonishing scenes that he hadn't bothered before this to question it; and now his wide-open ever-deepening stage had shrunk to a few lights shining at a woman singing at one end' of a theatre stage (87). Brian then begins to consciously shun more traditional boyhood pursuits in favour of the 'wide-open ever deepening' cinema screen; when Doddoe suggests that he wants to run away and become like 'Robin 'Ood' (94), Brian's response is: 'Wouldn't yer want to go to t' pictures?' (94). Indeed, Brian becomes so desperate to go to the 'flickerdrome' that he later gathers 'a scraping of pennies and ha'pennies' to get 'the price of a matinée seat at the pictures' (134). Ultimately, Sillitoe ensures that Brian's addiction not only leads to the cinesthetic desire for the conflation of cinema-going and sexual contact, but also acknowledges that it might condition his approach to reading. This dual symbolism is aptly symbolised when Brian and a friend – while waiting to see James Cagney in *G Men* – go and find a 'buckanachure' (147); 'in the window he could see magazines with bare women on the cover, and bare men as well, like Tarzans on the pictures' (148). In *Key to the Door*, Sillitoe finally examines the impact that widespread cinesthetic sensibilities can have not only on one's social relationships, but also on notions of reading.

It must be initially noted that Brian's cinesthetic sensibilities are much more openly incorporated into the style of Sillitoe's narrative, particularly in

relation to the conflation of cinema-going and sexuality. At the precise moment that Brenda becomes the first girl to tell him that she loves him, Brian's initial reaction is to escape into a particularly violent image, broken off like a section of a newsreel by the conspicuous use of colons: 'His teacher said that God loved everybody: Italians gassing blackies and mowing 'em down with machine-guns: dole, thunderstorms, school' (83), an apparent reference to the contemporaneous invasion of Abyssinia and capture of Addis Ababa in May 1936. Interestingly, however, Brian then begins to perform the motions of a relationship clearly learned from cinema, initiating a 'game' where he makes a 'Tarzan call' (84) to Brenda, his Jane. Of course, Brian is taking on the role of Johnny Weissmuller's Tarzan, who had been developing the Tarzan call as the film character's unique trademark in three films between 1932 and 1936.

Sillitoe's narrative certainly makes one aware that Brian's relationship with cinema is conforming to a gender stereotype. When Brian returns from a visit to the cinema with his younger siblings, for example, he listens to Margaret – who is herself displaying cinesthetic traits –'re-hash' the tale of her viewing. When she claims that 'The Three Stooges was the best because there was women in the other pictures' and that she had 'never seen a big picture wi'out a woman in it', her mother is quick to point out that she 'wain't neither', as 'the men like to see 'em too much' (136). Such conditioning soon leads to physical action and the intertwining of cinema-going and sexuality outlined by Annette Kuhn. Later in

Brian's life, he and his friend Bill begin to spend their Sunday nights in 'the four-penny gods of the fleapit Grand', where Brian stuns his companion as he 'often tried to go the whole way on the back row' (222). Physical interaction appears to be a way of satisfying the interactive appetites spurred by constant cinema-going. Tellingly then, when Brian finally meets his wife-to-be Pauline, she is described as emerging from the cinema-going experience, as 'she had come to him the first time out of the dark back seats of the Savoy picture house' (222). Brian is also keen that his new love fulfils the expectations formed by cinema; thus, when they kiss, the description clearly connotes the cinema-going experience, as 'his inner world grew to a blind illuminated space, the inside of a sphere that marked the limit of all pictures in his mind and turned his kiss-breaking into a vision' (257). Sillitoe's prose is now collocating 'normal' perspectives and cinesthetic influence much more emphatically.

In parallel to this development in Sillitoe's style, the influence of the cinema on Brian's sense of story-telling and reading is also investigated on much more open terms. When Brian tells Arthur and his other siblings stories, he draws on the cinematic 'serial story' (120) about gangsters in Nottingham as his reference, just as Sillitoe himself used to do. This is seen to be at the expense of the development of a literary sensibility, however. For example, Brian's first exposure to poetry, or 'pointry' (a suggestion of deixis that may even be read as

a reference to cinesthetic indexicality), is through a 'joke' about cinema-going told by his friend Alma:

> I went to the pictures tomorrow
> I took a front seat at the back
> A man gave me a plain cake with currants in
> So I ate it and gave it him back. (61)

Tellingly, Brian is alienated by the attempt to render the cinema-going experience as words, stressing the clearly illogical nature of the poem in his response. Indeed, the young Brian is clearly not a reader. His teacher claims that he 'don't spend five minutes over' books (101) and it is stated that he finds books 'too strange an object to read' (104). However when he does have to read, Brian clearly anticipates a cinematic and interactive experience, such as when Robert Louis' Stevenson's *Treasure Island* is introduced to the class: 'a cinematic hit-and-run battle […] taking place a million miles away yet just above his head, as if he could reach up and touch cutlass and cannon and tree branch to heave himself into hiding' (108).

Of course, as one has come to expect of Sillitoe, this potentially childish, unthinkingly-absorbed relationship with cinematic influence is not maintained throughout the novel, in defiance of how Hoggart *et al* understand 'working-class' forms of naïve cultural consumption. It is quite clearly spelled out that this 'phase' of cinema-going does not continue forever. Brian soon turns his back on cinema and becomes the 'reader' of the household, much to the despair of his parents. Crucially, we learn in the novel that young Brian consciously denies his

seemingly inherent interest in indexicality in response to a curious incident which also seems to signal his turn away from cinematic interests and towards more 'literary' reading. One sees Brian:

> stopping on his way back near billboards: big letters in yellow and black, red and purple and gold, forming titles of adventure and destiny, and names from the brightest of heavens such as Robert Donat and Jack Hulbert, Jean Harlow and Clark Gable. Shopping-bag by the wall, he took out his book and self-consciously gathered on to paper the shining words of poetry around him […].
>
> The game came to an end one evening when he opened his grandmother's *Evening Post* and discovered two long columns on the inside page already filled with words so arduously hunted for and copied down. In one way it was like finding a goldmine, corn in Egypt that dazzled his eyes as he strove to take in such a fabulous concentration of titles. Though they lacked the colour and layout that went right into him at the hoardings, his game was finished. (133)

Later in the novel, in Malaya, Brian is instead seen to fetishise books, like Robert Tressel's *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*. Pointedly, in comparison, cinema is ostentatiously described as 'dated', from Brian's posting to Malaya onwards. The camp cinema's 'rickety equipment had given out. It was so old they must have got it from the scrapheap outside some shutdown fleapit'. One 'could go, of course, to the Nanking Talkies', but it was a 'dead loss' (266). However, ironically, Brian's derision cannot completely free itself from cinematic terms. For example, when Knotman – the 'leading man' type whom Nicolas Walter feels draws on the characterisation of Jack Malloy in *From Here to Eternity* (1953)[45] – is dehydrated, 'his throat felt like cracked celluloid' (307). A soldier is mocked for wanting to pose with a Sten gun 'like any film star on active service' (273). On a

[45] Nicolas Walter, 'Because he is a man', *Anarchy* (December 1961), p. 292.

trek, Brian 'felt his face blown out of shape, cape flying back like Bela Lugosi the vampire bat-man' (194), conflating film character and actor in a particularly indexical way, just as Arthur Seaton uses the horror character of Boris Karloff. Though Brian attempts to deny the 'vulgar' cinema, Sillitoe makes it clear that it is an inescapable cultural reference point.

The Seatons' and long-distance runner Colin's relationships with cinema serve to remind us that the influences of cinema-going had become a fundamental aspect of social and cognitive perspectives in the post-war period. Where Sillitoe's approach to this apparently dubious influence – 'if they can be called such' – differs from that of Braine and MacInnes is its ultimate acceptance of these perspectives as more universal than marginal. As such, Sillitoe's work is a vital indication that the literary significance of cinema-going culture is developing from a loosely affiliated – as a fellow form of narrative – 'candy-floss' distraction to a necessary element of an authentic social realism. Also, as the reception of Arthur Seaton by a 'film-maker' readership begins to suggest, signs of a conflation of novelist and character begin to reveal the development of an indexical, extratextual element of the post-war novel's evolving framework of mimesis. This is a concept which is most tangibly engaged with by the Movement novelists in this period, as the following section examines.

7. 'I COULD HAVE BITTEN HER': LARKIN, WAIN, AMIS

> *As we were crossing the dusty first quadrangle a fair-haired young man came down staircase three and paused on the bottom step. Norman instantly pointed his right hand at him in the semblance of a pistol and uttered a short coughing bark to signify a shot - a shot not as in reality, but as it would sound from a worn soundtrack on Saturday afternoon in the ninepennies.*
>
> *The young man's reaction was immediate. Clutching his chest in a rictus of agony, he threw one arm up against the archway and began slowly crumpling downwards…*[1]

This is how Philip Larkin recalls his introduction to Kingsley Amis. Larkin's initial reaction to this performance was one of jealous silence; he believed himself to be 'in the presence of a talent greater than [his] own'.[2] Beyond the fact that it marks the beginning of an influential friendship that helped found the poetic grouping the 'Movement', this scene should have little literary meaning. If anything, the juvenility of Amis' ham acting and Larkin's melodramatic response may partially vindicate the host of critics – Randall Stevenson's proclamation that English literature 'was never more static than under the influence of the Movement' being their famous clarion call[3] – who continue to believe that the success of these apparently unsophisticated realist writers may have retarded the progress of twentieth-century English fiction. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, this rather 'candy-floss' sketch has never led to a focused discussion of Larkin's and Amis' relationship with cinema (who, if the balance of interdisciplinary readings of these writers is taken as a guide, are listening to too much jazz to have any

[1] Philip Larkin, 'Introduction', in *Jill* [1946] (London: Faber & Faber, 2005), p. x.
[2] Larkin, 'Introduction' to *Jill*, p. x.
[3] Randall Stevenson, *The Oxford English Literary History, 1960-2000*, Vol. 12 (Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 270.

time to go the cinema). However, by examining the early novels of Larkin, Amis, and John Wain, a fellow Movement writer, in the context of their relationships with cinema-going, it becomes clear that these writers are engaging with the emergence of new, distinctly cinesthetic, modes of reading and writing novels in ways which suggest their more direct appreciation of the *literary* – as well as the cultural – significance of this aesthetic influence.

Primarily, it is important to note that these writers, being born between 1922 and 1925, qualify for premium membership of the 'movie-made generation' (even if all three have at various points attempted to thwart such a connection by declaring distaste for the movies; such dismissal of an everyday, widely-available form of an apparent 'entertainment' is typical of this generation). Indeed, their novels demonstrate three major traits of such membership. Firstly, the novels offer significant engagement with the concept of identificatory fantasy. Annette Kuhn outlines how males of this generation are particularly prone to a sense of identificatory fantasy which allows one to 'enter into a part and imaginatively becom[e] one's hero' by being 'prompted by films to try out dance routines, […] gestures, mannerisms, and occasionally dress styles, of characters in films', from which 'a more self-conscious sense of performance and display emerges'.[4] As will become clear, these novels suggest that an affinity with the blurring of on-screen

[4] Annette Kuhn, *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), p. 103.

and off-screen bodies which leads to a more cinesthetic perception of how human form can be represented. Furthermore, it emerges that the extent to which Larkin, Wain, and Amis engage with this concept conditions the degree of their refigurations of a realist sense of character.

What will also become clear in this context is the extent to which the cinesthetic refiguration of character is centred on the objectification of women, which represents the second major trait of this collection of novels that will be examined. Larkin, Wain, and Amis have all been criticised for the traces of chauvinism and, in many cases, downright misogyny which emanates from their works, as will be discussed. At first glance, the fact that all of the novels examined offer visions of women that are crassly and intensely objectified will not help to ameliorate such accusations. However, the first step in engaging with this debate will be to view this tendency to objectify in terms of the writers' exposure to cinema and the cinesthetic fantasies it elicits, in the senses noted by Stanley Cavell – who notes that 'the ontological conditions of the motion picture reveal it as inherently pornographic' and that 'an inescapable demand' for voyeurism is thus created[5] – and particularly André Bazin, who argues that the 'participatory' element invoked by cinematic realism – the catachretic confusion of cinesthetics – creates an 'ontological pornography', as has been discussed; the 'cinema

[5] Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film - Enlarged Edition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 45.

unreels in an imaginary space which demands participation […]. The actor winning the woman gratifies me by proxy'.[6] In this context, the 'biting' metaphor of the title of this section, a reference to a real, cinesthetic sense of corporeal confusion experienced by Kingsley Amis, refers to this section's discussion of how cinema-going conditions the characterisation of women in the post-war period (and helps to condition the sexist context which women writers of the time are impelled to engage with, as is discussed more closely in the following section, 'Passionate Detachment'). The second stage of the engagement with this seemingly sexist tendency is then to examine the extent to which these portrayals demonstrate an explicit awareness of how such perceptions of women are formed by cinema culture, which can affect the way that one understands the apparent sexism of these texts, particularly in the case of Amis' fiction.

Thirdly, and most significantly in terms of literary innovation in the period, is the fact that these novels engage with the concepts of indexicality and extratextuality, which are elicited by an immersion in a cinema-going culture which evokes such participatory confusion and is driven by the 'star-concept', thus offering a model for how one can permeate the boundaries of the text. As such, the issue of publicity emerges in the discussions of these texts, particularly regarding the concept of the 'Movement' in relation to the work of Wain and

[6] André Bazin, *What is Cinema?* Vol. 2, trans. Hugh Gray (London: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 173-4.

Amis. As John Rodden correctly quips, 'the Movement belongs to both the history of publicity and the history of poetry'.[7] This interpretation is uncontested by the major critics in this field, such as Blake Morrison, whose *The Movement* (1986) is the seminal text of Movement-studies, and Zachary Leader, who shows that the anonymous leading article of the *Spectator* which coined the term, 'In the Movement' (1 October 1954), was actually written by J. D. Scott 'following a period of lobbying and jockeying by, among others, Anthony Hartley'.[8] However, it is important to note the nature of the writers' direct engagement with the concept of literary publicity. For Larkin and Amis, the origins of this consideration can be traced (perhaps surprisingly, considering the previous section of this thesis' excoriation of Leavisism), to Q. D. Leavis' *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932). Amis writes to Larkin declaring Leavis' work 'sodding good',[9] and its influence can be read in Amis' unfinished B.Litt. thesis, 'English Non-Dramatic Poetry, 1850-1900, and the Reading Public', as well as in the development of Larkin's poem, 'Fiction and the Reading Public'. At a time when these aspiring writers are desperate for literary fame and money (as their letters attest), Larkin and Amis devour Leavis' comprehensive survey of why people buy and read the books they do. The conclusions drawn by Leavis (outlined in the section 'The Emergence of the Cinesthetic Reader' above) appear to indicate

[7] John Rodden, '"The Rope That Connects Me Directly with You": John Wain and the Movement Writers' Orwell', *Albion*, 20:1 (Spring 1988), p. 60.
[8] Zachary Leader, 'Introduction: Origins and Ambivalences', in Leader (ed.), *The Movement Reconsidered* (Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 3.
[9] Kingsley Amis, letter to Larkin, 25 February 1948, quoted in Leader, *The Life of Kingsley Amis* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006), p. 208.

to Larkin and Amis that new forms of association with character and author guarantee a wide readership in this age, which suggests a nascent appreciation of the emerging cinesthetic reader, yet leads to vastly different responses. Wain, who offers Amis a platform for publicity on his BBC radio show, appears to come to similar conclusions regarding the cultural and aesthetic impact of widespread cinema-going, as his novels and later his two-part essay 'The Conflict of Forms in Contemporary English Literature' (1962) reveal. Above all, each of the three novelists can be seen to engage with the concept that readers are 'looking for signs of life' and, thus, that the text is increasingly understood by readers as an index of the author's reality, rather than the symbolic collection of signifiers it is in the analogical, classic realist model. This leads to varying degrees of consideration of the production and reception of a refigured, extratextual realism, which challenges the lingering critical accusations that these novels exhibit simplistic regurgitations of the nineteenth-century realism of Bennett *et al*.[10]

By examining these aspects of the Movement novels, it enables one to recast Larkin in the intriguing light of the cinema-addict and as a pivotal figure of the movie-made generation whose career was in part defined in response to cinema, rather than the multi-chauvinist whose personal star has fallen to such

[10] See, for example, Frank Kermode, 'The House of Fiction', *Partisan Review*, 30:1 (Spring 1963), p. 77; William Van O'Connor, *The New University Wits* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963), p. 149, which compares Wain to 'the pre-modern Bennett'; and Rubin Rabinovitz, *The Reaction Against Experiment in the English Novel, 1950-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 4, which notes Amis' 'affinity' with 'Wells, Bennett, and Butler'.

an extent that Tom Paulin has portrayed him as the 'sewer under the national monument' and whose novels have been neglected.[11] In this light, one can see Wain as the incisive cultural critic he was once known as, before his critical reputation became stuck on G. S. Fraser's reductive notion that the quality of his fiction is harmed and 'distorted by his moral convictions'.[12] Instead, one can begin to understand how the cultural and aesthetic convictions formed in response to cinema-going culture also affect the direction of Wain's fiction. One can also begin to see Amis' early novels not as a realist refinement of 'sharp social and psychological observation',[13] as Fraser describes it, but as an engagement with how cinema blurs the boundaries of fact and fiction. Amis also reveals himself to be less of a sexist than one might think and, furthermore, one can also begin to develop an understanding of Amis' unique relationship with his reader. Though Dominic Head rightly argues that 'Amis wanted to claw back whatever cultural power resides in literature on behalf of the ordinary intelligent reader, and [that] it is this kind of challenge which identified the Movement with a spirit of social transition',[14] Amis can now also be seen more as an integral figure of *aesthetic* transition in the post-war period of cinesthetic readers and writers.

[11] Tom Paulin, letter to editor, *Times Literary Supplement* (6 November 1992), p. 15.
[12] G. S. Fraser, *The Modern Writer and His World.* Rev. edn. (London: Andre Deutsch, 1964), p. 175.
[13] Fraser, pp. 176-7.
[14] Dominic Head, *Modern British Fiction, 1950-2000* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 51.

8. PHILIP LARKIN, 'THE LONELY SPECTATOR' AND FEARFUL INDEXICALITY

As this is my birthday I am going to see 'The Constant Nymph'.[1]

For most of the late twentieth-century, Philip Larkin was a giant of English literature. Larkin's peculiar but unerring articulation of post-war Englishness had earned him widespread recognition, which at worst led to accusations of parochialism, at best to acclaim as 'the nation's unofficial Poet Laureate',[2] as Stephen Regan argues. After his death, however, Larkin's personal and critical reputation slid dramatically as his work began to be read in the light of the anecdotal, then archival evidence that emerged regarding his prejudices and proclivities. Although critics such as Regan, James Booth, and Andrew Motion are notable in their attempts to fight back against this tide, Germaine Greer's damning assessment of Larkin as 'anti-intellectual, racist, sexist, and rotten with class-consciousness',[3] and other similar asseverations, have stuck tightly.

An area of Larkin's *oeuvre* yet to receive such implacable scrutiny, however, is the fruit of his budding career as a novelist in the mid-1940s. This is perhaps unsurprising: as David Lodge rightly states, Larkin's two novels were published 'without making much impression on the reading public';[4] Larkin had

[1] Philip Larkin, letter to Kingsley Amis, 9 August 1945, Philip Larkin Archive, Hull History Centre, U DPL/5/1 (All references to this correspondence relate to this folder).
[2] Stephen Regan, 'Introduction', in his *Philip Larkin* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), p. 1.
[3] Germaine Greer, 'A Very British Misery', *Guardian* (14 October 1988), p. 27.
[4] David Lodge, 'Introduction', in Kingsley Amis, *Lucky Jim* [1954] (London: Penguin, 2000), p. ix.

such little regard for these works that he managed to lose both the manuscripts of what he considered to be juvenilia; when the novels do receive limited critical attention, they seem to serve merely as 'Ur-texts' of his poetry, as Larkin terms it,[5] or, in relation to his first novel, *Jill* (1946), as the subject of dubious claims of it being the source of post-war 'class fictions', as will be discussed further below. Considering that the areas of 'prejudices and proclivities' and 'novels' have proved to be such hostile, barren, and reductive territories for the Larkin-critic, it might seem self-defeating to search for aesthetic significance in Larkin's *Jill*, which examines the class prejudices and voyeuristic tendencies of a young student. It might seem futile, then, to try and examine the potentially cinematic elements of the novel; Larkin has himself suggested that the relationship between the novel and the cinema is problematic on the grounds that 'the hero's fantasies are quite untranslatable'.[6] However, by reading *Jill* in the context of Larkin's remarkably insatiable cinema-going, what emerges is an endorsement of Larkin as the archetype of the movie-made writer of the post-war period, and of *Jill* as a founding text in the history of the cinesthetic novel. By detailing the nature of Larkin's cinema-going in the pre-, intra-, and immediately post-war years, one can begin to relate the potentially alienating voyeurism and fantasies of the novel's protagonist to Larkin's emergent understanding of the impact of cinema-

[5] Larkin, letter to Peter du Sautoy, 11 March 1963, quoted by Rebecca Johnson, 'Philip Larkin and the case of the missing manuscript', *Paragon Review*, 6 (1997). [http://www.hull.ac.uk/oldlib/archives/paragon/1997/larkin.html] (Accessed: 14 March 2013).
[6] Larkin, letter to Alan Brownjohn, 20 January 1981, Larkin Archive, U DPL(2)/3/27/1.

going on perceptions of realism, of the writer's relationship with the reader, and of the necessary direction of his literary career.

Larkin and the Cinema

The importance of poetry and jazz as artistic influences upon Larkin is well documented by Andrew Motion's and Richard Bradford's biographies, Larkin's own writings, and a range of critical works. However, Larkin's pre-1950s letters and diaries suggest that it is the cinema which dominates his aesthetic consumption in his formative years. Even though Larkin's letters are, at first sight, peppered with quasi-Leavisite caveats to temper the obvious sense of aesthetic satisfaction he gains from films – his everyday diet of films consists of 'reels of shit';[7] making a good film 'shouldn't be very hard', but is 'not really worth the trouble'[8] – it is clear that one should not underestimate the extent to which cinema-going influences Larkin's post-war literary sensibilities, indeed to the point that one can start to understand him as the prototype of the 'movie-made' novelist. Larkin's personal archive documents a relationship with the cinema which develops along a trajectory typical of the movie-made generation. To the very young Larkin, cinema-going appears to represent independence and a coming-of-age. Motion's biography shows that Larkin becomes 'fanatical about visiting the local cinema' as soon as he was allowed out on his own as a boy,

[7] Larkin, letter to J. B. Sutton, 24 September 1941, Larkin Archive, U DP/174/2/28.
[8] Larkin, letter to Sutton, 10 November 1941, Larkin Archive, U DP/174/2/33.

venturing out 'initially to see Laurel and Hardy, later to gorge on whatever was showing: *Major Barbara* (which he saw three times), *Love on the Dole*, *The Marx Brothers Go West*, *The Hurricane*, *Prison without Bars*, *Contraband* and *The Doctor's Dilemma*'.[9] The letters and diaries of Larkin's teenage years confirm that his relationship with cinema reaches the point of addiction. A diary from 1937, for example, notes the opening of the Rex cinema in Coventry and conveys that Larkin went to see the film *The Devil Takes the Count* (1936) four times in one month.[10] Intriguingly, this diary also suggests that cinema-going plays an integral role in the interactions of the Larkin family. The Larkins often make the effort to see the same films – Larkin's parents go to see *The Great Ziegfeld* (1936) two days after their son, seemingly on his recommendation;[11] Larkin 'coerce[s]' his sister to see *The Devil Takes the Count* with him[12] – and this influences their discussions, although not always positively in young Larkin's eyes: 'Go to "Tarzan escapes" at Rex. Pop not too pleased'.[13] The image of the young poet rebelling against his parents' wishes by attending an inherently escapist film suggests the extent to which cinema-going contributes to the structure of Larkin's adolescence. Although Larkin later discusses the cinema with his parents on far more even terms – Larkin informs them, for example, that he is 'looking forward' to seeing Olivier's *Henry V* (1944) as the trailer 'carried an air of rare dignity and promise'[14]

[9] Andrew Motion, *Philip Larkin: A Writer's Life* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994), p. 20.
[10] See Larkin, 'Schooldays Notes, 1936-7', April-May 1937, Larkin Archive, U DPL(2)/1/2/7.
[11] Larkin, 'Schooldays Notes', 3-5 March 1937.
[12] Larkin, 'Schooldays Notes', 1 May 1937.
[13] Larkin, 'Schooldays Notes', 29 March 1937.
[14] Larkin, letter to his parents, 8 July 1945, Larkin Archive, U DPL(3)/1/2.

– the senses of attachment and excitement that are clearly elicited and nurtured by the cinema in the late 1930s can only be seen to intensify as Larkin begins to embark on life as an English undergraduate and budding novelist.

Larkin's Oxford letters are strewn with references to how he visits the cinema 'every day',[15] as he tells J. B. Sutton. Significantly, the senses of attachment and excitement expressed by Larkin at this time begin to gravitate towards one clear point of interest: women on screen. The affects that Larkin articulates with regards to the female form on film are striking and increasingly perfervid, developing from the relatively tame 'Dorothy Lamour – grrr!';[16] to the rather more disturbing admission to Amis that he 'wanted to force my PENIS between her LEGS, at the FRONT' while watching Muriel Pavlow in *Night Boat to Dublin* (1946);[17] to an excruciating discussion of Jean Simmons' performance in David Lean's *Great Expectations* (1946) in extremely detailed pornographic terms (while dismissing the rest of the film as 'a cake of palmolive shit').[18] The expression of such affects suggests that Larkin experiences the strong desire for physical interaction with on-screen bodies which defines cinesthetic sensation, which is increasingly divulged in more explicit terms. In the context of a complaint that the film's 'pornography was almost non-existent', for example, apparently the 'sight of a column of uniformed women marching along' in *The Gentle Sex* (1943)

[15] Larkin, letter to Sutton, 24 September 1941, Larkin Archive, DP/174/2/28.
[16] Larkin, letter to Sutton, August 1938, Larkin Archive, U DP/174/2/1.
[17] Larkin, letter to Amis, 17 July 1946.
[18] Larkin, letter to Amis, 11 January 1947.

'affected [Larkin] strangely', even though he is disappointed that 'the girls weren't all nice-looking'.[19] It is true that in Larkin's case such cinesthetic desire is often stained with direct (and increasingly sadist) misogyny – 'Deanna Durbin is *ugly*' in *Nice Girl?* (1941);[20] 'Barbara Mullen looks mean and stupid' in *Jeannie* (1941) and, consequently, 'if the announcement of a film called "Jeannie" is flashed on to the screen', one must 'retreat from that cinema at a minimum rate of 66 ft. per second';[21] Larkin informs Amis that he was 'very glad indeed when that girl was killed' in *Mrs. Miniver* (1942)[22] – which suggests the extent to which Larkin fetishises the female on-screen icon (a process which is discussed more broadly in the following section, 'Passionate Detachment'). It is tempting to think that such an attitude towards women may stem from what Larkin appears to have felt as 'the simian camera in the head',[23] an image he includes in his poem 'Disintegration', published in the Oxford University Labour Club's *Bulletin* in February 1942 (Editor: K. W. Amis). Ultimately, though, Larkin's cinesthetic reactions to on-screen women are substantially typical of young men of the movie-made generation. A particularly illuminating example of this is when Larkin writes to Amis in 1943: 'While on the subject of sex and intersex, as you phrase it, I am going to see Wendy Hiller in "Twelfth Night"'.[24] Larkin had

[19] Larkin, letter to Amis, 7 September 1943.
[20] Larkin, letter to Sutton, 5 October 1941, Larkin Archive, U DP/174/2/29.
[21] Larkin, letter to Sutton, 10 November 1941, Larkin Archive, U DP/174/2/33.
[22] Larkin, letter to Amis, 1 September 1943.
[23] Larkin, 'Disintegration', *Oxford University Labour Club Bulletin* (February 1942), Larkin Archive, U DPL/3/1.
[24] Larkin, letter to Amis, 13 September 1943.

watched Hiller on screen only a few weeks previously in *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* (1943)[25] and seems to take great pleasure in the prospect of seeing this female star in the flesh, which suggests – in true cinesthetic fashion – that the young writer sees the projection of Hiller on the silver screen not as an icon, but as an index of her real existence, an existence he can trace and be part of physically when she appears 'in the flesh' at his local theatre. As a consequence of such indexical desire (as, again, is true of much of the movie-made generation), the cinema was later to act as a courting venue for Larkin; Ruth Bowman writes to Motion that, in the post-war period, she and Larkin 'were addicts of [the cinema] as were most people then' and often went together.[26] As we will see, the prevalence of such cinesthetic desire for the female form almost inevitably feeds into Larkin's writing at this time, becoming an integral element of the first novel that Larkin composes.

It is also true, however, that Larkin's interest in the medium often strays over the border of pornography and into the territory of art. Larkin writes to Sutton: 'Deborah Kerr […] has a "literary" face – nothing to do with Old Momma Big Shapes, just emotional associations, boy, just emotional associations. What Philip would call "genuine forms of life"'.[27] Indeed, Larkin often comments on cinema's capacity to convey 'genuine' realism, which, clearly, he has been taught

[25] See Larkin's letter to Amis, 1 September 1943.
[26] Ruth Bowman, letter to Andrew Motion, 13 December 1991, quoted in Motion, p. 135.
[27] Larkin, letter to Sutton, 24 September 1941.

to associate with the 'literary'. With this interest in mind, Larkin comments on film form and directorial choices equally as much as he does on actresses and these pronouncements are increasingly nuanced. For example, when Larkin 'stood in queues and saw "The Hurricane" twice (second time plus people)' in 1938, he notes of the film, rather basically, that the 'directing and lighting [are] pretty hot' and that 'the dialogue of the film is its best part'.[28] However, by 1943, Larkin is clearly more *au fait* with the medium's form, commenting on the reasons why the 'camera shots were conscientiously "good"' in the Russian propaganda film *Leningrad Fights* (1942),[29] or expounding his theory on why the use of Technicolor in *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp is* 'not warrantable'.[30] Larkin's aim in these discussions is often to assess the realism of these films. Sometimes films are seen as too realistic, such as when '"Owd Bob" on Wednesday night proved so life like as to be almost dull' and the 'story too lifelike to be gripping, but perfect if life is your aim in pictures'.[31] However, on other occasions the realism of the film is seen to draw powerful, physical, and potentially indexical connections to his own life, such as the notion that *The Next of Kin* (1942) 'nearly makes you sick by presenting the war *very clearly*, and you say: How horrible! Then comes the inevitable backlash of terror, nausea, disgust, despair & fear "But I am living in it!" [*sic*]'.[32] Crucially, it is clear that such meditation on cinema's

[28] Larkin, letter to Sutton, August 1938, Larkin Archive, U DP/174/2/1.
[29] Larkin, letter to Amis, 12 August 1943.
[30] Larkin, letter to Amis, 1 September 1943.
[31] Larkin, letter to Sutton, 4 August 1939, Larkin Archive, U DP/174/2/5.
[32] Larkin, letter to Amis, 12 August 1942.

ability to evoke reality in this powerfully affecting way begins to colour his literary endeavours of the war-time period. An unfinished poem by Larkin, dating from the end of 1942, opens with an explicitly cinematic review of the year, as 'The camera of the eye / Spools out twelve months'.[33] Significantly, though the speaker's 'camera-eye' can revisit scenes from the year, the poem concludes with the realisation that 'Words have no lips to kiss them back to life. / Words have no hands to hold their spilled sweetness'. The words of literature are deemed to have less power than the camera to render the memories of the physical and sexual sensations which Larkin endows with great importance in this period and, thus, the poem suggests the poet's consideration of the creative potential of a more cinematic aesthetic.

As well as suggesting the potential influence of cinema on his literary technique, Larkin's wartime letters also confirm the extent to which the cinema shapes his perception of himself as 'a writer'. Evidently, Larkin comes to rely on his relationship with cinema to define important moments in his life; a letter to Sutton, for example, reveals that Larkin chose to celebrate news of the war's impending end in 'a nearly empty cinema' to watch 'a thriller'.[34] Equally strikingly, however, is when Larkin completes his Finals and marches straight to

[33] Larkin, 'Poem (unfinished)', c. December 1942, Larkin Archive, U DPL/2/2/42.
[34] Larkin, letter to Sutton, 3 May 1945, Larkin Archive, U DP/174/2/120.

the cinema, still in gown and sub-fusc. Larkin later sees this as a crucial symbolic step towards assuming the role of 'the writer':

> This was a conscious act of independence. By walking from the examination hall into the one and ninepennies, therefore, I was symbolically rejecting the life of scholarship and putting my money on the life of the creative imagination.[35]

Significantly, the film is *The Moon and Sixpence* (1942), in which George Sanders' character Charles Strickland gives up everything to become a painter, a portrayal which apparently influences Larkin's decision to label himself a novelist. The notion that one has to assume the label and lifestyle of an artist reinforces cinema's indexical concept that the artist's life is not limited to on-screen performance, but becomes a role inhabited every day. The influence of this notion can be inferred from Larkin's insistence that one has to enter the 'life' of a writer, not just merely create texts. By viewing this relatively neglected figure of Larkin-as-novelist in the context of the overwhelming degrees of cinematic influence felt by the writer in this period – in terms of a growing interest in the creative potential of a cinesthetic perception of technique, and in terms of an understanding of the role of the writer formed, in part, in relation to a cinematic structure of indexicality – one can begin to understand the canonical importance of Larkin's oft-spurned debut novel, *Jill*. As we will see, the novel's dubious characterisation of a young woman and the damning indictment of its writer's ultimate abandonment of its form have obfuscated the significance of both its

[35] Larkin, quoted from a private essay, in Motion, p. 103.

conscription of a cinesthetic form and its author's troubled relationship with a new cinesthetic novel-reader.

Jill

The reputation of Larkin's first novel has suffered waves of encumberment. Initially, Larkin was keen to dismiss the work as juvenilia, as he emerged as a poet of note. Then, understandably, the novel's fetishised impression of a schoolgirl was vilified in the wake of the publication of Larkin's ephebophilic diaries and letters. Even when critics have tried to look beyond this troubling context, the novel's presentation of the 'Scholarship Boy' has led to it being drawn inevitably into the reductive post-war 'class fictions' debate (which is outlined in the previous section, 'Invitations to a Candy-Floss World?'). Larkin's 1963 'Introduction' to a new edition of the novel makes it clear that he wants to distance it from the idea that it was a forerunner of the class fictions of the 1950s, as James Gindin and others had argued.[36] Still, though, this interpretation of the novel remains the most dominant: James Booth maintains that, rather than 'reflecting the classlessness of the period', *Jill* is actually 'an unquestioning expression of class prejudice';[37] class is the first and predominant issue that Zachary Leader discusses about the novel in his recent article on Movement

[36] See James Gindin, *Postwar British Fiction* (Cambridge University Press, 1962), p. 99.
[37] James Booth, *Philip Larkin: Writer* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), p. 44.

fiction.[38] However, by applying the paradigm of cinematic influence to our understanding of the novel, fresh interpretations can emerge. Indeed, in his 1963 'Introduction', Larkin tells how his own sense of class consciousness (and creeping '*bourgeoisisme*') when studying in wartime Oxford was quelled by a 'snarling roar like that of the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer lion' by his tutorial partner Norman Iles,[39] which serves as a resounding signal to turn away from a consideration of the novel's class structure and towards the vigorous influence of cinematic culture.

The primary indicator of such cinematic influence is the novel's explicit engagement with contemporary cultural concepts of cinema-going. The novel's protagonist, John Kemp, is firmly positioned within a cinema-going culture. When John passes the 'local dingy cinema' of his hometown,[40] we learn that he 'knew [it] well' (198). John has now moved to study in wartime Oxford, a city where 'groups of students strolled off to the cinema' (67) often and, as such, where cinema-going has become a social currency, as suggested when a second-year student tells Christopher Warner, 'I was relying on you to stand me a flick this afternoon' (146). In line with the Leavisite vision of a cinema-gorged legion of 'passive barbarians', as posited by Richard Hoggart,[41] Larkin initially shows

[38] Zachary Leader, 'Movement Fiction and Englishness', *Cambridge Quarterly*, 42:3 (September 2013), p. 253.
[39] Larkin, 'Introduction' (1963), in his *Jill* [1946] (London: Faber & Faber, 2005), p. ix.
[40] Larkin, *Jill* [1946] (London: Faber & Faber, 2005), p. 198. Further references to this novel correspond to this edition.
[41] Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957), p. 205.

how cinema-going appears to be corrupting his peers. Cinema-going is often associated with fecklessness; Christopher does not write an essay, for example, because he said he would 'go to the flicks' (100) instead. It is also wearying; when Christopher returns from the cinema, one learns that it has made him 'ravenously hungry' – which might even be understood as an allusion to the Kracauerian concept of the *Menschenhunger* provoked by the medium[42] – and that 'watching the film had made his eyes tired' (101). Cinema-going also appears to be associated with vulgarity; Eddy Makepeace, who is continuously associated with the cinema, first interrupts a conversation with the loud interjection, 'What's on at the flicks?' (13), then when Christopher begins to tell a story in a traditional narrative speech – 'I remember once –' (43) – he is cut off by Eddy, who takes over the narrative, breaks into expansive gestures and attempts to increase the pace of the conversation. Indeed, when John hides from the train arriving at Oxford station, seemingly re-enacting the famous beginnings of cinema reception when the audience leapt out of the way of the Lumière brothers' train arriving at La Ciotat station – 'With a sudden increase in apprehension, he saw the engine come hissing up the platform, and […] he backed behind an empty chocolate machine' (69) – it can appear to represent a respectable distaste for the cinematic.

[42] Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* [1960] (Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 169.

However, this apparently corrupting addiction is more productive than one might assume. In some ways, the influence of a cinema-going culture can be seen to energise the young students. For example, Eddy possesses a will to movement, an 'itch to be on the move' (35), which, as it is juxtaposed with the statement that there is 'nothing on at the flicks' that evening, suggests that Eddy's addiction to infectious on-screen movement propels his life. This is itself infectious; Eddy's presence also allows Christopher to seem 'more animated than he had yet done that evening' (44). Gradually, this influence seems to condition John's own perspective. Initially, one is tempted to cite the influence of Christopher Isherwood's 'camera-eye'. The fact that John's apparently captivating room-mate is called Christopher is perhaps a clue to the respect with which Larkin regarded Isherwood's work at this time, a fact that his letters to Sutton and Iles elaborate. Larkin admits to reading Isherwood's *Lions and Shadows* (1938) and is particularly fascinated by the writer's cinematic influences.[43] Larkin later declares that he 'dreamt [he] met Isherwood',[44] and that a working title for *Jill* was 'Lines and Shadows'.[45] The poems 'Disintegration' and 'Poem (unfinished)', as has been discussed, both suggest Larkin's interest in the 'camera-eye' perspective in this period and a comparison between Isherwood's famous proclamation at the beginning of *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939) – 'I am a camera

[43] Larkin, letter to Sutton, c. 1940, Larkin Archive, U DP/174/2/11.
[44] Larkin, letter to Norman Iles, 8 January 1942, in Anthony Thwaite (ed.), *The Selected Letters of Philip Larkin: 1940-1985* (London: Faber & Faber, 1992), p. 32.
[45] Larkin, letter to Sutton, 8 January 1944, Larkin Archive, U DP/174/2/87.

with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking'[46] – and John Kemp's narrative suggests a similar influence. When John first arrives in Oxford, he describes 'hoardings advertising beans and the ATS, people pushing towards a red bus, a glazed-brick public-house. A pony and cart creaked down the road, the man holding the slack reins, a bowed figure in the faint dusk' (4). However, his perspective is conditioned by the fact that he is waiting 'anxiously' for a taxi at this point (5). After his trips to the cinema, though, which will be discussed below, he again sees at 'dusk a horse and cart […] going by', but this time 'felt absolved from all decisions' (139), suggesting a refiguration of his old analogical perspective, which is anxious to include every material detail, to one which is free to roam, 'quite passive[ly], recording, not thinking', as Isherwood's perspective does.

Of course, though the influence of Isherwood is discernible to a significant degree and represents a certain continuity with the modes of the pre-war novel, this narrative does not simply re-hash a late modernist cinematic technique; John's narrative is rendered in the third-person after all. More fundamentally, this narrative demonstrates an engagement with the active, physical processes of cinema-going itself, beyond the passive, technical camera-eye. As the Introduction to this thesis explains, it is this difference which distinguishes the post-war novel from its Modernist counterparts in this respect and it is this novel

[46] Christopher Isherwood, *Goodbye to Berlin* [1939] (New York: New Directions Press, 2012), p. 3.

which can be seen to represent the watershed moment for such cinesthetic realist refigurations. The first clue to this refiguration can be found in the conspicuous rendering of the social aspect of John's perspective. Though John initially wishes, when meeting these new people, for somewhere to be truly alone – he understands that 'he had nowhere to go more friendly, more intimate than this room', which was 'not his alone' (17) – he soon begins to adapt to and inherit the position of cinema's 'lonely spectator', just as Larkin uses the cinema as a social refuge and creative crucible in this period. As such, Larkin's rendering of John's perspective begins to develop a model of aesthetic practice suggested in the work of Siegfried Kracauer, who sees the potential for such 'frustrated' and 'lonely spectator[s]' to refigure their cinematic vision of the 'strange people' on screen and 'turn into kings of creation'.[47] This idea that a lonely, darkness-shrouded cinematic perspective can permit 'the lonely spectator to fill his shrinking self […] with images of life' can be seen operating in the narrative.[48] John's initial scanning of his room and the scene playing out before him, peopled by those so different from himself, demonstrates his loneliness when the narrative states that 'he only wanted to drag himself away and hide' (13) and that he 'continued to remain silent' (14). These admissions sandwich Eddy's contextually-odd interjection, 'What's on at the flicks?', which is ignored by the others and seems to serve only to place John's lonely and silent perspective into a cinema-going context. John's

[47] Kracauer, pp. 170-1.
[48] Kracauer, p. 170.

silence is then increasingly articulated in spectatorial terms, such as when he watches Mrs Warner eating, 'naturally silent[ly] as if watching an actress on stage' (75). Ultimately, when John begins to imagine 'Jill' as a 'real' creation, he realises 'that lies could be made up in a dark corner of the mind' and that these lies prompt him to 'watching the world change before his eyes' (100). The 'lonely spectator' has become the 'king of creation'.

Importantly, the cognitive process leading to the creation of Jill is rendered in strikingly classic cinesthetic terms, with John taking on roles based on identificatory fantasises, then on the creation of extratextuality, as he invents indices to symbolise the 'real' existence of Jill. Primarily, John's identificatory fantasies focus on the notion of replicating the life of Christopher. When John escorts Christopher's mother to tea, for example, he comports himself to reflect that 'he wanted the passers-by to think that he was her son' (71) and this soon progresses to the awareness that 'it pleased him to imagine she was his own mother' (72). Once he has taken on this role, he wants to manifest it physically and, as such, has to overcome 'an impulse to take [Mrs Warner's] hand' (72). John later has the thought that when the public-houses open, 'he could be Christopher and stand drinking at the bar' (76) and he also 'went through all the actions of a rich young man (Christopher), choosing a bow-tie in a shop' (78). This is not limited to Christopher's life-by-proxy – he also 'decided to become Mr Crouch' (76), for example – but these fantasies are consistently focused on a physical

engagement with images of the lives of others which is symptomatic of an identificatory and interactive cinema-going culture.

Larkin appears to confirm this model of influence when he relates John's character to the accompanying element of cinesthetic desire: extratextual indices. When he decides to 'create' Jill, it is significant that he seeks to prove her existence to his college friends by concocting a web of letters, diaries, and stories which mirrors, for example, Albert Limpley's gateway of 'bits of paper' and 'pages and pages' to the existence of his object-of-fantasy,[49] Felicity Storm, in J. B. Priestley's *Albert Goes Through* (1933). Where Larkin's novel develops this cinesthetic notion, however, is by foregrounding the creative process that this entails, as well as its convergences with and divergences from literary practices. When John initially fabricates letters and a diary that are supposedly written by Jill, their failure to attract the attention of his room-mate highlights the weakness of an indexical model that relies on purely written, as opposed to visual, elements. The opening of the first letter attempts to establish an interactive paradigm, declaring, 'You said you would write to me, but of course you haven't, you never do. So now I am writing to you instead' (103). The inclusion of 'of course', however, attempts to import a factual reality into this situation, but instead implicitly acknowledges the fact that this communication is a fantasy. Though the tone of the correspondence becomes increasingly interactive, with 'Jill' later stating, 'I wish

[49] J. B. Priestley, *Albert Goes Through* (Kingswood: Windmill Press, 1933), pp. 5-6.

you could be here and see for yourself' and insisting that she is 'really-and-truly here' (110), an unsatisfied sense of desperation emanates. Instead, John writes a 'Willow Gables' (98) (the site of Larkin's own pornographic schoolgirl fantasies, later published under the pseudonym Brunette Coleman) narrative of Jill's life, presented as a short story within the novel, yet it conveys 'so little of what he desired' and 'nothing of the Jill he knew' (130); the insistence on 'knowing' a stranger in this context is a particularly cinesthetic trait, exemplified in the responses of cinema-goers to the surveys of J. P. Mayer *et al*. John then concocts a diary, which only serves to push 'the image from his mind' (133) and he even tries to draw Jill, but 'every line he drew merely obscured the picture in his own mind' (117). Essentially, these detours signify the unsatisfactory ability of written media to convey character to a young man of this age; all of these attempts to engage with Jill only create a 'flat dullness' in his mind (135). Although these indices of Jill's existence help to maintain the fantasy, the desire to 'go through' to her reality – to transcend the screen, as Limpley does – remains. What John the cinema-goer wants fundamentally is to *see* Jill 'in the flesh'.

Our cinema-going protagonist instinctively knows how to fulfil such a cinesthetic desire, however. Tellingly, when his imagination has petered to this 'flat dullness', John Kemp is drawn to visit the cinema. Kemp's loneliness is particularly emphasised in comparison to the 'twos, threes and fours' he finds at the cinema, an experience which makes him feel as if he is watching a 'game still

going on despite his absence, and is filled with a desire to rejoin it' (136). This Metzian formulation, the 'absence-as-presence' felt by John when viewing a film, and the attendant desire to 'rejoin' what he is separated from, is an affect demonstrated consistently by cinema-goers (and, as such, acknowledgment of such an affect is, notably, one of the consistent threads between the ontological theories of Kracauer and Bazin and the semiotic interpretations of Metz and Wollen). Furthermore, it is the catalyst for an articulation of a tangible cinesthetic desire and what we can perceive to be an inaugural moment in the history of the 'movie-made' novel. Less than one page after John is rendered as the lonely spectator in the cinema, he exhibits an act of cinesthetic creation: 'a realization came upon him' and the character of Jill bursts into reality. John 'saw Jill' (137). The scene symbolically occurs in a book shop, where Kemp is 'fingering the edges of an uncut page' in 'frustration' before Jill actually appears to him (137). Suddenly, the books are forgotten and Jill is constantly moving before his eyes; she 'crossed', 'bent', 'slipped', 'screwed', 'scooted' and rose up in one sentence (139), for example. John loses track of Jill, but soon picks up the pursuit when he next passes a cinema, which spurs him to seek Jill 'like a detective' (142). When John finally meets 'Jill', who turns out to be Elizabeth's cousin Gillian, the cinesthetic nature of this desire is evidently hard to shake off. As such, John tries to gain sexual gratification not by touching her directly but by proxy, via an index of her existence: 'he crossed to the sofa and drank the cold dregs from Jill's cup, putting his mouth where hers had been' (158). Later, when Gillian agrees to meet

him, John feels like 'he could go straight through' a brick wall that now seems to be 'only a pattern of light', and thus 'an almost physical sense of emergence possessed him' (175). The image of John conjured, one of him going 'straight through' a 'pattern of light' to feel a 'physical sense', suggests that John achieves his Limpleyesque desire of 'going through'. As such, this image also represents the pinnacle of John's cinesthetic desire for Jill. This refiguration of the relationship between the fictional and the physical offers the prospect of a new formula for realism, both within and without the text.

The indexical element of such cinesthetic perspective appears to offer the potential for the novel to represent reality in ways that challenge the analogical model of classic realism. This is seen most clearly when Larkin describes the bombing of Kemp's home town, Huddlesford. When Whitbread informs him of the bombing, John's reaction – 'What, you mean a real air-raid – like Coventry?' (186) – consciously calls into play such indexicality. Indeed, when John claims that he is bound for 'the real world', away from the 'unreality and insubstantial pain' of Oxford (193), it not only echoes Larkin's own realization that his actual return to his bombed home-town of Coventry in this period 'made the war real',[50] but, in conjunction with John's explicit comparison to the 'real' Coventry, also serves as a sign to the reader that they should recognise Huddlesford as an indexical symbol, a smoke from the fire of what they knew had happened to

[50] See Motion, p. 49.

Coventry. As Coventry suffered one of the first instances of what was to become the Blitz, images were played on cinema newsreels up and down the country. As such, here Larkin has potentially found a way of creating a 'universal' realistic image, more objective than any classic realist counterpart, by linking it to a well-known cinematic image and letting the reader 'reel back' the memory for themselves, in the way that Kemp himself does when remembering his childhood in this scene (197).

However, indexical realism also poses fundamental problems for John and Larkin himself, particularly regarding his future as a novelist. Kemp is 'disconcerted' by the effect that the new indexical existence of Jill – where his lips can touch her cup – has on him, particularly when he realises that he might actually meet Jill in person:

> The idea that he had concocted out of the world's sight had suddenly showed itself as ordinary flesh and blood, as real, calling for real action on his part. What was he going to do? (140)

This interactive engagement with visualised character brings with it the prospect of participation, which terrifies seasoned *voyeurs* such as Kemp (and, indeed, Larkin). John soon starts to worry about the presence of Jill, deciding that 'never must she be allowed to go outside her own life' (152). Very soon after, when he sees Jill 'running at full speed', one learns that John now feels that 'he became the one that was hunted' (153). Even films, once his refuge, soon begin to overwhelm John; the 'enormous shadows gesticulated before him and he sat with his eyes

shut' (159) and the 'thought of Jill being so near' makes him breathe faster and 'a curious physical unease affected him' (159). Then, when it comes to meeting Jill, 'in theory he wanted to take hold of her' (172), but a sense of unease stops him from doing this. Ironically, John's cinesthetic desire is abandoned and he is shown 'longing for another medium' while having a stilted conversation across moving traffic with Gillian (174). This sharp, unanticipated termination of John's desire in the face of participation prefigures André Bazin's argument that cinema creates a 'relation with the image closer to that which he enjoys with reality', but that this precipitates 'a more active mental attitude on the part of the spectator and a more positive contribution on his part to the action in progress'.[51] This realisation prompts Bazin to expand his ideas of participatory vision to include elements of the politics of film composition, eventually resulting in a sustained discussion of *auteur* theory and the relationship that the viewer has with the creator of the image. For Larkin, though, this form of indexical correspondence – when an image or character is created which prompts one to seek its physical 'source' – can be understood to threaten not only the boundaries of the text, but of his own existence as an author.

The potential incursion of inquisitive cinesthetic readers into the privacy of his life appears to be on Larkin's mind at the time. Just like when Kemp decides

[51] André Bazin, *What is Cinema?* Vol. 1, trans. Hugh Gray (London: University of California Press, 1967), p. 36.

not to name Jill as Kemp but Bradley, as he does not 'want to connect her with himself in that way' (112), so too does Larkin begin to resist any prospect of a connection to his own life. The beginning of the process can be traced to when Larkin writes to Amis that he is 'conducting a defensive battle' between his life in Oxford and the setting of *Jill*, and, as such, wishes it was not set in Oxford.[52] Larkin later reveals that Kemp 'is growing like me, a tendency I shall sternly repress in the third draft'.[53] When Amis tells Larkin that the girls in Boots want to know if the author of *Jill* is 'good-looking',[54] Larkin begins to realise that the new generation of movie-goers seeks to fetishise, interact with, and control their authors' real-life image in the way, ironically, that Kemp had objectified and hunted Jill. In this context, Larkin's increased use of the pseudonym 'Brunette Coleman' and his abandonment of the beginnings of his new novel, 'A New World Symphony',[55] seem indicative of this anxiety and suggest attempts to disconnect potential indices. In a letter to Sutton, Larkin stresses that, though he wants the material trappings of a novelist's fame, he '*will not push* [himself]',[56] suggesting his unwillingness to embrace all the self-publicity and extratextual characterisation that would be necessary to create what cinesthetic readers now desire: an indexical connection between character and the 'real life' of the author.

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[52] Larkin, letter to Amis, 30 September 1943.
[53] Larkin, letter to Amis, 12 October 1943.
[54] Amis, letter to Larkin, 20 March 1947, Kingsley Amis Letters, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS Eng. c.6045/2/20.
[55] See Motion, p. 183 and Richard Bradford, *First Boredom, Then Fear: The Life of Philip Larkin* (London: Peter Owen, 2005), p. 75.
[56] Larkin, letter to Sutton, 16 August 1945, Larkin Archive, U DP/174/2/127.

Larkin was to publish a second novel, *A Girl in Winter*, in 1947. Larkin informs his parents that this novel 'deals with less explicit feelings and so I have tried to represent them by indirect reference and allegoric incident'.[57] The direct indexical reference that *Jill* made to Larkin himself is tellingly abandoned as, almost inevitably, Larkin begins to turn to the life of the poet, working within a medium which he prefers, revealingly, because of his understanding that 'the reader doesn't come into the poem at all'.[58]

[57] Larkin, letter to his parents, 11 November 1946, in Motion, p. 160.
[58] Larkin, letter to Sutton, 20 December 1940, Larkin Archive, U DP/174/2/16.

9. JOHN WAIN AND THE READER WHO 'JUDGE[S] BY WHAT THEY SEE'

> *Don't you think […] that the most valuable knowledge isn't always to be found in books? That it has to come from – from life as well?*[1]

With a name like John Wain, it may seem only natural that the novels of this writer, radio-presenter, and academic be read in the context of the movies. When one learns that Wain started a long-lasting friendship with Richard Burton in his Oxford days, the temptation to read his work in this way only deepens. Yet nowadays, one is lucky to find Wain's novels read in any context. Though he was once, briefly, a literary star of his day – as will be discussed – in the eyes of twenty-first century critics and readers, Wain certainly does not enjoy a film star's level of recognition. Indeed, as D. Rogers suggests baldly, 'it is entirely possible that Wain will be chiefly remembered for his fine biography of Johnson' rather than 'his minor novels'. Tellingly, Rogers concludes that Wain might be 'better served by ignoring them'.[2] There is some merit in Rogers' curt prediction. However, by viewing Wain's novels with fresh eyes, in the context of his membership of the movie-made generation, one can begin to see a significant and evolving relationship between Wain and the cultural and aesthetic effects of cinema-going culture, which articulates and illuminates many of the attitudes and concerns expressed on the literary side of the nexus between cinema and the

[1] John Wain, *Living in the Present* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1955), p. 35.
[2] D. Rogers, '*John Wain* by Dale Salwak' (Review), *World Literature Today*, 55:4 (Autumn 1981), p. 682.

novel in the post-war period. As we will see, Wain instinctively wants to reject the onrush of cinema-going culture and forms his opinions in an identifiably Leavisite manner. However, it becomes clear that Wain also begins to understand the significance of cinema's and, one can infer, cinesthetics' influence on the reception and production of the novel. Ultimately, his essays and novels offer some of the clearest articulations in this period of how the objectifying and reifying tendencies of the cinesthetic reader begin to be directed towards novelists themselves.

Wain, Cinema and Literary Form

For a man of his age, growing up in 1930s Stoke-on-Trent, Wain appears to have kept an unusual distance between himself and cinema. Wain's autobiography, *Sprightly Running* (1965), suggests that this may have been a conscious decision to help this son of a doctor, in a town where, apparently, 'the middle class are just represented by a skeleton staff' (an image offered in Wain's novel *The Contenders*),[3] to bolster his own sense of class-based superiority. Wain writes that he learns of 'the pictures' through a companionship with a boy called Eric. Primarily, Wain learns that the cinema is a place for courting – 'If you couldn't think what else to do with a girl, take her to the pictures'[4] – but also finds that the culture of cinema-going has a more specific cultural role:

[3] Wain, *The Contenders* [1958] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), p. 12.
[4] Wain, *Sprightly Running – Part of an Autobiography* (London: Macmillan, 1965), p. 41.

> This, of course, as I now see, was an essential part of the social role of the cinema. The working-class adolescent, who on summer evenings could take his girl out into the countryside, in the winter had nowhere else to take her but the cinema.[5]

Admittedly, the sense of Wain's social distance from cinema-going is retrospectively manufactured here. However, when one begins to examine Wain's critical and fictional work in this period, this sense of distance, and indeed disdain, emerges as an important baseline from which to understand Wain's attitudes towards and engagements with cinema in his early novels.

Wain's attitudes towards cinema-going and its place as the domain of the deprived 'working-class adolescent' are expressed in strikingly similar terms to the haughty sociological tone of Richard Hoggart. Indeed, in what represents Wain's most prominent pronouncements on the cultural role of cinema-going, his two-part essay 'The Conflict of Forms in Contemporary English Literature' (1962), Wain positions himself as a fellow inheritor of Leavisism. In true Leavisite style, the first half of Wain's essay soon poses the question: 'What does the mass public want?'[6] Considering the popularity of cinema at this time, it is almost inevitable that the young don is blown off a course charting Luigi Pirandello's stagecraft towards a medium styled as 'a knight errant wearing the disguise of a burglar' (13), the cinema, which has apparently 'taken over the entire function of

[5] Wain, *Sprightly,* p. 42.
[6] Wain, 'The Conflict of Forms in Contemporary English Literature' (Part 1), *Critical Quarterly*, 4:1 (March 1962), p. 9. Further references to this essay are included in parentheses within the text.

the naturalistic theatre as developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries', as well as the 'business of creating mirage, hypnosis, illusion' (13). However, Wain briefly relinquishes his Leavisite position when he states that he is not 'condemning the mirage' (14) and this allows him to convey productive observations regarding cinema's ability to influence one's sense of reality. Wain argues that, though the

> cinema has often been criticised for just this power [of creating a mirage], by moralists who point out that the passive audiences who crowd into the cinemas are being incited to compensatory fantasy which, if persisted in, weakens their ability to make a successful adjustment to real life (14)

and that 'no doubt, on its lower levels, it does this, or used to do it, when it had the mass audience and was the only release from boredom and emptiness in the lives of so many unemployed people in the 'thirties' (14), he admits that cinema can now actually 'be restoring, fecundating, life-enhancing' (14). Indeed, considering that these observations form a tangent from Wain's discussion of how theatre had attempted to convey realism, and that cinema had now usurped it as the primary purveyor of realism, one can read his conclusion on the issue of cinema's 'hypnotic' re-rendering of naturalism as a statement on its ability to refigure the realist aesthetic in the post-war period:

> Some dreams can bring us closer to reality rather than leading us further away. As for the alleged lack of 'audience participation' in the cinema, try watching a film in an empty auditorium. The presence of a rapt, somnambulistic audience, a whole theatre full of fellow-dreamers, makes one aware that the cinema is a group experience, that the audience does participate even though it cannot affect the performance. (14)

This acknowledgement of the participatory nature of cinematic realism comes rather close to articulating an understanding of the Bazinian interactive affect elicited by cinema. As we will see, one can also discern an increasing consideration of the impact of such essentially cinesthetic affects upon literary form in Wain's fiction of this period too, which allows one to invest these works with more critical significance than has hitherto been bestowed upon them.

The second part of Wain's essay again begins with a discussion of the damage inflicted by cinema on more established forms of culture; particularly, Wain argues that 'the novel is in decline to the extent that it has lost this colossal degree of mass support' and that this is due, in part, to the fact that the cinema has usurped its 'realistic tradition'.[7] Intriguingly, though, when Wain attempts to steer this discussion more explicitly towards the issue of literary form, he finds a comparison with the cinema to be the most apt rhetorical passage and one can begin to infer Wain's acceptance of the fact that both media now share an important relationship with the issue of indexicality. To begin with, Wain relays the idea 'that the advent of sound was a disaster which set the cinema back many years, since what was formerly accomplished by purely cinematic means could now be explained in words' and that, thus, 'the best contemporary directors have moved back towards the pure cinema practised by all the early directors from D.

[7] Wain, 'The Conflict of Forms in Contemporary English Literature' (Part 2), *Critical Quarterly*, 4:2 (June 1962), pp. 101, 104. Further references to this essay are included in parentheses within the text.

W. Griffith to Mack Sennet; they treat the spoken word with suspicion and employ it only where it is essential' (111). Wain then draws a significant comparison to the form of the novel, arguing that it cannot withdraw similarly to its own 'pure' means 'because it is the child of an age which delighted in mixed forms' and is thus only '"pure", i.e. entirely self-reliant, when it reaches the point at which it contains no extraneous material; everything is dramatized, presented through characterization' (111). Therefore, as 'the novel cannot be purified beyond the point to which its major practitioners had brought it by 1920' (111), according to Wain, contemporary literature is left with an inferior form in which:

> The chief cause of badness […] is externality: the author wishes to communicate something to the reader, and to this end he makes his puppets, the characters, utter certain words and perform certain actions; but all the time it is obvious to both parties that the characters are ciphers: the only real people in the relationship are the author who has the ideas and the reader who absorbs them. (111)

Such 'documentary' (112) fiction, as Wain calls it, has a clear affinity with the indexical form of cinematic representation, which directly draws external phenomena into the frame of the text. It appears that the cinematic model of indexicality has started to influence and indeed dominate literary form. As such, Wain acknowledges that the post-war novelist has to write for 'a generation of adults who have grown up entirely within the era of mass communications' and that their 'plethoric diet of documentary, of news flash and personality parade' conditions the reading process:

> Confronted with a long novel, for example, [the reader] will instinctively turn away from the effort of absorbing so much detail about events that did not 'really' happen and people who never 'really' existed. The

> amazing, the shocking, the highly-coloured, the comical and the grotesque are there before his gaze, in the non-stop reporting by television, radio and newspaper of the fast-spooling surface of 'real' life. (116-7)

This intriguing cinematic metaphor of 'fast-spooling' life again implies Wain's understanding of the cinema as an inherent conditioning factor for the contemporary reader and, in turn, of post-war literary culture. As a result of this 'era of mass communications' and the way it conditions a new (and, we may infer in the context of this argument, *cinesthetic*) reader, Wain believes that 'the idea of writing for any purpose except that of reporting a social scene, of being in possession of any kind of truth which is not the truth of the newspaper office, is fading from the public mind' (116-7), as, one assumes, this new reader demands indexical confirmation of the actuality of such narratives.

In terms of how the role of the author is affected by this shift, Wain summarises: 'All that matters is the *exposé*' (117). Furthermore, Wain makes it clear how the widespread desire for indexical, extratextual reports of the author's life to supplement and confirm the reality of literary fiction has affected post-war novelists when recalling 'the corpse of the "Angry Young Man" figure' and its surrounding publicity. Wain apprises:

> First came the success, in 1956, of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger.* […] Then, as everyone knows, Kenneth Tynan's celebrated review in *The Observer* started audiences flowing in. […] That pulled in the audiences, and with them the reporters and the gossip-columnists. And when these writers looked round for a few more names to tie up with Mr Osborne's in a package deal, they showed a fine disregard of hampering details. This, it will be recalled, was the moment when Mr Colin Wilson emerged with his astutely publicised theoretical book *The Outsider.* Nothing in *The*

> *Outsider* was new or revolutionary, but the fact that a young man who had been washing dishes for a living, and sleeping in the open on Hampstead Heath, had written a book dealing with the relationship between society and the creative intelligence, was good for a gossip columnist's accolade. Mr Amis's *Lucky Jim* was brought into the act – largely, one gathered, because of his hero's distaste for Mozart – and with three names to form a nucleus, other stray items were soon collected and the 'Angry Young Man' became a living reality, a familiar feature of the social scene. […] Literature, at best a minority interest, was simply by-passed. The confusion between Jimmy Porter (an invented character in a play, to some extent identified with by his originator), Jim Dixon (an invented character in a novel, rather less identified with by his originator), and Colin Wilson (a real character, seen through a falsifying mist of publicity) was blandly exploited, so that most of the people who used the term 'Angry Young Man' didn't know whether they were referring to real or imaginary characters: it was all one thick, featureless stew of documentary and the exploitation of personality. (117-8)

Here Wain details direct understanding of how the new aesthetic context of the 'era of mass communications' creates a 'featureless stew' of fictions and real-life figures not just within the fields of the popular arts, but now creates an identical working reality for the novel.

Elsewhere, Wain goes in to more detail about how these changes affect himself as well as his 'Angry' peers. Though Wain explicitly understands that 'keeping literature alive' in 'the age of the ad man' is 'just as much a problem of reception as of production',[8] he is also aware that it is difficult to generate the necessary publicity by the medium of the novel alone. In his autobiography, Wain acknowledges that a novelist's 'personality' now belongs to their publishers 'just as a film actor's belongs to his studio' and that publishers must

[8] Wain, *Sprightly*, pp. 189-90.

now generate 'a certain amount of "fame"' for their writers in the same way 'a screen actor who becomes a star has to put himself in the hands of a publicity man whose job it is to keep his name in the papers'.[9] In Wain's case, this leads to the publication of a photograph with the title 'John Wain is *not* an Angry Young Man'. Wain claims that his publishers create what is a visual index of his existence in order to stylise 'the public *persona* which belongs to them, which is the instrument by which my books reach a wider public'.[10] Though Wain's medium is less visual, he also attempts to emulate such indexicality. For example, a partial draft of an unpublished novel, 'The show of violence' (1957), includes a character who states **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**,[11] a playful indexical reference intended to convey his own, almost Metzian, absence-as-presence outside the novel. Crucially, however, Wain resolves (at least, publicly) to distance himself from this aspect of publicity, preferring to 'sit in [his] book-lined cave, getting on with [his] work'.[12] Considering his understanding of how vital the maintenance of extratextuality is to authors of the era, one cannot be surprised when Wain then describes how he 'was jeered at by a TV critic, who said [his] stint [of fame] was an illustration of the level of dullness to which the BBC sometimes sank – and called [him] "John Braine" throughout'.[13] However, the confusion caused by Wain's refusal to engage with indexicality in practical,

[9] Wain, *Sprightly*, p. 196.
[10] Wain, *Sprightly*, p. 197.
[11] Wain, 'The show of violence: a novel' [1957], John Wain Archive, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Wain MSS., p. 8.
[12] Wain, *Sprightly*, p. 197.
[13] Wain, *Sprightly*, p. 194.

rather than academic, terms can help one to understand the attitudes towards the cinema, cinesthetics, and indexicality conveyed by Wain's post-war novels.

Hurry on Down

Wain's debut novel, *Hurry on Down* (1953), remains his most well-known and this is in part due to its position as the first mainstream 'success' of the Movement. As such, a 1953 letter from Kingsley Amis to Wain places Wain at the head of the jazz band 'JACK WAIN AND THE PROVINCIAL ALL-STARS',[14] which positions Wain as the leader of a group that would largely form the membership of post-war Britain's literary elite. In 1958, Rayner Heppenstall, writing in the *Times Literary Supplement*, claims that Wain is a 'pioneer', and that as '*Hurry on Down* came out the year before *Lucky Jim* […] the attention it attracted helped to create the mood in which' the Movement and the notion of the Angry Young Man were able to take root.[15] Wain's position as the editor of the BBC radio programme *First Reading* also allowed him to act as a publicist for what he calls 'a fairly comprehensive roll-call of the younger established writers'.[16] At this time, Wain was almost certainly the most influential young literary figure in the country. However, considering his public profile at the time of the publication of

[14] Kingsley Amis, letter to John Wain, 6 November 1953, in Zachary Leader (ed.), *The Letters of Kingsley Amis* (London: HarperCollins, 2000), p. 341.
[15] J. Rayner Heppenstall, 'Taking It Easy', *Times Literary Supplement* (17 January 1958), p. 30.
[16] Wain, *Sprightly*, p. 168.

his first novel, one can read the novel – in the context of the current argument – as a lesson in how not to arouse the interest of the cinesthetic reader.

It would appear that a cultural bias against 'mass culture', including cinema-going, partly inhibits the production and reception of the novel. In *Hurry on Down*, the default Leavisite position that Wain suggests in his later writing is embodied in the figure of the novel's protagonist, Charles Lumley. 'Angry' Lumley calls cinema an 'anodyne'[17] and ends his relationship with Rosa out of fear that courting her – which would constitute 'half a dozen visits to the cinema' (176) – will make him succumb to the 'working-class' addiction of 'gazing, doped, at the immense screen peopled with shadows' (187). It is interesting to note that when he does actually watch a film, Charles is portrayed as emotionally and physically fulfilled – he states 'that his search was over' and he is said to be 'calm and content' (187) – but he quickly accepts that this benign state is 'merely existing' (187) and resolves to 'rise above' the hypnotic temptations of films, later linking undesirable 'provincial *naïveté*' to 'accents learnt in the cinema' (237). In the cultural context of the time, Wain can here be seen declaring that forms of culture as base as the cinema can only drag him and his art 'down' as opposed to upwards (one assumes that Braine's 'Top' provides the counterpoint of this structuralist cultural metaphor).

[17] Wain, *Hurry on Down* [1953] (London: Secker & Warburg, 1977), p. 78. Further references to this novel correspond to this edition.

This Leavisiste bias also appears to inhibit Wain's consideration of the 'stew' of indexicality at this point in his career. When the 'writerly' figure of Froulish contemplates the future biography of his famous career, for example, the narrative reprimands him for articulating his fantasies by likening them to the substance of that most illusory form, cinema: 'Film! Pure film! Try as he would, Froulish never succeeded in rivalling the Hollywood-sense of his idols' (40). The novel's use of ostentatious hyperbole is out of touch with Lumley's usually level discourse and hints at the ridiculousness of Froulish's cinematic fantasies. In contrast, on publication Wain consciously denies his own 'Hollywood-sense' by eschewing publicity and staying in his 'book-lined cave'. One is tempted to conclude that Wain's attitudes towards this issue play a part in the ongoing reception of his work; even though the novel was seen as a founding text of the 'Angry Young Man' phenomenon and originally received rave reviews, it is gradually seen as a less and less 'authentic' rendering of working-class life by readers and critics, in comparison to the later offerings of Sillitoe and Braine, for example. Indeed, Paul West is moved to conclude in 1963 that although 'the settings [are] brilliantly vivid' – one must note here that West, being himself born in the Midlands, 'physically knows' that it exists – the 'characters were little more than faces in the crowd';[18] West, writing from America, has no way of seeing Lumley, for example, as an index of Wain's reality, rather than a symbol on paper. Tellingly, in a private letter to Larkin, Amis

[18] Paul West, *The Modern Novel*, I (London: Hutchinson, 1963), p. 131.

concludes that he 'hate[s] [Wain's] business of *setting himself up as an expert on working-class life*' and that as such he 'seems to me a good deal less authentic than say Wodehouse'.[19] However, though the reputation of this novel as a canonical example of the resurrection of realism slowly dwindles – and one can infer that this is partly due to the lack of supporting extratextual indices, particularly if one applies the model of reception later posited by Wain himself – the lessons learnt from this process appear to have an almost haunting, but tangible presence in Wain's subsequent novels.

Living in the Present

Following Wain's refusal to pander to a broad readership's desire for extratextual indices, and in the shadow of the success of Amis' *Lucky Jim* (1954) – a phenomenon which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter – Wain's initial fame quickly fades. It is intriguing, then, that Wain's next novel, *Living in the Present* (1955), introduces a character, Edgar Banks, who immediately expresses a desire to 'pass out into reality'.[20] In this context, the novel appears to offer an ill-judged sub-plot which attempts to connect character and plot to public perceptions of Wain: Banks is in a tumultuous relationship with what is called the 'Movement'. The link is made obvious to the point of sarcasm:

[19] Amis, letter to Larkin, 10 July 1955, in Leader (ed.), *Letters*, p. 434.
[20] Wain, *Living in the Present* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1955), p. 4. Further references to this text correspond to this edition.

Philipson-Smith states 'you could have read quite a lot about it [the Movement] already in the ordinary newspapers' (49); Flannery says to the Movement members, 'I'm sure you'll advertise your identity loudly enough' (51). When Banks later declares, 'to hell with the Movement' and the narrative explains that 'he had got involved so deeply in a false situation that there was no time, now, to try to work his way back to the true one' (206), it feels as if one is led by the hand to read Wain's own denunciation of the artifice surrounding the concept of the Movement and its sibling, the Angry Young Man. Of course, if stating this reality so bluntly, almost to the point of surrealism, was the extent of Wain's exploration of this theme in the novel, then Elizabeth Hatziolou would be right to denounce the novel flatly as 'unreal',[21] and Dale Salwak would be justified in his observation that 'the normal is undermined and made unbelievable' in this work.[22] If one is less quick to dismiss the questionable realism of this work, however, it becomes possible to identify more thought-provoking explorations of the themes of indexical characterisation and the aesthetic influence of cinema.

Wain's presentation of Tom Straw offers an insight into how an entrenched culture of indexicality alters the perception of literary character. Banks sees Tom, his only long-standing friend, as 'a character really built up and nourished from within, really independent of circumstances' (159) and that any

[21] Elizabeth Hatziolou, *John Wain: A Man of Letters* (London: Pisces Press, 1997), p. 17.
[22] Dale Salwak, quoted by Hatziolou, p. 97.

'comparison' between Banks and Tom 'was excluded by the whole framework of reference within which he had placed himself' (184). The idea of a character who is purely independent of external indices is a reflection of the 'pure' characterization epitomised by James, Flaubert, and Joyce, which Wain outlines – and essentially grieves for – in his essay, 'The Conflict of Forms in Contemporary English Literature', as is discussed above. It is significant, then, that Banks harbours a secret jealousy of Tom and later attempts to 'identify' with his life in a typically cinesthetic way through his attempts to seduce Tom's girlfriend Catherine (which will be addressed in more detail below), as it positions this anti-indexical character as a desirable object, just as Wain idealises an anti-indexical form for the novel. Ultimately, though, Wain is an instinctive realist in more way than one and recognises that such characterisation is 'just as much a problem of reception as of production' (as he writes in *Sprightly Running*) in the post-war literary market. A striking symbol of this is presented when Tom later produces a cigarette packet from his pocket. Banks initially see the packet as 'absolutely flat', as one might perceive a person on the screen, but this is then understood to be an 'illusion', as he 'produced from it, like a conjuror, a perfectly round and fresh-looking cigarette' (233). Wain is acknowledging the fact that even though Banks thinks that Tom is 'pure', he is a product of how the cinesthetic reader of this period is conditioned to catachretically confuse fiction and reality.

Wain's novel offers further flirtations with the concept, if not the full-blown extratextual practice, of literary indexicality. One of the novel's epigraphs – 'Them that die'll be the lucky ones' – offers both a suggestion of how the concept of indexicality is a natural confrère of a discussion on cinema-going in a cinesthetic literary culture, and also a small window into Wain's understanding of the productive and receptive processes of literary indexicality. The phrase is accredited to Long John Silver and is ostensibly taken from Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, although it is important to note that the saying was re-popularised in the 1950s by Robert Newton's portrayal of Silver in the Bryon Haskin-directed films *Treasure Island* (1950) and *Long John Silver* (1954). In the latter film, Silver actually says 'Them that died were the lucky ones', meta-referencing the prequel for his audience in a similar way to how the novel's epigraph seems to be alluding – in what one can see as an indexical reference to Wain's status as a fellow 'Angry Young Man' – to Amis' *Lucky Jim*, published in the previous year. This serves as an example of how one might import the meta-reference that abounds within and without the cinematic medium to the literary field, in order to elicit such indexical connections from a cinesthetic reader.

Elsewhere, the novel addresses the cultural and aesthetic influences of cinema-going less cryptically. Initially, the strongest impression in this context is of a looming Leavisite shadow, emphasising the detrimental effects of cinema-going: an obsession with 'pi-ictuuuuuuuuuuuuuuures' is labelled as juvenile

through association with the demented Crabshaw children (59); when a bus driver is shown impersonating the actions of famous race-car drivers Fangio, Gonzalez, and Ascari, his identificatory fantasies are belittled by the narrative's insistence that 'he could only have studied [these motions] through newsreels and had therefore imperfectly grasped' them (196); Banks only considers a visit to the cinema as a last resort, in order to kill time (75). Perhaps surprisingly, though, more productive engagements with cinema-going can also be found. Banks' trip to Switzerland, which offers 'myriad new impressions' (75) and 'a procession of images' (143), offers an abstract hint of cinematic influence. Once the characters have disembarked at Lausanne train station and move away like in 'an old silent film' (65), a sequence of suicide notes, unsettling Swiss characters, secret political movements, a deadly date with a waterfall, Stimms' Nazi-esque 'Emil Jannings look' (238) – Jannings was a screen actor who went on to appear in Nazi propaganda films such as *Die Entlassung* (1940) – and Mirabelle calling herself 'Watson' to Edgar's Holmes (140) strongly suggest the inspiration of Basil Rathbone's wartime Sherlock Holmes films.

Indisputably, though, the novel's most significant engagement with cinema-going is in its use to describe a woman, in ways that suggest the familiar (and, in this period, almost omnipresent) influence of the cinesthetic, interactive fantasy of the on-screen female. As has been commented on, Banks tries to imitate Tom's life by proxy when he attempts to seduce Catherine. More significantly,

when Banks meets Catherine, he considers his behaviour in specific relation to cinematic figures and tropes: he is aware that he starts to speak in a way that sounds like 'exactly the remark that the interloper […] always makes in second-rate fiction and cinema' (187); he reasons that 'Catherine was the kind of girl […] who would not be impressed by George Sanders, particularly in *ersatz* form' (191). Wain, just like Banks, is maintaining the attitude that cinema is an inferior, inauthentic medium, but significantly shows that he is able to understand and engage with the cinematic models of behaviour that condition others. As such, the narrative makes it clear that Catherine's feelings are at least in part structured by her movie-going; Banks later claims that she talks of her feelings 'as if talking about some character in a film they had just seen' (211) and when Banks asks if she even knows the first thing about him, Catherine replies that she does know 'the first thing. And the first thing in your case is that you're just not the type who would play this particular dirty trick' (111), which suggests an understanding of men based on the cinematic scaffolding of 'type' (as defined by Stanley Cavell and others).[23] Yet, as Banks spends more time with Catherine, it becomes clear that he is equally susceptible to the enchantments of cinesthetic desire. Banks soon realises that his 'dreams' have 'thickened into images, images as keen and insistent as physical presences' (216), as he begins to realise that 'he wanted Catherine' (227). Finally, Banks equates this cinesthetic desire with

[23] See Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film - Enlarged Edition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 33.

reality when he becomes aware of his love for Catherine and immediately proclaims that 'it was the first day of his real life' (230). Thus, when Stimms states that he has only ever seen someone propose 'at the cinema, of course, on the, ah screen' (237), Banks automatically takes this as a cue to propose to Catherine. It is significant that Wain is drawn to the concept of characterising women as cinematic and, ultimately, cinesthetic symbols of desire in strikingly similar terms to his male literary peers, whose works have been discussed in previous chapters, yet also begins to demonstrate the ways in which men in such relationships begin to be deceived by their own objectifying gaze.

The Contenders

Wain's next novel, *The Contenders* (1958), explores working-class, masculine anxiety. Again, though, applying such a restrictive, class-based critical paradigm to discussion of this novel is self-defeating, particularly as it is the plethora of such fictions in this period (which are often superior) that helps to bury the critical reputation of this work. Considering that its title may indeed be playing on the cinematic epitome of such anxiety in the 1950s, Marlon Brando's Terry's famous insistence that he 'could have been a contender' in Elia Kazan's *On the Waterfront* (1954), it is perhaps apt that the application of a more cinematic context to our discussion of the novel can help to reveal its exploration of surprisingly progressive attitudes, particularly in relation to the idea that the model for the

visual reification of women within cinema-going culture can also be seen to be affecting cultural perceptions of the novelist.

Firstly, by shifting from notions of masculine anxiety to feminine objectification, one can detect a certain degree of continuity between this novel and *Living in the Present* in their characterisations of women in explicitly cinesthetic terms. Significantly, representations of the visual reification of women do not occur in the novel until the narrative reaches the post-war period. Once this point has arrived, however, the first figure of female beauty, model Myra Chetwynd, is introduced, highlighted 'by electric light'.[24] Almost immediately, Myra is visually objectified, described as 'an important symbol […] of possession, of achievement' and 'the publicly accepted emblem of success' (138). The reduction of alluring women to flat icons of sexuality is a cinesthetic symptom (the repercussions of which will be explored in more detail in the following section, 'Passionate Detachment'). Indeed, the explicitly cinematic nature of this oppressive male gaze is reinforced when, as a group of men stare at Myra, Shaw's narrative has to remind us that they 'were men, not cameras' (152). Significantly, though – and this is a rarity in the male-authored post-war novel – this cinematic sense of attraction and desire is not only experienced by the men of the novel. When the males gather to discuss Myra's appeal, Ned is asked, 'What about the

[24] Wain, *The Contenders* [1958] (London: Penguin, 1962), p. 138. Further references to this novel correspond to this edition.

people who fall in love with film stars and what not?'(144). Ned posits the notion that, if 'an adolescent girl falls in love with a film star', she 'has his picture over her bed, she goes to see all his films', but 'doesn't even consider the idea of getting any closer to the man' (144). Ned proceeds to tell a tale:

> An aunt of mine married a man who reminded her of Rudolph Valentino. And it's a fact that the man had dark hair, like Valentino, and was undersized, like Valentino. But the resemblance never struck anybody but her. It was just the old principle at work. She projected the image of Valentino on to her husband in order to get that extra two-penn'orth of fun out of him. It made her happy and it didn't hurt anyone. That's what people like Valentino are for. (144)

Wain is making the point that women do not appear to share the intensely physical sense of interactive desire when experiencing cinesthetic attraction. Although this conclusion might be contested to a certain degree by more recent feminist film criticism (such as Miriam Hansen's 'Pleasure, Ambivalence, Identification: Valentino and Female Spectatorship' (1986), for example), this viewpoint in the novel is consistently borne out by the way in which the greater intensity of male cinesthetic desire affects Shaw's narrative.

Indeed, the representation of cinesthetic desire for women is so affecting that it leads to a refiguration of the novel's realist mode. When Ned takes Shaw to see Myra, he protests: 'Where are you taking me?' The escapist nature of this entry into Myra's glamorous world is amplified by the adjacent remark from Shaw that this was a phrase he 'had often heard at the cinema theatre' (196). Indeed, as an object of cinesthetic desire, Myra represents a gateway to a

potentially interactive reality for the men that view her. Pepina, a young Italian girl, represents a similar form of cinesthetic escapism for Shaw. Though Shaw, who criticises the other men for viewing Myra as a sexual symbol, initially stresses that Pepina is 'real in all the ways that Myra was artificial' (216) and is the antithesis of 'a Hollywood cheese-cake queen' (217), eventually he cannot resist viewing her cinesthetically; he 'couldn't take [his] eyes off her' and it 'was the way she moved that fascinated' him (217). This sense of visual objectification is placed into a cinematic context rather explicitly, when, tellingly, the only word that he understands when she speaks Italian is 'cinema' (261). In this way, Pepina's character is compared to the cinesthetically-desired Myra, yet though Myra merely represents a 'gateway' for the men that objectify her, Shaw's cinesthetic desire for Pepina leads to a fundamental refiguration of the style of the narrative. Almost immediately, the plot is then transmuted into that most cinematic of forms, a chase (in this case across London's cafés) which is described as the 'last reel. Here comes the hero' (270). From this point on, Shaw's narrative constantly reneges on many of its previous commitments to analogical realism; Shaw 'had finally passed through the barriers and was living in a dream' (274) and he does not want to be 'pulled back across the frontier into the real world' (276). As a result of this, the famous London streets are not referenced in recognisable terms but are instead rendered as a cinematic blur: 'these streets began to look like a film set, the people like eagerly performing extras' (273). Furthermore, the narrative – for the first time in Wain's fiction – evolves into

what is essentially a film script between 'The Short One', 'The Tall One' and 'The Fat One' (276-7). This significant technical departure not only refigures the referentiality of the narrative's realism, but also carries clear consequences for the creator of such fiction. As is often his wont, Wain is keen to point out the meaning of his narrative and his character claims during this stylistic shift that 'I felt my old, obsolete character crumbling away' (277), that his 'last pipe-line to the real world had been cut' and that this represents 'the end of an epoch […] that had gone on too long, and had been too full of evasions' (285). Such metaphors suggest that Wain has by now found the allure of indexicality impossible to ignore, quite possibly because Wain may feel subjected in ways not too dissimilar to those experienced by Myra and Pepina.

Elsewhere in the novel, Wain suggests more clearly that women are not the only objects of oppressive forms of cinesthetic desire. Initially, Wain again makes a number of token gestures towards the notion of indexicality, particularly regarding the setting, which is ostentatiously labelled 'the town I mustn't name' (11), yet signposted by a wealth of textual and paratextual cues to clearly link it to Wain's own hometown in the Potteries. Indices of character are also represented in the novel when Robert Lamb, a visual artist, gains celebrity in a form reminiscent of the 'Angry' writers of the Fifties; the reader is pointed to the newspaper headline 'THIS PAINTER GIVES IT TO 'EM STRAIGHT' and 'a picture of him' (120), encouraging one to associate this with his 'scowling' public

image. Just as Wain is keen to simultaneously play on but distance himself from his 'actual' connections to the 'Angries', narrator Joe Shaw attends publicity parties but is outwardly uneasy at being linked to the success by virtue of being a physical part of Lamb's life. When Shaw discusses other associates of such artists, people who 'get into the act […] just because they *knew* these prodigies' (119), he makes his disdain clear for those who deem knowing the artist in the flesh as more valuable than the art itself. As such, Shaw also criticises Robert's fans for the fact that 'the more Robert raved and grumbled, the more they appreciated the act', yet they still do not know 'in any real sense, what he was talking about' (132). Such criticism, however, incorporates a far more conspicuous realisation: It appears that in this indexical, extratextual culture, artists – including, of course, novelists – are now objects of a widespread form of physical craving that is beginning to take on the reifying characteristics of the cinesthetic objectification of women. For example, just as the men are excited by Myra's presence in their midst, when Robert returns to his home town, people are 'excited' by 'the fact that he should be wandering among' them (186). The culmination of this relationship between aesthetic producer and consumer – which, as Wain writes elsewhere, is conditioned by the mass media forms surrounding the production of works and creates a 'stew' of fictions and realities – is made clear in this novel's striking acknowledgement of the reader's own physical presence at the point of discussing Robert's life and physical presence. Remarkably, when questioning whether Robert will appear in his life again,

Shaw declares: 'Of course *you* know he did, because you can see there are still lots of pages of this book left' (161). This statement renders the codex as an index, rather than a representative collection of symbols and signifiers, of the artist's 'life'. As such, it also represents Wain's acknowledgement of the changes wrought upon the form of the novel by a cinesthetic culture which encourages the reader to see the realist work not as an analogical mirror of life, but as words which merely confirm the writer's existence, just as smoke signals fire, or as the presence of ink is an index of the fact that you could hold the pen.

Wain's exploration of the reification of the artist in *The Contenders* represents the apogee of his examination of cinesthetics and indexicality. In his final novel of the Fifties, *A Travelling Woman* (1959), Wain appears to abandon his tentative forays into threateningly reifying cinematic territory. Consequently, the novel struggles to convey movement, as made explicit by narrator George Links: 'Movements: He tried to find a phrase for the way Ruth walked, held herself, stood, sat. It was impossible'.[25] Wain's failure to inaugurate fully an extratextual 'personality', in ways that encourage physical links to the lives of his characters through being photographed for magazines or appearing on television, also hampers his reputation among the cinesthetic readership. This is emphasised in an anecdote relayed by Amis, who recalls when Magnus Magnusson told him how he once introduced Wain onto his radio programme with the words: 'I

[25] Wain, *A Travelling Woman* [1959] (London: Penguin, 1963), p. 23.

suppose I can best introduce John Wain to listeners by calling him the poor man's Kingsley Amis'.[26] As will be discussed in the next chapter, Amis is no stranger to the fostering of extratextual indices that enhance the reception of his novel. When one compares Wain to Larkin, though, while it is true that his knowledge of the function and importance of cinematic indexicality in relation to literary reception is greater (at least in terms of how it is articulated), Wain's fiction is similarly stalled by his refusal to engage with its processes – and, in turn, the cinesthetic reader – in concrete terms. In his 1965 autobiography, with his sales already drifting, Wain ruefully acknowledges that 'people judge by what they see'.[27] One assumes, though, that he is still hankering for a time when a generation of cinesthetic readers did not automatically look to 'life' for all literary meaning – as the cinema-goer looks to a magazine interview with a film star to explain the emotions of their on-screen character, or as Phylis does in *Living in the Present* (as the epigraph of this chapter states) – but that such meaning could instead still be solely 'found in books'.

[26] Magnus Magnusson, quoted by Amis, *Memoirs* (London: Hutchinson, 1991), p. 44.
[27] Wain, *Sprightly*, p. 202.

10. KINGSLEY AMIS' EXTRATEXTUAL BITE

[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions].[1]

Kingsley Amis here offers what is thought to be an unimpeachably astute piece of advice to his friend Philip Larkin. The film is a 1942 offering on the subject of jazz and 'K. of W.' is a reference to 'Kingdom of Winter', the working title for Philip Larkin's novel *A Girl in Winter* (1947). The line of thought demonstrated by Amis offers a significant indication of his priorities in the period where he is preparing to embark on the life of the novelist. As we will see, the path Amis deigns to follow is, as the epigraph suggests, heavily signposted by cinema-going culture and will lead to a radically different approach, in comparison to both Larkin and Wain, to the production of the novel in the age of the cinesthetic reader.

By the Fifties, Amis was a vanguard-figure of the 'Angry Young Men' phenomenon and of the novel's perceived 'return to realism'. After this initial reception, David Lodge's essay 'The Modern, the Contemporary and the Importance of Being Amis' (1963) did much to nudge Amis into the literary canon (albeit rather slightingly). However, in common with his Movement peers, Amis became unfashionable in succeeding decades. Though some now attempt to resurrect Amis as a figure of late modernism, such as Greg Londe and his

[1] Kingsley Amis, letter to Philip Larkin, 26 August 1946, Kingsley Amis Letters, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, MS Eng. c.6044/5/103.

appraisal of the 'modernist deep psychology […of the…] performed self' and the Joycean potential of the Dixon-narrative in Amis' *Lucky Jim* (1954),[2] the shadow of Amis' affirmed xenophobia and particularly his sexism lingers. Hermione Lee's examination of Amis' misogynist tendencies in his later fiction has, quite understandably, held more sway on this issue than John McDermott's more sympathetic article of the same name,[3] and has coloured subsequent readings of the early novels too. However, one aspect of Amis-criticism that all of these strands share – and, as such, is particularly intriguing – is in their treatment of the relationship between Amis, his narrators, and the reader, which is often overlapped more freely than one finds in the critical approaches to his contemporaries. Lodge presses the connections between Dixon and Amis in his introduction to the 2000 Penguin reissue of *Lucky Jim*; Lee sees the 'Amis-surrogate' throughout his work;[4] most strikingly, George Watson claims to feel that, after reading Amis' fiction, he 'was Kingsley Amis'.[5] One is tempted to cite the influence of indexicality.

Indeed, when one turns to Amis' early novels, the issue of indexicality emerges as an integral aspect of the work. Furthermore, just as in the work of

[2] Greg Londe, 'Reconsidering *Lucky Jim*: Kingsley Amis and the Condition of England', in Marina MacKay & Lyndsey Stonebridge (eds.), *British Fiction After Modernism: The Novel at Mid-Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 140.
[3] See Hermione Lee, 'Kingsley and the Women', *The New Republic*, 201 (31 July 1989), pp. 39-41; and John McDermott, 'Kingsley and the Women', *Critical Quarterly*, 27:3 (September 1985), pp. 65-71.
[4] Lee, p. 40.
[5] George Watson, 'I Was Kingsley Amis', *Hudson Review*, 49:4 (Winter 1997), p. 610.

Larkin and Wain, the issue is bound up with discernibly cinesthetic representations of women and, as such, suggests the necessity of an investigation into the relationship between Amis and cinema-going as a means to understand the tangible relationship with the author experienced by his readers. By considering Amis' cinematic influences, one can begin to comprehend that Amis' reputation as a vivacious presence on the post-war literary scene is related to his exploration of extratextuality; unlike Larkin and Wain, Amis creates extratexts to support the reception of his realist characters. It also becomes clear that, as well as exploiting the cinesthetic reader he caters for, he also explores the harmful effects of their mode of reception in subsequent novels, which soon leads to a partial withdrawal towards a more traditional rendering of the literary text. Perhaps surprisingly, an examination of this exploration also reveals an author who is more sympathetic to feminist sensibilities than has often been suggested. As such, Amis' engagement with cinema-going can be seen to lead to an innovative post-war refiguration of realism, which in turn challenges the extant critical image of a superannuated sexist.

Amis' Cinematic Influences

When it was reported that Amis thought *Beverly Hills Cop* to be 'a flawless masterpiece',[6] it could have spelt the end for all serious critical enquiries into

[6] Zachary Leader, *The Life of Kingsley Amis* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006), p. 403.

Amis' implicit understanding of the importance of cinema. However, there is value in persevering with this line of enquiry, as records of Amis' adolescence reveal his surprisingly multi-faceted affinity with the cinema, spanning engagements with the mimicry, desire, and extratextuality associated with the medium and its culture. Though the young Amis' relationship with the cinema seems to have been slightly more inhibited than many of his peers – for example, whereas Larkin went to the cinema as soon as he was allowed out on his own, the cinema was off limits to Amis when he was a City of London School boy evacuated to Marlborough[7] – his clear interest in all things cinematic flourishes during his short stint as an Oxford undergraduate. Amis' introduction to Philip Larkin – the act of the cinematic cowboy 'in a rictus of agony',[8] as has been discussed – demonstrates Amis' predilection for cinesthetic identificatory fantasy and further evidence of Amis' fascination with cinematic role play abounds. In letters to Larkin, Amis promises to **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**;[9] asks Larkin to remind him **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**;[10] and Larkin later declares that Amis had an extensive repertoire of identificatory traits:

> The gangster film (with plenty of shooting), especially a version peopled entirely with figures from the University Faculty of English; the no-work film (this was largely silent); the U-boat film ('Wir haben sie!'); and one that involved Humphrey Bogart flashing a torch round a cellar.[11]

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[7] Leader, *Life*, p. 85.
[8] Larkin, 'Introduction', in *Jill* [1946] (London: Faber & Faber, 2005), p. x.
[9] Amis, letter to Larkin, 8 October 1946, Amis Letters (Bodleian), MS Eng. c.6044/6/123.
[10] Amis, letter to Larkin, 4 July 1946, Amis Letters (Bodleian), MS Eng. c.6044/4/79.
[11] Larkin, 'Introduction', in *Jill*, p. xi.

This addiction to the physical display of identificatory fantasy appears to have been a consistent and significant element of Amis' social life in this period; he writes to Larkin, for example, that **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**.[12] Indeed, Amis' enthusiasm for the cinematic and his penchant for mimicking on-screen gestures appears to have incited others to follow suit. Larkin recalls, for example, that a pose struck by Edward du Cann in a photograph from the time mirrors a gesture from 'one of Kingsley's Russian documentaries', *In the Rear of the Enemy*,[13] a Soviet film from 1941 (directed by Yevgeni Shneider) which one assumes formed part of Amis' offerings as the Oxford University Communist Party's Cultural Officer.

It is important to note that Amis' engagement with cinema is also developing beyond such potentially juvenile forms of mimicry. By the end of the war, Amis was beginning to offer Larkin, who was certainly the greater *cinéaste* in comparison, more discerning commentary on both the merit and form of films he had seen. In January 1946, Amis advises Larkin: **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**.[14] In July 1946, Amis attempts to convey the stuttering form of Joseph L. Mankiewicz's *Dragonwyck* (1946) using commas: **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**.[15] In November 1948, Amis rather sincerely declares that Olivier's *Hamlet* (1948) is **[Text has been removed due to**

[12] Amis, letter to Larkin, 1 July 1946, Amis Letters (Bodleian), MS Eng. c.6044/4/78.
[13] Larkin, 'Introduction', in *Jill*, p. xi.
[14] Amis, letter to Larkin, 11 January 1946, Amis Letters (Bodleian), MS Eng. c.6044/2/26.
[15] Amis, letter to Larkin, 19 July 1946, Amis Letters (Bodleian), MS Eng. c.6044/4/84.

copyright restrictions].[16] However, Amis' reviews also share one striking element in common: of *Dragonwyck*, he concludes, **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**;[17] of *Hamlet*, **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**.[18] Again one finds a male, movie-made novelist completely consumed by cinesthetic urges.

Amis' cinema-going is certainly encouraged by Larkin, as their correspondence attests, and is perhaps also spurred on by his realisation of his girlfriend (and, later, wife) Hilly Bardwell's interest in 'celluloid'.[19] However, the evolution of Amis' attitude towards cinema-going in the post-war years, from talk of 'malodorous films' in 1946 to demands of 'I want to see that film' (the raunchy *L'Elisir d'Amore*) by 1950,[20] can be understood most clearly in terms of how the visual and social practices of cinema create a particularly sexualised way of relating to the 'real' image, how Bazinian 'ontological pornography' creates cinesthetic desire in the viewer. Amis articulates this cinesthetic affect fervently in the post-war period. When Amis tells Larkin that he did not like *Gelda* (1946),[21] one is tempted to question the technical accuracy of his review when he states that **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**. Of course, there is a

[16] Amis, letter to Larkin, 2 November 1948, Amis Letters (Bodleian), MS Eng. c.6046/4/73.
[17] Amis, letter to Larkin, 19 July 1946.
[18] Amis, letter to Larkin, 2 November 1948.
[19] Amis, letter to Larkin, 24 March 1946, in Leader, *Life*, p. 169.
[20] Amis, letters to Larkin, 1 July 1946 & 12 June 1950, in Leader (ed.), *The Letters of Kingsley Amis* (London: HarperCollins, 2000), pp. 77, 233.
[21] Amis, letter to Larkin, 19 June 1946, Amis Letters (Bodleian), MS Eng. c.6044/4/76.

rather flippant edge to some of the discussion of Amis' cinesthetic fetishes; **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**.[22] Mostly, though, the forms of Amis' articulation of this objectifying fetish offer significant confirmation of its cinesthetic nature. Firstly, this desire is explicitly connected from on-screen women to women in his own life, such as when Amis tells Larkin that **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**,[23] a figure of their pornographic fantasises who would appear to correspond to an actual mutual acquaintance. Furthermore, this desire also considers the indices of the existence of such films and the women 'within' them, such as when a letter to Larkin from February 1947 includes a sketch of a poster which reads: **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**.[24] The articulation of such identificatory fantasy and cinesthetic objectification will emerge in Amis' novels, but it is important to stress that the roots of Amis' understanding that these affects are elicited by their conjunction with indexical aesthetic elements, such as the poster, can also be found in this period, as Amis explores the aesthetic demands of a cinesthetic generation.

It is clear that Amis' own immersion in such a cultural structure conditions him to think in cinematic forms. A remarkable example of the extent of this immersion can be found in January 1948, when he describes in letters to Larkin

[22] Amis, letter to Larkin, 15 May 1947, Amis Letters (Bodleian), MS Eng. c.6045/3/50.
[23] Amis, letter to Larkin, 24 March 1947, Amis Letters (Bodleian), MS Eng. c.6045/2/23.
[24] Amis, letter to Larkin, 27 February 1947, Amis Letters (Bodleian), MS Eng. c.6045/1/14.

when he and Bardwell **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**.[25] When they decide not to go through with this operation and to marry instead, Amis describes the priest who married him as **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**.[26] Significantly, Amis also begins to think about how minds other than his own process the aesthetics of mass culture. The subject of Amis' unsuccessful B.Litt. thesis is very important in this context, which Zachary Leader describes as emanating from an interest in 'the sorts of questions raised by Q. D. Leavis's influential *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932)', such as those 'of audience and of the relation of literary institutions (publishers, editors, booksellers, bookclubs, periodicals, etc.) to literary production'.[27] As has been discussed, Amis is rather taken with this work and it eventually contributes to his proposal of the thesis 'English Non-Dramatic Poetry, 1850-1900, and the Victorian Reading Public'. Amis' first proposal was initially rejected as unworkable, but was accepted on the second application, according to Leader:

> perhaps because it specified the means by which the topic would be investigated: through letters and memoirs, both of poets and their admirers, but also through reviews, advertisements, expository articles, public lectures and statistics of sales, library circulation and publication in magazines and anthologies.[28]

The influence of this form of Leavisism is more productive than most in the post-war period. The vehicles of publicity-producing extratextuality are clearly at the forefront of Amis' mind and in a specifically literary context. Indeed, remarking

[25] Amis, letter to Larkin, 12 January 1948, Amis Letters (Bodleian), MS Eng. c. 6046/1/2.
[26] Amis, letter to Larkin, 12 January 1948, Amis Letters (Bodleian), MS Eng. c. 6046/1/3.
[27] Leader, *Life*, p. 208.
[28] Leader, *Life*, p. 208.

on D. G. Rosetti's 'excessive tendency to self-advertisement' in the thesis, Amis concludes that this is 'a desirable and healthy attitude to take as a writer'.[29] Leader is right to conclude that, as such, 'Amis's thesis uncovered literary precedents for his own practice as a writer',[30] but one can stress further the role of post-war visual culture and its inherent indexicality as being particularly responsible for Amis' focus on these issues.

As we have seen throughout the post-war period, where cinematic identification and cinesthetic desire are, forms of indexicality can soon be found. It is interesting in this context that Amis' interest in literary publicity is spurred by John Wain's influence; who, as has been discussed, is particularly interested in the 'stew' of the fictions and personalities of authors in the post-war period. Wain famously offers Amis a slot on his BBC radio programme *First Reading* to showcase his work, but it is less known that, in their Oxford days, Wain encourages Amis' writing of 'The Legacy', an early attempt at a novel whose main character is 'Kingsley Amis',[31] later described as 'a young man like myself only nastier' by the author.[32] At the time, it is significant that Amis describes this character not as a distant creation, but using the first-person; as he writes to

[29] Amis, 'English Non-Dramatic Poetry, 1850-1900, and the Victorian Reading Public', B. Litt. thesis, quoted in Leader, *Life*, p. 254.
[30] Leader, *Life*, p. 254.
[31] See Leader, *Life*, pp. 180, 217.
[32] Amis, interviewed by Ray Connolly, 'A Childhood: Kingsley Amis', *Times* (24 March 1990), p. 35.

Larkin, in the novel **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**.[33] The knowledge of the literary marketplace that Wain continues to impart then acts as a constant encouragement of this self-aggrandising proclivity, urging Amis to 'push himself' in the way Larkin was unwilling to. Amis clearly takes this advice on board, telling his publisher Hilary Rubenstein that Wain 'has been for some time one of my literary mentors' and that, thus, his 'determination *re* "a new Amis" is gradually crystallising'.[34] From this point, Amis' public and, crucially, visual presentation of himself becomes a key point of discussion between publisher and author, with the issue of a publicity photograph becoming their main topic of discussion – apart from money – in the six months leading up to the publication of *Lucky Jim*.[35] At this time, one may be tempted to conclude that Amis is merely keen to explore the more popular, less literary routes to recognition that it is difficult to imagine Larkin and Wain entertaining, such as the 'wonderful coup' of being interviewed and photographed by *Vogue* magazine,[36] yet the knowledge that, for this, he is 'busy rehearsing faces already' actually demonstrates the vital importance of visual indexicality as a shaping influence of the production and reception of Amis' fiction.

[33] Amis, letter to Larkin, 21 September 1946, Amis Letters (Bodleian), MS Eng. c.6044/5/113.
[34] Amis, letter to Hilary Rubenstein, 17 July 1953, in Leader (ed.), *Letters*, p. 328.
[35] Amis, letters to Rubenstein, 6 June 1953-17 January 1954, in Leader (ed.), *Letters,* pp. 324, 358.
[36] Amis, letter to Rubenstein, 29 August 1953, in Leader (ed.), *Letters*, p. 332.

Lucky Jim

By the time that Amis publishes *Lucky Jim*, it is clear that he understands how his readers relate to cinematic realism. However, though at the time of its publication John Betjeman feels that the novel was like 'a Harold Lloyd film or a Buster Keaton film in prose, lacking the pathos of Chaplin',[37] a more detailed articulation of the specific cinematic nature of the novel has not been easy to come by. More recently, Patrick Swinden offers the most explicit argument of the potentially cinematic tone of the novel when, referring to Chapter Seven, argues that 'Dixon cannot rid himself of the notion that both he and Margaret are figures on celluloid, acting in a film that Margaret has scripted'.[38] One assumes he is referring to the part of the scene when Margaret is posited as its 'actress and script-writer'.[39] Yet this proclamation offers false hope in the context of this argument, even if it does offer an illuminating example of the potential for mistranslation when dealing with cinematic 'rhetorical strategies'. Indeed, this phrase could equally instigate a theatrical metaphor, which would be more consistent with the fact that Jim later tells Margaret to 'come off the stage for a moment' (159). However, the notion that different media might modulate Jim's

[37] John Betjeman, 'Amusing Story of Life at a Provincial University', *Daily Telegraph* (5 February 1954), p. 8.
[38] Patrick Swinden, *The English Novel of History and Society, 1940-1980* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 200.
[39] Amis, *Lucky Jim* [1954] (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 76. Further references to this novel correspond to this edition.

perspective of and relationships with women offers fertile ground for a more productive discussion of the influence of 'celluloid' on the novel.

Firstly, it appears that Jim actually models his behaviour towards Margaret, a woman he wants to distance himself from, on a more literary form. When Jim finds it difficult to converse with Margaret and feels that 'his role in this conversation […] had been directed by something outside himself' and that it did not arise 'out of a willing on his part' (186), the idea that he is directed by Margaret is confounded by the fact that the realisation is prefaced by Jim emphasising that his current feeling resembles that of 'a character in a modern novel Beesley had lent him' (185) and that the scene is concluded when Jim 'found that words were forming in his mind' (186), rather than moving images. Tellingly, Jim's remedy to both this alien and unwelcome literary sensibility – Jim 'reads as little as possible of any given book' (17) – and to Margaret's insistence that she 'can't understand' him is to invite her to a place where, we assume, he can express himself in relatable forms: 'Let's go to the pictures tonight' (187). Jim's use of cinema as a refuge in this context suggests that his perspectives are, at least in terms of pleasure and interest, formed and defined by the cinema.

However, it is important to note that cinema does not help Jim relate to Margaret in the way that the words and character of a novel had; significantly, their cinema-going date is not articulated for the reader and is only reported to

Christine (200). The suggestion that Christine is more compatible with Jim because they both understand the significance of cinema-going is verified by the fact that Jim certainly understands Christine in relation to cinematic, rather than literary, forms. When Jim 'saw with fury that [Christine] was prettier than he thought' and feels that she 'was doubly guilty, first of looking like that, secondly of appearing in front of him looking like that' (72) – phrases that might understandably draw accusations of raw misogyny – it is interesting to note that the scene also creates a striking spatial relationship between Jim and Christine. Though Jim initially sees Christine in opposition to 'run-of-the-mill queens of love' such as 'Italian film-actresses' (72), the physical terms he perceives her in are strikingly similar to those of cinesthetic desire. Christine is standing right in front of him and he has a strong urge to touch her, but he is conditioned by the screen images of 'Italian film-actresses' to think that such women are not immediately within physical reach; though he is 'strongly tempted to put his hand out and lay it on one of those full breasts' (72), whatever this impulse 'was or was called, was something nothing could be done about' (73). The certainty of this notion is challenged, however, when he continues to explore the nature of this desire in more explicitly cinematic terms. When Jim leaves 'the bar with Christine at his side', he cannot help but see this in terms of a myriad cinematic fantasy, feeling 'like a special agent, a picaroon, a Chicago war-lord, a hidalgo, an oil baron, a mohock' (113) and remarking that 'he found it hard to believe that she was really going to let him touch her' (113). Later, when he is in a car with

Christine, the scene is framed in a way which draws clear parallels with the cinema-going experience of 'courting', with the 'shoulders and hatted head of the taxi-driver, outlined against the glow' in front of them (139), being seated 'in the darkness' (141) and, as if on screen, 'the darkened countryside moving past' outside the window (139) and the road 'unsteadily unreeling itself beneath the wheels' (145). In this scene, the description of Christine initially conveys the image of an untouchable screen goddess, who displays 'no sound of movement', 'no scent', who seems 'a long way from' being touched (139) and is an 'unshared presence' to Jim as the 'isolated' (145), Kracauerian, lonely spectator. However, the fantasy of having a relationship with the apparently unattainable Christine starts to transform into a distinct possibility when Christine breaks the spell by stating that she is pleased to have met a man who does not seem to have 'an ambition like wanting to have a date with a film-star' (140), thus challenging the 'unreal' nature of Jim's desire. Jim is shocked and embarrassed out from his cinesthetic fantasy, defensively questioning anything that Christine says which he perceives to have 'been a line from a film' (141). As a result:

> He now had all the evidence he wanted that she was there; he could sense her breathing, her temple against his jaw and her shoulder under his hand were warm, her hair smelt of well-brushed hair, he could feel the presence of her body. (146)

Jim has emerged from the process of cinesthetic desire and his relationship with Christine is seen to benefit from this. Significantly, after this, Jim's only return to the use of a cinematic form is in order to highlight the chauvinism of another man; when Bertrand has warned Jim to stay away from Christine and tells

Christine to come with him, Jim is shown 'quoting from a film he'd once seen': 'Better do as he says, lady, otherwise he's liable to kick your teeth in' (216). The novel thus suggests that this apparently prevalent form of cinesthetic association with women can be detrimental to healthy relationships, a notion that implies a feminist empathy not usually attributed to Amis, but which is developed in succeeding novels, as will be discussed. However, the treatment of this theme does little to deny the power of this sensibility and its capacity to create imaginary forms of reality, a power which is not only acknowledged but explored and exploited by Amis himself.

A more obscure mention of the cinema provides a clue to the novel's hugely significant treatment of that confrère of cinesthetics in the post-war period: indexicality. The reader learns that the conclusion of Jim's 'Merrie England' lecture would have been a consideration of how 'the men or women I have tried to describe would react to such typically modern phenomena as the cinema, the radio, the television' (195). Amis' own fascination with the cultural effects of the 'era of mass communication', as John Wain calls it, is here hinted at by the echoes of Leavisism; Bradford notes the similarities between the lecture and F. R. Leavis' *Scrutiny* (1933),[40] and one is also tempted by the references to the 'Yellow Press' and the 'best-seller' (205) to note a connection to the text which influences Amis' B.Litt. thesis on the subject of readership, Q. D. Leavis' *Fiction*

[40] Richard Bradford, *Lucky Him: The Life of Kingsley Amis* (London: Peter Owen, 2001), pp. 110-1.

and the Reading Public. As has been discussed, this interest allows Amis to develop his understanding of the 'stew' of fictions and personalities that arises in this new literary market, and Amis' grasp of the importance of creating an indexical link between his public existence and his text is nowhere more clear than in his tailoring of the extratextual presence of Jim Dixon. As the flippant context of Jim's phrase 'harmless publicity' suggests (100), Amis understands that the publicity surrounding a novel could indeed have a tangible effect on its reception.

Just as Jim wants to know how Bertrand 'got hold of the B.B.C. type and the *Picture Post* people' (24), Amis also demonstrates a hunger for media exposure at the time of the novel's publication, in order to manufacture the extratext of the novel. As has been discussed, Amis' public presentation becomes a key point of discussion between publisher and author, resulting in an article in *Vogue* magazine timed to coincide with the publication of the novel and accompanied by a photograph of Amis which made him look, according to Leader, like a 'matinée idol'.[41] Amis is also keen to furnish media outlets with his biographical details at this time, as a letter to the BBC suggests.[42] Such information makes it clear to the public that Amis was a lecturer at Swansea University when writing the novel and allows people to perceive the novel as an index of Amis' own life. Amis pursues this approach rather actively; David

[41] Leader, *Life,* p. 281.
[42] Amis, letter to the BBC, 11 April 1955, in Leader (ed.), *Letters*, p. 426.

Lodge notes, for example, that Amis had also 'put the story about Leicester into circulation',[43] a tale of how he perceived the dilapidation of University College Leicester when visiting Larkin there in 1948, which amplifies perceptions of Amis' own existence within provincial universities. It also creates an index of Dixon's existence, as he is said to have taken 'the Leicester course' (33) for his history degree in the novel. Yet Amis' indexical technique goes beyond mere mapping of such biographical details; it also creates a sense of character, of life lived, rather than facts printed on paper. For example, when Jim plays a prank on Bertrand by impersonating a journalist over the phone (100), or writes a fake letter to Johns as 'Joe Higgins' (153), these scenes are quickly given an extratextual, indexical dimension by a public letter to the editor of the *Spectator* belittling Edith Sitwell, signed 'Little Mr Tomkins'.[44] Once Sitwell had included, unknowingly and quite remarkably, a reference to her admiration of Amis and *Lucky Jim* in her reply, Amis then reveals himself in a later edition to be the author of a public prank that Jim himself would be proud of.[45] Such indexicality was consciously and consistently cultivated by Amis as, tellingly, the novel's popularity simultaneously exploded through twenty print runs in three years and beyond.[46] Remarkably, in an example that epitomises and quite literally embodies the concept of indexical extratextuality, Amis appears at the 1956 Edinburgh Film Festival 'as' Jim Dixon, performing the Jim-Bertrand argument

[43] David Lodge, 'Introduction', in Amis, *Lucky Jim*, p. vii.
[44] Amis, as 'Little Mr. Tomkins', letter to the editor, *Spectator* (29 January 1954), p. 123.
[45] Amis, letter to the editor, *Spectator*, 26 February 1954, p. 230.
[46] David Lodge, 'Introduction', in Amis, *Lucky Jim*, p. v.

with Terry-Thomas (who plays Bertrand in the film of the novel) in order to publicise the impending film.[47] As one can imagine, the film publicity also gives ample opportunities for Amis to continue to cultivate the extratextual, physical existence of 'Jim Dixon', a process that (as well as affecting the reception of subsequent novels, as will be discussed) can be seen to continue up until the publication of Amis' essay 'Why Lucky Jim Turned Right' (1967), which supposes that Dixon is engaging with 'real-life' politics, apparently using Amis as his proxy.

The effect of these extratexts is tangible. As Richard Bradford notes of the reaction of friends and colleagues, 'Amis became an embodied myth. […] Everyone seemed to be waiting for a Dixonesque act of rebellion'.[48] Intriguingly, many 'regarded [Jim] as a new-found friend', typifying the interactive affect of the cinesthetic reader. As such, Amis recalls what happened when he was introduced to Marghanita Laski shortly after the publication of *Lucky Jim*: 'she looked at me and about her in something not far from panic. She was wondering which I would do first: pour my pint of bitter over her or assault her sexually'.[49] Indeed, when Richard Bradford explains how the apparent 'parallels between Jim and the junior don at a provincial university who had created him raised questions, which on 17 February 1956 were addressed by J. G. Weightman in the

[47] See Bradford, p. 116.
[48] Bradford, p. 113.
[49] Amis, 'Real and Made-Up People' [1973], in Robert H. Bell (ed.), *Critical Essays on Kingsley Amis* (London: Prentice Hall, 1998), p. 24.

Times Literary Supplement',[50] a piece which incredibly suggests that Amis should lose his job because of his fictional association with 'beer-drinking scholarship louts', it signals the extent to which Amis' extratexts had hit their mark and, furthermore, had become a national talking point. In a later essay entitled 'Real and Made-Up People' (1973), Amis explains the extent to which he has found that author and character are now conflated by readers and argues that a character should be devised by 'projecting himself [the writer] into an entity that is part of himself and yet not himself', as well as that the author is related to 'something outside the narrow twists and turns of his own real existence'.[51] Amis claims that he has 'very little idea' how this 'rather mysterious' process works,[52] and even though it seems that he navigates expertly the potential of extratextuality, it does also at times seem so incomprehensible that it has the ability to confuse Amis himself. This is seen when Amis, 'giddy' with the fame brought about by *Lucky Jim*,[53] speculates to Larkin that Alec Guinness could play Jim in a film adaptation of the novel, that Orson Welles could play Bertrand, and that Alfred Hitchcock could direct it.[54] Remarkably, within a year, rumours were rife that Hitchcock would indeed direct.[55] Bradford argues that 'the prospect of seeing a vision of himself on screen was obviously what lay behind his regular reports to Larkin on how and by whom this fantasy would be realised' and he 'suspects that the

[50] Bradford, p. 92.
[51] Amis, 'Real and Made-Up People', pp. 25, 27.
[52] Amis, 'Real and Made-Up People', p. 27.
[53] Amis, letter to Rubenstein, 1 February 1954, in Leader (ed.), *Letters*, p. 367.
[54] Amis, letter to Larkin, 26 November 1953, in Leader (ed.), *Letters*, pp. 345-6.
[55] See Amis, letter to Larkin, 18 October 1954, in Leader (ed.), *Letters*, p. 405.

experience of his first novel as almost literally a dream come true played some part in the fact that his next four would […] involve a struggle with the presence of Jim'.[56] There is some merit in this, but it can be understood slightly more clearly by looking at this run of correspondence with the Dixonian cinesthetic perspective in mind. When Hitchcock pulls out of the film, Amis' biggest worry is that he, as the embodiment of 'Jim', would now not automatically get to have sex with Grace Kelly, as 'G.K. wd. very likely have taken Christine and I cd. have bitten her'.[57] It appears that the role of embodying Jim extratextually had been taken to heart and other organs by Amis, who has succumbed to the 'stew' of fiction and personality by assuming the physical existence of a fictional character, in just the way that readers had been conditioned by cinema to demand a corporeal dimension from their literary realism.

That Uncertain Feeling

In his second novel, *That Uncertain Feeling* (1955), Amis scales back his extratextual endeavours but increases his exploration of how one can integrate a cinesthetic sensibility into the representation of realist character. The novel nods to a ubiquitous, if shabby, cinema culture in Aberdarcy: youths have 'Tony Curtis' hairstyles;[58] one learns that the raucous Ken Davies 'worked the projectors

[56] Bradford, p. 116.
[57] See Amis, letter to Larkin, 13 November 1954, in Leader (ed.), *Letters*, p. 411.
[58] Amis, *That Uncertain Feeling* [1955] (St. Albans: Panther, 1975), p. 75. Further references to this text correspond to this edition.

at the Cwmhryfryd Coliseum' (30); one can find an 'unshaven, wild-eyed student look[ing] up from *Sight and Sound*' (12) in the library. More significantly, though, cinema-going also affects the narrative mode, both in terms of its representation of sound – dogs here bark 'like a rifle-shot on the sound-track of a film about British India' (52); people have 'film-Welshman' accents (193) – and, particularly, sight. The fourth paragraph of the novel introduces a 'gaze' which is 'slightly filmed' (7). The murky cinematic allusion here suggests that librarian protagonist John Lewis is a secret cinesthete and such suspicion is confirmed almost immediately, at the sight of a female student. As the student crosses Lewis' path, his 'glance drop[s] involuntarily to her legs' and he 'inject[s] into [his] demeanour a purposeful air that owed a little […] to the striding, sneering hero of that week's main feature at the Pavilion' (10). Lewis cannot help forming a 'close-up' gaze and switching to a cinematic, identificatory guise, where even his inner monologue is instantaneously consumed by the voices of film: 'You wanted to see me? Well, now's your big chance, lady. Siddown, will you? All right, shoot' (10). The lady whom Lewis, in cinesthetic mode, is on his way to see turns out to be Elizabeth Gruffydd-Williams. When Elizabeth is introduced by a description of her 'skin the colour of the top of milk and hair the colour of tar' (11), she is framed as a monochrome screen star from Lewis' perspective, who in his mind continues 'being the Pavilion hero' (12) throughout most of their first conversation. Lewis hereafter harbours a cinesthetic desire for Elizabeth, which is stoked when he finds the headline 'SADISTIC TERROR AT A GIRLS'

SCHOOL' on the front of local newspaper, a nod to how Amis shared such pornographic fantasies with Larkin. Lewis is immediately drawn to the accompanying photograph of 'Marietta DuForgue', a 'full-figured girl' whose bodily dimensions are listed and highlighted in a way that suggests Lewis' desire for her to move out from the page; 'getting her to heave to' (87). The descriptive text accompanying Marietta's photo is consciously positioned 'near her right boot' (87), which draws the reader into the 'close-up' relationship with her that conditions the identificatory fantasy. Lewis' response to this demonstrates the consequent desire for physical interaction, which he simulates in the only way he can; he 'refolded the paper and thrust it back under the cushion' (87). As such, the paper image of Marietta clearly contributes to his desire to enact his cinesthetic fantasies of Elizabeth. This is seen when, soon after thrusting the photograph of Marietta away, he meets Elizabeth. Lewis cannot resist the urge to touch the object of his cinesthetic desire and his arm acts 'as if demoniacally possessed all on its own, getting ready to move round her shoulders' (96-7), an act so redolent of cinema-going culture – and Lewis' comparison of this meeting to 'an evening in the back row of the twos-and threes' (97) confirms that cinema-going is the source of such an act – that the impulse is certainly cinesthetic. Unsurprisingly, then, when Lewis does finally manufacture an opportunity to have sex with Elizabeth, the scene is framed in relation to the cinematic experience, with the couple surrounded by 'lights', 'lamps', a 'match' and a 'gleam', yet also 'happy about being at the centre of so huge an area in the dark'

(176). They are posited as the ideal of lovers in the dark back row of the cinema, surrounded by the moving light. Elizabeth continues to convey the glamorous fantasy of a black-and-white film star, seen as 'blackness, glimpsed against the tenuous whiteness of the skin' (177). However, just as Lewis notes that the fantasy of Marietta 'had had a bad effect on' him (199), he also realises that the reality of the act does not meet the expectation of his cinesthetic fantasy; their love-making is hampered by cold water and roving sand, perhaps in a pointed parody of the most famous cinematic love scene of the early Fifties, Burt Lancaster's and Deborah Kerr's beach-bound clinch in *From Here to Eternity* (1953).

The notion of a divergence between fantasy and reality is also relevant to one's understanding of this novel's sense of indexicality. In terms of Lewis' narrative, the novel does notably blend moments of cinematic escapism with the empirical style of social realism famously associated with domestic appliances at this time, such as when Lewis is involved in a fight at a club. One moment, Lewis is fighting a filmic bad-guy, whose outfit 'call[s] to [his] mind […] corrupt sheriffs in Western films' (76), the next he is slouching in a 'lavatory […] principally occupied by six youths combing their hair in front of six full-length mirrors' (77). The juxtaposition of such modes does much to suggest a cinematic refiguration of realist narrative. However, as has been discussed, a complete refiguration of this kind would also partly depend on the employment of some form of

extratextuality. On this subject, there is some merit in Bradford's highlighting of the 'close parallels' between Lewis' and Amis' existence[59] – life in Wales, a young child, adultery – and the novel offers clues to suggest that such indexicality is a fundamental element of such a narrative. For example, Lewis' protest that it is 'rather difficult to get hold of a book when you've no idea of the title or the author' (39), or his questioning of the fact that a fortuitous event was 'not symbolical' but 'real, wasn't it?' (143), might be read as cheeky suggestions of the indexical relationship between the author's existence and an understanding of fiction. The catachretic image at the novel's conclusion of Lisa Watkin 'picking up somebody's glass from next to Graham Greene' (220) – a misleadingly physical rendering of the author based on a purposeful misunderstanding of the fact that the 'latest Graham Greene' novel had earlier been seen lying on the table (216), 'on a copy of *Vogue*' (a prime source of *Lucky Jim*'s extratext, as has been discussed) – is particularly striking in this context. Ultimately, though, Amis does not apply the same extratextual elements to his characterisation of Lewis as he does to Jim, such as the *Spectator* prank, or the later appearance in Edinburgh. This leaves the cinesthetic reader – a reader increasingly dependent on extratextuality – in no doubt that this Welsh librarian is not the English lecturer that they had come to expect of the Amisian protagonist and, thus, the novel's realism is relatively attenuated.

[59] Bradford, p. 120.

This shift away from Amis' initially immersive exploration of indexicality is compounded by the approach of his subsequent novel, *I Like it Here* (1958), which David Lodge significantly summarises as 'the kind of novel which is not so much turned outwards upon the world as inward upon literary art and upon the literary artist'.[60] Initially, protagonist Garnet Bowen appears to be another quasi-Amis-figure and, again, he demonstrates elements of cinesthetic perspective: his mind is seen to be a 'mental projection-theatre' working at 'Chaplin-revival speed';[61] he expects 'Spencer Tracy and Henry Fonda [to be] hanging about or joining in' if he embarks on something adventurous (108); he rejoices in 'telling female film-stars apart' (136). However, the heart of the novel is to be found in Bowen's search for the elusive 'Wulfstan Strether', an author who has managed to keep his identity secret. In the course of this quest, the novel glorifies Fielding, James, and 'moral seriousness' and, in many ways, is a paean to the days when the 'literary artist' could depend on fashioning the text alone and was not so dependent on being 'turned outwards upon the world' as an identifiable 'star', as is often the case in the cinesthetic age of indexicality. This attitude is symbolised most prominently when Bowen tears up a photograph of himself – the image representing so much of what had been so important to Amis' own Dixonesque pursuits – and throws it into the River Tagus (92).

[60] Lodge, 'The Modern, the Contemporary and the Importance of Being Amis', *Critical Quarterly*, 5:4 (December 1963), p. 349.
[61] Amis, *I Like It Here* [1958] (St. Albans: Panther, 1975), p. 104. Further references to this novel correspond to this edition.

Take A Girl Like You

In his next novel, *Take A Girl Like You* (1960), Amis develops his rejection of the forms of cinematic influence, which leads to the blossoming of a significant challenge to the sexist model of cinesthetic fantasy and the violent reality it can provoke. In the novel, Amis considers the harmful implications that visual culture has on relationships between young people by emphasising the disparity of the expectations it arouses and the damage caused by the misleading models of behaviour it represents.

Protagonist Patrick Standish's perspective is undeniably cinesthetic, but this is demonstrated to be a deeply flawed and outmoded perspective. Patrick's mind is rendered as a malfunctioning cinema-projector when one leans that 'his brain had suddenly frozen, become a fixed camera'.[62] Significantly, cinema has distorted Patrick's relations to other people; he thinks, for example, of a rival as 'the kind of British-film villain who ought by rights to be allowed to make a fool of the hero' (84), an inversion of a moral code which invites the reader to question the authenticity, stability, and relatability of Patrick's cinematic and superannuated worldview. Patrick is shown to be of an older generation which uses cinema culture as a form of 'ontological pornography', which is stressed when he is shown gazing with 'understanding and sympathy' at 'copies of

[62] Amis, *Take A Girl Like You* [1960] (London: Penguin, 1962), p. 69. Further references to this novel correspond to this edition.

Kamera, QT, Model, Line and Form' (207), magazines which, as their titles suggest, amalgamate the forms of the camera-eye the and male gaze in a rather fetishised, cinesthetic fashion. This is interrupted, though, by Julian shouting 'Ah, you dirty lot, you dirty lot' (207), thus emphasising the now embarrassing nature of such perspectives. Indeed, all the other young men of the novel engage with forms of cinema which eschew the fetishised perspective of classic narrative cinema, seen when Dick invites Jenny to the Film Society's showing of the 'damn good Italian neo-realist […] *Bicycle Thieves*' (35), or when Graham takes Jenny to see a 'film about a poor Indian family' (166), assumedly a reference to the fashionable and contemporary 'Indian New Wave' films of Satyajit Ray *et al*, the type of 'Indian film' which one learns that Patrick does not like (70). As we will see, Standish's interaction with reality is shown to be increasingly overwhelmed and consequently distorted by his exposure to movie culture.

The contrast between the form of Patrick's visual perspective and those of others is most significantly emphasised by comparison to that of this potential paramour, Jenny Bunn. Jenny is the first major character in Amis' fiction to have grown up in the age of the television and it is made abundantly clear that her thoughts are nearly always validated through a connection to a televisual experience: when first in Patrick's room, Jenny 'would have liked to see what was on television' (56); Graham, Patrick's room-mate, has a face that was 'the kind that Jenny was well used to seeing on her parents' television-screen' (44); Jenny

sees a bus conductor as someone 'who looked very like a psychologist she had once admired on TV' (101). Crucially, as will become clear, Jenny's innocence is also conveyed in this way, such as when a raucous party reminds her 'of TV commercials that showed how frantic a party could get on prune juice or chocolate biscuits' (285). Notably, at the points when Jenny's perspective is discernibly cinematic, such as when she ignores Patrick by viewing a 'terrifically speeded-up film' in 'her mind's eye' (110), it is rendered in direct opposition to Patrick and as progressive in contrast to the slowed-down visions of Patrick's 'frozen camera' in the brain, or even Garnet Bowen's superannuated 'Chaplin-revival speed' mind in *I Like it Here*. Such cinematic perspectives are limited to expressions of Jenny's fear of and distance from men (in a way reminiscent to the proto-feminist use of such imagery by Lynne Reid Banks, as will be discussed in a later chapter), such as when girlfriend Anna makes Jenny 'walk out of a terrific musical at the cinema' (200), or when she hears 'a sound that reminded her of the opening of doors in creepy films' while she is waiting for a sight of Graham (168). By emphasising the cinematic as anathema to a young girl's perspective, the novel stresses a sensibility that can be compared to the concerns expressed by feminist film criticism in the succeeding decade and beyond, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

The potential feminist sensibility manifested by the distinction between Patrick's undesirably cinesthetic perspective and Jenny's anti-cinematic

innocence is stressed further by conditioning the terms of Patrick's continuing pursuit of Jenny, clearly rendering his cinesthetic hunt as inappropriately fetishised. The beginning of their relationship is conveyed in cinematic terms – when they first ride in a car together, for example, the 'shadows […] slipped sideways excitingly, like something out of a film' and Jenny feels 'like a starlet' (49) – but this fantasy soon sours as Standish imposes himself on the object of his desire. Standish calls Jenny 'the best-looking character I've ever been out with' and wants her to 'talk all the time so I can watch' (40), reducing her to a visualised type. The cinesthetic traces of a provocation of interactive desire soon emerge; when Patrick gets Jenny to his bedroom for the first time, he 'just can't keep [his] eyes off' her (59), thinks that 'it'd be hellish difficult for [him], going round with [her] without being able to touch' her (59) and, as we expect of such cinesthetic desire, is driven to think that he 'should keep wanting to take hold of' her (65). His subsequent pursuits of her are conditioned by such cinesthetics in increasingly aggressive, fetishised, and distorted ways: he wants to 'burst in and scuttle at silent-cinema speed up those stairs' (149) to go and sleep with Jenny; he starts to see in her 'the Disney look [which] intensified to the point where she became a small deer in *Bambi* scenting danger' (155). The frustration of Patrick's unfulfilled cinesthetic desire deepens, particularly when Standish and Julian visit a lap-dancing club and their view of the women is expressed in relation to their fantasies of film stars:

> We saw the lot and there they were all prancing about and we didn't feel a flicker […]. Same sort of thing goes for Monroe and Bardot and that lot

> – sexy without being stimulating […] and here we are feeling just cheerful and benevolent, jolly impressive and normal of us, what? (211)

Julian is not stimulated, but Patrick's resentment clearly seethes and is contextualised by misogyny due its juxtaposition with the toilet-graffiti: '*This Town's women* STINKS WITH MEANNESS' (213). Patrick still attempts to keep the cinematic nature of the fantasy alive, by perceiving the intended setting of an agreed meeting with Jenny as 'for once […] doing its best to act up to a town's God-given, cinematic role of serving as background' (267), positing them as actors within the cinematic scene. However, the reality of Patrick's physical desire increasingly outweighs his desire to maintain the cinematic dream. This is demonstrated when, while waiting for Jenny, he takes hold of a book with 'an irrelevant but real-stuff girl on the coloured wrapper' and 'divest[s] [it] of its coverings' (269), thus emphasising not only the intensity of his desire to interact physically with a 'real-stuff' girl, but also the catachretic nature of his perception of the relationship between reality, image, and text, a fact of the age of the cinesthetic reader which Amis had previously exploited. Patrick's cinesthetic desire is also conveyed at the point when he realises that the meeting with Jenny will not materialise and he therefore sleeps with Sheila instead. When she leaves, he feels that he must shut 'the door after her brawny figure before she could say: "Thanks – for believing in me, Mr Blake", before the music swelled and the credits rolled up' (279), which again seeks to position him in the role of the cinematic heart-throb and thus maintain the cinesthetic fantasy. Soon after though, in the novel's controversial denouement, Standish's festishistic fantasy

is no longer contained and it is made clear that he rapes Jenny. By reporting that 'what he did was off by itself and nothing to do with her' and that Jenny 'thought he would stop anyway as soon as he realized how much off on his own he was' (303), the narrative highlights the harsh, violent, and damaging reality of the unreal, subjective, cinesthetic fantasy. Here, at the novel's climax, it becomes clear that Standish is not merely the antiquated literary rake in the mould of, for example, Richardson's Robert Lovelace, as has been suggested by Rubin Rabinovitz,[63] but a more immediate menace created by a misogyny-provoking cinema-going culture, akin to the vicious, knife-wielding Harry found in David Lodge's *The Picturegoers* of the same year (as detailed in the second epigraph to the introduction of this thesis).

It is clear that Amis' explorations of extratextuality and of the cinesthetic can be perceived as radical in the context of post-war fiction. Amis is certainly held in high regard by the post-war reader; George Watson is not the only one to claim an almost corporeal affinity with Amis at this time. This is certainly suggested when Arnold Kettle's 1957 review of Amis' early work declares that 'Kingsley Amis is as much part of the world of 1957 as television'.[64] Of course, this statement becomes ironic in the context of this argument. As will be discussed in the conclusion of this thesis, 'The End of the Reel', so many of the

[63] Rubin Rabinovitz, *The Reaction Against Experiment in the English Novel*, 1950-1960 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), pp. 43-4.
[64] Leader, *Life,* p. 365, quotes Arnold Kettle, *Daily Worker* (12 February 1957).

extratextual concepts explored by Amis emanate from a cinematic indexical model of innate reception that is already beginning to be threatened by the emergence of Jenny Bunn's 'television-made generation'. For now, though, one must also address the fact that the inherently sexist cinesthetic attitudes eventually challenged by Amis, such as Patrick Standish's predatory perception of Jenny, and even Amis' own desire to bite 'Christine', are far from eradication at this time. As the following section investigates, the challenge of and the challenging of such attitudes are engaged with to a far more crucial degree by the women writers of the era.

11. PASSIONATE DETACHMENT: SPARK, BANKS, MURDOCH

> *Yes, I not only perceive them but am them. […] Not only do I enjoy them; I enjoy in them a vicarious life.*
>
> - Elizabeth Bowen on watching film stars, 1937[1]

> *In all my years of rapt cinema-going, my enjoyment of the movies had depended in large measure on identification with male characters. I had, that is, been putting myself in the place of the man, the hero, in order to enjoy – perhaps even understand – films.*
>
> - Annette Kuhn on watching film stars, 1982[2]

It is in the post-war period that the balance of the responses of women to the cinema begins to tip significantly, from reports of vicarious escapism to realisations that the medium often objectifies and inhibits expressions of female character. The savage grabbing of 'sorbo tits' seen in David Lodge's *The Picturegoer* (1960) (as outlined in the introductory chapter's epigraph) and the panoply of aggressively sexual gestures towards women incorporated into the novels of the male writers examined previously begins to be identified and articulated as symptomatic of a misogynistic, reifying culture by an emerging ('second') wave of feminist criticism. The title of this section, 'Passionate Detachment', originates from filmmaker and critic Laura Mulvey's insistence that the cinema-goer's scopophilic gaze should instead adopt a form that detaches from the sexist modes of sadist and festishistic vision.[3] The phrase is

[1] Elizabeth Bowen, 'Why I Go to the Cinema', in Charles Davy (ed.), *Footnotes to the Film* (London: Lovat Dickson Ltd., 1937), p. 214.
[2] Annette Kuhn, *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), p. ix.
[3] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen*, 16:3 (Autumn 1975), p. 18.

also used by Annette Kuhn to introduce her *Women's Pictures: Feminism and Cinema* (1982), suggesting that it connotes the desired sensibility of the feminist film critic. However, the term also represents the somewhat paradoxical attitude evoked by cinema that one finds when examining the early novels of Muriel Spark, Lynne Reid Banks, and Iris Murdoch**.** In these works, the medium elicits, simultaneously, the powerful, passionate sense of desire that cinesthetics provokes – which is reported by female cinema-goers just as much as males, as documented by Miriam Hansen's 'Pleasure, Ambivalence, Identification: Valentino and Female Spectatorship' (1986), for example[4] – and also the detached sense of distanciation that women are made to feel from a sexist medium, as documented by critics such as Kuhn. By looking at these novels in more detail, it becomes clear that the complicated affect of cinematically-conditioned 'passionate detachment' is at the heart of representations of female identity in the post-war period. Spark, Banks, and Murdoch bring distinctive sensibilities to the post-war novel's engagement with cinesthetic readers that complicate notions of female subjectivity and call into question whether women writers of the time can simply engage with the tropes of what had been seen as a 'women's medium', or simply disengage from a sexist aesthetic and culture.

[4] See Miriam Hansen, 'Pleasure, Ambivalence, Identification: Valentino and Female Spectatorship', *Cinema Journal,* 25:4 (Summer 1986), pp. 6-32.

As the previous chapters have attested, the post-war novel had yet to feel the force of feminism's second wave. D. E. Cooper goes as far as arguing that what the Angry Young Men and the Movement writers 'really attack' is 'effeminacy'.[5] John Hill offers (for our purposes) an aptly cinematic contextualising snapshot of the times, noting that 'ABC decided to launch a new advertising slogan in 1958: "Don't take your wife for granted – take her out to the 'pictures'"'.[6] It would seem that British culture is an extremely long decade away from being ready for Kate Millett, Germaine Greer, and John Berger's articulation of the idea that, in Western art, '*men act* and *women appear*. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at'.[7] Indeed, Susan Brook offers a damning indictment of post-war British literary culture particularly, noting that in this period women are

> endlessly present in 'angry' texts in the form of ciphers and fetishes, but absent or overlooked as writers and subjects, since novels and plays which departed from the dominant discourse of male affect, and which lacked a male protagonist, were invariably ignored by opinion-forming critics and by the New Left.[8]

Brook also cites Richard Hoggart's discussion, in his *Uses of Literacy*, of 'disembodied' representations of the female body in the media, arguing that Hoggart is 'both disgusted and fascinated by the feminized, sexual body as it is

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[5] D.E. Cooper, 'Looking Back on Anger', in Vernon Bogdanor & Robert Skidelsky (eds.), *The Age of Affluence, 1951-1964* (London: Macmillan, 1970), p. 257.
[6] John Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism* (London: BFI Publishing, 1986), p. 35.
[7] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin & BBC, 1972), p.47.
[8] Susan Brook, *Literature and Cultural Criticism in the 1950s: The Feeling Male Body* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 103.

itemized and broken down into parts',[9] particularly 'legs', 'clefts', and 'nipples'. As we shall see, the competing senses of fascination and disgust, as well as the notion of disembodiment, are key symptoms of a cinesthetic culture that Spark, Banks, and Murdoch are compelled to represent.

Though Hoggart struggles to articulate the allure of the '3D "cheesecake"',[10] a term applied to 'pin-ups' that Hoggart is happy to adopt, feminist film theory of the 1970s offers far more appropriate terms for the debate at hand. As has been discussed, one can apply Christian Metz's insistence that 'in order to understand the film (at all), I must perceive the photographed object as absent, it's photograph as present, and the presence of this absence as signifying',[11] to the work of John Braine, for example, to explain the medium's challenge to analogical literary realism. However, this notion is also adopted by feminist film theory in more Freudian and Lacanian contexts to explore the distinct repercussions that this semiotic dynamic has on representations of the female figure and, later, the ipseity of women. Mulvey's 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975) continues to sit at the heart of these debates. In this essay, Mulvey argues that phallocentrism structures the reception of the on-screen female. Firstly, Mulvey reminds us of the psychoanalytic basis of this argument:

[9] Brook, p. 24.
[10] Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957), p. 177.
[11] Christian Metz, 'The Imaginary Signifier', *Screen*, 16:2 (Summer 1975), p. 58.

> The function of woman in forming the patriarchal unconscious is two-fold. She first symbolises the castration threat by her real absence of a penis, and second thereby raises her child into the symbolic. Once this has been achieved, her meaning in the process is at an end, it does not last into the world of law and language except as a memory which oscillates between memory of maternal plenitude and memory of lack.[12]

As such, the woman on screen (particularly in the classical Hollywood model) becomes a physical icon that, according to Mulvey, becomes objectified by the male gaze through two strands of scopophilia: the voyeuristic (which focuses on the woman as a physical object) and fetishistic (which focuses on the woman as a tool for displacing castration-anxiety) gazes. This definition of scopophilia is closely tied to the 'fleshy' concept of cinesthetics, particularly as Mulvey also stresses that 'the conventions of mainstream film focus attention on the human form' and that, thus, 'scale, space, stories are all anthropomorphic'.[13] This process is, as Mulvey acknowledges, also at the heart of the star-system and its indexical identification with bodies on screen. However, Mulvey's psychoanalytic interpretation of this process ultimately sees it seeking to render the woman on screen as a symbol rather than a flesh-and-blood presence:

> Traditionally, the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium, with a shifting tension between the looks on either side of the screen. For instance, the device of the show-girl allows the two looks to be unified technically without any apparent break in the diegesis. A woman performs within the narrative, the gaze of the spectator and that of the male characters in the film are neatly combined without breaking narrative verisimilitude. For a moment the sexual impact of the performing woman takes the film into a no-man's-land outside its own time and space. Thus Marilyn Monroe's first appearance in *The River of No*

[12] Mulvey, pp. 6-7.
[13] Mulvey, p. 9.

> *Return* and Lauren Bacall's songs in *To Have or Have Not*. Similarly, conventional close-ups of legs (Dietrich, for instance) or a face (Garbo) integrate into the narrative a different mode of eroticism. One part of a fragmented body destroys the Renaissance space, the illusion of depth demanded by the narrative, it gives flatness, the quality of a cut-out or icon rather than verisimilitude to the screen.[14]

It would not be an overstatement to suggest that this theory continues to shape the direction of feminist film criticism, but that is not to say that Mulvey's views remain unchallenged. Arguments against this article primarily highlight its preoccupation with the male gaze at the expense of the female gaze. Critics such as Lorraine Gamman, Margaret Marshment, David Rodowick, Annette Kuhn, Jackie Stacey, Mary Ann Doane, and even Mulvey herself (in her article, 'Afterthoughts on "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", inspired by Duel in the Sun' (1981)) all raise this concern. Particularly, Doane argues that a woman viewing women on screen undergoes a distinct process; whereas Mulvey stresses the male viewer's 'terror of potential lack', Doane claims that on-screen women can also represent a haunting 'lack of a lack' to the female viewer,[15] an idea which, as we will see, is particularly relevant to our discussion of the works of Spark.

Another aspect of the critical reaction to Mulvey is the concern that her arguments are too explicitly psychoanalytical; Freud's Oedipus complex and notion of scopophilia, as well as Lacan's theory of the mirror-stage are integral to

[14] Mulvey, pp. 11-12.
[15] Mary Ann Doane, 'Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator', *Screen*, 23:3-4 (Autumn 1982), p. 79.

Mulvey's theory. Thus, later critics have attempted to re-situate Mulvey's concepts within the context of cultural studies and ethnography. Stacey's *Star Gazing: Hollywood and female spectatorship* (1994), for example, aims to 'straddle' both paradigms,[16] arguing that there are multiple processes of female viewing that centre on three major themes – escapism, identification, and consumption – thus refuting Doane as well as Mulvey, and chiming with Kuhn and also the concept of cinesthetics. Intriguingly, Stacey's focus on actual female cinema-goers raises the idea that the cinema is not always a haunting arena for women, as Mulvey and Doane suggest, but potentially an empowering cultural space. For example, Stacey argues that cinema represents an antidote to fear for most women: 'the extreme and dramatic context in which fear, anxiety, loss and confusion became the emotions of everyday life [during the War] produced a heightened desire to "escape into another world"'.[17] Stacey also implies that women's preferences drive the cinema industry: 'It was women who were seen as the key *motivators* of cinema-going'.[18] However, when Stacey later uses Rachel Bowlby's work (in her *Just Looking* (1985)) on women as primary and visual consumers to justify this approach, thus positing the cinema screen as a form of shop window, one is tempted to see this as a symptom of commercial manipulation rather than cultural empowerment. This concern is amplified when Stacey acknowledges that 'feminine identity was, and still is, constructed in

[16] Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing: Hollywood and female spectatorship* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 13.
[17] Stacey, p. 102.
[18] Stacey, p. 86.

relation to idealised images of desirability and sexual attractiveness which few, if any women ever feel they embody'.[19] This implies the idea that the codes of narrative cinema might deny women the vocabulary to express displeasure and disengagement, a notion clarified by Kuhn's suggestion that 'the female social audience can be caught up by the rhetoric of dominant cinema because on some level they identify with "masculine" codes of address'.[20] The binary implied here is particularly pertinent in the post-war period when one considers that the main alternative to the fetishised portrayal of women was to show them symbolising traditionally masculine roles; as Niamh Baker reminds us, during the War,

> newsreels had shown [women] operating heavy machinery, piloting planes, working on the land – a remarkable departure from the usual way of portraying women. These women did not look invitingly at the photographer but bent purposefully at their work, glamour and sex appeal sacrificed to practicality.[21]

Baker suggests that this is empowering for women, but this hardly represents the beginnings of a distinctive feminist discourse. It is the struggle within this binary to represent such discourse that conditions the novel (particularly those written by women) in the post-war period. So, while Stacey's work presents an apparent paradox, it is important to remember that it is based on the actual responses of cinema-goers and to note that the seemingly contradictory sense of 'passionate detachment' evoked is actually reflected in the response of women writers to cinema in the post-war period. It is this paradox which helps to contextualise the

[19] Stacey, p. 110.
[20] Kuhn, *Women's Pictures*, p. 64.
[21] Niamh Baker, *Women's Fiction in Postwar Britain 1945-60* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), p. 2.

recurring notion that women often want to disengage from cinema's objectifying culture while also finding its attractions difficult to deny.

The early novels of Spark, Banks, and Murdoch, written just before the blossom of second-wave feminism and its attendant criticism, have thus far avoided consideration in this context. However, by doing so, one can begin to understand, for example, that the apparently ethereal characters of Spark's early work often represent more than just the concept of an intangible and omnipotent God, as is often argued, but an anxious meditation on the substance of the female body and the position of its mind in the age of the feminine cinematic symbol. It also becomes clear that Dominic Head's insistence that Banks' *The L-Shaped Room* offers the promise of feminism but ultimately presents 'a timid reassertion of the [patriarchal] status quo' deserves closer analysis when the work is explicitly placed into a cinematic context.[22] Similarly, Brook's claim that 'the novel is an anatomy of shame, which becomes the affect that links its major characters' becomes reductive when the extent to which the cinematic offers forms of both empowerment and refuge is investigated.[23] Furthermore, G. S. Fraser's claim that Murdoch's mimesis is problematic because 'she presents characters who in such a world as ours *ought* to exist rather than characters whom we have met existing in it' can be re-examined in the context of a debate on how one should actually

[22] Dominic Head, *Modern British Fiction, 1950-2000* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 85.
[23] Brook, p. 114.

present a 'real' character,[24] particularly a female character, in the age of cinesthetics. What emerges from these investigations is an understanding that, whilst one can see many male post-war novelists seeking to create extratextual indices to their physical existence, many women writers of the era are driven by the same culture to cultivate a sense of distance from the body and to express, passionately, various forms of detachment.

[24] G.S. Fraser, *The Modern Writer and His World.* Rev. edn. (London: Andre Deutsch, 1964), p. 185.

12. MURIEL SPARK, CINEMATIC *STIMMUNG* AND DISEMBODIMENT

[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions].[1]

This 'terror' is expressed in Muriel Spark's drafts of her autobiography, *Curriculum Vitae* (1992). Intriguingly, this line was not included in the final version of the text, yet it represents suppressed emotions of fear and angst that are ever-present in Spark's utilisation of the cinematic in her early novels. Indeed, in contrast to the male writers discussed previously, it appears that Spark consistently attempts to use cinema to define a mood rather than bodies, but this is a mood that often fails to distance itself from the fear of being fetishised as a woman rather than being accepted as an intellectual. By investigating this dynamic in Spark's early novels, it becomes clear that the vaguely-distinguished sense of corporeality, which is often seen as an emblem of the postmodernism of Spark's novels, is defined, at least in part, by a feminist response to cinema-going culture. As will become clear, this response associates cinesthetics with fear in the female psyche, calls into question one's ability to create an indexically 'real' female character for cinesthetic readers, and most strikingly, seeks to usurp the 'fleshy' sensibility of cinesthetics with a discourse of disembodiment.

[1] Muriel Spark, 'Notes Concerning Edinburgh', Muriel Spark Archive, National Library of Scotland, Acc. 10989/200.

A stress on Spark's differences from other writers of the post-war period has become an integral aspect of criticism of her work. Introducing a 2008 issue of *Modern Fiction Studies* dedicated to Spark, David Herman's comprehensive review of the critical field posits that Spark 'in effect opted out of the two responses to modernism that David Lodge has called antimodernism and postmodernism' and 'chose a third path'.[2] Herman here borrows Marina MacKay's label of her as 'an amphibious figure' to encapsulate the idea that Spark's novels

> encompass tendencies displayed both by antimodernists advocating a midcentury return to realism and by postmodernist practitioners who did not share Spark's 'capacious sociability, [her] meticulous curiosity about the specificities of midcentury manners'.

Herman concludes that this provides 'grounds for the strong claim that her writing practices were in some sense dependent on the nonresolution of this dialectical tension'. Naturally, the term 'nonresolution' is problematic in an academic context and the wider acceptance of an almost unnameable mystique in Spark's writing has led to a raft of peculiarly intangible readings of her works, particularly regarding speculation on the extent to which Spark's deist Catholicism influences the relative omnipotence and embodiment of her abstracted narrators.

[2] David Herman, '"A salutary scar": Muriel Spark's desegregated art in the twenty-first century', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 54:3 (Fall 2008), pp. 473-5, quoting MacKay's contribution to the same edition of *MFS*.

One of the more productive readings to emerge from this sense of 'dialectical tension', however, is Patricia Waugh's argument that while many of Spark's characters are often seen attempting to touch the material world, the author simultaneously cuts 'those tacit and invisible threads that serve to bind selves to their historical worlds and that weave the texture of the realist novel'.[3] Waugh claims that, particularly in *The Driver's Seat* (1970) and *The Hothouse by the East River* (1973), Spark 'addresses not only our social roles and performances but also the very condition of our *ipseity*: the ontological underpinning of our fundamental sense and experience of selfhood and being as well as their historical modes of expression',[4] which involves 'an emptying out of the feeling of presence and self-presence'. As such, Spark's mode is, according to Waugh:

> a disturbing and uncanny one: familiar and yet displaced; almost realist, but not quite; seemingly postmodern, but not. Something central seems missing, something whose recovery might constitute, as Lise puts it in *The Driver's Seat*, 'Not really a presence… The lack of an absence, that's what it is'. […] What is missing for Lise – and for Spark in the metaphysical underpinnings of modernity – is this comfortable sense of self-presence, of being in and part of the world. […] Such a world takes on the strange and disturbing sense of what psychiatrists sometimes refer to as the *Stimmung*, the feeling or mood of eeriness experienced by psychotic and, in particular, schizophrenic sufferers'.[5]

Intriguingly, Waugh's analysis of Lise offers promising resonances for our own discussion of the influence of cinema-going. Primarily, the equivalence of

[3] Patricia Waugh, 'Muriel Spark and the Metaphysics of Modernity: Age, Secularization and Psychosis', in Herman (ed.), *Muriel Spark: Twenty-First-Century Perspectives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), p. 71.
[4] Waugh, pp. 64-5.
[5] Waugh, p. 66.

Lise's senses of displacement and interaction with the world appear rather similar to the catachretic confusion sensed by the cinesthetic reader, who feels physically part of an on-screen world which is almost real, but not quite. This alienated, abstracted sensibility is described as a 'lack of an absence' by Lise, which echoes the uncanny, Metzian ipseity of the cinema-going experience. Since Béla Balázs' *The Visible Man* (1924), the concept of *Stimmung* – a notoriously broad term denoting various 'moods' – has also been a vital part of the vocabulary of cinematic affect, with Lotte Eisner relating it most clearly to the eerie, perturbing shadow and light of German Expressionism, arguing that it elicits 'a mystical and singular harmony amongst the chaos of things, a kind of sorrowful nostalgia mixed with well-being, languor coloured with desire, lust of body and soul'.[6] Most relevantly, feminist cinema critic Mary Ann Doane also draws on the Metzian model of absence-as-presence to illuminate the relationship between women, haunted desire and cinematic spectatorship. Doane quotes Metz's insistence that 'desire depends on the infinite pursuit of its absent object' and that thus, the 'voyeuristic desire' evoked by the cinema is the only desire that evokes such a 'fundamental rent'.[7] Doane diverges from Laura Mulvey's appropriation of Metz (which accounts for such an alienated sense of female *ipseity* through the concept of 'masculinisation'), however, to incorporate a consideration of the female gaze. Thus, Doane observes that the distance, the 'rent', between female

[6] Lotte Eisner, *The haunted screen: expressionism in the German cinema and the influence of Max Reinhardt* [1969], trans. Roger Greaves (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), p. 199.
[7] Christian Metz, 'The Imaginary Signifier', *Screen*, 16:2 (Summer 1975), p. 61.

subject and object in this model of spectatorship is negated by the female subject, as the female object thus 'demands a becoming', that it is an 'overwhelming presence-to-itself'.[8] Furthermore, Doane, agreeing with Michèle Montrelay, claims that 'this body so close, so excessive, prevents the woman from assuming a position similar to the man's in relation to signifying systems', as 'she is haunted by a loss of a loss, the lack of a lack that is so essential for the realisation of the ideals of the semiotic systems'.[9] This *Stimmung*, which is articulated in strikingly similar terms to the mood felt by Waugh, stems from a confusion in the signifying system that intends women to be a mysterious icon, insufficiently decipherable to the male gaze. Doane explains that the need for such women to be insufficiently 'real' stems from a semiotic understanding that, when a woman on screen becomes more than the male gaze's icon, but a sign of an actual, physical woman – although Doane does not state this, the affect aroused by such realisation is an *index* of her reality, the key component of cinematic realism, as opposed to the desirable icon – then the system fails, as 'it cannot disengage itself from the "real", from the concrete; it lacks the gap necessary for generalisability (for Saussure, this is the idea that, "Signs which are arbitrary realise better than others the ideal of the semiotic process")'.[10] Thus, in a cinesthetic age, a haunted, uncomfortable *Stimmung* of female ipseity can be aptly represented in the novel by reference to cinema-going and, particularly, by a compulsion to distance one's

[8] Mary Ann Doane, 'Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator', *Screen*, 23:3-4 (Autumn 1982), pp. 78-9.
[9] Doane, p. 79.
[10] Doane, p. 79.

self from the body in a cinematic context, to refuse the 'excessive' corporeal indexical symbol.

There seems, then, to be a promising correlation between the uneasy ipseity expressed by Spark – which, as Waugh argues, appears to be a response to the 'schizophrenia' of modernity – and the uncanny affects elicited by cinema. An examination of Spark's relationship with cinema and its presence in her early works suggests that the cinematic is consistently called upon to represent an abstract unease or terror and, in many cases, a compulsive desire for disembodiment. Thus, by investigating Spark's use of the cinematic in novels of the 1950s and 1960s, one can begin to understand more clearly the roots of the mysterious *Stimmung* which Waugh finds in the novels of the 1970s.

Spark and the Cinema

Considering the scrupulous life-archive amassed by Spark (now held, mostly, at the National Library of Scotland), there is remarkably little material to suggest Spark's membership of the movie-made generation. Indeed, in her early life, Spark seems remarkably distant from cinema-going culture for a girl of her age. Biographer Martin Stannard documents, for example, how on 'many evenings Muriel would sit at a small table in the back bedroom while her parents were out

dancing or at the cinema'.[11] It is not until Spark's teenage years that the cinema, which had provoked such 'terror' in childhood, can be glimpsed in her recollections, after Miss Kay – a teacher who would provide the model for the famous Miss Brodie[12] – 'took Frances and me to the theatre and to concerts, sometimes to a good film, paying out of her own pocket'.[13] Considering the experience of Miss Kay's tutelage, it is perhaps little wonder that the cinema becomes the site of an apparent intersection between intellectualism – the 'good' film suggesting the influence of post-Leavisite cultural imperatives – and sexuality in Spark's life. This sense of opposition is conveyed more clearly when Spark compares herself, in her autobiography, to the 'girls' who went up to Edinburgh University:

> I doubt if many of those university students could have told you who Gary Cooper was, Conrad Veidt (my pin-up), Madeleine Carrol, Marlene Dietrich. They could on the other hand write a dissertation on John Donne by the time they were twenty. (But so could I.)[14]

The assumption that the 'intellectual' young woman, a role Spark herself clearly aspires to, should be distant from cinema-going culture is balanced with the apparent pleasure of having a 'pin-up' of her own. It is perhaps unsurprising then that Conrad Veidt soon co-exists with, or is usurped by, actual 'boyfriends', as the cinema becomes a place of 'courting'. Spark recalls how

> there was always someone, mainly a boyfriend, to take me to a film. (I never went alone.) Greta Garbo, then young and prospering, *Anna*

[11] Martin Stannard, *Muriel Spark: the biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2009), p. 13.
[12] This is confirmed by Spark in her *Curriculum Vitae: autobiography* (London: Constable, 1992), p. 56.
[13] Spark, *Curriculum Vitae*, p. 64.
[14] Spark, *Curriculum Vitae*, p. 102.

> *Karenina* and *Camille*, and *The 39 Steps* directed by the flourishing Hitchcock, were among those new productions, now oldies, that entered my generation's imagination.[15]

Spark clearly identifies with the concept of a movie-made generation here, but her own personal interests concerning cinema-going appear to be tinged with certain social anxieties. Interestingly, the first sentence is originally written as **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**,[16] with Spark's amendment prioritising the importance of boyfriends as an element of cinema-going culture. This operates in tandem with the parenthesised but stark signal that she 'never went alone', which conveys a sense of perturbation (that, in this case, one assumes is broadly social) based on the necessity of being seen to have a boyfriend. Gone is the pleasure taken in the productive isolation of, for example, Philip Larkin's cinema-going, which one can see as a model of Siegfried Kracauer's 'lonely spectator' as the 'king of creation'.[17] Indeed, prioritising the act of being taken to the cinema by a boy – and its implied sense of what Mulvey calls '*to-be-looked-at-ness*'[18] – also emphasises female ipseity as a passive, objectified and physical sensibility, as opposed to a mental and creative act. This sense of unease, related to female ipseity, was to colour the presence of the cinematic in Spark's early novels.

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[15] Spark, *Curriculum Vitae*, p. 112.
[16] Spark, 'Curriculum Vitae, Chapter 3' (draft), Spark Archive, Acc. 10989/257, p. 36.
[17] Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* [1960] (Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 170-1.
[18] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', *Screen,* 16:3 (Autumn 1975), p. 11.

The presence of the cinematic in Spark's short story, 'Bang-Bang You're Dead' (1958), originating from her earlier experience of Africa, can be read as a distillation of her attitude towards the medium at the time she launches her career as a novelist. The story unreels the memory of a fading event when a family sit down to watch an 18-years-old home movie. The narrative states Sybil's initial aversion to watching this film: 'The Kodachrome reels had lain in their boxes in the dark of Sybil's cabin trunk. Why bother, when one's memory was clear?'[19] The collocation of film and darkness is striking, as is the medium's implied challenge, as a document, to Sybil's own sense of her history. As the reader begins to realise, the film prompts memories of a violent death, a shooting, and as the story draws to its conclusion, the proximity of film and death is stressed with the repetition of the word 'shoot' in its equivocal guises: the cook-boy is asked to 'shoot' the home movie (82); the elderly woman comments on those people being killed in 'shooting affairs' (84). The apparent violence of cinema affects Sybil significantly. When asked if she would like to see the last reel again, Sybil says to herself, 'Am I a woman, she thought calmly, or an intellectual monster? […] "Yes, I should like to see it again. It's an interesting experience"' (84). The affect of the medium creates another troubling challenge for Sybil's ipseity, this time dividing her sense of being a woman from being an intellectual, within the context of monstrosity. There is the quasi-Cartesian

[19] Spark, 'Bang-Bang You're Dead' [1958], in her *The Complete Short Stories* (London: Viking, 2001), p. 59. Other references to this story are included in parentheses.

implication that, as woman is presented as an antonym of intellectual, women should be naturally concerned with their corporeal urges (an idea which was, as we have seen, widely-held at the time, particularly concerning female cinema-goers), but that even the act of thinking otherwise is monstrous. This is also the last line of the story, so holds an intriguing symbolic weight. As is common in Spark's work (David Lodge comments on this in his definition of 'problematic novels',[20] as does Bran Nicol more recently[21]), the reader is invited to pull together the pieces of this cryptic, 'interesting' puzzle. It is tempting to conclude that Spark's use of the cinematic encapsulates feelings of anxiety, revulsion, possibly even terror, and that this is intended to convey the anxiety engendered by the competing pressures of her physical and intellectual status as a woman in a visual culture which does not naturally accept a synthesis of these statuses. Spark's use of the cinematic to signal distaste for the corporeal is distinct at this time; as we have seen in previous chapters, cinema had engendered a particularly 'fleshy' sense of cinesthetic character. As such, it also represents an attempted but failed refusal – Sybil does decide to watch the film again – to impose upon female intellectual identity the objectifying codes that cinema had fostered in the era. This struggle with the cinematic – which encompasses a desire to foster a disembodied, intellectual female ipseity, and ultimately to allow women to be represented as indexically 'real' rather than mysteriously iconic – can help one to

[20] See David Lodge, 'The Novelist at the Crossroads' [1969], in *The novelist at the crossroads: and other essays on fiction and criticism* (London: Routledge, 1986), pp. 24-6.
[21] See Bran Nicol, 'Reading Spark in the Age of Suspicion', in Herman (ed.), *Muriel Spark*.

understand the nature of the consciously detached and often uncanny sense of voice that Spark develops in the novels of this time.

The Early Novels

In Spark's early novels, the cinema is often used to represent the 'emptying out' of self-presence that Waugh finds in Spark's later work. This process' attendant *Stimmung* is remarkably consistently reinforced by the fact that, in these novels, cinema is unfailingly associated with notions of disembodiment and death. In the context of this discussion, it is perhaps ironic that Spark was able to complete her debut novel, *The Comforters* (1957), after receiving financial assistance from Graham Greene via his film-production company.[22] The novel is about a writer, Caroline, appearing to undergo a form of mental breakdown (perhaps not too dissimilar to Spark's own in the mid-Fifties, one imagines). As a result, Caroline's narrative produces an intensely self-referential, metafictional novel (it is no coincidence that Caroline's character is simultaneously writing a monograph entitled *Form in the Modern Novel*[23]) that challenges prevailing attitudes to realism by offering an account of how she 'hears' the novel being composed of her own thoughts. Strikingly, responses to and the expression of Caroline's neurotic *Stimmung* centres on concepts of her body: the first question that her sceptical

[22] See Stannard, p, 162.

[23] Spark, *The Comforters* [1957] (London: Virago, 2009), p. 48. Further references to this novel correspond to this edition.

partner Laurence asks on hearing her account of hearing the novel being written is, 'Was the author disembodied?' (84); an injured Caroline states that 'the physical pain convinces me that I'm not wholly a physical character' (146). The female becomes an index to reality, but, as Doane suggests of cinema, is also problematic in this symbolic context. This is seen most clearly in the depiction of Georgina Hogg, whose status as objectified female has previously been enforced through observations such as the fact that 'Laurence's interest in Georgina's bulging frontage was more documentary' (124). As Hogg is at the mercy of the gaze, particularly Caroline's in the narrative, she can be disconcertingly extinguished, such as when she momentarily 'vanishes' in the back of the car with Helena and the Baron. Tellingly, the most apt simile to describe Helena's experience of this is cinematic: 'It was as if there'd been a black-out at the films' (170). This remarkable, 'creepy' (174) refusal of the body, depicted in cinema-going terms, is assumed to be a 'telepathic illusion' (170) experienced by Helena and the Baron, yet Caroline intimates that Georgina does actually vanish as 'she has no private life whatsoever' and that, as her sleep is private (170), she cannot be 'real' in these moments. This follows on from a previous insistence that 'as soon as Mrs Hogg stepped into her room she disappeared […]. God knows where she went in her privacy' (142), a phrase later repeated to describe Georgina slipping under water to her death.[24] When Hogg is in danger of becoming more

[24] This may also be influenced by the Robert Montgomery film *Lady in the Lake* (1947), which sees a character known as Muriel drowning another woman in similar circumstances. The detective, Philip Marlowe, shares the surname of the heroine of Spark's next novel and the film features

than the icon with the 'tremendous bosom' (124), she is ruthlessly expunged, in line with the cinematic model of female ipseity.

The cinema also offers alternative expressions of female anxiety, particularly regarding physical and mental fears of being 'emptied out'. Spark's next novel, *Robinson* (1958), attracts investigations into the nature of its challenge to literary realism, particularly in terms of how it diverges from its classic realist ancestor, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).[25] However, one can also consider the apparent influence of a more contemporaneous representation of Crusoe's plight, Luis Buñuel's *Robinson Crusoe* (1954); his first colour film. The film's use of Pathé Color, with its vibrant tints, appears to influence the presentation of the character whom narrator January fears the most, the murderous misogynist Tom (who appears to be guilty of Robinson's murder; ironically, it is now a male whose body vanishes). Though Jan's son is seen to benefit from visits to the cinema, which leave him 'brimming with the exotic new world he had tasted' (53), the cinema instead offers Jan a vocabulary to express fear of physical harm. Even when Tom has 'soup tipped over him', an apparently mundane event, it is seen running 'down the front of his shirt and over the sheets, like blood in a Technicolor film'.[26] When Tom's behaviour becomes more menacing, Jan feels

distinctly misogynist and objectifying traits, particularly because of its use of a subjective viewpoint throughout the film.

[25] See, for example, Joseph Hynes, 'Trick or Truth? Reality in *Robinson*', in his *The Art of the Real: Muriel Spark's Novels* (London: Associated University Presses, 1988), pp. 16-34.

[26] Spark, *Robinson* (London: Macmillan, 1958), p. 17. Further references to this novel correspond to this edition.

'swallowed up in fear, in the gashes of red on the screen of my mind' (110). Conversely, the panic of escaping Tom's clutches is rendered as disappearing 'through the film of blue rising vapour' (164); similarly, the final shot of the film, showing Crusoe's escape from the island, fills the screen with a misty blue sea and sky.

As the title of Spark's third novel suggests, *Memento Mori* (1959) is even more preoccupied with a fear of death and the disintegration of one's ipseity. Again, cinema-going is enlisted to convey these senses, yet this time the emphasis is more on the fragmentation of mental faculties. The deterioration of Charmian's mental state is immediately signified when she addresses the question 'Did you have a nice evening at the pictures, Taylor?' erroneously,[27] to both Dame Lettie and Mrs Anthony; Taylor is Charmian's estranged companion. Cinema is used as a symbol of loss, a loss which is particularly associated with the deterioration of an older generation. As such, one learns that 'Mrs Emmeline Roberts, seventy-six, […] had been a cashier at the Odeon in the days when it *was* the Odeon' (8) and that Granny Taylor's nurse, regarding Dame Lettie, had only 'heard of dames as jokes, and at the pictures' (12).

[27] Spark, *Memento Mori* [1959] (London: Virago, 2010), p. 5. Further references to this novel correspond to this edition.

As Spark's fiction moves into the 1960s, her uses of the cinematic continue to be concentrated around the notions of fear and disembodiment. In one of Spark's most explicit studies of misogyny, *The Bachelors* (1960), recourse to a particularly sinister form of cinema-going is used to express the most damaging proclivities of the men in the novel. Mike's and Father Socket's shady 'winter venture' is:

> a private cinema show lasting half an hour. It compromised two films, entitled, respectively, *The Truth about Nudism* and *Nature's Way*. The three girls, who appeared on the stage in person afterwards, were more or less thrown in with the price of the ticket. Mike had thought the employment of these girls unnecessary. 'Suppose the place is raided, it is easier to destroy the film than to conceal the girls'.[28]

Clearly, this 'venture' caters for the interactive, cinesthetic perversions of male clients and commodifies the girls in an explicitly corporeal sense; as Socket states, 'the show would lose its attraction [...] without a peppering of real flesh and blood' (151). The relatively gruesome tone conveyed by the reference to blood also conditions the statement that collocates 'destroy' and 'girls' to imply a particularly violent, misogynist destruction of these women. Furthermore, it places the conflation of on-screen icon and real life body – creating the troublesome, anxiety-inducing, indexical female on-screen – into a particularly undesirable context. This correlation between the cinema and sinister male desire is also seen in a novel of the same year, *The Ballad of Peckham Rye,* when the devilish Dougal Douglas' pursuit of Elaine heads to the flicks. Dougal implores,

[28] Spark, *The Bachelors* (London: Macmillan, 1960), p. 151.

'Come on out to the pictures […] for fine evening though it is I'm inclined to a bit of darkness'.[29] Even the identity of the indomitable Miss Brodie is diminished by relation to the cinematic, when, in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), Sandy sees her as 'a dominant presence rather than a physical woman like Norma Shearer or Elizabeth Bergner',[30] which implies that her existence as an intellectual influence negates her physical female ipseity, particularly in terms of being considered a desirable sexual being, like these film stars are in Sandy's eyes. Indeed, the cinema-going Sandy, who has no trouble imagining 'sexual intercourse' with the fictional Alan Breck 'in her mind' (35) has difficulties when she tries to imagine Brodie in a similar position. Sandy is 'desperately trying to visualize the scene in the art room' (50) where Monica saw Brodie and Mr Lloyd kissing, but has to resort to an 'experimental re-enactment' (50) in which she instinctively replaces her own body with the otherwise intangible figure of Brodie. Tellingly, Sandy goes on to assume that Brodie's 'sexual feelings were satisfied by proxy' (111), by Rose's liaison with Teddy Lloyd. In contrast to the intellectual Brodie, Rose is 'famous for sex', seen as merely beautiful and is described as being 'addicted to the cinema' (109), mindlessly taking the five shillings that Mr Lloyd offers to paint portraits of her in order to feed her habit. The disparity between intellectual mind and sexual body in perceptions of female ipseity is again underpinned by cinematic structures which emphasise the

[29] Spark, *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* [1960] (London: Macmillan, 1970), p. 185.
[30] Spark, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* [1961]. Omnibus ed. (London: Everyman, 2004), p. 87. Further references to this novel correspond to this edition.

uncanny and unsettling nature of this 'fundamental rent'. It is significant, then, that as Spark's own image becomes more and more open to the public gaze, she soon consolidates her considerations of such unnerving disparities in her most cinematic novel.

The Public Image

The popular success of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* turns Spark into an international celebrity. As Stannard notes, she becomes the first British woman to receive an 'entire issue' of *New Yorker* magazine,[31] soon after the novel's publication. However, as the later novel *The Public Image* (1968) appears to confirm, such celebrity rejuvenates anxieties concerning her own objectification that Spark had worked hard to control and ameliorate from the late 1950s onwards. Stannard pinpoints the moment when Spark affirms a desire to control her public image as her response to a review of *Memento Mori*. In this review article, which includes an interview with Spark, Venetia Murray describes Spark as 'plumpish, fair-haired and forty-ish […] a little Hermione Baddeley';[32] Baddeley is a British film actress. Stannard reports that, after this, 'Muriel had demanded close control of her public image'.[33] Spark's sensitivity about this issue is implied in a letter from her editor Alan Maclean, which attempts to reassure

[31] Stannard, p. 253.
[32] Venetia Murray, 'Think About Death Says Muriel Spark', *Books and Bookmen* (April 1959), p. 15.
[33] Stannard, p. 210.

her – a new batch of publicity photographs 'are said to be ravishing'[34] – but also reveals the objectifying literary culture of the period. Spark, however, endeavours to take an unusual (one assumes from her demonstrative tone) amount of control over this issue, stating in a later reply to Maclean: **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]**.[35] Intriguingly, though this approach does appear to thwart further comparisons to Baddeley, it does not limit physical comparisons between Spark and other film actresses. For example, a letter from a reader is more interested in how Spark appears on screen than in her works, trilling: 'You are delightfully *photogénique*! Had one not known you were a writer one might have taken you for a distinguished actress'.[36] Stannard goes as far as to liken the anticipation of her autobiography to hanging on the words of a film star: 'Garbo speaks?'[37] It seems that, as a woman, Spark cannot escape such reductive references to her iconic status and thus cannot achieve a more productive sense of the disembodiment applied to many of her female characters in her early novels. In this context, it might seems peculiar that Spark endeavours to write a novel that, to a certain extent, plays with perceptions of her iconic status (and, as we will see, this is certainly how the novel is received). However, it is also in this context that one can understand *The Public Image* as Spark's meditation on the dynamics of iconicity and indexicality when one

[34] Alan Maclean, letter to Spark, 21 December 1959, Spark Archive, Acc. 10607/13.
[35] Spark, letter to Maclean, 28 July 1960, Spark Archive, Acc. 10607/14.
[36] Dr. Margaret M. Maison, letter to Spark, 3 July 1961, Spark Archive, Acc. 10607/15.
[37] Stannard, p. xv.

strives to represent a 'real' post-war woman for the consumption of a generation of cinesthetic readers.

The response to *The Public Image*, a novel about a British actress abroad, is very much concerned with the novel's connection to Spark's own celebrity status. As Karl Miller's review explicitly states, 'the new novel *could* perhaps be called confessional. Much is owed to the circumstances of Muriel Spark's new life as an international star novelist, with a public image of her own to bear'.[38] By this point in her career, Spark had indeed become a star. Stannard paints a vivid picture of 'Muriel in film-star mode, tremendous décollectage, relishing her role' outside New York's Astor Hotel in 1965.[39] An Oscar-winning film version of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* was about to go into production. Spark herself had moved to Rome in September 1966,[40] becoming part of the 'the café life of the Via Veneto where everyone who was not a tourist was in, or wanted to be in, a film' that becomes the subject of the novel.[41] With this connection in mind, it would seem surprising that Karl Markoff is moved to comment that 'Spark has difficulty infusing life into her ever present sense of the grotesque',[42] yet our examination of the novels suggests that this seeming 'unreality' emerges from Markoff's masculine viewpoint and that it is much more likely that Spark is continuing to

[38] Karl Miller, 'Shallowness Everywhere', *Times Literary Supplement* (13 June 1968), p. 612.
[39] Stannard, p. 313.
[40] See Stannard, p. 329.
[41] Spark, *The Public Image* (London: Macmillan, 1968), p. 23. Further references to this novel correspond to this edition.
[42] Karl Markoff, *Muriel Spark* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 46.

represent the 'emptied out' ipseity of the objectified female, now in an overwhelmingly cinematic context.

More than any of Spark's previous novels, *The Public Image* explicitly accepts and utilises the concepts of indexicality and extratextuality. However, their presences in the novel also imply that the reception of these tropes is much more constrained when applied to a female image, conditioned by the audiences' understanding of the different relationship between icon and index when representing the objectifying, active man and the objectified, passive woman. As we will see, Banks and Murdoch also encounter similar restraints, in contrast to the male writers discussed previously. For Spark, this problematic dynamic is embodied by the life of Annabel Christopher, an emerging star of the silver screen. Initially, Annabel attempts to take advantage of the indexicality of cinema-going culture, aiming to convey a 'public image' (repeated almost *ad nauseum* throughout the beginning of the novel) of her own life that would supplement her audience's acceptance of the 'reality' of her characters on screen. As such, after the success of *Minerva Arrives at Platform 10*, a film in which she stars with her husband, Frederick, 'both of their personal lives became […] within the pages of the world's popular magazines, a trailing extension of the film' (34), a phrase which captures the deictic nature of such indexicality. Annabel then a hires a secretary, Francesca, to pursue more aggressively her policy of creating an extratextual fiction of her married life. Thus, Francesca 'arranged the press

interviews and supervised the press photographers. She wrote some of the stories herself […]. She briefed the journalists and arranged the public image of Annabel Christopher and husband' (38). When a photographer comes to take a photo of Annabel in her nightdress, Francesca even 'disarranged the bed' (41) to fortify the impression of blissful married life. However, the problems of creating an indexical reality of the life of this type of female icon, the happily-married and sexually-active wife, are made apparent by Spark when the socially-accepted role is altered by the fact of Annabel's pregnancy. Just as Mulvey argues that once a woman on-screen raises her child into the symbolic, 'her meaning in the process is at an end',[43] so too does Spark show that Annabel's significance is irretrievably damaged when the reality of her motherhood disrupts the reception of the sexually-alluring woman on screen, amplified by the simultaneous breakdown of her marriage. Ironically, Frederick argues that 'the baby's only in aid of your public image' (46), failing to see the 'rent' it has caused in Annabel's own ipseity: 'The baby, Carl, was the only reality of her life. […] She felt a curious fear of display where the baby was concerned, as if this deep and complete satisfaction might be disfigured or melted away by some public image' (54). Annabel initially attempts to fight against the fearful *Stimmung* that emerges in her mind. Annabel 'gave out a few charming photographs of the baby, Carl, to the press' (51) and 'was determined not to be left by Frederick in the first years of the child's life to look round for a new husband, a new type of film, form a new household, change

[43] Mulvey, p. 6.

her successful public image for another or, possibly, no image at all' (49). However, Annabel soon realises that the change in her own reality cannot be sustained and that a remodelling of her public image has become necessary, including 'taking action in her marriage' (55) to divorce Frederick. Spark makes it clear that the constraints placed on this icon of femininity by her cinesthetic audience soon damage her own reality.

This objectifying context of a cinesthetic audience is emphasised throughout the novel by the obfuscation and disembodiment of women. Frederick is having an affair with a 'long-haired, peach-like beauty' (32), reducing the woman to the image of a fruit. Annabel herself sees a 'blurred' (73) woman at a party. Most significantly, Annabel herself is diminished. Annabel is first introduced as the 'tawny-eyed actress' (8) and we later learn that she has become known by a segmented body part through the intentions of her male director, Luigi Leopardi**,** who 'transformed her eyes, on picture-screens, into those of the Cat-Tiger' (13). Annabel becomes objectified by a man who seeks to make her in his own image – the Cat-Tiger as the Leopard – while also reducing her to something non-human and to a synecdoche of her body. Ironically, though, this zoomorphism is desired by Annabel as it represents a refusal of the objectifying anthropomorphic terms in which she is viewed. To begin with, Annabel is a described as a 'puny little thing […] with a peaky face and mousey hair' (10) which leads to her 'always being cast as a chit of a thing' (10) and

'demand for small parts in films, always of the same type: she was called for wherever a little slip of a thing was needed' (12). Previously then, the icon of Annabel's body leads to her becoming inscribed as 'chit of a thing' and a female sign: the typist, the housemaid, the waif. Tellingly though, the incarnation of the Cat-Tiger image does not stop her audience, so used to objectifying the female body, from viewing her in corporeal terms; while she wants to be known as 'the English Lady-Tiger of films' (9), she becomes 'fixed in the public imagination as the English Tiger-Lady' (34), which more explicitly emphasises her status as a female being by using 'Lady' as the noun rather than the adjective. When Annabel realises this, in common with Spark's other female protagonists she imposes the mind-body binary on her own ipseity. It is declared that Annabel 'had no means of knowing that she was, in fact, stupid, for after all, it is the deep core of stupidity that it thrives on the absence of a looking-glass' (13); the only way that Annabel learns to circumvent this harsh binary is to tell herself that, in this objectifying context, 'she did not need to be clever, she only had to exist' (16). Again, Spark emphasises that there is no place for the mind and the body to co-exist in the public understanding of a woman in a cinesthetic culture.

The novel goes on to emphasise that the only response to this culture open to Annabel is fear and disembodiment. Fotini Apostolou rightly argues that the novel 'considers the theme of the double death that is entailed in the process of seeing: the death of the gaze and the death by the gaze', but also claims that

Annabel represents a woman who 'completely embraces her artificiality'.[44] It is clear, though, that Annabel is instead 'emptied out' by the *Stimmung* that the clash between her received iconicity and desired indexicality provokes and that any seeming 'embrace' of her fate is conditioned by her status as an icon. Indeed, 'Annabel took fright at the whole mythology that had vapoured so thickly about her, and turned to Fredrick in real panic' (46). This fear takes hold completely when Frederick commits suicide, apparently to destroy Annabel's career by extratextuality; he later explains in his letters (which are to serve as indices for the public) that he kills himself at the time of a party he arranged for Annabel in order to dismantle her public image. Annabel is immediately aware of how this will be received – she dreams up the damning headlines – and her decline into cinematic *Stimmung* is swift. As she is being driven home from the hospital where Frederick's body lies, she starts to think of her life as a film:

> Then she was driven home through the intertwining dark-lit streets […]. The poisoner behind the black window-square, a man flattened against a wall with the daggers ready… she wondered how the film would end, and although she wanted to leave the cinema and go home, she wanted first to see the end. (92)

This response is conditioned by the impending death of her image as the embodiment of the ideal wife. Annabel's initial response is retreat to the old forms of her iconicity; she is 'ready to be seen as a frail, small, slip of a thing' (95) and invites the press and her neighbours into her house on the night of her

[44] Fotini Apostolou, 'Seduction, Simulacra and the Feminine: Spectacles and images in Muriel Spark's *The Public Image*', *Journal of Gender Studies*, 9:3 (2000), pp. 282-3.

husband's death to see the distressed widow, where they sit 'waiting for the next scene to transpire' (102). However, Annabel soon begins to understand that the indices of the reality of her life that are soon to be revealed in the public inquest into Frederick's death will compromise this attempt to resignify her status as an iconic woman. Annabel declines her next film, which is due to include a religious 'renunciation scene', when she acknowledges the effect of the index: 'The audience would start to laugh, it would be a joke if you have been an orgy woman in the papers' (145). Instead, Annabel begins to understand the audience's perspective by viewing her existence objectively, denoted by the repeated insistence that she is now 'making a movie script of it in [her] mind' (148) and 'directing [the] inquest like a movie' (180). It is only then that Annabel accepts a fate of disembodiment, through an image previously bestowed upon her by her husband. In his letters, Frederick had accused Annabel of being 'a beautiful shell, […] a collector's item, perfectly formed, a pearly shell – but empty' (141). After choosing to expose Frederick's letters at the inquest, against the advice of her male entourage, Annabel ends the novel 'as an empty shell':

> Nobody recognised her as she stood, having moved the baby to rest on her hip, conscious also of the baby in a sense weightlessly and perpetually within her, as an empty shell contains, by its very structure, the echo and harking image of former and former seas. (192)

Annabel uses the image of the empty shell to consciously deny her iconicity and its attendant desire to invoke what Mulvey calls 'to-be-looked-at-ness'. In doing this however, Annabel's relationship with her child, who is previously labelled 'the only reality in her life', has now been compromised; the child's presence is

mirrored by an absent-as-present child within, thus emphasising both the 'emptied out', haunted *Stimmung* foisted upon her and the disconcerting echo of the 'lack of a lack' of a child that suspends her ability to be a desirable cinematic icon.

Spark uses Annabel's relationship with cinema to represent a significant conflict of female ipseity in the post-war period: the desire of wanting to be a woman in the ways established by a dominant symbolic order, against the recognition that the necessary objectification and diminishment of one's intellect is undesirable. *The Public Image* also represents a culmination of Spark's investigation of the links between the uneasy *Stimmung* felt by women in the cinesthetic culture of the post-war age, the conflicting desire (to be liberated from objectification) and the fear (of losing one's iconic status as a woman) evoked by the prospect of disembodiment. Indeed, the relationship between cinema-going and female alienation in Spark's fiction represents the significant strand of feminist thought that sees cinema as a patriarchal tool of objectification, a sensibility that Mary Ann Doane sums up with the idea that 'the simple gesture of directing a camera toward a woman has become equivalent to a terrorist act'.[45] However, this apparently intrinsically-female response to this culture is far from the only one crafted by women writers of the period. As the next chapter

[45] Mary Ann Doane, 'Woman's Stake: Filming the Female Body', *October*, 17 (Summer 1981), p. 23.

demonstrates, the cinema is not only a medium that elicits alienation from cinema's patriarchal codes, but a culture that has the potential to be engaged with in order to create a uniquely feminist discourse.

13. LYNNE REID BANKS' 'ANTIFEMINIST-FEMINISM'

> *BANKS: I hope you'll forgive me for being very feminine and personal, but I adore your dress and I haven't seen anything like it over here. […] Could you stand up and let's have a look?*
> *AUDREY HEPBURN: Certainly*.[1]

When, years later, Lynne Reid Banks was shown by her daughter-in-law a video clip of this mid-interview request of one of the world's premier film stars, she was mildly surprised that the younger woman 'simply screamed with laughter' before informing her that 'nobody would do that nowadays'. Banks – the sole surviving member of the 'movie-made' writers examined in this thesis – reveals this when the roles are reversed and I interview her in May 2013,[2] during which she provides a vivid and valuable insight into the connections between cinema, women, and novel-writing in the post-war period. Although Banks may have slipped onto the periphery of the critical radar in the late-twentieth century (even though she continues to work as an extraordinarily successful writer of children's fiction), her contribution to and presence in the debate in hand are significant and timely. Primarily, it should be noted that Banks is immersed in the film world to a greater degree than most. As will be explored, she went from enraptured cinema-going in her childhood, to acting in front of the cameras as a student at RADA, to interviewing stars as one of the first female broadcast journalists, to

[1] Lynne Reid Banks interviews Audrey Hepburn, 1956, ITN, S20100601 1 91787 [http://www.itnsource.com] (Accessed: 8 May 2013).
[2] All of the references to Banks being interviewed are taken from this interview unless otherwise stated. A transcript of excerpts from this three-hour interview can be found in the Appendix to this thesis.

having her work adapted into Oscar-nominated and Hollywood-produced films. Banks' insights also come at a time when the debate on her importance as a 'post-war realist' and contemporary of the 'Angries' is re-emerging and reformulating. Susan Brook's *Literature and Cultural Criticism: The Feeling Male Body* (2007) discusses Banks in a chapter entitled 'Angry Young Women?'. Strikingly similarly, a few months before I interviewed Banks, Trinity College Dublin's 'Postwar British Fiction' course included Banks under the title 'Angry Young Women? Lynne Reid Banks' *The L-Shaped Room* (1960)'.[3] However, in a relatively recent interview for the *New Statesman*, Banks states that she 'knew John Osborne and all that crowd quite well […] but I'm not sure their actual writing and their lifestyle influenced me',[4] and by looking at the proximity of cinema and social realism in Banks' work, it becomes clear that these new labels may indeed be misleading. Though the insistence on such influence has become appealingly neat to critics, we can now instead look to Banks' relationship to cinema-going and cinematic aesthetics as more tangible influences on her fiction, which ultimately help to frame Banks' efforts to articulate female desires and anxieties in the post-war period.

[3] See [http://www.tcd.ie/English/assets/pdf/options_201213/Postwar%20British%20Fiction%20EP%20HT %201213.pdf] (Accessed: 10 June 2013).

[4] Banks, interview with Jonathan Derbyshire, 'The Books Interview: Lynne Reid Banks', *New Statesman* (10 September 2010) [http://www.newstatesman.com/books/2010/09/interview-israel-writing-write] (Accessed: 14 March 2013).

Banks and the Cinema

Banks' association with cinema spans decades, takes her to remarkable places, and has left deep impressions in her memory. As is typical of the movie-made generation, Banks appears to have imbibed this influence profoundly and subtly. On reflection, even she is surprised at how significant her relationship with the movies seems to be. When one delves into the history of this relationship, however, it becomes apparent that cinema-going was a formative experience for Banks. Even from childhood, cinema-going looms large in the memory. In our interview, Banks stresses that cinema-going was her 'chief entertainment' during her years as an evacuee in Canada. Cinema-going is also linked to landmarks of her life. For example, Banks states: 'My first date was *Lassie Come Home*. I was about fourteen'. This film was released in 1943, which would indeed have made Banks fourteen years old at the time; it is important to note the accuracy and reliability of Banks' recollections. It is the impressive detail of her reminiscences, however, which allows us to consider the ways in which the medium may have influenced the young Banks. Consider this description of Banks' earliest cinema-going memories:

> You know, one of the first movies I ever saw that really made a very big impression upon me was a film called the *Elephant Boy* [1937]. There was an iconic young Indian star called Sabu, who was very much the rage before the War. He grew up and became a film star and he faded away and he died quite young. It was a Kipling story, turned into a film about the British Raj, of course. This film was completely fascinating. The father was killed by a tiger. Very well done, by the way, at the time. There was a funeral for him by torchlight and he was wrapped in a white shroud. The little boy, who hadn't been told, sort of blundered in on this ceremony and

> he went up to this thing and fainted. And this absolutely got me by the… I was very moved by this. And of course Shirley Temple. And Deanna Durbin, who has only just died now. Incredible how they have lived; Shirley Temple is still alive! I went to children's films, but they were very good. And she – laugh if you may – she was a very talented child. We all wanted to do tap dancing and sing, and she had some very nice numbers. So all those films were absolutely part of my childhood. But whether it influenced me… But certainly the elephant business influenced me for life. One of my great dreams was to ride an elephant [as Sabu does in *Elephant Boy*].

This account manifests many of the significant hallmarks of the movie-made generation. Firstly, the detailed impression of the white shroud, and the emotions it elicits, is typical of the ways in which this generation links symbols to affects. Secondly, the desire to 'do tap dancing and sing' like Shirley Temple is a common expression of identificatory fantasy. Finally, the suggestion that the scene 'got me by the…' appears to be a reference to a physical, interactive, cinesthetic affect. Furthermore, Banks may well have developed an indexical connection to the figure of Sabu. Not only does she want to do what he does, but later in the interview Banks continues to discuss his character in the context of his appearance in *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940) – a film she labels as 'the best of the lot' – and is also aware of the circumstances of the actor's actual death.

These profound degrees of emotional influence and connection to figures-on-screen do not end with early childhood, however, but continue as Banks reaches adolescence. Banks goes on to discuss the impact of 'grown up films':

> I remember one of the first grown up films I ever saw. […] It was called *A Stolen Life* [1946], and it starred Bette Davis as twin sisters; a bad one, and a good one. The good one really fancied the bad one's husband, of course.

> She was single and the other one was married and giving her husband a terrible time. One day they go out in a yacht, a storm blows up, the yacht capsizes. They both go into the drink and the good one clutches the bad one's hand to save her, of course. However, the good one goes to her doom and the other one pulls off her wedding ring. I remember this clearly and distinctly. When she wakes up, somebody says, 'We found your wedding ring clutched in your hand and put it back on your finger'. Need I say… She pretends to be the dead one and goes to the husband, who mysteriously and unbelievably is fooled. I just thought this is wonderful. From then on, Bette Davis was my favourite star for a long time. I always remembered this as my first really grown-up movie.

Interestingly, *A Stolen Life* was advertised using the tagline 'Bette Davis now lives her *most vibrant* love story'. Davis' portrayal certainly affects Banks and, in the age of identificatory fantasy, its model of female behaviour provides an intriguing template for a young woman to follow. As will be discussed, the vestiges of this influence can also be seen in Banks' 'grown up' fiction, particularly in terms of how starkly and superficially that female desire might be understood by unconvincing men in the cinematic age.

One of the ways in which Banks attempts to emulate figures like Bette Davis is undeniable: she wanted to be an actress. When Banks enrolled at RADA, her ambitions lay distinctly within the theatre, but movies were a vital part of the culture. Banks somewhat reluctantly states that, 'of course, we went to the movies incidentally', yet their impact on her life was growing in significance. Not only was Banks exposed to new types of films – 'One of the films that made the biggest impressions on me was *Les Enfants du Paradis*. And we went to a lot of Alfred

Hitchcock' – but she was becoming more aware of the publicity surrounding such films:

> I remember going up the Tube and on the side was a whole series of ads which simply said 'The Birds Is Coming'. I went to see that, and the one with the girl who had to have her horse shot. Tippi Hedren, poor girl, as we discover; Alfred Hitchcock being horrible. Oh yes, *Marnie.* And *Rope*, which was based on a real case, which we knew.

Of course, the fact that a budding actor at RADA was becoming more aware of the movie industry is perhaps unsurprising. Clearly, though, and crucially, Banks is aware of the real life that has an indexical connection – the horse killed in the film is an index to Hedren's own unfortunate circumstances – to the character on screen. Furthermore, it was at this point in Banks' life that it was now possible that she may be called upon to appear in films herself. As Banks explains, this did indeed become the case:

> I think Dorothy Tutin was in my year, who did *The Beggar's Opera* with Olivier. Some of the men certainly went into *I'm All Right Jack* and all those sorts of films. I was in one movie, in the background. I can remember crouching, in a lot of hay. Who knows what it was all about! Prunella Scales was in it with me. […] It never came to anything. I don't think it ever came out actually.

Although Banks evaded an appearance on the silver screen, she certainly went on to make her mark on the small one. After RADA, Banks was employed as one of the first female news reporters for ITN. As a woman on screen, Banks was pigeonholed by men and subject to their interactive desires when she encountered them in life. As Banks explains, 'we used to do *vox populi*, interviews, which was quite something at first, as men thought we were

soliciting'. Banks soon became a recognisable figure – 'after a while, they got the idea, then you'd be mobbed, as everybody wanted to be on telly' – and, as will be discussed below, this certainly conditioned the expectations of readers of her later novels. However, her role at ITN was still restricted to 'feminine' duties, which very often meant interviewing fantastically famous film stars. When one reviews the footage of these interviews, such as the 'very feminine and personal' encounter with Hepburn discussed above, it becomes clear that cinema culture was playing the role of gender-stereotype-maintainer with gusto. It is clear that Banks' questioning is meant to reflect and reinforce 'feminine interests'. In another interview, Banks asks Olivia de Havilland, 'Miss de Havilland, a lot has been said about your belief in yoga as a method for keeping young and slim. How did you first get into it?'[5] Rather than ask Mike Todd about his cinematic ventures, she enquires about what presents he buys Elizabeth Taylor now that they are married.[6] Consistently, Banks' line of questioning assumes matrimonial constraints on the ambitions of female actors and often detracts from women's achievements in the face of male success. For example, Banks asks Elizabeth Taylor (married to Mike Todd), 'Don't you long to be directed by your husband?'[7] Banks informs rather than congratulates June Allyson: 'You've been making a film with Rossano Brazzi […]. The women of the world will want to know what

[5] Banks interviews Olivia de Havilland, 17 September 1958, ITN, S23030702 91331 1 [http://www.itnsource.com] (Accessed: 8 May 2013).
[6] Banks interviews Mike Todd, ITN, 5 May 1957, S23010701 46722 1 [http://www.itnsource.com] (Accessed: 8 May 2013).
[7] Banks interviews Elizabeth Taylor and Mike Todd, ITN, 16 January 1958, S23030702 0 1 [http://www.itnsource.com] (Accessed: 8 May 2013).

he's like to play opposite'.[8] When questioned herself in 2013, Banks defends this tone as 'diffident', but it is clear that Banks was constrained and limited in the role. When Banks does try and elevate the discussion, such as when she asks Jean Cocteau at the Cannes Film Festival, 'Mr Cocteau, do you think the cinema is an art?',[9] she is hectored. More commonly, one finds compliant interviewees once Banks has adopted the traditional, feminine, maternal role. Thus, rather than ask Charlie Chaplin about art, she expresses concern about his son's welfare.[10] The first question that Banks asks Rita Hayworth is, 'Miss Hayworth, this is the first time you've been with your children for quite a few weeks, isn't it? Are you very excited to see them again?'[11] This awareness of the public interest in women's social roles becomes part of Banks' writing when the well-known 'woman from TV' publishes her first novel in 1960, but, as will be argued, her own immersion in the world of the movies and its affects also conditions a distinctly cinematic aspect of her work's social realism.

[8] Banks interviews June Allyson, ITN, 1956, S20100601 62135 1 [http://www.itnsource.com] (Accessed: 8 May 2013).
[9] Banks interviews Jean Cocteau, ITN, 5 May 1957, S23010701 42473 1 [http://www.itnsource.com] (Accessed: 8 May 2013).
[10] Banks interviews Charlie Chaplin, ITN, 9 September 1957, S23010701 1 87609 [http://www.itnsource.com] (Accessed: 8 May 2013).
[11] Banks interviews Rita Hayworth, ITN, 1956, S20100601 43980 1 [http://www.itnsource.com] (Accessed: 8 May 2013).

'The L-Shaped Room Trilogy'

In 1960, Banks published her first novel, *The L-Shaped Room*, and it almost immediately cast her into the domain of the Angry Young Men. Indeed, the novel appears to have aspired to such attention; it is perhaps an intended irony that the father of the protagonist's child is 'a leading light in a go-ahead new publishing house specialising in novels by Angry Young Men' (125).[12] In a Chatto & Windus advertisement in the *TLS*, Penelope Mortimer declares that Banks' novel makes her part of 'the growing group of responsible writers who are ambitious enough to present life as they see it'.[13] Even now, its seemingly 'angry', social realist elements form the basis of any critical attention afforded to Banks (particularly in terms of the emergence of the 'angry young women?' question mentioned above). In a recent reappraisal of the novel Lesley MacDowell claims:

> This is an angry tale in many ways, with an inextinguishable fire of authenticity. Reid Banks' journalistic style, as well as her eye for detail, is perfectly suited to the theme, and a documentary feel rather than a poetic register strengthens the impact of her message.[14]

Fifty years on, MacDowell concurs with Mortimer that Banks' debut demonstrates a talented 'eye' for 'real life'. MacDowell's assertion that the novel is 'angry', however, was not an opinion voiced by Mortimer at the time and it certainly was not universally held on the book's publication that it was a

[12] References to this novel are taken from the 2004 Vintage edition.
[13] Chatto & Windus advertisement, *Times Literary Supplement* (4 November 1960), p. 708.
[14] Lesley MacDowell, 'The L-Shaped Room, By Lynne Reid Banks', *Independent* (26 September 2010) [http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/the-lshaped-room-by-lynne-reid-banks-2086663.html] (Accessed: 14 March 2013).

scorchingly realist work. Anthony Cronin's review for the *TLS* claims that although 'Miss Banks has much of the insight, the understanding and the plain common sense of the good magazine-story writer, she also has the technique of substituting clichés for crucial realities'. He goes on to claim that, in the novel, 'reality has been thoroughly killed by kindness'.[15] Much more recently, Bernard Bergonzi claims that the novel 'is grossly sentimental, in ways that are sometimes reminiscent of Dickens at his direst'.[16] Surely, then, the original assumption that this post-war novel about social problems should be discussed in the same breath as classic social realism should not be re-emerging. Yet the conclusion of the novel offers a contradictory clue regarding its own sense of realism: Jane Graham, the protagonist, meets who is now in her l-shaped rented room on the last page and declares 'I could see the future as clearly as if I were sitting through a film for the second time' (269). The suggestion that the reader has just had a cinematic experience is striking and, again, the sense that this novel owes as much to cinema-going as to classic realism becomes apparent. By considering the influence of the cinema on this novel and the rest of its 'trilogy' in more detail, one can begin to understand how the medium conditions Banks' presentation of perception, gender, and the act of writing itself.

[15] Anthony Cronin, 'Coining Realities', *Times Literary Supplement* (18 November 1960), p. 737.
[16] Bernard Bergonzi, 'The Novel in 1960', in Marina MacKay & Lyndsey Stonebridge (eds.), *British Fiction After Modernism: The Novel at Mid-Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 209.

Understandably, many interviewers are keen to lull Banks into admitting that she was reading – and thus influenced by – the 'Angry' novels of the Fifties. However, when one considers the presentation of novel-writing in *The L-Shaped Room,* it is the cinema that emerges as a more significant influence. Toby Coleman is a 'serious' novelist who faces writer's block. One of his forms of procrastination is cinema-going; he states that 'on the way back [from a walk] I'll detour past a cinema which will be showing some piece of rubbish that I've no real wish to see, but I'll tell myself to study every market, and in I'll go' (40). At this point in the novel, the somewhat Leavisite Toby explicitly distances his writing from cinema, labelling the cinema-going reader as one of the least important of various 'markets', or readerships, and making it clear that he does not value cinema from an aesthetic point of view. However, it later becomes clear that Toby's *magnum opus* is heavily reliant on cinema. When Toby outlines his work, he finds the subject of his novel 'a bit difficult to explain in a few words. There's this man you see. He's a cameraman for a newsreel company, and it's a good job financially, but he's not satisfied with it; he wants to be a film producer' (80). Not only is the subject of the novel based on the movie industry, but even Toby's own explanation of it suggests writing's reliance on the cinematic. Images come more easily than 'difficult' words to this cinema-going writer. Toby's 'you see' implies the assumption of a cinesthetic reader in a way that is strikingly similar to the narrative of Colin MacInnes' *Absolute Beginners*. The 'newsreel' offers a nod to the

writer's awareness of cinema's apparently unrivalled capacity to produce authentic documentary realism.

Accordingly, discussion of how Toby's novel will be received revolves almost exclusively around the cinematic. This is, however, much to Toby's chagrin. Although Toby describes the fact that his protagonist's wife understands his desire to become a movie producer as 'the whole point' (81) of the novel, he is still perplexed by reactions that embrace the novel's cinematic core. When the idea is explained to Mavis, for example, she seizes upon the link to cinema and craves more, offering the suggestion: 'Why couldn't you have the wife not understand him, and drive him into the arms of another girl – a film star, say?' Mavis emphatically concludes, 'I like it being to do with the films' (81). Banks' own acknowledgment of the emergence of the cinesthetic reader is clear. Toby, however, 'looked at her uncomprehendingly, as if she'd suddenly started speaking in a foreign language' (81), claiming, 'Mavis, it's nothing really to do with films', but with the telling concession to follow: 'as such' (81). Toby goes on to express his disbelief that 'all [Mavis] could see in it was the film angle' and, notably, stresses her gender (with a strikingly similar emphasis to Siegfried Kracauer's theories on spectatorship in his 'The Little Shop Girls Go to the Movies' (1927)) as the root of the problem, declaring that 'you might as well describe your plot to a shop-girl in Woolworth's and hope she'd see its possibilities' (82). Jane's cool reassurance that Mavis is 'not part of your public'

(82) is meant to comfort Toby, but highlights Banks' own understanding of the misogynistic attitudes towards cinema-going female readers held within post-war literary culture. The hypocrisy of such attitudes is most significantly underlined when it transpires that Toby is directly inspired by cinema to commence the act of writing. Toby's denial of the cinematic parallels a long period of writer's block, yet he is ultimately inspired by film when 'one night he had come in from a particularly insipid and boring film and had sat down in front of his table, picked up a pen' (263) and wrote out his novel to completion. Banks is not only emphasizing the futility of denying affinities between cinema and the post-war novel, but also stressing that novel-writing – particularly by and for women – must actually embrace the cinema.

Banks also addresses the link between gender and cinema more directly, using it to aid representations of female concerns of the period and, to a certain extent, positioning the culture and imagery of cinema-going going as a sanctuary for considering the position of women in society. Thus far, critics have judged Banks' feminist sensibilities rather harshly. Deborah Philips bluntly claims that Banks does not 'have the language or sensibility of a feminist consciousness',[17] although does little to ameliorate this shortcoming by discussing the novel in terms of the work of male contemporaries: the arrival of Jane at her bed-sit 'evokes Joe Lampton's arrival in Dufton' in Braine's debut novel; Toby is 'clearly

[17] Deborah Philips, *Women's Fiction 1945-1960* (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 46.

in the mould of the Angry Young Man'; 'John is a character who could belong to Colin MacInnes' 1959 novel *Absolute Beginners*'.[18] In a similar vein, Susan Brook claims that *The L-Shaped Room* is an example of a text which '"mimic[s]" the angry narrative with the effects that Homi Bhabha describes in relation to colonial mimicry',[19] implying that Banks is describing sexist oppression in the language that oppresses. Although Dominic Head's critique of the novel stands out by acknowledging 'a dawning feminist consciousness' in its pages, he also proceeds to argue that 'the critique of misogyny seems ultimately to be weakened by attitudes that partially reinforce it'.[20] This ultimately leads Head to the conclusion that the novel is in 'need for a fully independent feminism that [it] cannot adequately frame'.[21] However, a consideration of Banks' presentation of the relationship between cinema and gender might help explain this antifeminist-feminist dichotomy. It appears that Banks acknowledges the medium's inherent sexism while using it as the foundations of her representations of subjugated female consciousness, thus forming a crude, but cinesthetic, 'proto-feminist' perspective.

Primarily, cinema-going offers forms to convey the sense of being subjected and marginalised as a woman in a patriarchal society. For example,

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[18] Philips, p. 41.
[19] Susan Brook, *Literature and Cultural Criticism in the 1950s: The Feeling Male Body* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 107.
[20] Dominic Head, *Modern British Fiction, 1950-2000* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 85.
[21] Head, p. 86.

when Dr Graham is examining Jane and asks about the father of the baby, the sense of dislocation is described in cinema-going terms: 'It was like watching a film in which there is suddenly a large, clumsy cut, and you're left not knowing what has been missed out, not quite understanding what's happening now' (28). Later, when Jane's housemates enquire about her health after a near miscarriage, the scene is rendered as a cinematic event, where 'the lights had been turned off, and we happened to be sitting in the patch of light thrown by one small lamp. All round were people in the gloom – an audience of attentive and potentially malignant strangers' (186). Although it is unsurprising that a character who 'was trying to be an actress' (11) imagines herself as the subject of cinematic projection, such imagery – while implicitly criticising cinema's sexist modes of representation – also offers a form of expression to women who are, Banks assumes, immersed in the codes of the culture.

It is also made clear that women are not merely the passive consumers of the medium as may be suggested by Mavis' reaction to Toby's novel. Jane's job also allows Banks to present her as a woman who moves beyond being the passive subject of a gaze towards the active roles that facilitate cinematic indexicality. In doing so, Jane is seen to challenge the cinematic gender roles to an extent that far surpasses Banks' own timid questioning of Audrey Hepburn's fashions. After Jane and Toby finally sleep together, she has to leave the bed early next morning to work on 'the historic meeting of a famous comic and a famous

bust who were going to make a film together' (98). The female actress is henceforth referred to as 'the lady with the bosom' (101) and 'the celebrated bust' (102) who stirs the male journalists to cinesthetic leering. Pointedly, Jane vomits at the feet of this artificial embodiment of ontological pornography, crudely symbolising female revulsion at such visual objectification.

The professional link between Banks and Jane also suggests an understanding of two major hallmarks of cinesthetic literature: indexicality and extratextual character. Banks was certainly aware that readers would feel that Jane's 'predicament' must certainly reflect that of Banks herself. Banks states in our interview: **'**My mother warned me that everyone would think it was based on truth. I said, "If I wrote a book about a psychopathic killer, would they be looking for the bodies?" She said, "They'll be looking for the babies, dear, believe me"'. However, Banks emphasises the artificiality of such scandal by allowing her female protagonist to take strength from the situation, by again re-framing it in cinematic terms. Jane thus glamorises her new job in a café after a scandalous theatre-company entanglement in cinematic terms, insisting that 'what I didn't realise was that what I'd done was the local equivalent of Ingrid Bergman getting a job as a hat-check girl in the Regent Palace Hotel right after the Rossellini scandal' (16). Although this may be a case of others scornfully projecting cinematic tropes onto the life of a young woman, Jane appears to fortify her own self-esteem through such identificatory fantasy. Indeed, Banks herself claims that

the inclusion of the Bergman scandal 'was just adding tremendously to the excitement of her [Bergman's] whole cinema thing, the whole Hollywood thing' and that she 'actually rather liked that comparison'. This sense of female self-identification, coupled with a consideration of the cinema's influence on the novel itself, suggests that Banks is using the cinema in ways that attempt to reclaim the codes of an apparently 'female' medium that had come to be dominated by men. When one considers the next two novels of the 'L-Shaped Room Trilogy', it becomes clear that Banks attempts to establish such ideas as a consistent form of expression for her writing.

The significance of cinema in *The Backward Shadow* (1970) could so easily have come to represent a case of capitulation.[22] Initially, cinema is once again conscripted as short-hand for poor artistic taste and tawdry money making, with Toby insisting that 'you only make money from movie sales' (23) and envisioning 'on the marquees [of cinemas] now – Toby Coleman's *Brave Coward*' (24); ironically, Toby's novel is a 'success' and it has been adapted for the cinema. This brings to mind Banks' first, disenchanting encounter with film adaptation; *The L-Shaped Room* was adapted and released in 1962. When discussing the recent death of the film's director, Bryan Forbes, Banks conveys that she felt exploited by the industry and that she 'didn't have any control at all' to defend against the 'extraordinary liberties' taken with her work. There are some obvious signs of

[22] References to this novel are from the 1972 Penguin edition.

Banks' marginalisation in the process, including the fact that Toby rather than Jane is presented as the author of the story when he hands a manuscript entitled 'The L-Shaped Room' to her near the film's end. Banks was particularly incensed by the fact that the essence of Jane's character was so freely abused: 'She is supposed to grow towards some kind of independence, not wish herself back onto her Catholic French family'. Clearly, Banks is unimpressed by how women, and particularly women writers, are treated by the cinema.

However, Banks (fortunately, very soon before his death) reconciled with Forbes, and cinema-going is again co-opted to represent forms of social engagement. Once more, cinema is a catalyst. When Jane is at one of her lowest ebbs in the novel, she 'wandered into the only local cinema [...] and watched the last three-quarters of quite a good film for nothing'. She then sank 'without trace into the pure escapism of that movie – an hour and a half of total relaxation' (132). Now 'feeling almost happy' (132), the experience of cinema-going spurs her to action, which involves driving into London to see John: 'I had never felt so wide awake in my life. [...] My whole body seemed to be trembling with the need for some action' (133). Jane's escapist cinema-going is not frivolous; the cinesthetic sense it engenders allows her life – and the novel – to progress.

Cinematic tropes are also used to help articulate and deal with the threatening 'otherness' of male characters. As *The L-Shaped Room* draws to its

conclusion, Terry follows Jane and 'looked so much like a traditional film stalker that I felt no more than a trivial, fictional alarm. But just to amuse myself I pretended that he was following me' (229). Similarly, at the beginning of *The Backward Shadow*, Toby 'made a strangler's gesture that was straight out of a Danziger Brothers B picture' (18). By rendering the potential physical threat of men as low-grade cinema, their predatory element is subverted to convey a reassuring and empowering sense of ridiculous masculinity. The use of cinema to convey the inadequacy of men is continued in the trilogy's third instalment, *Two is Lonely* (1974),[23] a novel concerned with how to reconnect David with his father and the problems that this entails. Although critic Jane Miller might well be justified in highlighting the 'tired' nature of the book as well as its protagonist,[24] this label also applies to Terry, particularly because the one-time agent for Angry Young Men has been rendered as a 'film star'. In the first chapter Jane comes across a photo of Terry in a film magazine. He is 'somehow indefinably altered, not merely by years'. The caption reads: 'Terence Boyden, ex-rep actor who for the past seven years has neglected show business for the world of publishing, returns with a new smile (a *new* smile?) and, so he tells us, a film contract only waiting for his signature…'. Jane questions the authenticity of his smile and also notes that 'some trick of the photographer's light had invested his head with a sort of halo' and that 'he no longer looked quite male,

[23] References to this novel are taken from the Kindle edition.
[24] Jane Miller, 'Mateless Days', *Times Literary Supplement* (22 March 1974), p. 282.

or even quite human'. Banks challenges the cultural authority invested in 'haloed' male movie stars in order to represent Terry's deceit and ridiculousness. When questioned about this development, Banks states:

> I never had much sympathy for Terry. I always thought he was a bit of a callow actor-type. There are these very self-interested, selfish, careless people. We know that, to say the least, he hadn't been very nice to his wife. So I just thought I'd make him a failed film star, who messed around with his teeth and hadn't made it. I just thought that that was the kind of future he was heading for. He would change himself physically and do whatever's necessary in order to make it and to look right. It did have something to say, in the background I suppose, about the film world and how you have to fit in to that and be whatever you're expected to be and change yourself in order to get the great rewards of stardom. And then you almost certainly won't get them.

Both Banks and the novel make it clear that Terry deserves to fail; his failure in this profession is confirmed when Terry's wife reveals that the 'film he was going to be in was bunged on the shelf and him with it'. To some extent, Terry is rendered as a man who is victimised and abused by the movies just as much as women, yet it is made clear that his attitudes towards females are synonymous with the smiling sexism of cinema.

Two is Lonely also continues to use cinema as its catalyst for action, particularly through its presentation of young David's emerging understanding of cinematic indexicality. David has read the magazine containing Terry's picture and later reveals that he has found out that his father is going to be in a film being made 'at a place called Elm Tree', before requesting, 'Can we go and see it, Mummy?' This highlights David's cinesthetic desire for interaction, but also sets

up the potential for a situation where David would meet his father for the first time through cinematic projection; again, cinema conveys the insubstantiality of men. When this prospect is denied, David's plan to find his father emerges at the end of the novel, as told by his friend Amanda:

> He took that picture from the magazine, we'd cut it out and kept it and we used to look at it and make up stories about him. […] He was so silly, he thought his Daddy would be in a cinema, or that the studios would be near the cinema somewhere.

David's indexical understanding that his film-star father would be found in a cinema is ridiculed, but it is so strongly felt that it compels him to action. Amanda continues: 'We went to the cinema and while we were watching the film, right in the middle David said he wanted to go to the loo…'. Jane finally realises that David has gone to find his father at Elstree Studios. Terry is not there – his film has flopped – but David is found on this trail. Ultimately, cinema-going has allowed Jane to present the understanding that young children must not be denied access to their fathers, however pathetic they are. Throughout the trilogy, it has also allowed Banks to construct a distinctive, if problematic, antifeminist-feminist voice that appeals directly to cinema-going female readers.

An End to Running and Beyond

Banks' first novel published outside of the trilogy, *An End to Running* (1962), also utilises cinema in similar ways, though its female protagonist, Martha, more overtly places distance between herself and the medium. Indeed, outside the

trilogy, the language and imagery of cinema-going starts to become a more discreet theme. Martha has a hate-love relationship with the movies. When suitor Jim wants to take her on a date to the 'flicks' and suggests that 'this new ''Carry On'' thing sounds pretty tolerable',[25] Martha's narrative denounces it and demands a trip to the theatre instead. However, Martha often sees the world in cinematic terms: she is 'not a rebel without a cause' (18); she calls Anne-Marie 'an Ingmar Bergman blonde' (60); she sees Aaron giving her a 'suave, George-Sanders look' (80); to her, Jo looks like 'a beautiful spy' with a 'Garbo hat' (108). It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that she turns to cinema-going as a refuge from the opening night of the deliberately farcical play that she has – slightly unwillingly – concocted with Aaron: 'In the afternoon I went out again, this time to the cinema. It was a good film and while watching it I forgot everything else. By the time I came out, it was seven forty-five. The curtain had been up for fifteen minutes' (127). We are not invited to share the experience of the film, but assured that it is pleasurable and beneficial. This contrasts markedly with Aaron's attitudes to cinema. In his section of the narrative, cinema is only used to convey the rarely-felt *absence* of sexual desire, when he describes Martha's flatmate as 'a pretty little thing, all pert and blonde and cushiony, but it was like watching a very old film of a vamp, dead or aged long ago; it just didn't occur to me to want her' (151). Cinema is certainly not a male refuge either. Instead, Aaron wants to go to a kibbutz to find solace. Ironically, it is only Martha who is able to see their

[25] References to this novel are taken from the 1984 Penguin edition.

new home in Israel as a refuge and it appears that Banks uses the fact that Aaron does not discuss cinema-going in his narrative to emphasise his discomfort and alienation. Although Marigold Johnson's review sees the only positive aspect of this novel as 'the considerable documentary value of the picture of *kibbutz* life',[26] it actually – and conspicuously – excises the important role played by cinema-going in the life of a *kibbutzim*. As Banks explains:

> In the kibbutz, the weekly movie – which was usually Friday night – was something everybody went to. It was in English, the Hungarians and the Brazilians all went and it wasn't… it had Hebrew subtitles. It was in Hungarian, all the Brits went. Everybody went to the movie, whatever it was. And it was a period when the most impressive, the thing that made the most impact, was *Rosemary's Baby* [1968], in the Sixties. That was an amazingly… that was shocking. To me, the evil in the husband was really shocking. And everybody… talk about the water cooler! The next day, *everyone* talked about the film, in a way that certainly didn't happen in Canada. Certainly when I was at ITN, I don't think we bothered so much.

It is striking that this culture is not reflected in the novel. This circumvention of representations of cinema-going continues in a later (and under-rated) novel, *Children at the Gate* (1968). Protagonist Gerda's early aversion to films is confronted when Raya gives her 'a mock-incredulous look' and admonishes her: '*Don't like* films! Oh, you'd never make a kibbutznik!'[27] The implication that cinema-going then becomes part of her life is left unstated and suggests a movement in Banks' novels towards rendering the female sanctuary of cinema as a private, unuttered experience, at odds with the gender codes of literary culture.

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[26] Marigold Johnson, 'Never-Never-Land', *Times Literary Supplement* (12 October 1962), p. 789.
[27] Banks, *Children at the Gate* [1968] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), p. 51.

It might be easy to conclude that this move towards a more discreet and guarded representation of cinema and its culture in relation to the female experience reflects Banks own treatment at the hands of the industry. The issues encountered in relation to Forbes' film of *The L-Shaped Room* were not isolated incidents. Banks continued to felt shunned by the cinema, claiming:

> I can't think of a single book I've written which wouldn't make a bloody marvellous movie! I think they're all good movie material and I'm really rather hurt that only two of them have been made into movies. I can think of at least three that I'd like to write myself.

Banks' move towards successfully writing children's fiction is also affected by this relationship to the cinema:

> As for *The Indian in the Cupboard* [1980], least said, soonest mended. It was a travesty I thought. But, at the same time, I have to admit it's a nice family movie, it's just not my book. It should be made again I think.

However, the feeling that the medium's inherent 'antifeminism' could not accurately portray a feminist consciousness appears to be realised more and more clearly as the novels progress. Banks becomes aware that the lascivious gaze of the cinema has little affinity with her desired aesthetic, however much the culture of cinema-going forms part of the female experience. This realisation may have come during her time in Israel. As Banks explains (directly after admitting: 'I never thought I wrote so many references to films!'):

> I did like Ingmar Bergman. I didn't like *The Virgin Spring* [1960]. I saw that in Israel, in the city. We did visit Tel Aviv occasionally. I don't think that was in the kibbutz. That was my first full-on cinema rape. I had this idea even then that it would have been much more effective just to see the faces

> of the watchers, reflecting what was happening. My personal feeling is that this is often an artistic mistake.

Banks is alienated by the objectification of Birgitta Pettersson's (who plays rape-victim Karin) body on screen and also feels that cinema's 'mistake' in this area has yet to be rectified. Reflecting on her experience of watching Danny Boyle's recent film *Trance* (2013), Banks declares that 'I just couldn't take it. Not that I thought "I'm not liking this", but thinking "I'm *hating* this. This is horrendous and it's shocking and it's hurting me. I'm going"'. Banks' response to this visceral film demonstrates that the medium still has the power to elicit strong physical affects, but it has failed to live up to the relationship to the movies felt by the young movie-made Banks in her childhood: 'You do not have to – as evidenced by *Trance* and similar films – have any sympathetic characters. You do not have to identify with anybody, which in my day when we went to the movies, you certainly did'. In the context of this statement, Banks' decision to become a writer of children's fiction such as *The Indian in the Cupboard* may reflect a desire to return to the exotic and escapist fantasies felt by the young fan of Sabu's film career. Banks certainly sees the works she creates for her young readers as a type of refuge. As she explains about the reception of *The Indian in the Cupboard*:

> I have had kids say to me that they didn't like the movie because they had their own movie in their head about it and it was different. It sold five million copies in America by the time they made the film, so that's at least five million kids who made their own movie. If you come along and spoil that, or distort it, you've got a lot to answer for.

Although Banks may have lost her affection for the movies, it is still true that her post-war novels represent an experiment in challenging the sexist tropes of cinema by focusing on other affinities felt with the medium, in order to create a mode of writing novels by women, and – broadly – for women. With this in mind, it is not surprising to find that Banks is discussed in works in the vein of Niamh Baker's consideration of such 'female' fiction in the post-war period, in her *Women's Fiction in Postwar Britain 1945-60* (1989). Baker does not, however, feel that debates on Iris Murdoch or Muriel Spark are merited in such a context. Perhaps some of the elements of any perceived alienation from 'women's fiction' in the works of Murdoch and Spark may also be understood in the context of their relationship to cinema-going culture. Where Banks at one time sees a potential refuge for female identity, Spark consistently sees darkness, guilt, and fear. As will be discussed, where Banks sees expressive potential for women's fiction in the culture and language of cinema-going, Murdoch sees another net needing to be flown.

14. IRIS MURDOCH, PLATO'S CAVE AND FORMS OF ESCAPE

> *I was told at school that the cinema resembles the Cave in the Republic of Plato; a dark hole into which one retires in order to escape from reality and be entertained by shadows.*[1]

When reading most critical work on Iris Murdoch, it would seem that cinema itself resides in a 'dark hole'. In 2001, Peter Conradi, an eminent Murdoch-scholar, makes it clear that the debate about 'the relationship in her work between text and image [...] is long overdue'.[2] It is true that the work it introduces, Anne Rowe's *Salvation by Art: The Visual Arts and the Novels of Iris Murdoch*, does address this relationship, but certainly not in the department of cinema (beyond a brief discussion of the film set in *Under the Net*). More recently, Alex Ramon's '"Re-Seeing Reality" in Richard Eyre's *Iris* (2001)' (2012) tries to engage with Murdoch's own views on film (to a greater extent than all), but his pronouncements are tentative – Murdoch 'appears to have associated film *spectatorship* with a passive and indiscriminate consumption of questionable imagery',[3] for example – and his most important references are derived directly from Conradi, Rowe and *Under the Net*. Progress in this area thus seems depressingly Viconian.

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[1] Iris Murdoch, 'What I See in Cinema' [1956], in Josephine Ross (ed.), *The Vogue Bedside Book II* (London: Century, 1986), p. 187.

[2] Peter Conradi, 'Foreword', in Anne Rowe, *Salvation by Art: The Visual Arts and the Novels of Iris Murdoch* (Lampeter: Edward Mellen Press, 2001), p. viii.

[3] Alex Ramon, '"Re-Seeing Reality" in Richard Eyre's *Iris* (2001)', in Anne Rowe & Avril Horner (eds.), *Iris Murdoch: Texts and Contexts* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 226.

In fact, Murdoch's fascination with the shadows on the cave wall is a much more productive and discriminate process than Ramon attests. This chapter's epigraph comes from one of Murdoch's more obscure articles, 'What I See in Cinema' (1956) – it is not referenced by Ramon, who writes most directly on the links between Murdoch and cinema – and the intriguing blend of hauteur and allure that it conveys encourages one to incorporate the cinematic into an understanding of Murdoch's early writing. As will be explored, it becomes clear that Murdoch's early novels demonstrate a detailed engagement with the indefinite borders of one's perception of cinema's escapism and realism, progressing towards a distinctive debate on the gender dynamics of this process which is less inhibited than Spark's meditation on disembodiment and becomes more positively and distinctly 'female' than Banks' narratives. What emerges from Murdoch's exploration of the cultural influence of cinema-going is a sophisticated sense of the ways in which an 'escape' from models of analogical realism might manifest itself as a necessary 'detachment' from the 'to-be-looked-at-ness' of post-war visual culture.

Murdoch and 'Plato's Cave'

When one charts the traceable course of Murdoch's relationship with cinema, it progresses from a restricted engagement with the long-standing question of the cultural value of cinema, to more complicated considerations of the form and effects of the medium, particularly in terms of how it presents and conditions

women. In her very early years, although Murdoch's mother Rene 'adored the cinema', according to Conradi,[4] young Iris herself was surrounded by many more Leavisite views to the contrary. Murdoch's contemporary Indira Gandhi tells how films were regarded as 'mental dope' at their school, Badminton.[5] Murdoch was keen, however, to mediate between such cultural views of cinema. An article by her in the school newspaper from 1934, for example, appeals to 'lowbrows' and 'highbrows' to find 'a happy medium' and particularly urges highbrows not to 'leave the picture house immediately after the travel film has finished. Wait to see the other one, even if it is Mae West or Clark Gable. You may like it better than you think'.[6] Such engagement with cinema-going culture formed a significant part of Murdoch's time at Badminton. Whether she was playing the part (notably, according to the review[7]) of a Hollywood film producer in a comedy sketch for the sixth-form revue, or seconding the motion 'The cinema is a menace to culture' at the Debating Club,[8] or even, as Head Girl, giving the inauguration speech for the school's newly-built cinema,[9] Murdoch engages with the cultural significance of cinema from a young age. Interestingly, the first film shown at the school's cinema was Robert J. Flaherty's 'ethnofiction' *Man of Aran* (1934) and Murdoch is quoted as saying that she 'did not think that we should

[4] Conradi, *Iris Murdoch: A Life* (London: HarperCollins, 2001), p. 50.
[5] Quoted in Conradi, *Iris*, p. 66.
[6] Murdoch, 'Contrasting Views on Highbrows and Lowbrows', *Badminton School*, LXIV (Spring 1934), p. 23.
[7] See *Badminton School*, LXX (Summer 1936), p. 32.
[8] This debate took place on 15 December 1937. See *Badminton School*, LXXV (Autumn 1937), p. 19.
[9] The cinema was opened on 16 October 1937. See *Badminton School*, LXXV (Autumn 1937).

enjoy the films less because they were educational', according to C. Neville-Smith's bulletin. As Murdoch makes her way up to Oxford, it is clear that she is not only engaging with questions of the cultural significance of the ubiquitous medium, but also starting to evaluate the substance of its ability to elicit affects, such as the enjoyment that one can assume she and her peers associate with 'regular' cinema-going.

By the time that war had broken out, Murdoch's relationship with cinema-going becomes increasingly involved, demonstrating a taste for experiences that surpass the normal diet of the regular mid-century British cinema-goer. A letter to David Hicks passes judgement on the form of a striking choice of film for a young government worker and socialist, Veit Harlan's Nazi-era *Immensee* (1943): 'Colour admirable, full of subtlety & much superior to any English or Hollywood efforts'.[10] Conradi claims that Murdoch shared with Leonid Massine an admiration of René Clair's *Sous les toits des Paris* (1930),[11] a very early French sound film, re-runs of which were likely to be available only in a few London cinemas. Murdoch also writes to Hicks of being 'in the midst of a very complicated Jules Berry film last night, in which everyone talked *argot*'.[12] The film is likely to have been Edmond T. Gréville's *Dorothy Looks For Love* (*Dorothée cherche l'amour*, 1945), which was released in the same week (and in which Berry

[10] Murdoch, letter to David Hicks, 27 January 1946, in Conradi (ed.), *A Writer at War: Letters and Diaries 1939-45* (Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 288.
[11] Conradi, *Iris,* p. 169.
[12] Murdoch, letter to Hicks, 13 November 1945, in *A Writer at War,* p. 258.

plays Monsieur Pascal). Murdoch may even have been a Gréville aficionado, the type of relationship with a film star shared by many young people of this era, as he also acted in Clair's *Sous les toits des Paris*. However, the film he directs, in which a young girl is guided through lessons in love by a Heaven-sent, much older male billionaire, symbolises the classic stereotype of the objectified female which Murdoch begins to question at this time.

Indeed, Murdoch's war-time letters suggest her contemplation of the depiction of women on screen and of the effect that this has on women of her age. A letter to Frank Thompson recalls how Murdoch 'saw a film (in Glorious Technicolour) called "Arabian Nights"' and flippantly refers to its 'American glitter, wise cracks, spectacles' and, most emphatically, the ridiculous deployment of 'Lovely Girls'.[13] Another letter, to Marjorie Boulton, appears to refer to the effects of the prevalence of such 'candy-floss' women on screen when warning her friend that

[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions].[14]

The idea that Boulton has created her own sense of **[Text has been removed due to copyright restrictions]** chimes exactly with Jackie Stacey's findings of the affects of escapism and identification demonstrated by female cinema-goers of this era, particularly in terms of how one is encouraged to simulate vibrant on-

[13] Murdoch, letter to Frank Thompson, 17 February 1943, in *A Writer at War*, p. 131.
[14] Murdoch, letter to Marjorie Boulton, 5 November 1943, Iris Murdoch Archive, Kingston University, KUAS6/19/1/7, pp. 5, 8.

screen bodies and also disseminate indices that manipulate others' opinions of one's lifestyle. One can infer Murdoch's strong views on how the cinema's presentation of women – and its consumption by women themselves – affects both their cultural status and their own ipseity.

Considering this contemplation of a form of cinesthetic ipseity, it is significant that Murdoch's own cinema-going stirs profound emotions, such as the sadness and tears that flow every time she hears 'Oh the Pity of it All' from the Rita Hayworth film *My Gal Sal* (1942).[15] The song begins with the male pianist (Victor Mature) insisting, 'I wrote the words to this one myself', before reducing singer Hayworth to the fragmented name 'y-o-u' in the first line, then interrupting her in order to change her use of the word 'wouldn't' to 'couldn't' and only offering an encouraging 'uh-huh' when she echoes his phrases.[16] The way that Mature's character restricts Hayworth's performance is striking and is an indictment of feminist critics' insistence that classic Hollywood cinema is conditioned by patriarchal modes of presentation. The 'haunted', alienated ipseity evoked by such representation, as argued by Mary Ann Doane (as discussed previously), seems to have become a significant conditioning element of Murdoch's own cinema-going. Indeed, when, much later, Harold Hobson asks if she enjoys going to the cinema, Murdoch replies: 'The cinema upsets me

[15] See Conradi, *Iris,* p. 157: '[Clare Campbell] recalls that Iris could not at this time [1943] hear without crying the theme song from a film, "Oh the Pity of it All"'.
[16] See *My Gal Sal* (1942; Dir: Irving Cummings).

terribly when it's sad. Life is sad enough without that too. Crying at music is a kind of pleasure, but in the cinema I just get filled with a dangerous sort of self-pity'.[17] The predominance of sadness and pity, particularly within the corporeal context suggested by the notion of being 'filled', chimes with the *Stimmung* provoked within cinema-going women as represented in the works of Muriel Spark, as discussed previously. Murdoch is increasingly disturbed by cinematic forms of presentation. Furthermore, Murdoch shares with Spark an anxious meditation on how the cultural attitudes towards women encouraged by the medium infect public perceptions of women writers and intellectuals, particularly in terms of how cinema fosters assumptions of distance between the female body and mind. Writing to Hicks as the War draws to a close, she states that although a novel 'suitable to be made into film scripts' might make her money, she 'shall *never* manage it. My novels are too full of *thought*.)' [*sic*].[18] The stress on her 'thought' as the antithesis of the cinematic calls to mind the mind and body dichotomy raised in the work of Spark, again suggesting that an 'intellectual' female writer will not be well-received by the dominant cinematic model of post-war literary culture. Intriguingly, the brackets which intend to close cinema off from apparently more 'serious' debate are not fully closed and one can see elements of this debate trickling out, then flowing into succeeding works.

[17] Harold Hobson, 'Lunch with Iris Murdoch', *Sunday Times* (11 March 1962), p. 28.
[18] Murdoch, letter to Hicks, 7 December 1945, in *A Writer at War*, pp. 269-70.

Considering the increasingly feminist deliberations – in so far as they pre-articulate concerns that chime with later feminist criticism of film – of Murdoch's at this time, it might seem rather peculiar that it is in a 1956 edition of *Vogue* magazine that Murdoch offers her clearest public statements on her attitudes towards cinema. In the article, entitled 'What I See in Cinema',[19] Murdoch openly admits that, in terms of discussing film, she is 'an outsider with strong prejudices and no expertise'. However, the article does offer a fascinating distillation of Murdoch's views on the medium and its culture. Murdoch makes some remarkable concessions to the abilities of the cinema, including the notion that film is 'the medium which can most exactly reproduce the moment-to-moment vagaries of the human consciousness' and that 'it is in fact the most natural image for the consciousness'. Murdoch goes on to state that 'a film is as near to us as our own self-awareness', although then claims that 'one result of this is that the film can be the most profoundly boring and demoralising of all art forms'. This insistence that cinema's forms of representation walk a fine line between eliciting self-awareness and demoralisation is strikingly resonant of the understanding of the medium's effect on female ipseity that one can infer from Murdoch's earlier letters. Viewing this pronouncement in such a feminist context is encouraged further when Murdoch also states that even 'in the surely not impossibly difficult task of presenting the magic of feminine beauty the cinema has not often

[19] Murdoch, 'What I See in Cinema', in Ross (ed.), pp. 187-8. All references to this article are from these pages.

succeeded, and for all their undeniable charms I would exchange the whole pack of Italian *gamines* for the memory of Lee Miller in *Le Sang d'un Poète*'. Significantly, Cocteau's film provides a meditation of the anthropomorphic significance of the on-screen female. In this film, Miller – a gifted photographer in her only cinematic appearance – is disembodied, with only her mouth first emerging as an artwork and then appearing as part of the male artist's hand. This occupation of the male body is viewed with horror; the accompanying intertitle claims that the 'drowned' mouth is contracted by the hand 'like leprosy'.[20] Still refusing embodiment, however, Miller's mouth then becomes an armless statue, who commands the artist to walk through a mirror and later to shoot himself. Within this sequence, one scene is denoted as a meeting of hermaphrodites, half of whose bodies are shown (the rest drawn with chalk) reclining on a *chaise longue*. Over their genitals a sign lies, '*Danger de mort*', signifying rather clearly the intense castration-anxiety (as Mulvey and others would surely argue) evoked by Miller's troubling form of femininity. Within this Freudian model, the artist's response is predictable: he smashes Miller-as-statue with a hammer, symbolising the 'terrorist act' of the male gaze upon the female form. Later in the film, Miller reappears as a fully-embodied card player. In this form, the card player achieves her purpose of getting the man to commit suicide, signifying the apparently mortal danger of the female body upon the male, after which she dons black gloves to 'become' the statue once more. Lastly, she is seen with holding a lyre, a

[20] See *Le sang d'un poète* (1930; Dir: Jean Cocteau) in Cocteau's *Orphic Trilogy* (Criterion, 2000).

symbol of Orpheus – this is the first film of Cocteau's 'Orphic Trilogy' – who is famously commanded to avert his gaze from Eurydice when leaving the Underworld; his failure to do this destroys the woman. This allusion, combined with Miller's battle against the male gaze and the concluding image of a collapsing tower, all convey an apparent attack on phallocentrism. As such, when Murdoch notes Miller's beauty in this context, it is certainly not defined in terms of the male gaze that rests upon Miller in the film, or the gaze of a public which devours the forms of the *gamines*, or perhaps John Braine's protagonists in *The Vodi* who see, in the next instalment of Cocteau's Trilogy (*Orphéé* (1950)), the woman playing Death as 'a smasher'.[21] Indeed, when Murdoch concedes that she 'used to expect films to resemble dreams, and was disappointed', she implies an increasing awareness that the apparently oneiric form of this film represents a demoralising reality of a dominant male gaze. Thus, as we will see, Murdoch's early novels explore and challenge concepts of a universally male gaze (in a similar vein to critics of Mulvey's 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema') and begin to develop female character in ways which defy, and indeed escape, such objectification.

[21] John Braine, *The Vodi* [1959] (London: Magnum, 1979), p. 121.

Under the Net

Murdoch's debut novel, *Under the Net* (1954),[22] elicits an extraordinary range of critical responses. On its release, most critics are caught up in conflicting debates on the novel's realism (Angus Wilson feels that Murdoch had rendered well 'the milieu, which Miss Murdoch knows well and represents faithfully, [of] the London intellectual Bohemia'[23]), the author's personality (John Betjeman states that 'there is a little too much farce and fantasy for the good of the novel', and concludes that 'it is rather the personality of the author than the reality of her people which impresses me'[24]) and, as the literary establishment is beginning to be gripped by social-realist-fever and thus pounces on the apparent 'angriness' of the work, wild statements regarding Murdoch's place as an 'Angry Young Man'.[25] Pertinently, Conradi notes that this may be down to the fact that 'a token woman was required',[26] which is a significant indictment of the relatively patriarchal literary culture of the age. More recently and more accurately, much has been made of the fact that 'the net' of the title alludes to a comment on the nature of language in section 6.341 of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921). Between these realist and modernist poles, one of its major themes tends to be overlooked; as Conradi abruptly notes, cinema is 'the art-form

[22] All references to this novel are from the 2002 Vintage edition.
[23] Angus Wilson, 'New Novels', *Observer* (6 June 1954), p. 7.
[24] John Betjeman, 'Amusing Story of Life at a Provincial University', *Daily Telegraph* (5 February 1954), p. 8.
[25] See William Van O'Connor, 'The New University Wits', *Kenyon Review,* 20:1 (1958), pp. 38-50, for possibly the most influential application of this label to Murdoch.
[26] Conradi, *Iris*, p. 428.

which dominates the story'.[27] Conradi and A.S. Byatt have said more than most on the subject, but both critics see this fact as a sub-point of the piece. However, by turning more attention to this issue, it becomes clear that this work offers one of the most wide-ranging considerations of cinema as a cultural and aesthetic influence – particularly regarding the potent effects of cinema as a realistic 'dream' – that can be found among post-war novels.

Thus far, Byatt and Conradi have limited their discussions of the importance of cinema in this novel to issues of its social and realist authenticity. Byatt is particularly keen to note the touching-points between cinema and the corruption of character that are plotted in the novel. Byatt notes that characters are 'corrupted by big money in films' and that

> the various film corporations, Bounty Belfounder, Phantasifilms […] make excellent symbols both for art at the mercy of social and economic forces, and for capitalism and the more extreme irrationality of large sums of money not equitably administered.[28]

Byatt also emphasises the whiff of Sartrean disgust blown towards the cinema 'in the splendid and extremely funny scene in the Bounty Belfounder studio "situated in a suburb of Southern London where contingency reaches the point of nausea"'.[29] Conradi draws attention to a more specific (and quotidian) example

[27] Conradi, *The saint and the artist: a study of the fiction of Iris Murdoch* [1986]. 3rd edn. (London: HarperCollins, 2001), p. 48.
[28] A.S. Byatt, *Degrees of Freedom: the early novels of Iris Murdoch* [1965] (London: Vintage, 1994), pp. 26-7.
[29] Byatt, p. 27.

of the deceitfulness and abuses of historical truths associated with cinema, arguing that:

> film's standards of truthfulness and accuracy are evoked for us in the scene at Hugo's studio in Chapter 12. Sadie is playing the part of Orestilla in a film about the Catiline conspiracy. Sallust says of Orestilla that no good man praised her save for her beauty, and Cicero professed to believe her to be not only Catiline's wife but his daughter too. Despite three eminent ancient historians in the film's payroll the script presents her as 'a woman with a heart of gold and moderate reformist principles'![30]

Indeed, Byatt similarly notes that 'the conspiracy of Catiline […] represents a world where there is at least a suggestion that truth is more inevitably corrupted and deformed by the necessities of the script'.[31] More interestingly, Conradi argues that the destruction of the film set relates to Murdoch's project of

> the destruction of images, pictures, states of mind. Here the pathos and impermanence of the phenomenal world distantly mirrors, perhaps prefigures, the Socratic smashing of illusions and of all the theoretical attempts to dominate reality with which the tale ends.[32]

Conradi goes on to assert that 'the dismantling of the various scenes' – including the film set, which Byatt refers to as 'the cinematic unreality of the plastic and Essexboard Eternal City at the studio'[33] – 'connects with the book's interest in the guilt and the attempted purification of art. The novel is much concerned with lies, art-as-lies, and the deceptive nature of all copying'.[34] What Byatt and Conradi both fail to address however is that beyond the acknowledgement of an obsession with cinema's 'illusion' and deceitfulness, Murdoch also uses the

[30] Conradi, *The saint*, p. 49.
[31] Byatt, p. 27.
[32] Conradi, *The saint*, p. 39.
[33] Byatt, p. 219.
[34] Conradi, *The saint*, p. 40.

cinema as part of more expansive discourse on its creation, rather than 'destruction', of cinesthetic states of mind that constitute a convincing reality, rather than an 'unreality', for the lives of many in this period. Murdoch is not still entrenched in the debate on whether 'Cinema is a menace to culture', here conveying the continuity of this Leavisite distaste for the medium's cultural effects in the guise of the Oxbridge don, but instead entering into a productive debate on the substance of the escapist hinterland between realism and dreams that the medium elicits.

In this novel, Murdoch uses cinema to inform the cultural perspectives of her characters (rather than as a cultural symbol of insincerity and the plebeian) and also demonstrates the broad extent of its influence. Though much has been made of the fact that the novel's narrator, Jake Donaghue, is a man, little has been made of the fact that he is an incorrigible film buff who demonstrates a deep awareness of cinema-going culture and represents Murdoch's own awareness of its cinesthetic appeal to readers. Jake is very well informed regarding the ins-and-outs of the industry, and addresses the reader in ways which suggest that they share a common culture that venerates cinema. He is seemingly an historian of film, informing the reader that 'about this period, if you remember, British films were passing through a critical phase. The Bounty Belfounder Company had just been set up, and old Phantasifilms Ltd. came into new hands' (32). Jake is also, purely, a film fan. He names four films that the dog Mars has been in when he

sees him and admits 'Nothing thrills me so much as meeting a film star in real life, and I had been a fan of Mars for years' (141). He even begins to blur his knowledge of films with his understanding of life, a common cinesthetic symptom. When he tells Mars to 'be quiet', for example, he adds: 'Think of the fix you were in in *Five in a Flood*, and it turned out all right!' (144). Later, when he thinks of using Mars' body warmth when sleeping on a park bench, he was 'not sure that I didn't get this idea from one of Mars's films'. However, 'it was true' (175). Jake also demonstrates the signs of identificatory fantasy that are a symptom of such regular cinema-going when he takes a 'gulp of whiskey' in order 'to wear the expression of one who, contrary to appearances is master of the situation', then immediately states that 'the films provide one with useful conventions of this kind' (80). In many ways, Jake is an icon of the movie-made generation.

However, when he is compared to other male protagonists of this era, it is important to note that Jake's cinesthetic sensibilities are less gender-specific than one might expect. While Jake does represent the typical, masculine signs of a sexism learned from cinema, it is made clear that his relationship with the medium and its culture is not wholly different from the women cinema-goers of this time whom Jackie Stacey sees demonstrating consumption, identification, and escapism. His references to ideas such as that Magdalen's 'exertions are directed along the lines suggested to her by women's magazines and the cinema'

(10-11) and that she is 'everyone's idea of a pretty girl' (11) are counter-balanced by his feminist warning that she is 'enlisting for life as a mannequin' and will thus 'have to spend all [her] time being a symbol' (15) if she enters into a relationship with movie-man Samuel Starfield, as well as the various examples of him consuming film magazines, identifying with Mars' on-screen reality, and escaping into thoughts of cinema-deity Hugo Belfounder. Here is where Murdoch's exploration of the relationship between gender and cinema deviates from Spark's and Banks' desire to stress difference; though 'the name BOUNTY BELFOUNDER perpetually burning in neon light raised a sigh in the breasts of girls who passed it daily on their way to work' (156), it brews a storm in Jake's own. It appears that Murdoch may already be attempting to circumvent the medium's apparent gender binaries that are later posited by Laura Mulvey.

It is true that much has been made of Jake's statement that his 'acquaintance with Hugo is the central theme of this book' (60). Conradi is not alone when stressing the notion that Hugo Belfounder is broadly based on Wittgenstein's pupil Yorick Smythies,[35] and thus the importance of the *Tractatus* to the novel. Malcolm Bradbury prefers the more mythical approach, claiming that 'Belfounder certainly stands for Vulcan' in a grand mythic structure; [36] an approach which, again, has its merits. However, in many ways Jake's

[35] Conradi, *Iris*, p. 381.
[36] Malcolm Bradbury, 'Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net*', *Critical Quarterly*, 4:1 (Spring 1962), p. 50.

relationship with Hugo, the cinema kingpin, also represents a debate on the type of reality that cinema conveys to its audience. Firstly, and most basically, Hugo's perspective appears to bear many similarities to the cinematic. Jake relays that Hugo's vision for cinema wants to see 'each thing [as] astonishing, delightful, complicated and mysterious' (66), which echoes the earliest critical discussions surrounding the expressive potential of the camera-eye. Being 'the most purely objective and detached person' Jake has ever known (57), Hugo also appears to represent the documentary potential of the medium. However, this medium also has the capacity to represent an escapist 'candy-floss world', thus Hugo has a tendency, when explaining something to Jake, of either 'illuminat[ing] it enormously' or 'ma[king] nonsense of it entirely' (64). Most tellingly, Jake also states that in Hugo he meets 'for the first time an almost completely truthful man; and the experience was turning out to be appropriately upsetting' (69), which can be seen to reiterate Murdoch's own relationship with the medium at this time, as it induces tears, self-pity, but also self-awareness and an acute consciousness.

Furthermore, Hugo increasingly embodies the cinesthetic element of cinema's presentation of reality, as he begins to elicit cinesthetic desire. Though Jake prefers his film stars to convey 'some quality of surface and *éclat* […] though personally [he] still prefer[s] the word "flash"' (32), he appears to be equally keen on its echo, the 'flesh' of the human body on screen and it is thus significant that Jake first turns to Belfounder's films when their rival 'Phantasifilms evidently

decided that human beings were bad box office' (32). Not only does Jake take 'an especial pleasure in going to the cinema to see, before the credit titles, the familiar shot of City Spires, and hear the crescendo of City Bells, while the words *Presented by HUGO BELFOUNDER* grew solemnly upon the screen' (73), but he also demonstrates a desire to touch Hugo himself after seeing this on-screen symbol of his existence. Jake states that he is under 'Hugo's spell' (68) and goes on to seek Hugo 'with a feverish urgency' (101), demonstrating a tactile, interactive desire for him: 'I wanted to see him. The bullfighter in the ring cannot explain why it is that he wants to touch the bull' (101). Later, in the hospital, Jake states how the 'proximity of Hugo' raises a 'tornado' in him and that he 'had to see him' (238).

As has always been the case with our discussion of the cinesthetic, its existence resides in the hinterland between dreams and reality. It is significant, then, that Hugo is also rendered as the gatekeeper of this territory. While both Conradi and Byatt see the scene in the film studio as a rhetorical strategy used to represent film's 'unreality' (as has been discussed), the episode can instead be read as a *volta* in the form of the novel itself, created when Hugo not only 'explodes' the wall of the film studio to escape the police (167), but also explodes the boundary between the realism of the first half of the novel to escape into a following dream sequence. As the narrative declares:

> The whole structure was beginning to sway and totter in the most alarming fashion. I looked up and saw as in a dream the brick and marble skyline vacillating drunkenly while there was a slow crescendo of cracking and splintering and rending. (168)

When Hugo stresses the reality of the wall's unreality, that 'it's only made of plastic and Essex board' (168), he is in effect demonstrating how cinema stresses its own visual realism even when presenting fantasy and it encourages the reader to see Jake's own narrative as realistic, too. However, the following sequence bears all the cinesthetic hallmarks of a cinematic dream. Jake soon articulates a type of cinesthetic affect when he describes 'the kinaesthetic sensations of a boat combined with the olfactory sensations of a train' and that it 'was in the midst of such a *déréglement* [*sic*] *de tous les sens* that I now lay thinking about Hugo' (187), the kingpin – and index – of cinema in Jake's world. Then, after his escapist 'transportation', when Jake arrives in Paris and implores of the city, '*Paris, dis-moi ce que j'aime*', the only reply he hears is 'crumbling walls' (189), which suggests that he is still in the dream-like state induced by the explosion of the walls; as we learnt, 'the world blacked out' when 'the whole thing [the studio wall] was on top of us' (168). Indeed, it seems more than a coincidence that one of the last things that Jake sees is a 'railway' before passing out and that Jake then almost immediately takes a train to the coast and that even the boat smells – in a moment of a catachretic confusion of the senses, a distinctive feature of the cinesthetic – like a train. Indeed, after an existence of sleeping on park benches and running from the police, Jake's time in Paris also seems jarringly ideal, as he is offered money, reunites with Madge, and is associated with a Prix Goncourt-winning novel. He reports that as he 'wandered towards the Seine I felt sure that, wherever the line was to be drawn between appearance and reality, what I now

experienced was for me real' (189), however the wandering, verbal hedging, and stark acknowledgement of this statement's subjectivity suggests otherwise; Jake might be protesting too much. Soon, Jake sees in the river reflections of 'which one cannot tell what is reflected and what is not' (189) and when Madge proposes a film-company-related sinecure for Jake and he fantasises about an 'exquisite star' pouring him 'another glass of champagne' (204), Jake's cinematic dream appears to be exposed.

More compelling evidence that this Parisian sojourn is an oneiric episode soon follows and it also confirms that Hugo-as-cinema is not only able to elicit cinesthetic desire himself, but also for all those in the 'possession' of his medium. When Jake learns of Anna's attachment to Hugo, her new cinematic context is amplified by Jake's cinesthetic pursuit of her across Paris. This cinematic dream sequence begins when Jake thinks he sees Anna on the banks of the Seine during Bastille Day. The scene begins with 'the darkness coming' (212), hinting at Plato's Cave, and Belfounder fireworks streaking 'star burst[s]' across the sky (215), which symbolises Hugo's brand of cinematic escapism and its inherent 'flash' of film stars. Then, Anna's face is lit amongst a crowd of people, 'suddenly radiant' (213). Jake 'wanted to call out to her', but 'then she began to move' (214), which allows him to physically interact with her image by following her, during which he is 'moved to the point of frenzy' (214). When Anna finally stops, he considers his reflection in the river as 'an image which might attract Anna's attention' (214),

which aptly simulates the apparently porous 'fourth wall' of the cinema, through which the cinesthete might transcend, as, for example, J. B. Priestley's Albert Limpley appears to do. Jake then begins to dream of embracing Anna in a cave, citing Aeneas (216), but, in this cinesthetic context, connoting the Platonic arena of escapism. Increasingly, an explicit sense of *mise-en-scène* is relayed, such as how 'the Louvre enclosed the scene', scattered with the artificially bright, Technicolor 'flowers self-conscious with colour', all framing the star and 'the flash of her long leg up to her thigh' (217). The suggestive, cinesthetic close-up and her *éclat*, or 'flash', denotes Anna's existence as a cinematic star in this narrative as Jake experiences – using the same term as, for example, John Braine uses in his diaries to convey his appreciation of women on-screen – the 'enchantment of these moments' (217). Intriguingly, it is then an index of Anna's existence which spoils her symbolic value. Jake, while protesting that he is 'not a fetishist' and 'would rather hold a woman any day than her shoes' (218), finds what he thinks are Anna's shoes. Of course, they are not hers and the reality that this supposed index to Anna's existence provides shatters his enchantment; Jake loses her.

In fact, the development of Jake's relationship with Anna throughout the novel offers a meditation on how women become fetishised and objectified through the influence of cinema. Tellingly, Jake's initial description of Anna is juxtaposed with his discussion of the history of British films (32). Though it is

Anna's sister Sadie who is the film star and that 'Anna never tried to get into films' herself (33), Anna is still forced into a cinematic context through association with Jake and Hugo. When Jake first visits Anna, it is at the 'Riverside Mime Theatre' in Hammersmith, an apparent reference to an actual film studio, Riverside Studios, which was producing quota quickies at the time that the novel was written and published.[37] When he enters, Jake's apprehension of who he initially thinks is Anna is framed in a way that emphasises the objectifying male gaze as described in feminist film criticism. Jake 'noticed particularly the two female masks' and that they are the only two that are 'in profile' – the male masks are 'full face' – and the only ones that 'had the eyes filled in', whereas 'the male masks had empty eyes through which the eyes of the actors gleamed oddly' (40). The women's faces, masked by their own profiles, are reduced to symbols of their body rather than their bodies themselves and are completely surrendered to a potentially cinematic male gaze. Indeed, we later learn that this mask show reminds Jake 'of the silent expressionism of Hugo's early films' (94). Similarly, Anna's exposure to the actual film world diminishes her reality in Jake's eyes. When Jake first sees Anna he relays great detail regarding her aged face, such as the 'wrecked look', 'sheaf of wrinkles', and the 'streaks of grey' in her hair (42). However, when Anna is whisked away to the prospect of cinematic stardom by Hugo, Jake is left only with indices of her existence, 'the contents of Anna's room'

[37] See 'Timeline' [http://www.riversidestudios.co.uk/theriversidestory/main.cfm] (Accessed: 19 March 2014).

(124) in the back of a removal van. Anna starts to become a creation of Hugo's. Jake later notes how her words 'were not her own. They were Hugo's' and then, with an instinctive indexical sensibility, 'it occurred to [him] to connect what she said with the real Hugo' (93). Jake's personal relationship with her is soon reduced to one of indexicality, in common with all her new fans. Jake reads in a newspaper report – and it is structured so, headlined 'Anna Quentin For Hollywood?', within the narrative – that 'Miss Quentin's admirers […] will hear with mixed feelings the report that she is bound for Hollywood' (153). Jake's emotional response has lost its personal connection to the 'real' Anna: 'Like other admirers I had mixed feelings'. When Jake is left holding 'her' shoes in the Parisian park, it is the culmination of this process of objectification, fetishisation, and disembodiment. By the end of the novel he thus claims: 'I no longer had any picture of Anna. She faded like a sorcerer's apparition […]. It seemed as if, for the first time, Anna really existed now as a separate being and not as part of myself' (268). Anna has been extinguished in Jake's eyes. The influence of a dangerously predatory and misogynistic cinematic perception has encouraged Jake to cancel out Anna's existence. However, the acknowledgment that Anna 'really existed now as a separate being' does represent the prospect of a perception of female character liberated from such a perspective which Murdoch will later pursue in her own fiction.

In immediately succeeding fictions, however, Murdoch continues to stress the damaging and distorting influence of cinema. In a short story, 'Something Special' (1957), one finds a young girl, Yvonne, whose outlook on love is conditioned by a culture in which her uncle feels able to say to her: 'You're not Greta Garbo and you're lucky there's a young fellow after you at all'.[38] In Murdoch's novel *The Flight from the Enchanter* (1956),[39] the sense that cinema alters lives for the worse is conveyed in abundance. The literal sense of escape wished for by Nina, who wants to flee Mischa Fox's clutches by absconding to Australia, is built upon the proxy fantasy of 'her only indulgence', which 'was whenever possible to go to see Australian films, during which she would weep continuously' (144). Nina soon commits suicide. There is also the more figurative sense of escapist enchantment felt by the unruly fantasist Annette Cockeyne as she rushes away on a train at the novel's end. As she stares out of its window, 'she looked upon them all enchanted, lips parted and eyes wide. It was like being at the pictures' (283). To a certain degree, the men of the novel also conform to the cinesthetic stereotype of their gender: embodying the predatory male gaze, driven to touch and possess the female. However, when one examines the expression of this gaze, the issue becomes more problematic. John Rainborough, who, as has often been suggested, may indeed represent the type of man that

[38] Murdoch, 'Something Special' [1957] (London: Vintage, 2001), p. 7.
[39] All references are taken from the 2000 Vintage edition.

Murdoch often encountered in her own work for the civil service, has an attitude towards women that can be captured in one glance:

> Miss Casement hitched her skirt up so that the whole of her legs from the silken knees down were plainly visible, together with an inkling of underclothes. This gesture, which Rainborough had imagined was affected only by film stars when being photographed for the evening papers, infuriated and delighted him. (90)

Here Rainborough demonstrates the aggressively-framed understanding of female sexuality which is learned from film culture; this he has in common with many male characters in the post-war novel, as we have seen. The curious mix of delight and the bitterness implied in his censorious thought that this behaviour is 'affected' for his benefit may lead us to assume that the later attempt to rape Annette is borne from such frustrated cinesthetic desire. However, this infuriation also betrays an essence of victimhood; Rainborough is, in a sense, conned by the images of women he has been exposed to. This is indeed easier to accept when the idea of men becoming victims of cinematic enchantment is applied to one's reading of Hunter Keepe. His name may signpost his role as the masculine predator, but Hunter himself becomes prey to cinema. When Hunter walks through London, he experiences 'the sensation of being followed, a sensation […] which had of late been much aggravated by frequent visits to detective films, a form of entertainment to which he was greatly addicted' (155). Hunter's mental health descends from this point. When he emerges from his feverish state, he sees an unrecognised 'beautiful lady'; his only words are: 'Film

star […] must be a film star' (261). The proximity between cinesthetics and fever is clear and it is suffered from men and women alike.

However, it is *The Bell* (1958),[40] widely agreed to be Murdoch's first masterpiece, which represents her most significant 'form of escape' from the modes and registers of writing – as seen in her previous work – that are encouraged by a ubiquitous, but apparently deleterious, cinema-going culture. Superficially, it is clear that cinema is almost completely excised from the novel. However, considering the context of cinematically-inscribed gender perspectives established by the earlier work, it also becomes apparent that this novel seeks to challenge the omnipotence of such perspectives. Murdoch's presentation of Dora Greenfield's sense of subjectivity is the most prominent example of the clash between cinesthetic and feminist sensibilities informing the development of a 'really exist[ing]' female character. Take Dora's notion of her presence in the Abbey:

> It was if her consciousness had eaten up its surroundings. Everything was now subjective. Even, she remembered, Paul this morning had been subjective. His love-making had been remote, like a half-waking fantasy, and not at all like an encounter with another human being. (182)

Byatt cites this excerpt and sees this as an indication of subjectivity as a pure experience, arguing that in 'this state, with no real relationship with the outside world, or any reality other than herself, [Dora] has an almost pure experience of

[40] All references are taken from the 2004 Vintage edition.

what it is to live in a world of entirely self-centred fantasy'.[41] However, this excerpt is directly prefaced by the line 'The dazed feeling of unreality continued' (182); the experience is far more confused and less 'pure' than Byatt acknowledges. Again, though, one can understand this blurred boundary between fantasy and reality by looking to the consistent thread of cinematic sensibilities.

Throughout the novel, Dora's sense of self-awareness progresses from a worldview that is conditioned by her own sense of 'to-be-looked-at-ness' – a sensibility which, Mulvey argues, twentieth-century women learn from narrative cinema – to one which is much more thought-centred and consciously detached from the simultaneous and consistently fetishising male gaze. Indeed, the male gaze is presented in very similar terms to how Murdoch and others render it in many of the novels discussed previously, consistently reducing Dora to a sexual and anxiety-inducing symbol. Toby certainly sees her as such a symbol. Toby is shown 'ponder[ing] for a while rather generally upon the conception of Woman' and he 'became aware that this immense incarnation of femininity was taking on the features of Dora Greenfield', primarily because she has 'a magnificent head, with those flat tongues of golden brown hair shaping it, like something in an Italian picture; and for the rest, she was well rounded, buxom you might say' (174). Dora does not represent the 'Italian *gamine*' that Murdoch cites in 'What I

[41] Byatt, p. 88.

See In Cinema' then, but she certainly represents a similarly symbolic female body – a 'something' whose form is conditioned by visual culture – which Toby is keen to touch, rather than a 'real' woman. Indeed, Toby's interactive desire is felt particularly strongly, as it stirs 'something monstrous, provocative almost' and 'an obscure wish to do something violent' (175). Toby's narrative voice later articulates this mental process as 'when Dora's image had so obligingly filled out that blank form of femininity' (215), then sees her as a 'pale flurry' (219), thus confirming both the reduction of Dora to an image rather than a 'real' body and an intrinsic perception of 'emptied out' femininity (which in turn conditions the *Stimmung* of the post-war, female cinema-goer, as has been discussed). Both of these strands of perception are articulated by other men in the novel too. While dancing with Dora, Noel Spens sees her as 'a kaleidoscope of rippling skirts and flashing thighs and golden brown hair' (187), which reduces her to a disembodied form. When Dora is described as 'enchanted' by Peter's fake cuckoo call, which she declares is 'as good as the real thing' (128) – the response of an escapist affect to a mechanical reproduction subtly putting her into a cinematic context – Michael notes with 'detachment' her 'self-conscious feminine twittering' and that 'she epitomized everything he didn't care for in women' (128), conveying the masculine anxiety aroused by the feminine symbol that is in turn experienced as the haunted *Stimmung* by women.

Initially, however, it appears that Dora is not a passive victim of this culture. Dora often seems to cultivate her 'to-be-looked-at-ness'. The narrative notes that 'Dora Greenfield was wearing a spectacular dress of dark West Indian cotton and carrying a white parasol' (121), an ostentatious choice which conjures images of the black-and-white film star. Later, Michael sees 'Dora's red dress conspicuous and bright against the grass' (97), which again seems to suggest Dora's 'conspicuous' desire to be looked at. Dora is also shown to be guilty of objectifying men herself. On the journey to Imber Court – significantly, during a conversation between James and Toby which turns out to be on the topic of 'symbols' and the fact that Toby will become a type of 'exhibit' at the Court (21) – Dora objectifies Toby as the symbol of a desirable young man, detailing his 'admirably red lips' and noting how he 'moved his leg nervously' (20). Once she has arrived, Dora almost immediately begins to objectify the men at Imber Court visually, declaring that James is possibly the most handsome because he 'bore the closest resemblance to a film star' (134). Dora's visual sensibilities are shown to be just as 'movie-made' as the men of the novel.

Almost inevitably, though, when the narrative adopts her internal discourse, Dora is shown to be particularly beholden to the *Stimmung* that such objectification elicits. The first paragraph of the novel immediately articulates Dora's senses of 'guilt' and 'fear' in relation to the 'absence' and 'presence' of her husband (7), which bears a striking resemblance to the articulation of the

cinesthetic *Stimmung* experienced by many of Muriel Spark's female protagonists. In practice, this sensibility is demonstrated when Dora is stated to be conscious of how she appears to other people. For example, when she enters the train to Pendelcote, Dora sees herself in a mirror as having a 'round well-formed face' and 'attractive' hair (15), yet when she becomes conscious of others in the carriage, she immediately feels 'fat and hot in [her] smart featureless coat and skirt' (16). Even when she has settled into Imber Court's lifestyle, Dora still feels 'nervous and shy and as if she were acting a part' (133), which particularly conveys the *Stimmung* evoked by the performative responsibilities of 'to-be-looked-at-ness'.

So, Dora is certainly positioned within the context of the discourse on cinesthetics and gender that Murdoch's previous works had established. However, Dora's narrative also demonstrates a strikingly distinct feature in this context: as the men continue to fetishise her, Dora simultaneously develops a detachment from this objectifying paradigm. Dora's thoughts are often occupied with the thought of escape at the beginning of the novel, such as when she 'first escaped from Knightsbridge' (12). However, this concept is unrefined and only leads Dora to a type of existential crisis. Slowly, though, Dora begins to develop a related sense of detachment. Dora first articulates this concept when noting the 'detachment' ingrained in a nun's apprehension of her, framed with 'unsmiling objectivity' (33-4). Dora finds this detachment and capacity for objectivity

striking and thought-provoking. After this Dora becomes 'conscious that her skirt was intolerably tight' and that her high-heeled shoes are 'extremely uncomfortable' (34); Dora is slowly demonstrating a rejection of the signs of her 'to-be-looked-at-ness'. Dora then confronts her own existence and private thoughts when looking at herself in a mirror: 'She continued to look at the person who was there, unknown to Paul. How very much, after all, she existed; she, Dora, and no one should destroy her' (45). Later, Dora sees Catherine, the symbol of the saint, as 'the figure under the net' and feels 'terror, as if something within herself were menaced with destruction' (73). Dora starts to understand that she is destroyed when objectified and reduced to a feminine symbol – as Spark's motif of disembodiment also testifies – and that she must instead seek a different form of existence. A comparison of Catherine's near-drowning to Spark's rendering of a strikingly similar scene in *The Comforters* bears fruit here. Spark's narrator Caroline fails to save the increasingly disembodied Georgina Hogg from drowning in a lake. Dora, however, succeeds in rescuing Catherine from such destruction. It is possible to see this comparison as an allegory of how the effect of cinesthetic *Stimmung* on female character is rendered by the respective authors. After Caroline's failure, Spark's novel continues to stress Caroline's own sense – and implied acceptance – of corporeal confusion. In contrast, Dora's success serves as a catalyst for her to continue her divergence from this cinesthetically-conditioned form of ipseity. Thus, Dora begins to feel 'unreal' when she realises that she loves Peter 'as one might love someone to whom one

had never spoken' (181), suggesting that it is Peter as a *type*, a glamorous symbol, that she had based her attraction upon, prompting a connection with the feelings articulated by the female cinema-goers interviewed by Jackie Stacey, which pledge love-by-proxy to on-screen men such as Humphrey Bogart.

In a bid to create a sense of self unreliant on cinesthetic models of female ipseity, Dora begins to turn the tables on objectifying gazes by prioritising her own gaze more explicitly, in turn subverting her 'to-be-looked-at-ness'. While viewing a recital, for example, Dora had 'now watched for so long that she felt herself invisible' and slides 'back into the darkness' when Toby spots her (194). When the Bishop arrives, Dora hovers 'uncertainly in the background' (249). Considering the development of Dora's ipseity, one assumes that she is 'uncertain' not in terms of her own self-esteem, but as an unfetishised element of the Bishop's gaze. Later, when Dora attempts to achieve her goal of cleaning the bell, she hides herself in the house and crawls under windows to avoid detection (261-2). Also, as Dora begins to demonstrate a strong sense of her own agency, such as when she feels 'the heavy responsibility of her vatic role' as bell-revealer (241), Dora begins to experience her own sense of 'detachment' (241) and when detachment and a denial of her own to-be-looked-at-ness both become part of her consciousness, 'generalship [begins] to come to her' (246).

Ultimately, the development of Dora's self-awareness leads to a refusal of her symbolic role – as Mulvey might argue – as wife and mother of Peter's children, feeling 'intensely the need and somehow now the capacity to live and work on her own' (301). Significantly, though, this sense of 'passionate detachment' is not merely a rhetorical strategy, but an indication of a detached voice as an element of a form encompassing bipartite 'feminine' and 'masculine' discourses. This is demonstrated when, almost simultaneously, Michael opines that Dora 'felt herself to be a socially unacceptable waif' and meditates on her 'simple and robust nature' (303-4). He clearly bases this flawed understanding of her on her as a visual phenomenon rather than a sentient being, as he 'watched Dora […] turning towards life and happiness like a strong plant towards the sun' (308). Dora's independent, internal narrative instead shows that she is dwelling on 'pain and violence' (310). Paul also continues to see Dora as vacuous type, declaring in a letter that 'she was the type of woman who was made to vacillate between teasing and submitting' (311), but, again, Dora's narrative directly refutes this, this time in explicitly 'detached' terms: 'she no longer had the feverish urge to escape into his world' (312). Instead, Dora signals a final turn away from the visual by rendering the Court's windows as 'dark and blank, like the eyes of one who will soon be dead' (315) and looks forward to 'telling the whole story to Sally' in her own terms (316).

Murdoch's later novels continue to demonstrate an understanding of visual perspectives that escape the established gender-specific cinematic paradigm; uniquely, in comparison to her post-war peers. Indeed, when in *A Severed Head* (1961) protagonist Martin Lynch-Gibbon states that 'a visit to the cinema almost reduced me to tears',[42] one can easily replace the man with Murdoch herself crying in the cinema, as she testifies in her interview with Hobson less than one year later. In an essay of the same year, 'Against Dryness' (1961), Murdoch posits the distinction between 'crystalline' and 'journalistic' forms which helps to articulate the perceived divide between realism and experimentalism in post-1960 fiction, yet perhaps this work suggests something ultimately more significant than this binary (which, as has been discussed, has proved troublesome for literary criticism). Murdoch argues that 'literature must always represent a battle between real people and images' and she expresses a desire to create – like Shakespeare and Tolstoy – characters that are 'free and separate' but 'related to a rich and complicated world from which as a moral being there is much to learn'.[43] By examining novels of the post-war period, it becomes clear that this process can be inhibited by the influence of cinematic culture and the presence of a cinesthetic reader under the influence of its symbols. Indeed, it could very well be the dislocation between the symbol of an on-screen body and indices of its reality – the 'off-duty' photo, the newspaper interview –

[42] Murdoch, *A Severed Head* [1961] (London: Vintage, 2001), p. 119.
[43] Murdoch, 'Against Dryness', *Encounter* (January 1961), pp. 20, 18.

fostered by this culture which had prompted Murdoch to ask: 'Wherein does the reality of a person reside and in what way can one, or should one, display that reality?'[44] Murdoch's early novels gradually make it clear that, particularly in terms of the presentation of women in the cinesthetic age, the representational priorities of the novel must centre on the concept of mind over body – a process which inherently rejects any textual, indexical connection to one's own body – in order to destabilise an oppressive *Stimmung* and to claim an authentic voice.

[44] Murdoch, 'The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited', *Yale Review*, 49:2 (December 1959), p. 247.

15. THE END OF THE REEL

> *The film stock was old and scratched, as if the desolating passage of time were made visible in the rain upon the screen, audible in the worn soundtrack, yet these erosions of temporality only enhanced your luminous presence since they made it look all the more forlorn, the more precarious your specious triumph over time.*[1]

Post-war Britain experiences rather dramatic technical developments that seek to cater to the interactive demands of a cinesthetic culture. In Rugby in 1947, Dennis Gabor develops and patents his invention of holography, which allows the projection of three-dimensional moving images.[2] The British Film Institute's use of 'Dynamic Frame' technology to present *The Door in the Wall* (1956),[3] a short adaptation of H. G. Wells' classic exploration of crossing physical and mental boundaries, brings the viewer into a more energetic relationship with the screen by constantly adjusting its frame. As has been outlined, a movie-made generation of writers also develops new literary tropes and forms which engage with and interrogate cinesthetic culture, representing a period of intense transition in the history of the twentieth-century novel.

Such intensity, however, as all fierce flames, burns out. The physical culture of cinema-going suffers a rapid decline from its golden epoch in the mid-Forties, which is largely attributed to the emergence of television. As the novels

[1] Angela Carter, *The Passion of New Eve* [1977] (London: Virago, 1982), p. 5.
[2] See Dennis Gabor, 'Dennis Gabor – Biographical' (1971) [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/physics/laureates/1971/gabor-bio.html] (Accessed: 24 January 2014).
[3] See 'The Door in the Wall', *BFI Monthly Film Bulletin*, 23:264-75 (July 1956), p. 94.

of this period make clear, a younger generation, represented by figures such as Colin MacInnes' Boy, Alan Sillitoe's Arthur Seaton, and Kingsley Amis' Jenny Bunn, are already beginning to see cinema as a medium and a culture that has had its day. As the epigraph of this chapter – from Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) – demonstrates, even the physical material of the cinema appears to be undergoing a process of degradation. The original photographic form of the medium itself is gradually eroded, from the days of silver nitrate towards later digital cinematography, which serves to eradicate the physical basis of cinematic indexicality – and accompanying assumptions of its ontological realism – and thus, in the context of our argument, undermines the cinesthetic process that much of the innovation of literary production and reception in the period appears to have been based on. Certainly, in the Fifties and Sixties, fading film and the stereotype of the unpopulated, grimy cinema-theatre, undecorated since its Thirties heyday, become less fashionable and less effective as culturally-central signifiers in fiction.

Carter's Seventies novel, however, can also be seen as a helpful emblem of when literary criticism begins to see important reconnections between the novel and cinema. Laura Marcus and Steven Connor both quote this passage – Evelyn's view of an on-screen Tristessa de St. Ange – in their discussions of the

significance of cinema's nexus with post-1970 literary fiction.[4] Marcus cites Carter in her discussion of the presence of material concepts of the 'death of cinema' in the contemporary novel. Connor uses Carter and also Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980) to exemplify cinema's influence on concepts of form and spatio-temporal boundaries in contemporary texts. However, a brief analysis of Marcus' and Connor's conclusions also offers a way of placing the impact of literature's movie-made generation into the critical history of the cinema-literature relationship – which, as outlined previously, almost seems to have had its chapter on Fifties fiction torn out – by demonstrating that many of the 'contemporary' influences of cinema can be understood as continuities – or as Carter might term it, as a 'persistence' – of the cinesthetic post-war age.

The movie-made novel of the post-war age offers three clear strands of literary innovation, in terms of how it diversifies perceptions and representations of gender; how it refigures realism in cinematic terms; and how it conceives of an emulation of cinematic indexicality and, thus, extratextuality. The cinesthetic novel certainly offers new modes of representing gender. Marcus explains how Carter offers images where the 'celluloid and body become one',[5] which has a rich precedent in the catachretic confusion of cinesthetic images in the post-war novel. Particularly, Carter's use of cinematic imagery to portray a confusion of

[4] See Laura Marcus, 'The Death of Cinema and the Contemporary Novel', *Affirmations: Of the Modern*, 1:1 (Autumn 2013), p. 166; and Steven Connor, *The English Novel in History 1950-1995* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 34.
[5] Marcus, p. 167.

physical boundaries, which culminates in Evelyn's transformation from male to female form, can be understood to be inherited from the ways in which cinesthetics becomes an integral element of the exploratory representations of gender in the post-war period.

The cinesthetic novel and its idiosyncratic blend of social realist and escapist perspectives, encouraged by an increasing cultural awareness of the realist illusion of the cinema, allows 'the cinema' (meant more in its cultural, rather than technical sense) to operate as a less lowbrow and more objective frame of literary reference, and can also be seen to prepare the ground for the reception of later 'magic realist' fiction. Marcus argues that Carter's novel foregrounds the influence of 'illusory' film and 'its use (misuse) of the workings of human perception to construct motion out of stillness' in its literary rendering of 'derealisation'.[6] Connor claims that cinema contributes to the destabilization of realism in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, as it brings about 'a mutual permeation of the private and the public, such that the integrity of both is dissolved and a relationship of difference is no longer possible between them'.[7] While all correct, one must also acknowledge that this debate draws on the turn in post-war fiction which begins to articulate such cinematic 'derealisation' not

[6] Marcus, p. 168.
[7] Connor, pp. 31-2.

as a Modernist experimental trope, but as a central element of contemporary realist refigurations.

When Connor argues that '*Midnight's Children* suggests that the traditional form of the novel is not capacious or internally diversified enough' to represent the expansive reality of India shown to its inhabitants by cinema, so instead 'adopts and mimics the forms of electronic media that have been so important in defining and dissolving cultural identity in the twentieth century',[8] one is reminded of how the cinesthetic post-war novel explores the concept of cinematic indexicality and begins to emulate it by conceptualising its extratextuality as a tangible model for literary production and reception. Indeed, even though cinema's indexicality has been diminished, the desire for the refigured realist framework of extratextuality persists. The reader who is now connected to the Internet via Wi-Fi-enabled reading devices poses a threat to the culture of the novel for some. For example, Will Self poses the question: 'If you accept that […] the vast majority of text will [in future] be read in digital form on devices linked to the web, do you also believe that those readers will voluntarily choose to disable [the device's] connectivity?'[9] Self believes not and thus predicts 'the death of the novel' in its codex form. Yet such reading is but a refigured form of the indexical desire for interactive reading, which, one assumes, will develop

[8] Connor, p. 30.
[9] Will Self, 'The novel is dead (this time it's for real)', *Guardian* (2 May 2014) [http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/may/02/will-self-novel-dead-literary-fiction] (Accessed: 11 May 2014).

intratextual references to the virtual beyond the realm of 'rhetorical strategies', just as the post-war novel of the movie-made generation took stories of cinema-going and ended up refiguring literary realism.

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APPENDIX: AN INTERVIEW WITH LYNNE REID BANKS[1]

13 May 2013, Shepperton, Surrey, UK

MM: Let's talk about movies.

LRB: Have you seen *Trance*?

MM: The recent Danny Boyle film? No, I haven't. Is it any good?

LRB: I walked out I'm afraid. I just couldn't take it. Not that I thought 'I'm not liking this', but thinking 'I'm *hating* this. This is horrendous and it's shocking and it's hurting me. I'm going'.

MM: What was so shocking about it?

LRB: What they do to the 'baddie'! They do the most dreadful things to him, to force him to tell what he told and he doesn't remember. And then everyone in the whole film, including the hypnotist, turns out to be a totally flawed and wicked character. Anybody you're even thinking you might identify with, forget it! It turns rotten to the core and they're going to do the most awful things to each other and they're going to sleep with all the wrong people. I just hated it, really hated it.

Skyfall? Silliest movie ever made. I was told when I said it was the silliest movie and he [James Bond] wouldn't have survived the first ten-minute chase… Anyway, I thought, 'Is this supposed to be realistic at all? Or is it just nonsense?' I was told afterwards, 'Well you don't expect the Bond films to be believable, do you? They are just fun'. I don't mind escapism though. One needs it.

[1] The following record of the interview represents excerpts from the full interview.

MM: You have previously stated that you are a very visual writer. Why do you think that this is the case?

LRB: Well, when I started to learn to read, if you didn't make pictures in your head, there was no earthly point in reading the book. I mean, where does it happen, if it doesn't happen in your head? And then I became an actress, and of course it all has to be visual. And I saw movies, which were lovely and were there in front of you. And then when I began to write my own stuff, of course I saw it in terms of first of all plays. I had to be able to see them, envisage them. They would be on stage and stage directions and how they speak all had to be there, which gave me a very visual take on imagining stuff. The progression from there to books… It just seemed to be perfectly natural that I could visualise everything.

I can't think of a single book I've written which wouldn't make a bloody marvellous movie! I think they're all good movie material and I'm really rather hurt that only two of them have been made into movies. I can think of at least three that I'd like to write myself. But it hasn't happened; now I think probably their day is done. You need something more edgy and dark. Of course you have to have the visual side of it, but the actual plot, the actual people, the story… You do not have to – as evidenced by *Trance* and similar films – have any sympathetic characters. You do not have to identify with anybody, which in my day when we went to the movies, you certainly did. I mean, they could be flawed characters, certainly. I remember one of the first grown up films I ever saw – we used to have double-bills in those days, as you probably know, with several programmes, the main feature, shorts, cartoons, certainly a newsreel, trailers, and there would be, as it were, the B movie. So my mother took me to a programme and it was a long haul. I was only nine, I suppose. Ten, maybe. It was before the war, anyway. And she said, 'Now darling, I want you to sit patiently through my movie and I will sit patiently through yours'. I've forgotten what my movie was entirely, but I

remember hers. It was called *A Stolen Life*,[2] and it starred Bette Davis as twin sisters; a bad one, and a good one. The good one really fancied the bad one's husband, of course. She was single and the other one was married and giving her husband a terrible time. One day they go out in a yacht, a storm blows up, the yacht capsizes. They both go into the drink and the good one clutches the bad one's hand to save her, of course. However, the good one goes to her doom and the other one pulls off her wedding ring. I remember this clearly and distinctly. When she wakes up, somebody says, 'We found your wedding ring clutched in your hand and put it back on your finger'. Need I say, she pretends to be the dead one and goes to the husband, who mysteriously and unbelievably is fooled? I just thought this is wonderful. From then on, Bette Davis was my favourite star for a long time. I always remembered this as my first really grown-up movie.

MM: Did you go to the cinema often?

LRB: Well, when we were in Canada, which was between 1940 and 1945, going to the movies was our chief entertainment and we used to go once a week. There was nothing shocking. I mean, there were war stories and come carnage, but there was nothing really awful. There was the Hays Office, so anything you'd see now from that era seems very gentle. Everybody thought that censorship was a very bad thing and that directors and writers should be free to express themselves. Okay, they got free, they express themselves, and we get movies like *Trance*! So, as I say, in my childhood and youth, you could be fairly sure that you might enjoy a film. Over-sexed they certainly weren't; they weren't allowed to be. Hollywood was always much more scared of sex than it was violence. Did you see *The Hunger Games*? I remember writing that they should make a movie about teenagers bonking each other to death. Instead of having to kill each other

[2] This film was actually released in 1946, directed by Curtis Bernhardt, with the tagline 'Bette Davis now lives her *most vibrant* love story'.

by all sorts of violent and unpleasant means to be the last one standing, why can't you be the last man who can take no more sex? I'll tell you why: because sex is much more threatening in some strange ways than killing each other! How this has come about, I absolutely don't understand.

MM: Perhaps sex-on-screen has a capacity to influence more people than violence. If you see sex on screen, one potentially feels more able to copy that than violence in one's own life.

LRB: Well, that's very interesting. I think there's probably something in what you say.

MM: There are many connections made between your early work and that of the 'Angry Young Men'. You have also said that you began writing your first novel on a teleprompter, which seems to be a fairly avant-garde writing technique when compared to contemporary writers such as Kerouac. How much contemporary fiction were you reading at the time?

LRB: Well, I was at ITN at the time. Where else would I get a teleprompter typewriter? The teleprompter had just arrived in the newsroom and it was a big machine if I remember. Of course, it would need to be. And the paper came off it, perhaps even in a continuous roll – you could rip it apart – and I was just interested in what it looked like. I began a sentence, which lead to another sentence and I was watching these great big letters, half an inch high, coming up on the screen. It didn't continue for long. I was just experimenting with typeface, more than trying to write a novel or anything else. I think I wrote four pages.

MM: I'd like to talk about your time at RADA and ITN. How were films perceived at RADA? Was there a cinema-culture at all?

LRB: Not really. Purely a stage culture. Of course, we went to the movies incidentally. It was the Forties, so… musicals have always been my passion. I have a dream that one day I will be on some kind of 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire?' and all the questions would be about musicals.

One of the films that made the biggest impressions on me was *Les Enfants du Paradis*. And we went to a lot of Alfred Hitchcock. I remember going up the Tube and on the side was a whole series of ads which simply said 'The Birds Is Coming'. I went to see that, and the one with the girl who had to have her horse show. Tippi Hedren, poor girl, as we discover; Alfred Hitchcock being horrible. Oh yes, *Marnie.* And *Rope*, which was based on a real case, which we knew.

MM: Was that part of the fascination with *Rope*?

LRB: Yes. And it was all done in one take, or something mysterious like that. It was really astonishing. I suppose it was a bit like theatre. We were much more into theatre than film. We just went to films for relaxation.

MM: Was there any prospect of working in film after RADA?

LRB: Just lead us to it! That was where the money was. And the telly! I don't think many of us did. I think Dorothy Tutin was in my year, who did *The Beggar's Opera* with Olivier.[3] Some of the men certainly went into *I'm All Right Jack* and all those sorts of films. I was in one movie, in the background. I can remember crouching, in a lot of hay. Who knows what it was all about! Prunella Scales was in it with me. All I can remember clearly – I think Donald Wolfit was in it.[4] It never came to anything. I don't think it ever came out actually – is Prunella Scales' little round face, pretty little girl, telling me how she'd been touring in an

[3] Tutin played Polly Peachum in the film (directed by Peter Brook, 1953).

[4] Intriguingly, the only film featuring both Scales and Wolfit that was actually released appears to have been Jack Clayton's *Room at the Top* (1959).

American play called *Tobacco Road*, which was famous at the time because it was very daring. She played a young girl in it called something like Ellie May. She told me a funny story about censorship. The watch committee in a certain town viewed the play and would tell the director what had to be cut. She said the stuff that came through had them all in hysterics. 'Ellie May will not rub herself on the rake handle in a suggestive manner' and stuff like this! In the next town, if the requirements were different, they would go back to rubbing herself on the rake handle!

MM: You then got the job at ITN. How often did that involve working on films?

LRB: Well, I interviewed day and night and sometimes, occasionally, on three times in one day, with two bulletins. At the beginning there were two women, three male reporters and the newscaster, who was then Christopher Chataway. It was heavily weighted on the male side. And the women – I certainly was – were so grateful to have such an amazing job. And although we were always angling to get the harder news stories – which we could and we did occasionally, if all the men were off, or busy – basically, we were doing the soft stuff. I lumped them all together under 'Mother of Ten in a Council House'. Those kind of stories. Or we used to do *vox populi*, interviews, which was quite something at first, as men thought we were soliciting. Then after a while, they got the idea, then you'd be mobbed, as everybody wanted to be on telly.

MM: There seems to be an interesting gender divide in that job! One of the interviews I have seen is with you and Audrey Hepburn. Near the end of the interview, you say 'I hope you'll forgive me for being very feminine and personal, but I adore your dress and I haven't seen anything like it over here… Could you stand up and let's have a look?' Is that the sort of thing you were expected to ask?

LRB: You know, my daughter-in-law, she saw that. She simply screamed with laughter! I was so hurt. I said, 'What's funny?' She said, 'Nobody would do that nowadays'. I think I just did it on impulse. She was wearing an Empire-line dress and I'd never seen one before.

MM: Your tone is quite apologetic and she is very obliging…

LRB: Diffident! And she wanted to show her dress off.

MM: So surely it must have been an expectation to ask.

LRB: Well occasionally you might try to do something a bit different, if you could. Because all you got was at the most five minutes to interview them. And if you were very lucky, three minutes of screen time, but it was much more likely to be one and a half.

MM: Regarding your first novel, *The L-Shaped Room*: the critical reaction saw it very much along the lines of documentary fiction and often assumed that it was an autobiographical work.

LRB: Well, my mother warned me that everyone would think it was based on truth. I said, 'If I wrote a book about a psychopathic killer, would they be looking for the bodies?' She said, 'They'll be looking for the babies, dear, believe me.' There was nothing documentary about it. It was just a made up story. There were certain characters, like the man she works for in the hotel, who was based on my news editor. I mean, I didn't even know how it was going to end when I started it. If ever there was a book that grew organically, it was that one. I didn't know where it was going, I really didn't.

MM: Related to the idea of 'looking for the babies' and the notion of scandal: near the beginning of the book, Jane is working in a café and she seems to liken her predicament to the Ingrid Bergman and Rossellini scandal. Do you think that cinema made the idea of scandal more attractive at that time, or more palatable even?

LRB: No, it was just adding tremendously to the excitement of her whole cinema thing, the whole Hollywood thing. There was such an incredible upheaval when this wonderful, beautiful girl, with her marriage and her baby and lovely, handsome husband and all that, went off with this saturnine, Italian, macho man. People in America of course – the Puritans, as they pretend to be – were all banning and boycotting her films. I actually rather liked that comparison; this small town, as it might be one of the towns were I was in Rep. Then, we [the theatre group] were the only… There was no cinema, so everybody went. Anybody that wanted some entertainment went. My landlady used to smile at me if I played a good woman and I think she would feed me better, but if I played a bad woman, she would say, 'It's not right, asking a nice young girl like you to play a woman like that. When you came on in your cammy-knickers, I couldn't look'. If there had been a scandal within the company, and if it had happened that the actress had ended up working in a café…

MM: Later, when Toby is trying to explain the novel he is writing to Mavis, he seems quite hurt that she says, 'It's okay, but why isn't there a film star romance?' He appears to take this notion as some sort of contamination of his literary work. However, when he starts writing and finally gets into a flow, it seems to be a product of the fact that he goes to see what's called 'a boring and insipid film'; he returns, and all of a sudden… A coincidence at all?

LRB: I suppose it was! It's the mix-up thing of being fascinated by film, being taken, caught up in it while you are watching it, even if you despise it, and even despise yourself for enjoying it, maybe. But my idea simply was, having had a break, and seeing what was going on out there, which wasn't as good in his view as what he was doing… He'd come back and be inspired.

MM: From the research I've done, I've found that that attitude tended to prevail. I think that there was a superiority complex in that regard. But also film was quite inspiring in terms of narrative.

LRB: But it's like going out for a drink, isn't it? Just a break. You can't concentrate, you can't make yourself do it, or you're lazy, whatever it is. Or uninspired. So you make a break.

MM: Near the end of the novel, when Terry appears he is likened to a 'traditional film stalker'. Also, at the beginning of the next novel, *The Backward Shadow*, Toby's hand comes through the door and it's likened to a 'Danziger Brothers B-Movie'. It seems that the cinematic comparison is a very apt way of trying to convey a predatory but also quite ridiculous element of masculinity. Do you agree?

LRB: I think that's quite good! And there's also the element that a lot of writers, because they're constantly projecting themselves into other people's lives, they're all to some extent actors *manqué*. They're acting out their own characters. Some of the more extrovert ones actually are! They're show-offs and performers. Like actors, they are *always* acting! And I think Toby's a bit like that. And they also quote stuff and speak in a rather flowery way. And quote Shakespeare.

MM: Reading the beginning of *The Backward Shadow*, there seemed to be a very different tone set in the narrative [as opposed to the 'realism' of *The L-Shaped*

Room]. Jane's point of reference at the outset becomes far less about her surroundings and much more about her child, and that seems consistent with her character. Was this ever a conscious decision, to turn away from elements of social realism, or was it just part of Jane's character?

LRB: I don't think I consciously did that. I wanted to get into a more bucolic environment, to make a break from Fulham. But it's only part-idyllic, as she's got so many worries and concerns, all the difficulties financially, and so on. I didn't want the beginning of her child's life to be tainted by his origins. That's all going to come later, when he becomes aware of not having a father present. But in the meantime, it's just a mother and son, which is actually rather beautiful.

Not much about the movies in that! Apart from the Toby at the beginning, as you say. I'd sort of forgotten about that.

MM: Well, the only time there is a return to the gritty urban environment is when Jane drives into town to meet John. Her decision to do that actually comes within less than a page of her going to a film and feeling a sense of happiness and escapism. She goes back to Dotty and says, 'I need to go'. She gets in her car and drives off to Paddington. So, again, there seems to be quite an interesting impetus provided by film, like Toby with his writing.

LRB: It's difficult to answer that. I haven't read it for so long!

MM: Well, how about in *Two is Lonely* [the third in the Trilogy]? Talking about 'pathetic' masculinity, I find it interesting that Terry – which I didn't expect to happen – becomes what one might call a failed film-star. David decides to go and find him while he is in a cinema and he looks for him a film studio. What do you think that link conveys about Terry's character?

LRB: I never had much sympathy for Terry. I always thought he was a bit of a callow actor-type. There are these very self-interested, selfish, careless people. We know that, to say the least, he hadn't been very nice to his wife. So I just thought I'd make him a failed film star, who messed around with his teeth and hadn't made it. I just thought that that was the kind of future he was heading for. He would change himself physically and do whatever's necessary in order to make it and to look right. It did have something to say, in the background I suppose, about the film world and how you have to fit in to that and be whatever you're expected to be and change yourself in order to get the great rewards of stardom. And then you almost certainly won't get them.

MM: *Children at the Gate* does seem to be a stylistic departure. It's very 'writerly', particularly in the character of Gerda, who foregrounds the fact that she is *writing* the narrative. The other novels don't explicitly do this. The first thing I wanted to ask about this novel was whether this was a conscious stylistic shift and whether the fact that you state that 'this is fiction' at the beginning of the novel – as you do in *An End to Running* – was a response to the reaction towards earlier novels.

LRB: *Children at the Gate* was the only book I wrote when I was working in a kibbutz in Israel, so it had to have something to do with that. The original inspiration was of a woman who – she was American actually, and is still around, to my amazement – who was a theatre director. And she came to our kibbutz with two children who were actually Moroccan orphans. She came to the kibbutz because it was the only way she could find where she might be able to habituate the children, regarding her as her mother, and at the same time be able to work. It worked for a bit. I think the kibbutz did help her as much as they could, but it was very hard to integrate these two children. This idea of bringing in two kids… I looked at them and thought, 'What if they weren't Jewish kids at all? What if

they were Arabic? And she was passing them off…' This is not true of course, it's fiction. It gave me the idea. It just took off.

MM: The sense of perspective does seem slightly different to the 'L-Shaped Room Trilogy' – which has a bit more in common with contemporary work – in terms of its perspective and its sense of voice. Particularly *Children at the Gate*, in terms of its psychological realism…

LRB: It's much better written.

MM: I think so.

LRB: Yes, well I did change the style. Both were written in the first-person, but from the point-of-view of two totally different women. I wanted to make sure that her [Gerda's] voice could not even be compared with Jane's voice. And I think I did do that.

That book was very nearly filmed by the way. Eli Wallach was going to play the Arab and he would have been marvellous. And it was all ready to go and something happened, as it does.

MM: How was your experience of production when your novels *were* adapted into films?

LRB: You know that Bryan Forbes[5] died this week? They took it and they ran with it. I didn't have any control at all. I was shown the script and was turning the pages thinking 'What? Oh my God! She's what?' So afterwards I was allowed to have a meeting with Bryan – I'll always remember this – and I told him it was very good, very funny. I didn't like the ending but he said 'Nothing's set in stone.

[5] The director of *The L-Shaped Room* (1962).

When we've actually filmed it it will probably come out quite different'. I said, 'She is supposed to grow towards some kind of independence, not wish herself back onto her Catholic French family'. Oh!, the whole business about her being French was mad. We were landed with it. I said, 'Pity to leave the father out altogether. He's rather important'. He said, 'Well you know the reason I have to do that: because I really cannot bear it when French or foreign people who should be speaking their native language in a film are actually speaking to each other in broken English'. I said, 'Well why couldn't the father have been an Englishman? That would explain what she is doing in England. She didn't have to be an au pair. She could have been visiting her dad'. He said, 'Sh… I hadn't thought of that.' I said, 'Is it too late?' 'Yes', he said. Naturally, I was very upset. When he showed it to me, it was in a small subterranean viewing theatre in Soho somewhere and the only person I spoke to at the end of it was the boy who played John [Brock Peters]. I went up to him and I said 'Beautiful, lovely performance. Thank you'. And I walked out. I never said a word to anybody. Twenty years go by, and we're back in England [after living in Israel] and the film comes up in some sort of retrospective of Bryan's work. And it's on the telly. And the boys [her sons] said, 'Oh, we must see Mum's film'. And I thought, '*My* film?' And I thought I'd just wait until my name comes up in the credits and somehow I found myself sitting down and watching it with some detachment and thinking it's a very good film, it's stood the test of time and 'Oh God, how ungracious I was'. It was a very good film, it just wasn't my book. It did take some extraordinary liberties. She [Leslie Caron] was very good. She did tell me quite recently that that was the best straight part she ever got and she got an Oscar nomination for it, if not an Oscar.[6] No it wasn't an Oscar. So, more years go by. I'm sure by some clerical error I got invited to some kind of anniversary or birthday party for Bryan. I went. I thought 'This is going to be embarrassing, but I will eat crow'. I

[6] Caron received a nomination for 'Best Actress in a Leading Role' for the film at the 1964 Academy Awards and won the 'Best British Actress' award for the role at the 1963 BAFTAs.

went straight up to him and said, 'Bryan, do you remember me?' He said, 'Oh yes, I do'. 'I was very ungracious to say the least, but', I said, 'I was very close to it at the time and you did make some changes and you were entitled to. But, I saw it recently and it's a very good movie and I'm sorry for the way I acted'. Well, of course, he threw his arms around me. 'I have waited twenty-five years for this moment!' So at last I was able to put it right with him.

As for *The Indian in the Cupboard*, least said, soonest mended. It was a travesty I thought. But, at the same time, I have to admit it's a nice family movie, it's just not my book. It should be made again I think.

MM: *Children at the Gate* seems to be a less cinematic novel, at least more difficult to adapt. In the novel, when Gerda says she doesn't like films, someone replies, 'You'd never make a very good kibbutznik'. I wondered: what kind of cinema culture was there on kibbutzim?

LRB: Oh, my dear! Well, when I said to you when we were in Canada, going to the movies almost weekly was our treat. I don't suppose it was every week. My first date was *Lassie Come Home*.[7] I was about fourteen. Anyway, in exactly the same way, only much more so, in the kibbutz, the weekly movie – which was usually Friday night – was something everybody went to. It was in English, the Hungarians and the Brazilians all went and it wasn't… it had Hebrew subtitles. It was in Hungarian, all the Brits went. Everybody went to the movie, whatever it was. And it was a period when the most impressive, the thing that made the most impact, was *Rosemary's Baby*,[8] in the Sixties. That was an amazingly… that was shocking. To me, the evil in the husband was really shocking. And everybody… talk about the water cooler! The next day, *everyone* talked about the

[7] Released in 1943.
[8] Released in 1968.

film, in a way that certainly didn't happen in Canada. Certainly when I was at ITN, I don't think we bothered so much.

You know, one of the first movies I ever saw that really made a very big impression upon me was a film called the *Elephant Boy*.[9] There was an iconic young Indian star called Sabu, who was very much the rage before the War. He grew up and became a film star and he faded away and he died quite young. It was a Kipling story,[10] turned into a film about the British Raj, of course. This film was completely fascinating. The father was killed by a tiger. Very well done, by the way, at the time. There was a funeral for him by torchlight and he was wrapped in a white shroud. The little boy, who hadn't been told, sort of blundered in on this ceremony and he went up to this thing and fainted. And this absolutely got me by the… I was very moved by this. And of course Shirley Temple. And Deanna Durbin, who has only just died now. Incredible how they have lived; Shirley Temple is still alive! I went to children's films, but they were very good. And she – laugh if you may – she was a very talented child. We all wanted to do tap dancing and sing, and she had some very nice numbers. So all those films were absolutely part of my childhood. But whether it influenced me… But certainly the elephant business influenced me for life. One of my great dreams was to ride an elephant [as Sabu does in *Elephant Boy*].

There was a lot of Cecil B. DeMille stuff in the Forties, of course, and we loved it. Very spectacular films. You must remember there was no digital trickery going on. If there were a thousand people to be seen, they were there. The directors had to do incredible things. And all the trick photography was quite sort of new and very… Oh, I forgot to tell you the best of the lot. *The Thief of Bagdad*.[11] Sabu was in that too. It was a marvellous story, a sort of 'Arabian Nights' story, with a genie coming out of a bottle and horses could turn into real

[9] Released in 1937, directed mostly by documentary filmmaker Robert J. Flaherty and finished by Zoltan Korda.

[10] 'Toomai of the Elephants', from Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894).

[11] Released in 1940, winning the 1941 Academy Award for Special Effects for its pioneering use of 'bluescreening'.

horses and terrible evil and the beautiful maiden and the young man who gets turned into a dog. Marvellous stuff! To this day, if it came on I'd watch it diligently. What's really amazing about it was that it was made in the War. Alexander Korda made it during the War, in Britain. So how on Earth… It was Technicolor, which was by no means universal then. All the special effects. And they were very good. I don't know where he got the resources.

MM: In *An End to Running*, Martha doesn't want to go to the cinema with Jim because he wants to see a *Carry On* film. She makes her preference for the theatre clear over the cinema, but then also when she meets Aaron's girlfriend in the hotel, she refers to her as an 'Ingmar Bergman blonde'. Considering her strong opinions on film and culture, would that have been a compliment?

LRB: I never thought I wrote so many references to films! I did like Ingmar Bergman. I didn't like *The Virgin Spring*.[12] I saw that in Israel, in the city. We did visit Tel Aviv occasionally. I don't think that was in the kibbutz. That was my first full-on cinema rape. I had this idea even then that it would have been much more effective just to see the faces of the watchers, reflecting what was happening. My personal feeling is that this is often an artistic mistake. I usually cite Roman Polanski, *Macbeth*.[13] That was very realistic and had the whole castle built of wood, it had the open walkways around the wall. After Macbeth has killed the king and smeared the guards with blood, there's nothing in the text to suggest that he's done nothing more than just kill them. There's nothing to say that, in a frenzy, he's actually chopped them up. What Roman Polanski did was incredibly brilliant and subtle, in my opinion. He didn't show guts and blood. He showed Lady Macbeth running to see what her husband has wrought. She runs away from the camera to the corner where the guards are lying and she

[12] Released in 1960.
[13] Released in 1971.

faints. She faints! Lady Macbeth *faints*? That tough-minded woman? She's so horrified that her husband has lost all control. I thought, 'What has he done?' Whereas, if you had seen the bodies, you'd think, 'I wonder: how they've achieved that effect, with his arm cut off?' That was when I really solidified my idea that it's far more 'impactful' to suggest than to show.

MM: In *An End to Running*, Martha goes to see a rehearsal of Aaron's play and she mentions how exciting it is to see the 'three dimensions' of the page coming to life. Do you think that one could ever experience that quality of 'three-dimensionality' from a novel in any way?

LRB: Are you talking about some future technology, where holograms leap out at you? Maybe there is such a thing, I think.

MM: Well holography came about in the late Forties, early Fifties. The influence of the hologram is something that certainly interests me!

LRB: Well I think the idea with Martha probably was just the old trope of bringing the words to life. To go into the studio when they were making *Indian in the Cupboard*, with all these huge props – this was in Hollywood! – if anyone tells you that's no fun, they're lying! Even if they have changed it a lot! But you go and you see a trainer, a shoe, which is about 17.3 times bigger – I've forgotten the exact scale – than a normal one. And they'd bought it. It was polystyrene and the laces were like big ropes. The sole of the shoe is really cut into. The Indian has to run – he's running away from the cowboy with a gun – leaps onto the trainer and he turns and fires an arrow. As the bullet hits the trainer, it lights up. Very effective scene. So of course I went to the prop man and said, 'That was awfully good. How much did it…?' I think it was $50,000! All that stuff was just fascinating. In a film, if you see something like that in front of you, it's

spectacular. It's not only in full colour, 3D, but you've also got the music to emotionalise it. How can books stand up to that, unless you can do better in your head? I have had kids say to me that they didn't like the movie because they had their own movie in their head about it and it was different. It sold five million copies in America by the time they made the film, so that's at least five million kids who made their own movie. If you come along and spoil that, or distort it, you've got a lot to answer for.