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Introduction

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Few British film-makers have divided critical opinion as strongly as Tony Richardson. Notoriously, in his *Biographical Dictionary of Film*, David Thomson refers to Richardson as 'a wretched director' whose contribution to British film culture amounts to a 'pitiful record' (Thomson 1994: 632-3). In a similar vein, Gilbert Adair, writing an entry on Richardson for the *Independent on Sunday's* feature 'The guillotine: Twentieth-century classics that won't last', describes the director's work as 'just plain bad' (Adair 1999). Both pieces are marked by their intemperate language and dismissive tone. In contrast, the majority of obituaries which followed Richardson's premature death in 1991 offer a more balanced assessment, but none the less still tend to chart a career which follows a classic arc of rise and fall. Almost all these commentators prefer his early work and few can find much merit in anything he made from the early 1970s onward. At best, they suggest that Richardson was a significant but uneven director whose work never really cohered either as a whole or even within individual films.

In stark comparison to this are the views of those who knew him personally or who worked with him. For his New Wave colleague Lindsay Anderson, Richardson was 'the most remarkable by far of the young artists who battled for change in the heady days of confidence and enterprise which were the late 1950s and early 1960s' (Anderson 1993: xiii). Although their working relationship was often bitterly painful, John Osborne wrote in the *Observer* after Richardson's death that 'no one has inflamed my creative passions more tantalisingly than Tony' (Osborne 1991b). Similarly, Vanessa Redgrave's 'appreciation' of her former husband in the *Guardian* is a passionate defence of his creative achievements throughout his career (Redgrave 1991). It is, perhaps, unsurprising that Richardson's closest friends should pay tribute to him, but then there were also the numerous prizes received during his lifetime including the Best Director Academy Award for *Tom Jones*

(1963) and the BAFTAs for *A Taste of Honey* (1961), as well as the Palme d'Or nomination at Cannes for *Mademoiselle* (1966). Contemporary reviews for *A Taste of Honey*, *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1962), *Tom Jones* and *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1968) were often lavish in their praise. Many of his films also achieved considerable box-office success, particularly *Tom Jones* which was popular internationally.

The most striking aspect of David Thomson's assessment of Richardson, other than its generally ill-tempered tone, is that Thomson provides little explanation or argument for his summary of Richardson's failings. In the same way, Gilbert Adair's article simply offers his own (knowingly provocative) views as if they are a statement of fact without constructing any reasoned analysis of Richardson's weaknesses as an auteur. In light of Richardson's not inconsiderable achievements in his career (co-founding the English Stage Company at London's Royal Court Theatre where he directed many of Osborne's plays including the landmark first production of *Look Back in Anger* (1956); helping to create and run Woodfall Films, one of the most successful and innovative British production companies of the 1960s; the commercial phenomenon of *Tom Jones*, etc.), these critical dismissals of Richardson seem inadequate. What is clearly needed is a reassessment of Richardson which actually considers carefully the films themselves as texts. This is something missing even from more considered appraisals such as that of John Hill where Richardson is taken as a figure inexorably bound up with the British New Wave rather than as a film artist in his own right (Hill 1986).

This study is intended to offer the first systematic and detailed examination of Tony Richardson's work as a film director, an undertaking that is certainly long overdue. The one existing critical work on Richardson, James Welsh and John C. Tibbetts's *The Cinema of Tony Richardson: Essays and Interviews*, offers an interesting selection of essays from a variety of authors but, inevitably, does not attempt a rounded or consistent overview; there are also omissions such as *Laughter in the Dark* (1968). Richardson's own approach to film-making is strongly intertwined with two of the dominant traditions in British film-making, that is realism and what Roy Armes once called 'literary cinema' (Armes 1978: 198–200). His early work is rooted in a conception of cinematic realism that is far from unproblematic, as noted by writers like John Hill. Part of the methodology adopted here will be to try to unravel Richardson's individual, and often idiosyncratic, approach to the realist mode and consider what is distinctive about it. Virtually all of Richardson's feature film output is adapted from notable literary sources, an aspect of his work which commentators like Armes have seen as a limitation

(Armes 1978: 268–71). However, this assessment is based on another set of assumptions about the wider nature of British cinema which requires more considered evaluation. We need to ask what precisely draws Richardson to these particular literary texts in the first instance and how he adapts them for the screen, considering that some of his 'literary' work makes substantial changes from the source material.

Throughout his career Richardson was dedicated to the notion of an art cinema, one which recognised film-making as a source of profound personal vision and self-expression. This often put him at odds with producers and executives who found him wilfully contrary. In an interview as early as 1961 he declared:

In films I can say something that is absolutely my own – what I feel about the world and about people. Well what do I want to say? Well, I can only say it through the films I make. I can't explain because I am an anti-intellectual. By which I mean that I'm trying to overcome being an intellectual. I want to expose myself totally through my work. Basically, everything one feels has to be expressed through one's work. It's through one's work that one speaks most eloquently. I honestly believe that you change people more by the things you create than by sitting down in Trafalgar-square. (Muller 1961)

Richardson's desire to pursue artistic freedom is reflected both in his cinematic methods and in his choice of subjects. He is drawn again and again to those at odds with authority or out of step with society's norms, his sympathies lying with the underdog and the outcast. This has a political dimension, as Richardson recognised:

Yet at the same time my own political feelings are growing stronger and stronger all the time. Left. Further and further Left. What is so awful is that if you lean very strongly to the Left, there is nothing to which you can attach yourself any more. You can't feel anything about the Labour Party. The Monarchy is dead poetry and Labour is living on dead poetry, too. And that's the trouble with the whole of English life today. The concepts that people are hanging on to are hopelessly out of date – everybody clinging to some tattered bits of the past, worn out and used up. (Muller 1961)

The anger evident in this statement was to fuel a film career beset by conflicts, but one in which he never lost confidence in his own vision or softened in his sympathy for the downtrodden and the rebellious, a role in which he often seems to have cast himself. This book sets out to counter the easy assumptions made by Thomson and Adair, returning Richardson to a more just assessment of his contribution to the development of art cinema in Britain during the 1960s and 1970s.

Richardson's career: an overview

Tony Richardson was born Cecil Antonio Richardson (named after an uncle of his) in Shipley, Yorkshire, on 5 June 1928, although the family later moved to the seaside resort of Morecambe. His childhood home was in the rooms above the family's chemist shop at 28 Bingley Road. It was a highly matriarchal household inhabited by his parents, his two grandmothers, and various visiting elderly female relatives. In his memoirs he described it as 'a world of skirts and inhibition' (Richardson 1993: 5). His love of theatre and films developed initially with his maternal grandmother and then with his Aunt Ethel. From an early age there was also a sharp awareness of class: his mother's family thought themselves 'slightly grand' and certainly a cut above his father's side who were distinctly 'trade'. The family's aspirations to see their only child rise up in the world led to a life of scrimping and saving so that Tony could be sent to a local private school and eventually away to boarding school. Or as he put it, 'it was on the altar of class that I was sacrificed' (Richardson 1993: 17). It's characteristic that in his memoirs he celebrates what he sees as the more classless aspects of the Yorkshire culture he grew up in, one where the value of hard-earned money ('brass') was more important than the usual English obsession with class distinctions, which he refers to as a 'virus'. He describes these preferred values as being typically American rather than English, which again may partially account for the affection he developed for America and his later decision to live there.

Richardson hated Ashville College, Harrogate, with a vengeance – 'it is impossible to exaggerate the misery, the sordidness, the continual and recurring nastinesses of a sentence to a gulag from which there was no escape' (Richardson 1993: 24) – but he almost equally resented his parents' desire to see him safely into a respectable profession such as the law. The school was evacuated during the Second World War to the Lake District where a love of wild nature developed (his descriptions of it are reminiscent of Tom Courtenay's training runs in *The Longfellow* of *the Long Distance Runner*). He was a tall, weedy boy who felt acutely that he didn't fit in, a frame of mind which was to stay with him most of his adult life. From Ashville College he progressed to Wadham College, Oxford, with the aid of a bursary. He embraced life at Oxford wholeheartedly, particularly appreciating Wadham's tolerant attitude towards 'eccentrics' like himself. It was the social life and the opportunity to take part in Oxford's two main dramatic societies which held his real interest, rather than any academic pursuits; he emerged with a third-class degree in English. One thing that Ashville College had taught him, via its own amateur dramatics group, was that he would never make an actor, but

he knew just as firmly that he wanted to direct. He became president of both the Oxford University Dramatic Society and the alternative Oxford University Experimental Theatre Club, as well as being drama critic for the student magazine *Isis*. Another of his lasting character traits was rapidly emerging – his energetic dynamism.

On leaving Oxford he took up an offer to become a trainee television director on a new scheme launched by the BBC, but it was largely an unhappy experience. The course proved to be ramshackle and under-resourced, and Richardson felt stifled by what he saw as the bureaucratic nature of the BBC. Although he did subsequently work for the BBC intermittently, he was already looking to the London theatre as his next career step. His first forays into professional theatre directing were not successful and ironically it was actually through one of his television assignments that his career was to change fundamentally. Here he met the actor-manager George Devine, a key figure in twentieth-century British theatrical life. They became friends and hatched a plan for a new theatre company of their own. This was to lead eventually to the creation of the English Stage Company (ESC) with its base at the Royal Court Theatre in Sloane Square. As Richardson put it, Devine brought to the partnership 'his awareness and knowledge of theatre as a craft, as a business, as an organisation, and his experience as a physical practitioner ... What had I to offer? Only, perhaps, some sense and smell of a new generation, unarrived and unproven' (Richardson 1993: 60). Richardson's main contribution was to be the task of rooting out new work by unknown British writers and bringing it to the stage. To this end he advertised widely for original material and, according to the legend, the fifth script he and Devine looked at from the mountain that had arrived through the post was *Look Back in Anger* by John Osborne.

The play opened at the Royal Court on 8 May 1956 with Richardson directing and was the third production mounted by the ESC. The initial box-office returns were modest but, as Osborne later recalled in his autobiography, the critics were almost uniformly vociferous in their condemnation of the production (Osborne 1991: 20–3). Fortunately, there were two significant exceptions to the consensus: Kenneth Tynan, the most fashionable young critic of the time, and, conversely, Harold Hobson, the most venerated representative of the theatrical establishment and drama critic of *The Sunday Times*. Although their support did not turn the play into a commercial hit, it helped to establish the Royal Court as the focus of cutting-edge theatre in Britain. The play had touched a contemporary nerve and marked the beginning of a revolution in the British theatre, unleashing a wave of new writers and performers, particularly those from working-class backgrounds. In the

of the Bond films). Although it was seemingly an unlikely partnership, Saltzman's considerable business acumen brought in financial support from Warner Brothers, and Richard Burton for the lead role of Jimmy Porter. Throughout most of the following decade the company succeeded in securing regular funding from domestic sources, such as British Lion/Bryanston, and from the London offices of American majors like United Artists, enabling it to maintain a steady output of feature films. Richardson followed *Look Back in Anger* (1959), logically enough, with an adaptation of *The Entertainer* (1960) which preserved Olivier's landmark performance. Neither of the films managed to replicate the critical success of its theatrical counterpart, receiving a mixed reception and only moderate box-office takings.

Like Anderson, Richardson was committed to a cinema which combined artistic ambition with contemporary social relevance, and which would consequently shake the dust from a moribund, out-of-touch national industry. Unlike Anderson, whose prickliness often made the process of feature film-making difficult, Richardson proved to be the workhorse of the British New Wave, as it soon came to be called. In a broadly realist mode, he directed *A Taste of Honey* (1961), from the Shelagh Delaney play which he had previously staged in its first Broadway run, and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1962), adapted from Alan Sillitoe's novel. He also produced *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960) with Karel Reisz directing, adapted from another Alan Sillitoe novel; it proved to be the biggest commercial success of the New Wave films. He was then executive producer on *The Girl with Green Eyes* (1964), directed by Desmond Davis from Edna O'Brien's novel. He was by far the most prolific of the New Wave directors; for Reisz it was 'Tony's confidence and impresario genius which made it all possible' (Tibbets and Welsh 1999: 27). The realism and topicality at the centre of the New Wave's approach had its film-makers dubbed by the popular press as 'angry young men' and practitioners of 'kitchen sink' cinema. At the same time, Richardson was also developing an increasingly personal take on these naturalistic subjects, introducing more poetic and lyrical elements which divided critical opinion.

Like all the New Wave directors, Richardson made an abrupt and decisive shift away from naturalism, almost as if it had served its purpose. His film of Henry Fielding's picaresque novel *Tom Jones* (1963), adapted very loosely by Osborne, proved to be the biggest commercial and critical success of his career, garnering four Oscars, including the award for Best Director, and grossing more than \$20 million. For Richardson, it was 'our holiday film' (Anon. 1963), breaking away from the grim realities of his previous work into a period fantasy of joyful sexuality.

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process, it swept away the stifling certainties of the postwar middle-class consensus which has been typified by the 'well-made play' and the work of Terence Rattigan. As Stephen Lacey suggests, it became 'the defining theatrical event' of its era (Lacey 1995: 3). Richardson was to continue working as principal director with the ESC until 1964. His productions included two further new works by Osborne, *The Entertainer* (1957), with Laurence Olivier in the role of Archie Rice, and *Luther* (1961) with Albert Finney. He also staged work by Shakespeare, Noël Coward, Tennessee Williams, William Faulkner and Ionesco.

Richardson's interest in cinema initially found its expression in two areas. Firstly, he was to write criticism and opinion pieces for a variety of film magazines during the second half of the 1950s. He had become friends with Karel Reisz and Lindsay Anderson (Anderson preceded him by a couple of years at Wadham College), who edited and wrote for the magazine *Sequence*. Richardson published occasional pieces here and in other journals such as *Sight and Sound*. These pieces never formed anything like the substantial, coherent body of work produced by Anderson in print, but some consideration will be given to them in a later chapter. The most dominant themes in Richardson's critical writing tend to be his concern with the primacy of the director in cinema, as well as in establishing the basis of an art cinema tradition in Britain to rival those of European countries like Italy and France. The second opening into cinema which he found also came courtesy of his friendship with Reisz and Anderson. Reisz became Programme Manager at the National Film Theatre in London where he and Anderson initiated the series of six film seasons between 1956 and 1959 which became known as 'Free Cinema'. These programmes showcased documentary shorts by new British and continental film-makers, including work by Anderson and Reisz, Claude Goretta and Alain Tanner, Lorenza Mazzetti and Richardson himself. Richardson's contribution, co-directed with Reisz, was *Momma Don't Allow* (1956), an observational portrait of the Wood Green Jazz Club in North London. Richardson never showed much inclination to return to the pure documentary form, although he incorporated elements of its approach into his early realist fiction film-making; instead he was already aiming at mainstream features.

Showing some pragmatism, Richardson set about entering feature film production by trying to attract finance for an adaptation of *Look Back in Anger*. To facilitate this, he and Osborne established their own production company, Woodfall (named after the street in Chelsea where Osborne lived with his first wife, the actress Mary Ure). They brought in as their third partner the maverick Canadian-born producer Harry Saltzman (later to achieve international fame as co-producer

It certainly tapped into the nascent mood of an emerging 'Swinging' Britain. The film's popularity catapulted Richardson into the unfamiliar realm of the internationally prestigious director; he suddenly became sought after. He had already had one unhappy experience of the Hollywood studio system when he made *Sanctuary* in 1961 for the producer Darryl Zanuck, an adaptation of William Faulkner's novel. He had found the machinations of Hollywood hard to adjust to but none the less now found himself tempted back by the offer of complete control over a version of Evelyn Waugh's black comedy *The Loved One* (1965), set in the bizarre world of California's undertaking business. If the film's critical reception was uneven (it has subsequently gone on to attract something of a cult following for its 1960s camp excesses), that was nothing compared to the critical hostility which greeted his next two outings. The European co-productions *Mademoiselle* (1966), from an original screenplay by Jean Genet, and *The Sailor from Gibraltar* (1967), adapted from Marguerite Duras's novel, both starred the French icon Jeanne Moreau and suffered commercially from poor distribution. Richardson's brief period of critical favour had quickly evaporated, and never really returned. The growing animosity between him and the press was typified by the legal action he took against *The Spectator* in 1966. The magazine, and its film critic Ian Cameron, were forced to publicly apologise (Anon, 1966a). His personal life was no less troubled during this period and attracted its own attention from the press. He had married the actress Vanessa Redgrave in 1962, but they divorced in 1967 with Jeanne Moreau cited as co-responsible. Their two daughters, Natasha and Joely, went on to successful acting careers of their own.

Richardson returned from his travels to the UK, initially to make the short film *Red and Blue* (1967), intended as one part of a portmanteau film with the other two sections to be directed by Peter Hall and Lindsay Anderson, but which eventually had a limited release as a stand-alone. He then began work on *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1968), a massively ambitious and expensive undertaking, with lavish staging and a starry cast, but the results again divided contemporary critics and the film did comparatively poor business at the box office. It has subsequently gone on to be substantially re-evaluated, most systematically by Mark Connelly (Connelly 2003) in his book-length study, and can rightly be claimed as a major work, distilling many of Richardson's anti-authoritarian leanings and complex cinematic techniques. The film was also significant in marking Richardson's final professional collaboration with John Osborne, albeit one which ended with Osborne being removed from the project. After an absence of five years, Richardson returned to working in the theatre with his 1969 production of *Hamlet*

at The Roundhouse, featuring Nicol Williamson in the central role. He subsequently filmed the production for Woodfall in a strikingly minimalist style, receiving some of the most positive reviews of his career. There were to be occasional further returns to the theatre during the 1970s.

Adaptations from literary sources continued to remain the central connecting thread of Richardson's output into the first half of the 1970s. *Laughter in the Dark* (1969), taken from Vladimir Nabokov's novel, again had a mixed reception, while *A Delicate Balance* (1973) was a low-budget adaptation of Edward Albee's play filmed as part of the American Film Theatre's slate of UK-based drama adaptations. This dimension of Richardson's work has always been deemed problematic by his detractors. As James M. Welsh puts it, 'because he made so many films that were adapted from novels, short stories, and plays, he was attacked for lacking originality, but he had a special talent for adaptation' (Welsh 1999a: 14). Richardson's films of the 1970s have been largely neglected by film historians, as have those from the mid-1960s between the major productions of *Tom Jones* and *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. One of the key intentions of this book will be to re-examine this work in some detail, leaving aside easy assumptions about the supposedly 'inferior' nature of adaptations.

Between *Laughter in the Dark* and *A Delicate Balance* came the traumatic adventure of *Ned Kelly* (1970), featuring Mick Jagger of The Rolling Stones as the Australian outlaw and anthero. The film was an expensive commercial failure and attracted some of the worst notices of Richardson's career. It has become one of those mythically 'bad' films which is long overdue a more considered, unprejudiced evaluation. As the 1970s progressed, Richardson's career faltered. This decline needs to be set against the context of a British film industry which was also in a state of enormous flux and turmoil, which made it increasingly difficult for Richardson to get projects off the ground. In 1977 he told *The Times*:

It is very much harder now to get a film started in this country: there's a kind of despair which I don't really understand, and now you have to decide not just what films you want to make but what film you could actually raise the money for. I've been spending too much of my time on interesting projects that came to nothing, and I've now got to be more realistic. (Morley 1977)

This new 'realism' may be reflected in the nature of his next British film, *Dead Cert* (1974), adapted from one of the populist racecourse thrillers written by Dick Francis. This was followed by *Joseph Andrews* (1977), which returned Richardson to the bawdy world of *Tom Jones* with a second adaptation from Henry Fielding. Despite the cynicism with

which the latter was largely greeted by British reviewers, it's clear that Richardson had hoped for some years to revisit Fielding and that he took the project perfectly seriously (Morley 1977). This book takes the time to offer a comparison between the two films which allows that the latter might be rather more than just a commercially expedient exercise. During this period Richardson also established a new relationship with his partner Grizelda Gramond, with whom he had a third daughter, Katherine.

Although this series of books concerns itself with the work of British film-makers, it would leave Richardson's story incomplete if consideration was not given to his last three feature films, all of which were made in America. Richardson had effectively decamped to the United States after *Dead Cert*, but struggled to make much headway following his departure from the Diana Ross vehicle *Mahogany* (1975) (Anon. 1975), returning temporarily to the UK when funding became available for *Joseph Andrews*. However, from 1978 onwards he was based in California. His departure attracted some carping criticism in the British press but, as his friend Lindsay Anderson recalled, 'the lifestyle offered to him by the United States was of the first importance' (Anderson 1993: xvi). Not that he necessarily found it any easier to conform to the requirements of the Hollywood system of production, as evidenced by an output of just three cinema feature films in thirteen years, as well as his resignation from the controversial television film *Playing for Time* which he publicly described as 'tacky' (Anon. 1979). The bulk of his late American work was for television (five completed productions). These films varied greatly, from sober crime dramas like *A Death in Canaan* (1978) to glossy entertainments such as his version of *The Phantom of the Opera* (1990). This work was often successful with both audiences and critics, garnering a number of nominations and awards in America. At the same time, it's difficult to see his American television output as other than relatively minor in comparison with his feature films.

His final three American features films – *The Border* (1982), *The Hotel New Hampshire* (1984) and *Blue Sky* (filmed in 1991, but posthumously released in America in 1994) – are admittedly uneven, but remain interesting works which will be considered in the final chapter of this book. They combine an astute eye for the American scene with typical Richardson concerns for society's outsiders. The development of this new phase of his career was brought to an abrupt and tragic end by his death in Los Angeles on 14 November 1991 from AIDS-related illnesses.

Reassessing Richardson's films

What follows is an attempt to place Richardson's cinematic output under a close textual and contextual examination, but one undertaken from a rather more sympathetic standpoint than has been the case with some previous commentators. My own response to Richardson's work is that it is considerably richer, more complex and more rewarding than has largely been acknowledged to date. I hope to set this critical imbalance to rights and to do so through a systematic analytical consideration of the merits of the films themselves. What is certainly true is that Richardson was a figure of cultural significance in Britain during the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, a fact which needs to be both acknowledged and evaluated. At the same time, substantial swathes of his work have received scant critical attention and require less a reassessment than an initial one. In making this examination of his work, it seems obvious enough to adopt the basic tenets of the auteur theory as a starting point, using close textual analysis to extrapolate the cinematic traits and characteristic themes which give his films their signature style. From his individual approach to content and style, Richardson's vision emerges and, contrary to some existing critical views, it is a remarkably consistent and coherent one.

At the same time, it's useful and appropriate to widen this approach out to cover other areas. As Susan Hayward has pointed out, the auteur theory has developed under the influence of post-structuralist critiques by acknowledging that 'what was required was a pluralism of theories that cross-fertilised each other' (Hayward 2000: 26). One often discussed weakness of the auteur theory (in its initial form) has been its failure to acknowledge the collaborative nature of the film medium. Richardson as a film-maker was always publicly appreciative of the contributions made by his key artistic collaborators, and this book will reflect this. With a director so concerned with adaptation, writers loom large in his oeuvre. Most important was his relationship with John Osborne, which took them from the theatre into cinema and contributed directly to four of Richardson's films. But other key writers also need consideration, including Shelagh Delaney, Alan Sillitoe, Nigel Kneale (who was key in adapting Osborne's first two plays for the screen), Charles Wood, Christopher Isherwood and Edward Bond. The roster of actors who have given fine performances under Richardson's direction is almost as striking as the quality of the writers he worked with. Richardson loved working with actors and had the highest regard for their craft; in his memoirs he wrote, 'Acting is imagination at its finest. Acting is the ability to enter into and believe absolutely in the mind and blood of someone else' (Richardson 1993: 36). He goes on to talk passionately

about the actor's ability to achieve special 'moments' of heightened imagination which can make an unparalleled impact on the spectator. Richardson's films are littered with such moments, from the spontaneous interplay of Murray Melvin and Rita Tushingham in *A Taste of Honey* to the verbal sparring of Harry Andrews and Trevor Howard in *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. Many of Richardson's films also benefit immeasurably from the contributions of key technicians, including the cinematographers Walter Lassally, Oswald Morris, Haskell Wexler and David Watkin, as well as regular editor Anthony Gibbs, composer John Addison and designer Jocelyn Herbert. Richardson's need to establish and maintain close, productive collaborations is apparent in the way these names reappear from project to project. This book will give appropriate weight to the way Richardson drew on the abilities of others to enrich his work.

It will also seek to place Richardson's work within a number of framing contexts. These will include the critical context, so that consideration will be given to contemporary press reactions to the films, as well as to assessments made by film historians. Many of these have been keen to examine Richardson's place within established traditions of British film-making such as the literary adaptation or documentary realism, as previously indicated. This book will take a fresh look at how these debates have developed and how Richardson has sometimes been used to help formulate often polemical, didactic arguments about the wider nature of British cinema. My concern will be to show how Richardson's films benefit from being seen within such critical contexts, but how they also contradict them in their individuality. A further context which requires consideration is the political economy of the British film industry. Richardson worked as a director, producer, writer and company executive through a period of considerable change for the British film industry. His own struggles for autonomy, or simply to get films made, can usefully be set against the background of an industry emerging from a period of stagnation (the late 1950s) into one of expansion and confidence (during the 1960s) and then heading into disintegration, fragmentation and near structural collapse (the 1970s). It would be difficult to fully assess the nature of Richardson's work without properly considering the forces which helped to shape that output and the social shifts which he was often responding to, and sometimes shaping himself.

The following chapters broadly follow the chronology of Richardson's career, so as to allow the shape of its progression to emerge. At the same time, films are necessarily grouped together in ways which allow a number of aesthetic and contextual issues to be examined

more effectively. As a result, strict chronology is occasionally set aside. Chapter 2 looks at the Richardson's early realist work in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In order to do this, it also considers Richardson's place within the New Wave. Some of the debates between film historians over the nature of the New Wave's achievements and limitations, which have occasionally been vociferous, are reconsidered to arrive at a balanced assessment of what the New Wave was able to achieve within its context. The third chapter begins with the success of *Tom Jones* and then follows Richardson's wanderings across Europe and North America during the mid-1960s. It concludes with his return to British cinema with *The Charge of the Light Brigade* in 1968. Subsidiary themes which are considered include Richardson's relationship with American cinema, and with traditions in European art cinema, as well as the impact of the Swinging London scene on his work. Chapter 4 covers the remainder of his British career through to *Joseph Andrews*, taking in much previously neglected work, and considers the vexed issue of literary adaptation, along with Richardson's predilection for rebels and his handling of historical subjects. The context here is one of social unrest and economic decline which inevitably impacted on his development. Chapter 5 looks more briefly at Richardson's self-imposed exile in the United States, focusing principally on his final three completed feature films but also providing some consideration of his television work.

This is only the third academic book to have been published about Tony Richardson, following on from Don Radovich's *Tony Richardson: A Bio-Bibliography* (1995) and Welsh and Tibbetts's *The Cinema of Tony Richardson: Essays and Interviews*. It is the first monograph to examine his work in detail. Radovich openly acknowledges that it was beyond the remit of his volume to offer a defence of Richardson's work, suggesting that this might come later from other hands (Radovich 1995: xi), while Welsh and Tibbetts offer the cautious hope that their edited collection might have started this process (Welsh 1999a: 21). I am more explicit in my intentions. Unlike David Thomson and Gilbert Adair, I have found much to admire and enjoy in the work of Tony Richardson: the playful montage showing the developing love between Sophie Western (Susannah York) and the eponymous hero (Albert Finney) in *Tom Jones*; Colin Smith's (Tom Courtenay) final grim act of defiance in *The Longest Day*; the inclusion of Richard Williams's brilliant animations in *The Charge of the Light Brigade*; and the delight of Rita Tushingham's luminous face in repeated close-ups in *A Taste of Honey* all linger in the memory with pleasure. This book is offered as a further step in returning Richardson's reputation where it belongs, among the first rank of British film-makers.

critic and magazine writer (Richardson 1993: 68), yet he did contribute to *Sight and Sound* and other publications, usually to put forward his opinions on the nature of directing and what made for good cinema. An article he later wrote for *Granta* in 1962 sums up many of his attitudes. Here he argues for a director's cinema in which other contributors behind and in front of the camera are incorporated in the director's vision. His two criteria for a successful film are the director's imposition of a style 'which makes eloquent use of the technical language of cinema' and the creation of 'an organic relationship between content and presentation' (Richardson 1962). He typically refers to a wide range of directors who are cited as examples of true film artists, particularly Anthony Mann and Otto Preminger. He suggests that these directors 'establish their presence through recurring patterns of expression or recurring ideas'. The piece is far from coherent; at one point he berates film-makers who indulge in mere decoration, but later suggests a director can be 'as decorative as he wishes'. Little justification is given for his likes and dislikes, with John Sturges dismissed without much supporting argument. Terms are used loosely, so that Preminger is celebrated for how his 'way of saying things cinematically becomes his way of regarding things morally', yet what this morality is remains unclear. In another later interview he admitted, 'I've never been the kind of director who's been good at explaining why he made a film or what he thinks it's about' (Morley 1977). What does emerge from the article is a deeply held belief in a cinema of personal artistic vision, the director's vision and a concern for the marriage of style and content, with content seen as the starting point for artistic decisions. These qualities are described as being the result of intuitive feelings rather than as produced by intellectual reflection.

If Richardson's own early writing on cinema lacks a wider social and political agenda, he was happy enough to put his name to the polemics issued as part of the Free Cinema movement. These statements may owe more to Lindsay Anderson's influence in their rhetorical style and radical stance, but Richardson clearly felt a close affinity with the sentiments which his friend and colleague could put into words more effectively than he. The central focus of the Free Cinema movement (the term was coined by Lindsay Anderson in reference to the fact that their films had been made free of the normal commercial constraints of mainstream film-making and without any institutional propaganda intent) was the series of six programmes of short documentaries which were screened at the National Film Theatre (NFT) in London between February 1956 and March 1959. Three of the programmes featured work by young British film-makers, while the others showcased films

The New Wave films (1956-64)

2

In his memoirs Tony Richardson provides a quite lengthy list of films which inspired him in his youthful love of movies. The choices are eclectic, ranging from silent comic greats like Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Harry Langdon, through Soviet political cinema and German Expressionism in the 1920s, to the French masters of the 1930s and Hollywood mavericks like Preston Sturges. The list finishes with Italian Neo-realism, which he describes as 'more real and more vivid than anything one imagined' (Richardson 1993: 67). Encountering these Italian masterworks was 'like emerging from a house whose windows and rooms have long been boarded over and air and places and people being revealed outside. It didn't seem like art - it was life itself.' British films and directors feature very little. He acknowledges early Hitchcock, David Lean, Carol Reed and Alexander Mackendrick, but that's all. More depressingly, he attributes Britain's meagre contribution towards the art of cinema to a widespread cultural reluctance to take the medium seriously: 'The attitude of British society was to denigrate. Movies were popular and therefore inconsiderable' (Richardson 1993: 67). He partially attributes a growing change in these attitudes to the magazine *Sequence* (1947-52), developed initially by a group of Oxford students led by Lindsay Anderson and later, with its operation moved to London, edited by Gavin Lambert (Oxford) and subsequently Karel Reisz (Cambridge). *Sequence* was close in its ethos to Richardson's own attitudes, advocating the importance of cinema as art, embracing wide and idiosyncratic tastes, and openly expressing its dislike for most British cinema of the period. He sought out the *Sequence* group when he moved to London after graduating and quickly became friends with them. On its demise after just fourteen issues, its young writers found another outlet for their views through the British Film Institute's *Sight and Sound* magazine, of which Lambert became editor.

Richardson frankly admitted that he was 'never much good' as a film

by foreign directors. The first programme was organised principally as a means of enabling films which Anderson, Richardson and Karel Reisz had already made to be screened to the public when other avenues seemed closed; Reisz's position as chief programmer at the NFT obviously helped with this (Dupin 2007). The first programme attracted sufficient attention from the press and public to embolden them to organise the other five sets of screenings.

Each set of screenings was accompanied by a short manifesto stating the aims of the group. The first manifesto statement is worth quoting in full:

These films were not made together, nor with the idea of showing them together. But when they came together, we felt they had an attitude in common. Implicit in this attitude is a belief in freedom, in the importance of people and in the significance of the everyday.

As film-makers we believe that

No film can be too personal,

The image speaks. Sound amplifies and comments. Size is irrelevant.

Perfection is not an aim.

An attitude means a style. A style means an attitude.

This is signed by Anderson, Reisz, Lorenza Mazzetti and Richardson. If phrases like 'a belief in freedom' or 'the importance of people' sound a little hollow now, or at least vague, then the statement has to be seen in context. The 'people' that the Free Cinema directors had in mind were specifically the British working class who form the main subject matter for their films. It is their 'everyday' lives that have 'significance'. And it is the personal feelings of the film-makers towards this section of society which give the films their 'attitude'. The political nature of the statement is implicit but lies in the sense that these are subject that have been neglected by the majority of British films to this date. The Free Cinema movement was effectively making a political stand by focusing on a class marginalised by mainstream British film culture. Anderson could be considerably more explicit in expanding on this position. For him, British cinema was actually 'an English cinema (and Southern English at that), metropolitan in attitude, and entirely middleclass'. These qualities were not to be read as virtues, for our national cinema was also 'snobbish, anti-intelligent, emotionally inhibited, wilfully blind to the conditions and problems of the present, dedicated to an out-of-date, exhausted national idea' (Ryan 2004: 234). Free Cinema's attempt to connect with the lives of ordinary, working-class people in contemporary Britain was, therefore, implicitly a rejection of the middle-class values deemed to be at the heart of the ills besetting British culture. As Christophe Dupin suggests, such sentiments chimed perfectly with other

cultural movements emerging at the time, including the phenomenon of the 'angry young man' writers and the changes occurring in British theatre in which Richardson was to be a central figure (Dupin 2007).

If Free Cinema's main subject was working-class life, then its chosen mode was social realism and, more specifically, the documentary. Anderson was an acknowledged admirer of Humphrey Jennings and saw the Free Cinema films as a continuation of a British tradition of documentary film-making. It's significant that Anderson preferred the work of Jennings, which combined documentary technique with a highly personal, poetic vision to that of the more sociological practitioners in the British documentary movement. Among the films which Richardson most admired was the work of the Italian Neo-realists whose cinematic agenda had clear affinities with Free Cinema. Richardson's contribution to the first programme of Free Cinema screenings (his only film contribution to any of the programmes) was the 22-minute documentary *Momma Dort* (1956) which he co-directed with Karel Reisz. The film was made possible by a grant from the British Film Institute's experimental film fund and portrays a typical Saturday night out in a jazz club in North London. It was shot over nine Saturdays at the club in Wood Green and the surrounding area for the princely sum of £425 using a Bolex 16mm wind-up camera with the shooting completed in November 1955. The Bolex camera provided the young film-makers, and their cameraman Walter Lassally, with some technical challenges. The Bolex could shoot only a maximum of 22 seconds of film at a time and the sound had to be recorded separately from the images because of the noise its mechanism made. As a result, the film is essentially a montage of images with the unsynchronised sound providing a form of audio backdrop. Lassally later recalled how he had shot scenes in the club perched on top of a stepladder to get wider views.¹

Much of the film consists of quite straightforward shots of people dancing to music played by the Chris Barber Jazz Band, and the emphasis is on a positive portrayal of young people having a good time. As Richardson and Reisz put it, 'It is the freedom, exuberance and vitality of this world that we set out to capture and admire' (Dupin 2007). They were also clearly aware of the wider resonance of this. Reisz later recalled, 'A very substantial change took place in England, and the commercial cinema really ignored it. The most important thing our films did was to take notice' (Tibbetts and Welsh 1999: 28). The change Reisz was referring to had its roots in the emerging youth culture which their film depicted. Although an observational documentary, the film does construct a simple narrative. Over an opening slow blues, we see shots of working-class teenagers finishing-up at work (a dental nurse,

a butcher's mate, a girl cleaning train compartments) before they head off to the jazz club. Slow numbers alternate with more up-tempo pieces and we see a couple bickering and then making-up. The central narrative thread is, however, implicitly political. A group of upper-class revelers arrive, their identity indicated by the expensive car they drive up in and by the fact that the young man driving unscrews the car mascot before going into the club – presumably so that it doesn't get stolen. Their clumsy, self-conscious dancing is contrasted sharply with the wonderfully professional dancing of the working-class couples and they are made to appear rather foolish. They leave before the end, while the fun is still going on inside the club. The impression of them is as interlopers, cultural tourists whose interest in the jazz scene is clearly fake.

It's worth briefly comparing *Momma Don't Allow* with Anderson's own contribution to the first Free Cinema programme, *O Dreamland* (1956). Anderson's film is a portrait of another form of popular culture, the 'Dreamland' funfair at Margate, but his attitude is strikingly different to that of Richardson and Reisz. The shots of rides, bingo and arcade machines are undercut by a soundtrack in which the noise of a mechanical laughing policeman is repeated and the glum-looking faces of the crowds are ironically counterpointed by a juke box playing Frankie Laine's recording of 'I Believe'. Anderson's intention was to show a public which was being debased by the poverty of Britain's entertainment culture but, as Roy Armes suggests, the film 'confuses an assault on exploitation with what is very close to contempt for the exploited' (Armes 1978: 266). In contrast, Richardson and Reisz's film is warmly affirmative in its depiction of young, working-class Britain and the emergent world of pop culture. Both films were well received by critics, but the difference in tone was noted by commentators like Dilys Powell who contrasted the 'savagery' of Anderson's approach with the 'friendliness' of *Momma Don't Allow* whose scenes, she comments, are 'observed with unforced sympathy, the film is infectious with high spirits' (Powell 1956). Walter Lassally recalled that it was the only one of the Free Cinema films to return a profit, which accrued from its later commercial distribution.

Richardson had no particular affinity for the documentary form and never made another, although elements of an observational documentary style are used in his first four New Wave feature films, as well as in the hunting sequence in *Tom Jones*. His involvement with the Free Cinema movement appears to have been a stepping-stone towards his wider plans. Even as early as 1954, when the funding for *Momma Don't Allow* was first granted, his ambition was to make fiction feature films and to work in the professional theatre. Those ambitions came to

fruition rapidly. The legacy of his involvement with Free Cinema lay in two areas: firstly, in the use of social realism as a mode to explore issues of class conflict; and, secondly, in building professional relationships with the likes of Anderson, Reisz and Lassally which were to be crucial in the following years.

Look Back in Anger (1959) and *The Entertainer* (1960)

Richardson's path into feature films was to come, as with many other British directors, via the theatre. His production of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* for the English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre has come to be widely regarded as the most significant theatrical event in Britain during the postwar era. Much of this importance has to do with the context into which the play emerged, and which it was in part a response to. In his study *British Realist Theatre*, Stephen Lacey argues that the play's cultural impact far outweighs its intrinsic merits as art and that the key to understanding this is through examining it as an historical 'event' rather than as a work of creative drama. He suggests that 'the most enduring stereotypes of British theatre in the early 1950s came from a perception that it was dominated by pre-war personnel and reactionary social and aesthetic values, reflecting a wider cultural phenomenon' (Lacey 1995: 22). This view of British theatre as backward-looking, conformist, dull and stiflingly middle-class has obvious similarities to Lindsay Anderson's view of British cinema and, as Lacey implies, with a broader perception of the nature of British culture in the first half of the 1950s. The film version explicitly refers to this context by including a sequence where Jimmy Porter (Richard Burton) and Cliff (Gary Redmond) gatecrash rehearsals for a play in which Helena (Claire Bloom) is appearing. The play is revealed to be an archetypal example of all that Osborne perceived to be amiss in the mainstream British theatre of the time, being an obviously melodramatic and lifeless story of suppressed middle-class emotions. Jimmy and Cliff sabotage the rehearsals by going on stage and performing a mock musical hall routine. By comparison, Osborne's play is youthful, vigorous and overflowing with raw, violently expressed feelings. For Stephen Lacey, its impact was so great precisely because it was 'anti-hegemonic' in relation to the bulk of British theatre at the time (Lacey 1995: 3–5).

The play was also responding to a wider context of national malaise. As Osborne himself suggested, 'The country was tired ... the leaping hare of the Victorian imagination had begun to imitate the tortoise even before 1914, but in that summer of 1955 it was still easy enough

to identify what we regarded as a permanent Establishment' (Osborne 1991a: 3). Jimmy's anger arises principally from his frustration at a country which still seems rooted in a class system that is a hangover from the Edwardian era; in the film version Jimmy and Helena go to see a Korda-style colonial epic at the cinema which Jimmy loudly ridicules. Jimmy is identified as a product of the 1944 Education Act, a working-class man who has made it to university but who finds that the country has no place for an educated, articulate graduate who doesn't accept its abiding class structures. Rather than conform, Jimmy lives a semi-bohemian existence, running a sweet stall in the market and playing trumpet in a jazz club in the evenings. It was Osborne's ability to use Jimmy as a mouthpiece for the frustrations of a whole section of society that was recognised by critics like Kenneth Tynan: *Look Back in Anger* presents post-war youth as it really is ... all the qualities are there, qualities one had despaired of ever seeing on the stage – the drift towards anarchy, the instinctive leftishness, the automatic rejection of "official" attitudes, the surrealist sense of humour' (Tynan 1956). As John Russell Taylor later said, 'Jimmy was taken to be speaking for a whole generation, of which he and his creator were among the most precocious representatives' (Taylor 1963: 38).

The play was quickly swallowed up in the whole phenomenon of the 'angry young man' and the press interest in 'kitchen sink' novels, drama and films. It appears that the term 'angry young man' was actually coined by the ESC's own publicist, George Fearon (Osborne 1991a: 20), but both terms were used initially by the press in a derogatory manner. None the less, it was clear that a radical change was taking place in a variety of areas across the arts including theatre, literature, painting and cinema. This change was, as Arthur Marwick comments, a foreshadowing 'of the "cultural revolution" which erupted in the sixties' (Marwick 1996: 82). These shifts were in turn linked by the popular press with wider social changes such as the development of youth culture and the beginnings of the satire boom which dared to poke fun at those in authority. As a result, *Look Back in Anger* quickly took on an iconic status as the 'event' in which these developments first came to the forefront of public consciousness.

The play effectively gave Richardson the cultural cache he needed to launch his feature film career. It was an obvious enough move to try to obtain financial backing for a film version of *Look Back in Anger*, but Richardson's introduction to the realities of British film finance was a harsh one: 'The British industry was smug, very closed and very opposed to new directors' (Richardson 1993: 97). The solution came through a new friendship with the Canadian-born producer and

entrepreneur Harry Saltzman. In Richardson's words, Saltzman was 'a hustler, but a sublime hustler' (Richardson 1993: 96) and it was he who decided that they should seek funding from Hollywood. Eventually, Saltzman brokered a deal with Warner Brothers to finance the film, and with this came the opportunity to cast one of their star performers, Richard Burton. From the original stage production only one of its leading actors, Mary Ure, made it into the film, with Burton replacing Kenneth Haigh as Jimmy Porter, Claire Bloom taking the role of Helena in place of Helena Hughes, and the unknown Alan Bates replaced by Gary Redmond as Cliff. There were other compromises, including the decision that Osborne should not write the adaptation, although he is credited as providing 'additional dialogue' – according to Richardson's account this consisted of providing some additional scenes designed to 'open up' the play and adding the character Ma Tanner (Edith Evans). The job of adaptation was given to Nigel Kneale, an experienced writer for television and cinema who had enjoyed considerable success with the *Quatermass* science fiction series for the BBC and its subsequent film versions for Hammer. Richardson had already directed a Chekhov adaptation scripted by Kneale during his stint as a trainee director with the BBC. Richardson was assisted greatly in his first outing as director by being assigned the gifted Oswald Morris as his cinematographer. As Richardson recalled, 'He took me in hand, taught me an enormous amount and kept me constantly up to scratch' (Richardson 1993: 97). The production also introduced Richardson to the composer John Addison, who was to score five of his next six films. To help organise proceedings, Saltzman, Osborne and Richardson went into partnership and created their own production company, Woodfall.

The perennial problem facing directors adapting stage plays for the cinema has been the question of whether to retain the theatricality of the original production or to 'open up' the play to make it more cinematic. It's apparent from Osborne's memoirs that he was opposed to this process of opening up (although his principal contribution to the finished screenplay, perhaps under duress, was actually along these lines); he feared that it would result in a loss of intensity. By contrast, Nigel Kneale regarded the play as 'quite a mouthful' and was comfortable with reducing its grandstanding speeches, shifting the emphasis on to its visual aspects (Murray 2006: 62–3). Richardson's approach is quickly obvious; in his memoirs he recalls that he was 'already chafing at the bit to do something freer and more liberated than something created for the theatre. Once material and characters have been poured into that mould, it's very difficult to free them for recreation in another medium' (Richardson 1993: 98). Oswald Morris subsequently recalled

Richardson's overwhelming desire to 'go out onto the streets and feel free' (Morris 2006: 173). A number of sequences show Richardson pushing the play away from its theatrical origins into something more overtly cinematic. We first see Jimmy playing jazz in a smoky pub in a scene that is strongly reminiscent of *Momma Don't Allow*. We then follow him through rain-drenched streets where he stops to play 'Rule Britannia' to the sleeping town, although there is a suggestion that this is only happening in his mind as the sound here is non-diegetic and unsynchronised. The market stall sequences featuring Donald Pleasence as a racist council inspector have a documentary feel to them, as do the scenes where Jimmy takes Ma Tanner to a pub and then sees her off at a forlorn railway station near a graveyard. Location shooting is used throughout these scenes and for those depicting the cityscape where Jimmy lives. Already Richardson seems to be striving for the acute sense of place which was to become a feature of his later films. He also interrupts the narrative with a number of external shots of street scenes and of children coming out of school. There is even some attempt to expand the spaces within the house where Jimmy has rooms by moving outside of the main theatrical setting of the living room into other rooms upstairs and the communal hallway downstairs.

However, the play's theatricality is harder to overcome than Richardson might have hoped. The film retains the central setting of the living room where Jimmy and his wife, Alison (Mary Ure), spend their time arguing and where Gary Redmond's Cliff tries to keep the peace. Richardson emphasises the claustrophobia of this interior space by having the camera prowl around it in long takes and by the use of rather noirish lighting. There is a degree of tension between the staginess of the setting and Richardson's attempts at cinematic stylisation.

At the core of the play's effect were the raging speeches with which Jimmy vents his frustrations at the mediocrity of postwar Britain. As Harold Hobson described it in his famous review of the original stage production, Jimmy's role is a 'long, sustained scream at society' (Hobson 1956). This element of the play has been considerably truncated in the film (for fear of alienating audiences seeking entertainment) so that Jimmy's anger often seems more a symptom of his personality than of any social context. The class aspects of Osborne's original dialogue are only obliquely indicated by Jimmy's friendship with Ma Tanner and his accusation that his wife looks down on her because she is working class. Jimmy is portrayed as a man out of his time rather than a product of it. He has surprising affinities with Alison's staunchly middle-class father, to the extent that Alison comments that they are both equally sad, her father because Britain has changed so much, Jimmy because

so little has altered. We learn glancingly that Jimmy is a graduate and that his father died shortly after returning from fighting for the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War. In his equally famous review of the play, Kenneth Tynan suggested that the essence of Jimmy's anger lay in his youth and that the play was an expression of generational tension (Tynan 1956). Again this tends to be dissipated in the film, at least partly by the casting of the overage Richard Burton as Jimmy.

By displacing the political, class-based and generational aspects of Jimmy's anger, Kneale's adaptation leaves Alison squarely as the focus of his fury. This is problematic in a number of ways. In simple narrative terms it frequently makes little sense. In the play, Jimmy's disgust is directed at his wife's middle-class upbringing and family, but, with the class dimension sidelined, his treatment of his wife appears pointlessly brutal, as when he tells her that he wishes she should have a baby and that it would die so that she might learn some humanity (he doesn't realise at this point that she is actually pregnant). It is all the harder to understand how he can then enter into a passionate relationship with Alison's friend Helena who is represented as more middle class and snobbish than his wife. Other narrative incongruities include Helena's departure at the end of the film, which is presented without proper explanation. There is little that Richardson or Kneale can do to redeem the final reconciliation between Jimmy and Alison at the railway station, with its childlike metaphor of squirrels and bears cuddling-up together in the woods. Richardson adopts a stylised visual approach for this sequence, with silhouetted figures and swathes of steam from the passing trains, but this can't disguise a cloying sentimentality which even Tynan pinpointed in his original review, describing the final scene as 'painful whimsy'.

After more than fifty years' passage of time, the sustained verbal abuse of the female characters now seems little short of misogyny. This impression is reinforced by a number of other elements in the play and film. While Alison is standing at the ironing board, Jimmy and Cliff put the world to rights as they discuss the Sunday papers. Later in the narrative Alison is replaced by Helena and the scene is replicated. Both women endlessly wait on the male characters, Jimmy's violence towards Alison and Helena is partly excused by the emotional pain he is suffering, but as the reasons for this are never elucidated it appears to be little more than chauvinism. To be fair to Richardson and Kneale these criticisms have been levelled at the play itself and the film simply reproduces these tendencies, although it can be argued that the sidelining of much of the political and social content of Jimmy's tirades leaves this aspect of the play exposed. As Stephen Lacey says of the play, 'Class

resentment (struggle is too strong a word for it) is inseparable from an antagonism towards, and fear of, women' (Lacey 1995: 3). Osborne was to be repeatedly accused of misogyny in his later work, not least in the savage depiction of his former wife Jill Bennett in the second volume of his autobiography, *Almost a Gentleman*.

Divorced from its immediate historical context *Look Back in Anger* now looks like a filmed play which is straining, not entirely successfully, against the nature of its theatrical origins. In order to tone down and make more accessible its political dynamic, the film has lost much of its contemporary resonance and generalises its youthful anger with the British class system. On its British release in May 1959, following a Royal Charity Premiere (the first ever given to an 'X' certificate film), the reviewers took a similar view. Leonard Moseley's notice in the *Daily Express* is typical in finding the film already dated, stigmatising Jimmy as little more than 'a whiner who takes out his discontent on his poor wife' (Moseley 1959). Moseley suggests that what had been electrifying in the theatre just three years earlier has already become pointless. Similarly, an anonymous reviewer in the *Manchester Guardian* grumbled that 'the obvious trouble about this film – as about the original play – is that Jimmy Porter, who is the centre of its interest, is so nasty, sentimental, so self-pitiful, and probably so worthless' (Anon. 1959). Many reviewers attributed the film's loss of emotional power to its dilution of Jimmy's speeches, particularly the absence of his notorious lament that there were 'no good brave causes' left to fight for. Another reason for their ire was the casting of Richard Burton, so that even those who admired his performance still tended to feel he was miscast by dint of his age and his Hollywood status. Richardson's attempts to open out the play fared rather better, with Arthur Knight in the *Saturday Review* identifying some 'marvellously documentary scenes of the pushcart market where Jimmy and Cliff operate their sweet-stall, a grey and tender visit with Mrs. Tanner to a pitiable cemetery' (Knight 1959).

It's only by returning the film to its context that we can get a real sense of its potential to affront the class conventions of the period. The film aroused considerable interest from the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC) for its strong language; this aspect of the film was even condemned by Lord Amwell in the House of Lords. However, Tony Aldgate's painstaking dissection of the BBFC's records shows that what really affronted its reviewers was Jimmy's uncouth working-class effrontery. As one of its reviewers put it, 'it just seems to me such a wearisome fuss about nothing that couldn't be cured by manual hard labour or going off to the Dominions' (Aldgate 1995: 75). Richardson remained convinced, whatever the film's shortcomings, that it was part

of a necessary process of change for British film culture: 'It is absolutely vital to get into British films the same sort of impact and sense of life that what you can loosely call the Angry Young Man cult has had in the theatre and literary worlds' (Richardson 1959: 9).

Following the muted critical and commercial response to *Look Back in Anger*, it proved difficult for Woodfall and its resident wheeler-dealer, Harry Saltzman, to raise the funding for their second Osborne adaptation, *The Entertainer*. The play had been an enormous success, garnering exceptional reviews (especially for Laurence Olivier's performance as Archie Rice) and selling out as it transferred from its debut at the Royal Court in April 1957 to the Palace Theatre in the West End, and then on to Broadway. Despite this, Saltzman was unable to attract any American backing on this occasion. Funding and distribution came from the government-backed British Lion consortium, who had a track record of supporting small independent producers, and was channelled via Bryanston, a loose affiliation of film-makers who included Richardson as one of their members and who were led by that most distinguished of British producers, Michael Balcon. This had its advantages for Richardson in that he was given a freer hand to develop the project as he wished. According to Nigel Kneale's account of the pre-production, it was Harry Saltzman who again decided that Kneale should work on the adaptation, although this time John Osborne 'insisted on being much more hands-on' (Murray 2006: 64). As before, Kneale attempted to open up the play to make it more cinematic, cutting down some of Archie's monologues. Osborne appears to have been permitted to rewrite a good of Kneale's screenplay on this occasion and the two share a joint credit on the finished film. Both Olivier and Brenda de Banzie as his wife were retained from the original cast, along with Joan Plowright as their daughter (she had taken over from Dorothy Tutin in the stage production). Roger Livesey replaced George Relph as Archie's father and the cast also featured three young actors who were to play important roles in the New Wave of British cinema: Alan Bates and Albert Finney as Archie's sons, and Shirley Ann Field as Archie's mistress, Tina, a part which didn't feature in the play.

Richardson was determined this time to free himself from the usual constraints of theatrical adaptation:

It confirmed me for ever in the opinion that, except in special cases – a subject like a musical, for example, or a scene with special technical problems – studios were anathema: that their artificial conditions produced artificiality in acting and image (which for me has been the greatest criticism of all the American studio films of the 1930s and 1940s, for which I have never had and will never have either admiration or reverence), and

use of locations) with the stylisation of these scenes was to become a trademark of Richardson's mature style.

Where Richardson's naturalism comes into its own is in foregrounding Osborne's political discourse and its contemporary resonance. The fact that Osborne had a much greater role in adapting his own play may have been another factor in this. The pivotal point of reference is the Suez crisis of 1956, seemingly Britain's last throw of the dice as a colonial power, and seen by those on the Left as an indication of the long overdue need for a reimagining of the country. Those on the Right tended to cite it as an indication of Britain's loss of international standing and national virility. Osborne's position seems equivocal. We know that Jean opposes the war and has been on protest demonstrations in London. Her commitment to a new, youthful Britain is indicated by her working at a school in a deprived area. Her brother Mick goes to serve in Suez, is captured and then released, and then finally killed in action. His story is played out as a context for Archie's ongoing attempts to salvage his fading career. Archie's cynicism is contrasted strikingly with the dated but sincere views of his father, Billy Rice. In a telling sequence Richardson cuts from Billy singing a traditional, patriotic number on stage in his show. Billy's sincerity is juxtaposed with Archie's disdain for the words he is singing. Archie is situated between contrasting views of Britain. His father yearns for the nation which saw its finest hour in the Second World War, a place of class solidarity and moral standing, whereas his daughter argues for a new order of class equality and rebirth. As Osborne's representative, Archie cannot decide what he thinks and ends up selfishly believing only in himself, clinging on to his career as the one thing that gives his life meaning. The hollowness of his position is revealed in the film's two most moving scenes: firstly, on stage after a show when he admits to Jean that 'I'm dead behind these eyes, I'm dead ... just like the whole dumb, jolly lot out there'; and, secondly, at the film's climax when he performs his signature song, 'Why Should I Care', and berates the disinterested audience with 'You've been a good audience ... let me know where you are working tomorrow night and I'll come and see you'. Archie's other son, Frank (Alan Bates), leaves for Canada as Phoebe declares that Britain has had it. Archie stays to face a probable jail sentence for breaking the conditions of his bankruptcy order.

The film illustrates the beginnings of a schism between Richardson and Osborne that was to accelerate. As is evident from the play, the writer's sympathies are with Archie. He is a relic of a vanishing Britain which Osborne views with reverence and affection, like the music hall

that I would never be happy shooting except in the open air or inside real locations. So, although I couldn't have articulated it, never having been introspective, *The Entertainer* was a key moment in my development, because all the ideas and convictions I was to work with afterwards were crystallised in its making. (Richardson 1993: 109)

As a direct consequence, a great deal of the film was shot on location in Morecambe (where Richardson's parents now lived) whose faded glory provided a visual metaphor for the play's themes. The use of authentic locations is established from the opening shot when we first see Joan Plowright's Jean Rice among the crowds on the seafront at Morecombe standing outside the theatre where Archie is appearing. The interior of the theatre is also depicted in a naturalistic manner conveying a strong sense of the everyday life of a jobbing theatre company in a seaside town. Other location settings are used to reinforce the specifics of place and time, with Archie seen holding court in a pub where he can imbibe his beloved Bass ale. We see the amusement arcades and half-deserted ballrooms of the town as Archie wanders about trying to drum-up new business. The extended sequence of the beauty pageant combines location shooting with library footage. It is here that Archie meets Tina, who he seduces with promises of a part in his next production, a venture he intends financing with the help of her wealthy father. Another key location is the hillside overlooking the fairground where Archie eats fish and chips with his daughter on a melancholy, grey afternoon and confesses how his first marriage to her mother collapsed after he committed adultery. The effect of the location work is to firmly root the film in the specifics of contemporary Britain. In line with the principles he and Lindsay Anderson had outlined in the Free Cinema programmes, the film looks outward to its context in order to confirm the relevance of its allegory.

The unavoidably theatrical aspects of the play are handled by Richardson through a deliberate strategy of cinematic stylisation. Early in the film an extended flashback sequence shows us Jean's life in London, where she works as an art teacher at a tough school in a working-class area. After attending a dance at the school she sees her brother off at the railway station – Mick, played by Albert Finney, is going to fight in Suez – and then argues with her middle-class boyfriend in her flat. The sequence makes extensive use of tilted camera angles and atmospheric touches such as a melancholy melodic motif played on the soundtrack and expressionistic lighting of the rain-splattered window in her room. Another sequence, in which Archie's wife, Phoebe, gets drunk and rages at him, is reminiscent of *Look Back in Anger* in its use of a claustrophobic interior set. The combination of naturalism (apparent in the

tradition which produced him. In the film the elaboration of Archie's squalid and exploitative relationship with Tina, along with his self-interested manipulation of his own father (he stages a period revival show featuring Billy in order to raise money to clear his own debts, but the strain causes Billy a fatal heart attack) reveals Archie's emptiness. In contrast, much of the film's energy comes of its portrayal of the more youthful characters, particularly Frank and Jean. This shift in elegancies prefigures the thematic concerns which were to emerge more strongly in Richardson's next two British feature films.

The initial release of the film, including its premiere, was hampered by unforeseen difficulties with Richardson's naturalistic soundtrack. Rank pulled the film from its West End run at the Odeon, Leicester Square, insisting that the dialogue be remixed to make it more audible (Anon. 1960). The film's commercial prospects were also damaged by the decision of the BBFC to categorise the film as an 'X' certificate. The Board's secretary, John Trevelyan, was keen to lift the standing of the 'X' category (which audiences associated with horror and exploitation cinema) by using it to allow serious, adult subjects to be released uncut – the same approach had been used with *Look Back in Anger*. However, as Anthony Aldgate has shown, the actual result was that the film's commercial prospects were certainly lessened as a result. In addition to being denied consideration for the Royal Film Performance, for example, *The Entertainer* was also discarded as the official British entry at the Cannes Film Festival' (Aldgate 1995: 83–5). The critical response to the film was mixed, with a good deal of praise for the performances, particularly Olivier's, as well as for Richardson's inventive direction, but there were also familiar accusations that self-censorship had again, as with *Look Back in Anger*, removed some of the play's political edge. Derek Prouse in *The Sunday Times* echoed a common view by suggesting that Richardson had still not entirely succeeded in overcoming the theatricality of his source material (Prouse 1960).

Whereas the majority of reviews were relatively mild, the film managed to arouse an uncharacteristic public dispute in parts of the British press. The ill-tempered tone was set in the *Sunday Express* by Derek Monsey, who raged that the film 'wastes, with the recklessness which is bred only of conceit and incompetence, the glory which rightly belongs to the misguided but splendid Olivier' (Monsey 1960). Derek Hill in *Tribune* became the film's self-appointed champion, defending it at length from the splanetic response of Monsey and advocating the film as representing a new kind of British cinema which was long overdue (Hill 1960). As evidence of how much of a break with the past it constituted he detailed the difficulties Woodfall had experienced in getting it

made and released in the first place, citing specifically its problems with censorship, as well as recording the public slanging match which took place between Woodfall and Harry Saltzman on one side and Michael Balcon and Bryanston on the other across the pages of *The Sunday Times* and *Films and Filming*. These disputes may seem arcane after fifty years but they do indicate the way in which Richardson and the New Wave provoked debates which went well beyond a discussion of the intrinsic merits of any given film and became an argument about the nature of British society and culture. At the heart of this were questions of class identity, generational conflict and the need for social change which were to come to the fore even more in Richardson's next two New Wave films.

A Taste of Honey (1961) and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1962)

The disappointing box-office receipts for both *Look Back in Anger* and *The Entertainer* had left Woodfall in serious financial difficulties. As Richardson recounts in his memoirs, the situation accelerated the already deteriorating relationship he had with Harry Saltzman (the two appear to have been temperamentally far apart), culminating in Osborne and Richardson firing Saltzman from Woodfall in 1960 (Richardson 1993: 11–12 and 18–20). Richardson continued to view Woodfall as a vehicle not only for his and Osborne's own ambitions but as a means to produce the kind of British films which they, and especially Richardson, believed in. As a result, Woodfall took out options on Alan Sillitoe's novel *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and on Shelagh Delaney's play *A Taste of Honey*, both already established as key texts in the burgeoning new wave of British literature and theatre. Richardson took charge of matters with the restless dynamism which was to mark his career throughout the 1960s. He immediately grasped the reins as producer on *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* with Karel Reisz in the director's chair. At the same time he and Osborne worked together on an original production for the BBC entitled *A Subject of Scandal and Concern*. The film version of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* was exceedingly well received by the British critics and hit a nerve with audiences who warmed to its irreverent working-class hero, Arthur Seaton (played by Albert Finney), providing Woodfall with a much needed commercial success. For the first time Woodfall seemed able to make a film which was not hampered by its literary source but which took flight in a purely cinematic way, connecting more immediately with audiences as a consequence.

Richardson's involvement with *A Taste of Honey* began with its American stage debut. The play had first been performed in London in 1958 by Joan Littlewood's company at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, where it had been a success. The play was taken to the States by the maverick producer David Merrick with Joan Plowright cast in the lead role as Jo and Angela Lansbury as her mother, Helen. Richardson took over as director with the close assistance of George Devine. The play opened initially at the Biltmore Theatre in Los Angeles, enabling Richardson to rehearse the production while also directing his first Hollywood feature film, *Sanctuary* (which is discussed in Chapter 3). It then went on a short tour before arriving on Broadway in October 1960. The play was well received critically and did good business which, along with the strong box office experienced by the film of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, enabled Woodfall to finance a film version. As with *The Entertainer* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, distribution in the UK was handled by British Lion. Richardson gathered a remarkable team of collaborators around him for the film. John Addison, who had scored *The Entertainer*, was brought back along with the designer Ralph Brinton. Anthony Gibbs was recruited as editor and Walter Lassally, who had shot *Momma Don't Allow*, was brought in as director of photography with the future director Desmond Davis as camera operator. For the first time Richardson worked closely himself with the play's author, Shelagh Delaney, on the adaptation – something he had not attempted with Osborne. Together they moved the film stylistically towards a poetic naturalism rather than the more theatrical minimalism of the original play (Delaney 1959). The role of Helen was taken by the popular Lancashire comedienne Dora Bryan, while Murray Melvin was retained from the original Stratford East cast for the role of Geoffrey. Richardson decided that none of the actresses who had played Jo on stage was young enough to carry off the role in the more naturalistic medium of film and set about finding an ingénue to take the part. In his memoirs Richardson recounts with considerable pleasure the story of how he saw more than two thousand girls before finally settling on the unknown Rita Tushingham, a 'little hedgehog from Liverpool' who haunted his imagination with her 'all-speaking eyes' (Richardson 1993: 120).

Richardson believed that casting was the key to creating reality on screen and *A Taste of Honey* certainly demonstrates his remarkable facility with faces. Among the most memorable elements of the film are the many facial close-ups, from Dora Bryan's brassy, heavily made-up features thinly hiding her perpetual disappointment, to Robert Stephens's leering boyfriend, Peter, and Murray Melvin's fine, melancholy face, described by Richardson as 'like an Egyptian hieroglyph'.

Most striking of all is Tushingham herself, from the moment we first see her at school looking in a mirror as she washes, with her enormous eyes emphasised by Walter Lassally's monochrome photography and her permanently sad-happy expression. There are sections of the film where Richardson seems almost overwhelmed by his fascination with Tushingham, so that the narrative pauses to allow Lassally's camera to contemplate again her quirky, engaging features. It's characteristic of Richardson's identification with outcasts and nonconformists that he should be so drawn to the character of Jo and to Rita Tushingham as a performer.

Richardson's sympathies with Jo and Geoffrey are also rooted in their youth. The development of their relationship is depicted with a touching delicacy and charm. They first meet when Geoffrey comes into the shoe shop where Jo works and she sells him some 'Italian casuals'. They then accidentally run into each other again during a religious parade through the town. They decide to go on to the fair, a joyful montage sequence set to music. In one of the film's key scenes they head out to the countryside overlooking the town and Jo tells Geoffrey that she is pregnant. Richardson shoots the pair in silhouette against the skyline, running and throwing their arms in the air as she tells Geoffrey, 'My usual self is a very unusual self. I'm an extraordinary person.' They both shout in unison, 'We're unique, young, unrivalled', their voices echoing in the arches of a viaduct. The sequence celebrates their youthful energy, optimism and sense of freedom, while avoiding the sentimental mawkishness which could easily have descended. At the end of the scene Geoffrey offers to marry Jo, despite the fact that the baby is not his, but with a clear-eyed firmness she declares, 'You are nothing to me Geoff, and I'm everything to myself'. The energy of the sequence is reinforced by sudden, frequent jump cuts and changes in location.

The vibrancy of Jo and Geoffrey contrasts all the more strongly with the depiction of the older characters, particularly Helen and Peter. Their happy, spontaneous visit to the fair acts as a counterpoint to the weekend in Blackpool where Jo goes with Helen and Peter. Blackpool is a vulgar collage of novelty photo stalls, amusement arcades and cockies, set to a raucous rock and roll soundtrack, but we are reminded constantly of Jo's loneliness and exclusion by tight close-ups of her face. Peter tempts Helen with photographs of the house he wants them to live in, all crazy paving and bay windows, but it is exactly the kind of stability that Peter has never experienced and her resentment of this ensures that Peter will never allow her to live with them. In an earlier sequence, Richardson cuts sharply between Jo with her young black lover, Jimmy (Paul Danquah), and Helen with Peter. The young couple are depicted with

flowing shots as the camera pans upward from their entwined hands to their faces, cutting then to two quick facial close-ups as they embrace. By contrast, Helen's interest in Peter is because he offers an affluence and material comfort she has rarely had. He appears a pathetic figure, an inadequate man taking advantage of a desperate older woman. Their relationship is exploitative in comparison to the naturalness of Jo's, Jo is shown to be consistently in conflict with her mother. When we first encounter them together they are about to do a 'flit' from their accommodation as Helen owes two months rent and can't pay. This is obviously a common occurrence as Jo has spent her whole life on the run with her mother. Their bickering relationship eventually dissolves into farce at the end of the film when they chase each other around Jo's flat to Geoffrey's alarm. Helen scolds him, complaining 'Oh, don't be silly, we enjoy it!'

The film's endorsement of a younger generation is mirrored in its tolerant, liberal attitude to Geoffrey's homosexuality and to the mixed-race relationship between Jo and Jimmy which results in her becoming pregnant. Geoffrey is accepted by Jo, and implicitly by the audience, with a blunt directness which is startling for the period. Basil Dearden and Michael Relph's film *Victim*, with its open plea for an end to the criminal prosecution of gay men, came out only in the same year as *A Taste of Honey*. Gay men still appeared rarely in British films, and then usually as a butt for homophobic jokes and in stereotypically camp roles. Jo is completely curious about Geoffrey's sexuality; even to the extent of being innocently curious about Geoffrey's sexual history; after he has been thrown out by his landlady she quizzes him about what he actually does with other men – 'I've always wanted to know about people like you' – but when he is offended she reassures him that she doesn't care what he does. She then takes him home to share her digs. Their domestic arrangements defy easy categorisation. Although he takes on the housewife role, decorating, cooking and tidying the flat, she occupies a maternal position as mother-to-be. At one point she tells him, 'You're just like a big sister to me'. Their roles often become interchangeable and imply an interdependence that is outside of the normative judgements made in most British films at the time. Murray Melvin's performance, while suggesting a gentleness and sensitivity about Geoffrey, has no recourse to camp stereotypes. Geoffrey is almost always portrayed in a positive light, organising things for the impending birth, making clothes for the baby and even braving the other mothers at the prenatal clinic.

The depiction of Jimmy, Jo's black boyfriend, is similarly unmonstrous and even-handed. Jo's attempts to make Jimmy exotic are quickly undercut. When she asks him if his ancestors came from Africa,

he replies 'No, Liverpool'. There is an unpretentious freshness to the dialogue which normalises their relationship. When she suggests he must have some jungle in him somewhere, he responds mockingly by pretending to play the drums. The childlike aspect to this is reinforced when they play together with a toy car on the docks and Jo tells Jimmy that she likes his being black. Again, what could be sentimental and disingenuous in this treatment of race is undercut by the realism of Jo's responses. She makes love with Jimmy knowing that he will inevitably leave her, but is still willing to grab any small piece of happiness she can find. Her last sight of him is as his ship sails away and he is on deck, peeling potatoes. Typically Richardson moves in for another sympathetic close-up of Rita Tushingham's forlorn face.

The film offers the first mature articulation of what was to become Richardson's favourite thematic concern, his siding with outcasts, rebels and those marginalised by society. This is something that can be traced back to his early experiences via his memoirs and through interviews he gave. Forever the outsider himself, he was the comparatively poor boy at the public school he attended (and hated) and then the awkward, lanky northerner who had to disguise his accent when he was at Oxford. He felt out of place in his brief stay at the BBC and ostracised by the mainstream of the British film industry. He sometimes attributed these feelings to things like his gangly height and build, although it is easy to imagine that his own sexuality may also have been a factor. In the context of *A Taste of Honey*, these feelings are manifest in his empathy with Jimmy. Geoffrey and Jo, looked down upon for being black, gay and young.

It also emerges in his use of cinematic technique via his antipathy for shooting in the studio. For Richardson it was not just a matter of achieving the feeling of authenticity which location shooting could provide but the sense of personal freedom it gave him: 'I felt free and happy making a film for the first time without constraints of any kind' (Richardson 1993: 121). *A Taste of Honey* was made entirely on location and foregrounds its sense of place. This is most apparent in the lyrical visual style adopted by Richardson and Lassally for the scenes filmed around Manchester, beginning with the credit sequence where Jo rides on a bus through the city centre, the camera following her point of view as she travels out to the poor suburbs where she lives with her mother. The sequence also establishes the use of the film's principal musical motif, the song 'The Good Ship Sails' sung by a group of children. The song perfectly expresses the feelings of hope, yearning and melancholy which runs through the film. A number of scenes adopt a semi-documentary approach such as an early sequence with Dora Bryan singing

in a pub, and again when she goes to a dance hall with Robert Stephens. The most visually striking of these scenes are those where Jo walks by the canal. Although set against grim backdrops of shipyards and tenements, these are made hauntingly romantic by the use of slow fades and atmospheric music. A sense of the hope residing in the starkest environment is evoked when Jo first feels her baby kick as she walks by the filthy canal. Many of the tenderest moments of the friendship between Jo and Geoffrey take place along its banks.

In his memoirs, Walter Lassally recalls with considerable pride the innovations that he and Richardson developed in this atmosphere of creative freedom:

Having won the freedom to make *A Taste of Honey* the way we wanted, it became a 'first' in this and several other respects. It was the first British feature made for a major distributor (Bryanston/British Lion) to be shot entirely on location, the first to use three different film stocks, including the high-speed (400 ASA) material, Ilford HPS, hitherto considered suitable only for newsreels and documentaries; and the first to 'key' the use of these different film stocks to different locations, so that the 'look' they created became part of the setting. (Lassally 1987: 63–4)

Lassally goes on to describe how the latter technique was used to create differing visual atmospheres for the first flat that Jo lives in with her mother, and then for her own flat, and again for all the exteriors. In Lassally's view, for all its naturalism, *A Taste of Honey* is 'above all a romantic and lyrical film' (Lassally 1987: 69).

All of these sequences are marked by a tension between the desire for freedom and the constraints placed on individuals by class and environment. This is taken through to the film's conclusion when Jo finds herself back with her mother again (Helen having been rejected by Peter for a younger, less troublesome model) and her improvised 'marriage' to Geoffrey is ended with his exit. Alone on bonfire night, Jo watches the children gathered around a fire and clutches a sparkler. Although her situation is cheerless, with the established cycle of stifled ambition recurring again for another working-class generation, the final image of Jo, inevitably in close-up, remains hopeful.

The film's expression of yearning for a changed Britain where the aspirations of the young might find an outlet across class boundaries hit a nerve of recognition with audiences, as well as with the press. There was much praise from reviewers for the performances, particularly that of Rita Tushingham, but it was Richardson himself who was picked out by British critics for the warmest praise. The *Daily Mail* pointed to the 'unforced poetry' of his visual style and his ability to capture 'Manchester's canal threaded hinterland to a misty, moisty, smoky

nicety' (Dehn 1961). Significantly, *The Times* noted Richardson's success in making his adaptation fully cinematic: 'It is Mr Richardson's great gift that he can show a face in close-up and reveal the thoughts of the mind without a word being spoken' (Anon. 1961a). The London *Evening News* went further, suggesting that its readers 'put his name up with Carol Reed and David Lean. Even higher. If his progress remains constant he is destined to outstrip them both' (Barker 1961). Their reviewer went on to identify Richardson's debt to Italian Neo-realism and to the British documentary movement in the realism achieved by the film, but none the less marked the film out as 'a director's triumph – the apotheosis of Tony Richardson'. This success was crowned by strong takings at the American box office and an award for Rita Tushingham at the Cannes Film Festival.

Richardson's ongoing conflicts with the BBFC continued across both *A Taste of Honey* and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*. With *A Taste of Honey* the censors were concerned by two issues: firstly, that there should be no suggestion that Jo was under sixteen; and, secondly, that Geoffrey's homosexuality should be only hinted at and not directly referred to. With a typically patrician attitude, they were worried that the mass audience in Britain was not ready yet to accept the notion of a gay man as someone sympathetic and likeable. Anthony Aldgate's account indicates that Richardson was considerably emboldened by Woodfall's success with *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and although he was willing to compromise to a degree he stood his ground on retaining direct references to Geoffrey's homosexuality in the dialogue exchanges between him and Jo (Aldgate 1995: 128–30 and 137–9). Censorship of *Loneliness* was, in contrast, largely confined to its use of vulgar language, although the BBFC's records show that the censors were much vexed by its politics, complaining that it was 'blatant and very trying Communist propaganda, and particularly worrying for us because the hero is a thief and yet is held up to the admiration of silly young thugs' (Aldgate 1995: 99). However, within their remit they had no authority to insist on cuts simply because they objected to the political leanings of the film.

Like *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* was adapted by Alan Sillitoe from his own original work, in this case an extended short story rather than a full-length novel. Richardson was able to retain much of his favoured crew from *A Taste of Honey* with Walter Lassally as cinematographer, music by John Addison, Anthony Gibbs as editor and Ralph Brinton as chief production designer. Again, many of the cast were young and new to cinema, from supporting players like James Bolam, Julia Foster, John Thaw and Topsy Jane, to its star, another discovery to rival Rita Tushingham, Tom

Courtney, who plays the film's sullen, rebellious hero, Colin Smith. Richardson himself seems to have regarded the film with the same pride that he felt towards *A Taste of Honey*. Together they form the summation of his work within the New Wave.

There is certainly a similar sense of cinematic freedom in Richardson's handling of *Loneliness*. The film opens with the sound of running feet and is then followed by the first of many extended tracking shots as we follow Colin on a training run, the fluid movement of the camera following his. The political implications of this movement are emphasised from the start when Colin's voiceover tells that he has always been running, including from the police. When his talent for running is recognised by the borstal authorities, Colin is given permission by the Governor (Michael Redgrave) to run freely in the woods outside the perimeter fence. Again the camera runs with him, looking up frequently at the sky through the trees in a series of point-of-view shots. These shots form a montage and are accompanied by a jazz score. As well as expressing Colin's desire for freedom, they form a framework for the flashbacks to his earlier life, so that these scenes appear as a kind of stream-of-consciousness, placing us firmly within Colin's subjective experience. The flashbacks are never signalled by any of the usual cinematic conventions (slow fades, etc.) but simply interrupt the narrative like random thoughts. Camera movement is also used to express the tension between movement (equated with freedom) and confinement, echoing its use in *A Taste of Honey*. Many sequences inside the borstal are shot in long takes with the camera prowling its grounds and buildings, emphasising the feeling of claustrophobia. We first see the borstal from Colin's viewpoint framed through the caged window of the van that delivers him there. This reaches its climax when the young inmates vent their frustration at the food they are given by beating their fists on the refectory tables. The full-scale riot which follows is filmed with fast-moving tracking shots, the image frequently blurring. The visual metaphor of imprisonment is extended to Colin's life outside of the borstal, so that even when he and his friend Mike (James Bolam) escape to the countryside with two girls they have met they still find themselves hemmed in by barbed wire. The tone here is much harsher than in *A Taste of Honey*, with Colin rarely afforded the sympathetic close-ups which typified Richardson's portrayal of Rita Tushingham. The most notable exception is our first sight of Colin when an extreme close-up of Courtney's angry, resentful face is followed by a whip-pan which reveals the handcuffs which bind him.

As with *A Taste of Honey* the world of Colin and his young friends is sharply contrasted with the hypocrisy and empty values of an older

generation. Again, this is shown across Colin's life both inside and outside of the borstal. Colin seems completely distanced from his own mother, his resentments towards her coming to a head when she installs her new boyfriend in the house shortly after the death of Colin's father: the theme of absent fathers and overtly domineering mothers also links *Loneliness* with *A Taste of Honey*. In the borstal Colin repeatedly bucks authority. The Housemaster's (Alec McCowen) attempts to psychoanalyse him are met with an uncooperative blank. He tells another inmate that he wants to take all policemen, governors and politicians and line them up against a wall because that is what they would do to him given the chance. The Governor seems to have little concern with the well being of his charges and is more interested in the status he can achieve through their winning sports contests such as the up-coming cross-country race against a public school. Colin's few moments of escape, other than through running, come in his outings with Mike and their girlfriends to Skegness. They dance to pop music on the train to the coast, book into a boarding house and walk together on the sands. But even these scenes are bathed in melancholy – referring to his family's life Colin says, 'It's the way most people live but I think it needs to be altered'. Walter Lassally's cinematography makes the beach appear beautiful, but bleak.

Where *Loneliness* differs most from *A Taste of Honey* is in the political dimension of its dissent. This is intimated from the film's opening with its downbeat musical leitmotif of 'Jerusalem'. This is repeated to full ironic effect during the concert given to 'entertain' the borstal boys, when the vicar leads them in singing Blake's radical poem and the scene is intercut with the brutal re-arrest of a boy who has escaped. The melody returns again during another scene where the police search Colin's family home. The film's political position is drawn directly from Sillitoe's original novella. Sillitoe's narrative is essentially an extended interior monologue in which Colin gives vent to his violently disenchanted view of British society. Referring to the borstal Governor, he says, 'At the moment it's dead blokes like him as have a whip-hand over blokes like me, and I'm almost dead sure it'll always be like that, but even so, by Christ, I'd rather be like I am – always on the run and breaking into shops for a packet of fags and a jar of jam – than have the whip-hand over somebody else and be dead from the toe nails up' (Sillitoe 1984: 14). In Richardson's film, Colin tells us in voiceover that he refuses to take paid work because he won't slave just to put money in the pockets of the bosses. His decision to survive through petty thieving is therefore equated with his rejection of capitalism. His attitude is inherent moral corruption is coloured by his view of his father's life.

He was a union official in the local factory and a thorn in the side of the management. Colin watches as his father slowly suffers a premature death, coughing away his last in the bedroom of their cramped home. The family are given £500 in compensation and his mother blows this on an orgy of consumerism, buying beds, carpets, clothes, food and a television set. Disgusted by this betrayal of his father's values, Colin retreats to the room where his father died and burns his share of the blood money. Within this political schema the theft of cash from a warehouse by Colin and Mike becomes a gesture of defiance; their eventual imprisonment (Colin for the robbery, Mike for a subsequent car theft) is the revenge the system takes on those who have the effrontery to defy it. Colin takes enormous pleasure in taunting the police officer who is after him, but there is no escape, the system always wins against the likes of Colin – when he hides the cash in a drainpipe outside his house, rain washes the money out just when the police are back for another search. We assume the other boys in the borstal are much the same as Colin, if less articulate, and they share his fate, spending their days pointlessly dismantling old gas masks.

This class conflict culminates in the film's most notorious sequence when students from a public school visit the borstal to compete with the inmates in a cross-country race. The sequence begins in documentary style as we observe the students and inmates sharing a dressing room, the gulf between them emphasised by their contrasting accents. As the race progresses and Colin takes an unassailable lead, a montage of voices from earlier in the film plays out over shots of the race. We see his dead father, the camera prowling its confined interior. We see his friend scolding him for always running away. The sequence becomes increasingly stylised, drawing on the montage principles of the Russian avant-garde of the 1920s. The shots interchange more and more rapidly, cutting backwards and forwards in time, until Colin finally stops running and stands motionless in sight of the finishing line. He directs a mocking grin at the Governor and allows his public-school competitor (played by a young, fresh-faced James Fox) to beat him to the line. Colin has so little to lose he gives up the one thing he excels in rather than be a pawn in a social system he despises (he has in any case proved that he could win if wanted to). The stylisation of the sequence again places us inside Colin's head, so that we experience the feelings that lead up to this decision, and we share his immediate elation at sticking two fingers up to the whole rotten system. However, it is inevitably a pyrrhic victory; the last we see of Colin he is back in the borstal dismantling gas masks.

Richardson's increasing focus on the aspects of formal cinematic

technique is apparent elsewhere in the film. Its visual style sees Richardson moving gradually away from the naturalism which dominated the early New Wave cinema of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and *A Taste of Honey* and shifting toward the more experimental, filmic self-consciousness of the French Nouvelle Vague. Perhaps the least convincing of these devices is his use of speeded-up motion. This is first employed when the new inmates have to strip as they arrive at the borstal. It is then used again for various scenes depicting the petty criminal activities of Colin and Mike, such as when they steal a car together and when they break into the warehouse. The effect here is to gloss over the seriousness of their activities and give the film a momentary comic effect, so that Mike and Colin appear almost as cartoon heroic figures. If the results are jarring, other borrowings from the Nouvelle Vague are more effective; the film ends with a freeze-frame reminiscent of the conclusion of François Truffaut's *Les quatre cents coups* (1959). Most notable of these is the sequence where Colin and his family spend the insurance money after his father's death. Their spending spree is accompanied by jaunty music and shot as a series of tasteless television commercials. When they get back to their home they then watch equally grotesque adverts on the television set they have just bought, mirroring the earlier scenes. The result is a critique of the gross consumerism which offers the family a brief escape from the grind of their lives. This use of overtly stylised techniques prefigures the increasing concern with cinematic form which was to appear in late New Wave films such as Lindsay Anderson's *This Sporting Life* (1963) and John Schlesinger's *Billy Liar* (1963), as well as in Richardson's own *Tom Jones* (1963). With hindsight, the use of realism in the New Wave can be seen as a useful method for grounding their films in a contemporary situation and allowing them to react to it. Once its usefulness had ceased they moved on to a more formal approach which tended to emphasise cinematic virtuosity and the more metaphorical dimensions of narrative.

Richardson's blending of realism and artifice was much commented on by British film critics, with a number objecting to his 'borrowings' from recent French cinema, seeing them as some kind of intrusion into the purity of British cinema's documentary traditions. John Coleman's review in the *New Statesman* summarised the debate, opening by suggesting that 'you can almost hear the clashing of new waves, English and French' (Coleman 1962). Although Coleman felt the attempts at stream-of-consciousness failed, he was willing to concede that Richardson's inventiveness was 'refreshing' and that 'aside from its evident sociological pretensions or provocations, this latest work of Tory Richardson's, with its enterprising gleanings from the sort of cinema

Surname	First name	Cerem No.	Additional access needs	S/G
Trott	Nicholas	10.30	Guest requires wheelchair access	Guest
Creed	Sophie	10.30	One of her guests will need wheelchair access	Guest
King	Rachel	10.30	Guest requires disabled access (and room for pushchair)	Guest
Rees	Gwyneth	12.30	Wheelchair access needed for guest to Media centre and disabled parking space	Guest
George	William Rhys	12.30	Wheelchair access for guest	Guest
Pearce	Betsan Mari	12.30	Wheelchair access for guest	Guest
Parry-Jones	David	12.30	Wheelchair access for guest	Guest
Osborne	Frederick	12.30	Guest needs wheelchair access.	Guest
Cogliolo	Anthony	3.30	Wheelchair access for guest	Guest
Williams	David	3.30	Wheelchair access and space for a wheelchair for guest	Guest
Baker	Stephanie	3.30	Two elderly guests coming out of the three. Aisle seats would be preferable.	Guest
Eneje	Ogbonnaeze	3.30	Guest has a walking stick	Guest
Sanderson	Rebecca	3.30	Guest will require wheelchair access	Guest
Morgan-Cairns	Rhiannon	3.30	Wheelchair access for guest	Guest
Causton	Alex	3.30	Elderly Grandmother may need help	Guest
Webster-Salter	Ross	3.30	Student requires wheelchair access to the stage	Student

Truffaut seems to be after, is successful enough to start debate about what the film can chuck up'. The film's politics also divided reviewers. Unsurprisingly, Nina Hibbin's review in the *Daily Worker* supported its Left leanings (Hibbin 1962), while Leonard Moseley in the *Daily Express* objected vehemently to the film's sympathetic depiction of a working-class criminal, calling it a 'lament for a layabout' (Moseley 1962). These reviews tend to tell us more about the positions adopted by British critics of the period. More tellingly, a number of reviewers saw the film as the beginning of the end for the British New Wave. David Robinson in the *Financial Times* encapsulated this view by acknowledging 'a growing resistance' from audiences to films 'about real people and contemporary themes' (Robinson 1962). Commentators like Robinson sensed a change of national mood, so that the proletarian rebellion of the New Wave seemed to have both run its course and served its purpose in challenging the perceived cosy middle-class parochialism of postwar Britain. The prevalence of youth culture and a new liberal agenda were already emerging. Whatever divisions appeared in the contemporary press regarding the development of the New Wave, and Richardson's place in it, this has subsequently been surpassed by the debate among British film academics regarding the New Wave's achievements, or lack of them. This debate requires consideration in its own right.

Richardson and the New Wave: critical debates

The British New Wave has been the source of divergent interpretations by scholars of British film history, and has provoked a good deal of trenchant criticism, some of which has been directed specifically at Tony Richardson. At the heart of this has been a debate about the extent to which the New Wave represents an effective reaction against the outdated attitudes and conformism prevalent in British cinema and culture in the 1950s. Certainly Richardson himself viewed his motivation for making films as being to 'ignite the possibility of the new by communicating what was true and exciting' in the world around him (Richardson 1993: 68). In looking back at Richardson's career in 1993, his friend Gavin Lambert described him as someone who 'set out to challenge the established order of things' (Lambert 1993: 30). The films of the New Wave were at the very least made with the *intention* of making a break with the prevailing orthodoxies of the British social and cultural scene of the 1950s.

It is this self-assessment that provides the starting point for John Hill's substantial examination of the New Wave in his book *Sex, Class*

and *Realism*. Here he sets out to evaluate 'just how successful were the films in tackling the issues and problems which they presented' (Hill 1986: 2). He offers a detailed critique which challenges the views of Lambert, Richardson himself and others of their contemporaries by arguing that the New Wave failed to deliver the radical agenda it seemed to promise. In order to assess the underlying basis of Hill's analysis we firstly need to examine his main criticisms of the New Wave. Hill takes issue with one of the central techniques common to New Wave directors such as Richardson, namely their use of working-class, urban, industrial townscapes as the primary settings for many of their films. Both Richardson and Lindsay Anderson had argued for the adoption of a poetic visual style which would free them from the more literal conventions of the British realist tradition.² This approach is much in evidence in both *A Taste of Honey* and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*. Hill argues that one result of this stylistic trait is that the industrial landscapes, which were formed by a specific economic system, are robbed of their full social meaning, becoming little more than a picturesque backdrop (Hill 1986: 127-33). He suggests that because they have no specific function within the narrative development their importance as visual evidence of capitalism is lost. This is an idea also taken up by Andrew Higson in his essay 'Space, place, spectacle: Landscape and townscape in the "Kitchen Sink" film' where he identifies 'That Long Shot of Our Town from That Hill' as a defining visual cliché of the movement. Higson is rather less didactic than Hill, but still points to a tension or 'imbalance' in the New Wave films between their realist aspects, with their intention of describing the world as it is, and the poetic sensibilities of Richardson and Anderson which treat industrial townscapes as 'spectacle' (Higson 1996: 154-6). This is offered not as a criticism per se of the New Wave films, but more as an acknowledgement of their limitations in failing to 'investigate a landscape historically'.

Hill implies that a further cause of this sense of distance may lie in the class background of directors like Richardson (Hill 1986: 132-3). This is a position first taken up by Roy Armes nearly ten years earlier in his *A Critical History of British Cinema* where he points to the fact that the three directors at the heart of the New Wave (Richardson, Anderson and Karel Reisz) were all from broadly upper-middle-class backgrounds and followed similar career paths via public school to Oxford or Cambridge. For Armes the consequence of this is that they 'do not create out of their own lived experience' and, therefore, are forced to adopt a viewpoint and class position which they have little personal knowledge of. They are in essence outsiders, adopting the posture of the sympathetic liberal bourgeoisie (Armes 1978: 264-7). An additional consequence of

being unable to draw on personal experience is that they then become reliant for their source material on the authentic experiences of the new generation of working-class writers who had emerged during the 1950s like Alan Sillitoe and Shelagh Delaney. Armes sees this as all too typical of the limitations that British cinema has imposed on itself through its over-reliance on literary sources. He argues that it is difficult for real innovation to take place when a visual medium finds itself embedded in a literary tradition. The reliance on this tradition is, for him, an indication of 'the failure of British cinema to sustain its stylistic innovations and preserve its artistic integrity' (Armes 1978: 262).

However, a firmer sense of the historical production context can show this reliance on literary sources in a different light. Richardson was faced with a British film industry which was, in many respects, precisely the 'monolithic', conformist body which Armes takes issue with throughout his study. Both Armes and Hill give scant consideration to the immense difficulties faced by the New Wave directors in getting their films off the ground in the first place. Richardson recalled with some bitterness how he and his colleagues remained 'outsiders and poor: ridiculous to everyone within the industry' (Richardson 1993: 68-9). For him an affiliation with exactly those subjects and writers who were prohibited from the mainstream constituted a statement of his contempt for the industry. In the context of 1950s Britain this meant embracing a working-class culture which was not his own, but which offered something he saw as vibrant, alive and positive. If it was difficult for Richardson to get films made, the possibility of someone working-class actually being given the opportunity to control a film production was largely unthinkable. The fact that writers like Sillitoe had established a degree of critical and commercial recognition in their own field provided a base from which to build inroads into the more conservative film industry. In addition, the position adopted by both Armes and Hill seems to be based on a form of reverse class snobbery, so that it becomes impossible for middle-class film-makers to make a leap of imaginative sympathy. This overlooks the fact that a number of intellectuals on the Left in the 1950s turned to working-class culture as embodying the authenticity of experience which they sought. These included Richard Hoggart in his *The Uses of Literacy* (first published in 1957) and Raymond Williams's *Culture and Society* (first published 1958). It was also reflected in the collection of essays called *Declaration*, edited by Tom Maschler (first published 1957). This collection predated the New Left movement of the 1960s, another largely middle-class grouping who sought meaning and political commitment through a concern with working-class culture.

Hill has also argued that the New Wave was compromised by its representation of the working-class heroes who are so often at the centre of its narratives. In an earlier essay he identifies the recurring theme of the young working-class man on the make as one of the most repeated motifs of the movement. While acknowledging the excitement brought to these roles by new actors like Albert Finney and Tom Courtenay, he suggests that all too often the characters they portray are motivated by personal advancement and selfishness. For Hill this is evidence of an 'ideology of individualism cemented into the narrative form' which accepts the underlying value system of capitalism and therefore poses little threat to the status quo of the British class system (Hill 1983: 11). A superficial viewing of either *A Taste of Honey* or *Loneliness* hardly bears out this criticism, since neither of the protagonists shows any interest whatsoever in personal gain or in maintaining the status quo. One of them (Jo) is left adrift by the social system she finds herself in, while the other (Colin) actively rejects its values to his own detriment. This criticism might be partially accurate of films such as *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, although even here it's hard to understand why a young working-class man should not wish to improve his material quality of life (an aspiration shared by the New Left), but the analysis seems particularly inappropriate to Richardson's work.

As a result of this alleged concentration on the self-seeking individual, Hill argues that the films of the New Wave reject the communal values typical of working-class life. This in turn leads to a depoliticisation of class conflict by ignoring the possibility of change through collective action. As he puts it, 'It is characteristic that the endings of such films should rely on individual, rather than social and political, change' (Hill 1986: 57). The individual working-class character is portrayed as essentially isolated, trapped within a social system which he or she is in conflict with but which always powerless to alter. Here Hill adopts an analytical position which exhibits many of the more deterministic aspects typical of the critical framework developed by Marxist theoreticians such as Althusser, as well as the writers of the Frankfurt School. This includes a tendency to assume an unproblematic correlation between affluence and class identity. As Robert Murphy suggests in his survey of 1960s British cinema, Hill's 'Marxist Puritanism leads him into dangerously wide generalisations' (Murphy 1992: 3). The New Wave films, and specifically those directed by Richardson, consistently show working-class characters whose attitude to both material and class advancement are far more complex and equivocal than Hill allows for, and who frequently reject the values offered to them, or at least crave some alternative. This may not be achieved through collective action,

but here the action of individuals is often taken to represent symbolically the feelings of a whole class. The activities of anonymous groups are hardly likely to make the stuff of engaging cinematic drama.

Hill's critique of the conformist tendencies of the New Wave extends to their use of filmic techniques. He argues that although the films often invite the viewer to share the attitudes of the central protagonist (by use of camera set-ups which position us in line with their point-of-view), they always provide an alternative external viewpoint which is more emphatic than this subjective positioning. This produces a conflict between the articulation of a distinctively proletarian voice and a controlling 'authorial' voice which is representative of the distanced position of their middle-class film-makers. The overtly constructed nature of the New Wave films therefore expresses 'a separation between spectator and subject' where the pleasures available 'rely less on recognition than the very sensation of class difference' (Hill 1986: 136). The attempt to find poetry in the everyday then results in a romanticising of working-class life, which in turn highlights the lack of reality in the artistic sensibilities of Richardson and his New Wave colleagues. Again, this argument can be reversed so as to ask why it is that Hill (and Higson) assume that the working class could not exhibit anything in their culture that could be seen as poetic. There is a link here back to Higson's argument over that distant view of our town from the hill. John Hill seems determined to argue that realism can be expressed only through an essentially negative depiction of working-class life. Similarly, he does not take into account the conventions of narrative technique prevalent in British cinema of the period, which Richardson strove against to try to bring a fresh style into British films. Working within an ethos which often saw location shooting as a foolhardy enterprise, where directors might be allowed more freedom than was good for them, Richardson had 'the vigour of an innovator by instinct when he set out to break down the four-wall look of the studio set-up', as Alexander Walker put it (Walker 1986: 64). For Richardson and the other New Wave directors, the freedom of cinematic innovation ran alongside the rebellion of depicting working-class life as key concerns.

The accounts given by Richardson, Anderson and others who were directly involved in the New Wave indicate an area which Hill does not always give full weight to. This is in providing contextualisation which allows the films of this period to be seen within the complexity of the social and cultural background in which they functioned. In order to understand these films, due consideration needs to be given to the way they were received at the time of their production, by their makers, by the industry from which they came, by the audience which consumed

them and by the critics who helped to shape that response. It is this form of contextualisation which informs Alexander Walker's account of the New Wave in his study of the 1960s, where he places their innovation within the stifling environment of British film production of the time. Even an unsentimental observer like Andrew Higson has acknowledged the place of the New Wave within a British tradition of documentary realism, seeing them as articulating a vision which is 'clearly committed to the communication of a politically responsive set of values' (Higson 1986: 92). There is a tendency in Hill's critique to underestimate the impact of Richardson and the New Wave in bringing to British film culture of the period a genuine breakthrough in both style and content.

The difficulties which lie at the heart of Hill's analysis are discussed by Raymond Williams in his essay 'Base and superstructure in Marxist cultural theory'. Here Williams examines a fundamental debate within Marxist cultural analysis, that is the relationship between the economic base (capitalism) and its cultural manifestations (or superstructure). Williams describes a tendency in Marxist theory towards defining this relationship as both hegemonic and deterministic, so that it is 'the notion of prefiguration, prediction or control, which has often explicitly or implicitly been used' (Williams 1980: 32). Such an approach sees the dominant ideology as a predetermining force, imbuing all cultural products with its values. This conceptual framework is implicit in Hill's position, as evidenced by his tendency to see all attempts by the New Wave to break with the conventions of mainstream British cinema as ineffectual. Williams proposes an alternative approach which sees the relationship between base and superstructure as more fluid. He argues that dominant ideology persists by being 'more flexible than any abstract imposed ideology' (Williams 1980: 39). The dynamic of this process creates spaces within which alternative, or even confrontational, ideas can exist. He suggests that in a period of particularly marked class movement or social change, as might be typified by Britain in the late 1950s and early 1960s, there may be a marked increase in opening-up these spaces. This approach allows a more sympathetic understanding of how the New Wave operated. As Williams put it in his masterly study *The Long Revolution*, the function of the arts is to convey a 'felt sense of the quality of life' at a given time (Williams 1961: 47). It is exactly this quality which Richardson's New Wave films offer in relation to their wider context.

A less deterministic approach is evident in much recent scholarship on the New Wave. In Samantha Lay's study of the realist tradition in British cinema she contextualises the New Wave by tracing its roots back to the documentary movement of the 1930s and 1940s. She specifically

identifies it as a continuation of the work of poetic documentarists like Humphrey Jennings, rather than the more sociological agenda of John Grierson. As she puts it:

The 'authors' use recognisable units of meaning in a way that goes beyond the surface realism of mainstream 'realistic' films and documentary realism, in order to get at 'poetic truths'. Poetic truths are human, existential truths, and run counter to social facts. The implication is that social facts are really surface facts – things that can be counted, categorized, labelled, and accounted for. Poetic truths have deeper, universal and existential concerns. Thus for the British New Wave film-makers, film should not merely reflect the surface realities of everyday life, but should penetrate that surface to reveal human truths. (Lay 2002: 62)

This is certainly an interpretation which sits comfortably with the very human concerns of Richardson's New Wave films, and specifically his empathy with outsiders and rebels. It is also reflected in his use of overtly cinematic devices which go beyond the usual remit of surface naturalism. In this it refers back to the influence of Italian Neorealism, as well as forward to the future work of film-makers such as Bill Douglas, Terence Davies and Lynne Ramsay, whose work shows the influence of Richardson's innovations and poetic response to the experience of reality.

Despite this, Lay tends to concur with Hill and Higson in seeing the New Wave films as largely conservative in their sexual and class politics, although she mainly uses examples other than Richardson's films in making this case. A more sympathetic contextualisation is apparent in Amy Sergeant's overview in *British Cinema: A Critical History* published in 2005. Sergeant interweaves the New Wave films into the production environment of British cinema of the period, as well as into the wider context, picking up a number of interesting threads. These include the contribution which the New Wave made to shifting debates in film censorship (Sergeant 2005: 206), their role in various intellectual debates emanating from the political left (Sergeant 2005: 212–13) and in introducing audiences to the use of various new forms of location shooting (Sergeant 2005: 214). This contextualisation extends to her consideration of realism itself which she rightly identifies as a 'comparative term of evaluation and criticism' (Sergeant 2005: 223). This contrasts strikingly with the absolutism of Hill and Higson, and allows Sergeant to indicate how the New Wave used realism as a means of tackling topical issues such as race. Her example here is Richardson's *Look Back in Anger*, although *A Taste of Honey* might have worked as well. One of the most recent academic reassessments of the New Wave, the essay 'Looking back at the British New Wave' by Yael Zarzhy-Levo,

adopts an entirely historicist approach by focusing exclusively on the way in which contemporary press reports helped to establish the 'revolutionary' nature of the movement in the eyes of the public. The essay is another indication of a move away from deterministic cultural criticism towards work which squarely assesses the films within their specific historical moment (Zarzhy-Levo 2010: 232–47).

In retrospect, the critical perspective on the New Wave offered by John Hill seems as much a product of its time as Richardson's New Wave films are of theirs. Hill's approach being rooted in a deterministic political reading prevalent in cultural theory when his study was published. From the perspective of a more pluralistic contemporary position, his analysis seems inevitably narrow. Richardson's New Wave films show him using the movement's realist agenda to develop a personal artistic vision. The basis of his method increasingly moves towards combining surface naturalism with a poetic approach which acknowledges the essential artifice of the medium. The content shows his instinctive empathy for social outcasts and rebels, as well as a reaction against the conformism inherent in Britain's social structures of the period. By 1963 Richardson had begun to exhaust the artistic possibilities which the New Wave offered him and rapidly jettisoned realism itself as a form, although vestiges of it were to reappear in his work over the next decade, particularly in *Tom Jones* (1963) and *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1968). His last direct involvement with the New Wave as a coherent movement was in acting as executive producer for Woodfall's *Girl with Green Eyes* (1964). Adapted by Edna O'Brien from her own novella and featuring Rita Tushingham, Peter Finch and Lynn Redgrave, the film gave Richardson's regular camera operator, Desmond Davis, his debut as a director. Richardson's influence is writ large over the film, from the naturalistic use of location shooting and mobile camerawork to the occasional stylisations such as the use of another outsider (this time a young woman who incurs the wrath of her community and the Church by undertaking an affair with an older, married man). Even the use of Rita Tushingham, often shot in close-up, is strongly reminiscent of *A Taste of Honey*. Despite the film winning a Golden Globe, British reviewers were quick to pick up on the way that Richardson appeared to have been very close at Davis's shoulder in terms of the style of the finished film. By the time of the release of *Girl with Green Eyes* Richardson had already moved on to another phase in his career, one which had been unveiled spectacularly the previous year with *Tom Jones*. Reviewing his early realist work it is apparent both how essential Richardson's contribution was to the cultural impact of the

New Wave and how his personal vision pushed beyond its limitations.

Notes

¹ Walter Laessly is interviewed for the film *Small Is Beautiful: The Story of the Free Cinema Films Told by Their Makers* which forms part of the BFI's Free Cinema DVD box-set.

² See Anderson (1957).

The Swinging Sixties (1961–68)

3

The release of *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* in 1962 effectively marked the beginning of the end for Richardson's substantive involvement with the New Wave movement. The year 1963 was to be a watershed for the development of his career, as well as for the wider British culture. The underlying changes that had been gathering force since the mid-1950s finally broke through into the public consciousness in a decisive way. It was in 1963 that the British ruling establishment was widely accused of moral hypocrisy for the sexual improprieties revealed by the Profumo scandal. The Conservative Prime Minister Harold Macmillan resigned to be replaced by Sir Alec Douglas Home, a figure described by the historian Dominic Sandbrook as having the image of 'a good-natured amateur who had somehow bumbled his way to the political summit, rather as if one of P.G. Wodehouse's heroes had woken up one day and found himself in 10 Downing Street' (Sandbrook 2006: 8). It was little surprise that he was to lose office the following year, albeit very narrowly to the comparatively slick and culturally aware Labour leader Harold Wilson. In an atmosphere of political malaise, the 'boom' in satirical television programmes grabbed headlines and audiences, while a robbery involving a Royal Mail train could be hailed by the press with the epithet of 'great', its perpetrators transformed into working-class heroes apparently thumbing their noses at a staid social system.

In his comprehensive account of the 1960s, Arthur Marwick divides the period into three distinct phases. The first, which concludes in 1963, he describes as 'The first stirrings of a cultural revolution', with 1963 being identified as the moment when the certainties of the 1950s finally began to give way to an avalanche of change (Marwick 1998). Although political events can be used to illustrate this, it is probably more apparent through the cultural shifts which came to the fore. If 1963 is the year of Profumo, it is also the year in which The Beatles fully emerged into

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For Joseph and Gwen