

From costume romps to queer milestones: adaptation, collaboration, queerness and modernism in the 'Long New Wave' of Richardson, Schlesinger and Reisz

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Abstract

The post-New Wave films and trajectories of the key British New Wave directors remain under-analysed terrain, both in terms of their potential relevance for interrogating how we understand the British New Wave itself and for the terms in which we might conceptualise a 'Long' New Wave. This essay departs from persisting auteurist approaches to consider the post-New-Wave oeuvres and careers of these directors collectively, in terms which foreground the importance of collaborations and networks rather than individual authorship and seek to decentre, denaturalise and potentially dislodge their pre-eminent association with *Northern, British, social* realism and its presumed legacies. I argue for the importance of a cluster of less-analysed areas of intersection and development which emerge *across* the eclectic filmmaking careers of Tony Richardson and John Schlesinger (and, to a lesser extent, Karel Reisz) in the immediate post-New Wave decade from the 1963 success of Richardson's *Tom Jones* to the early 1970s. My discussion pivots on two commonalities: during this time, all three directors contributed significantly and plurally to innovations and advances in genre and representation across two areas distinct from British Northern working-class realism: historical/costume film genres, and queer representation. An approach which centres the (broadly defined) queer elements in these directors' post-New-Wave oeuvres – intersecting at times with their equally undervalued contribution to 'pre-heritage' period cinema – reveals the 'Long' New Wave as substantially a cinema of adaptation, collaboration and queerness which encompassed important, near-forgotten, international projects as well as modernist influences and, in Schlesinger's *Sunday Bloody Sunday* (1971), a significant advance in realist queer representation.

Keywords

British New Wave, adaptation, collaboration, queer cinema, period historical and costume genres, realisms, modernism, Tony Richardson, John Schlesinger, Karel Reisz

Introduction

The post-New Wave films and trajectories of the key British New Wave directors in the period from 1963 onwards remain significantly under-analysed terrain, particularly in terms

of their potential relevance for rethinking and interrogating how we understand the British New Wave itself and for the terms in which we might conceptualise a 'Long' New Wave. The individual directorial careers of Lindsay Anderson, Tony Richardson and (less widely) Karel Reisz and John Schlesinger have, of course, yielded book-length studies (Hedling 1998, Hedling & Dupin 2016, Izod et al 2012, Kitchen 2023 on Anderson; Welsh & Tibbetts Eds 1999, Shail 2012 on Richardson; Gardner 2007 on Reisz; Phillips 1981, Brown 2019 on Schlesinger) alongside biographies (Mann 2005), collected interviews (Buruma 2006), memoirs (Richardson 1993, Sherwin 1996, Lambert 2000), and Anderson's published writings and diaries (Anderson & Ryan 2004, Anderson 2005). However, the publication of new critical studies has waned in the past decade (with the exception of Brown 2019 and continuing interest in Anderson). A limitation is that the impulse in most of this work has remained assertively auteurist – here, it is significant that Anderson, with his supreme commitment to personal filmmaking, has attracted the most sustained scholarly attention – along with a lingering framing of all but Anderson as pre-eminently directors of realism and/or social commitment as well as authorial control, in line with the continuing valuation of the wider British New Wave and its legacies in those same terms. In consequence, much of this work has laboured under a self-imposed pressure to find unifying throughlines of *individual* deep authorial vision (an approach exemplified by the US literary scholars Phillips 1981 and Brown 2019 in their monographs on Schlesinger); or, conversely, faces difficulties in integrating the directors' more unexpected (often, international) projects into either authorial or 'national' British cinematic framings. Robert Shail (2012) thus collects Richardson's three international features between 1963's *Tom Jones* and 1968's *The Charge of the Light Brigade* into a chapter titled 'The Swinging Sixties', a descriptor which struggles to accommodate their diverse range: the Los Angeles funeral-business satire *The Loved One* (1965), loosely adapted and contemporised from Evelyn Waugh's 1948 novella, and Richardson's two lesser-known projects with Jeanne Moreau, *Mademoiselle* (1966) and *The Sailor from Gibraltar* (1967).

This essay departs from previous approaches by considering the post-New-Wave oeuvres and careers of these directors, firstly, collectively, in terms which foreground the importance of collaborations and networks (characteristically established across time and media) rather than individual authorship; and, secondly, in terms which seek to decentre, denaturalise and potentially dislodge their reputation as directors pre-eminently associated with *Northern, British, social* realism, presumed social commitment and presumed realist

legacies. In view of these goals, I defocus away from Anderson, given that he was the only director of the four who remained anchored in the UK (with the exception of 1987's Bette Davis and Lillian Gish vehicle *The Whales of August*) and cleaved to an auteurist path throughout his career which has inspired several book-length studies (Hedling 1998, Hedling & Dupin 2016, Izod et al 2012, Kitchen 2023).

In contrast, the uneven – but productively eclectic – transnational and international careers of Richardson, Schlesinger and Reisz all prominently include films which they clearly helmed as jobbing directors rather than 'auteurs'; but also – of particular interest for my analysis – films on which collaborative networks and personal relationships, production happenstance and related complexities and constraints significantly drove and shaped creative decisions and cinematic outcomes. Focusing centrally on the immediate 'post-New Wave' decade, from 1963 – the transitional year in which the release of Richardson's picaresque Eastmancolor costume romp *Tom Jones* preceded that of Schlesinger's *Billy Liar*, named by Sarah Street (2014: 28) and many others as the last British New Wave film – to the early 1970s, I specifically want to revisit a cluster of less-analysed areas of intersection and development which emerge *across* the work of Richardson and Schlesinger (and, to a lesser extent, Reisz) from the 1963 transatlantic box-office and Academy Awards triumph of *Tom Jones* onwards.

My discussion pivots on two intersecting – and, I argue, significant – commonalities: between 1963 and c.1971, the trajectories of all three directors contributed significantly, and plurally, to innovations and advances in genre and representation in two areas distinct from British Northern working-class realism and its dominant framings: historical/costume film genres, and queer representation. In its later sections, my essay centres the latter: queerness (broadly defined), and the question of where it might be found, and in what forms, in the films of the 'Long' New Wave. While these instances include manifestations of queerness in the post-New Wave, 'pre-heritage' (Monk 2021) period cinema, they also – as I will explore – extend far beyond this, including to some less remembered projects to which queerness (of sources, creative collaborations, and/or textual readability, layerings and energies) was key.

Innovations in period cinema and the case for studying the Long New Wave

Richardson's successful foray into the costume romp with *Tom Jones* was merely the first of several significant and ground-shifting contributions by Schlesinger, Reisz and Richardson to

a wider post-British New Wave shake-up of the historical/costume film during the 1960s to 1970s. The British period cinema of that time and its distinguishing features have received little sustained analysis (in contrast with the post-1980 ‘heritage film’). In an earlier article (Monk 2021), I began to explore and define this neglected field – which I termed ‘the pre-heritage film’ – and its subgenres, via the period film output of EMI Films. As I noted there, ‘[t]he scholarly inattention to the heritage film’s relation to its precursors stretches back to the marked stylistic and tonal shifts in 1960s British period cinema wrought by the British New Wave directors, as well as by the more widely discussed Ken Russell’ (Monk 2021: 52).

Although the contemporary success of Richardson’s, Schlesinger’s and Reisz’s revisionist interventions in period film with audiences and critics varied, as a body of work they are collectively significant both for their role in spearheading many of the defining features of long-1960s period cinema (in the UK and also transatlantically) and in relation to how we might want to define the ‘Long’ New Wave and the insights to be gained from thinking in ‘Long’ New Wave terms. The three directors’ post-New Wave period films were significant, firstly, for their impact across a spectrum of four period genres, both established and new: the ‘classic’ literary adaptation (*Tom Jones*, *Far from the Madding Crowd* [Schlesinger, 1967]); a *zeitgeist*-pleasing subcategory, the eighteenth-century erotic-picaresque costume romp (quintessentially *Tom Jones*, reprised less successfully in Richardson’s 1977 *Joseph Andrews*); British imperial history (Richardson’s 1968 *The Charge of the Light Brigade*); and some key contributions to a newly emergent mode, the twentieth-century retro film. *Isadora* (1968), Reisz’s 1890s–1920s biopic of the American-born, pro-Soviet modern dance pioneer Isadora Duncan; Richardson’s abandoned 1970 *Nijinsky* biopic (scripted by playwright Edward Albee, and to have starred Rudolph Nureyev opposite Paul Scofield as Diaghilev); and, later, Schlesinger’s unsparing 1930s Hollywood satire *The Day of the Locust* (1975) all confirm the late-1960s emergence and long-1970s transatlantic and international prevalence of the ‘retro film’ as a distinct period-film mode, or genre, around two decades before the ‘retro’ label gained traction (see Monk 2021: 59–67).

Secondly, however, and directly pertinent to conceptualising a Long New Wave – Richardson’s, Schlesinger’s and Reisz’s cross-genre shake-up of the tone, sensibility and cinematic and performance style(s) of period cinema was inflected and defined by a set of impulses – naturalistic, contemporising, democratising, modernist, ‘swinging’ and countercultural – which demonstrate both clear continuities with the earlier New Wave

cinema and new lines of development, the latter responsive to the shifting cultural mood of the mid-to-later 1960s but also making use of experimental styles and practices which had their origins in the 1950s Royal Court theatre. Thirdly and of equal importance, the period films of the Long New Wave capitalised substantially on the stardom and – markedly contemporary, not period – personae of the new generation of British stars the British New Wave had forged.

These features point to the importance of *continuing* networks and collaborations (as well as some new ones) with key writers, producers, and other creative personnel, as well as actors, with some of these connections stretching across a longer transmedial timeframe to the 1950s Royal Court and ‘kitchen sink’ dramas which had supplied the British New Wave with its earliest stage-to-screen sources. In a valuable reframing of the 1959–1963 New Wave as a cinema of adaptation and of complex theatrical influences, Victoria Lowe (2020) argues and evidences that the Royal Court imprint on the New Wave films extended beyond textual source material to acting styles, adaptation of the dramaturgical spaces of the theatrical sources and production design – with Jocelyn Herbert as a key connecting figure – and to working practices of networked collaboration spanning stage and screen.

Such insights – and indeed the specific example of Herbert – demonstrate why there is a need to extend such consideration to the films of the Long New Wave. Richardson’s, Schlesinger’s and Reisz’s films of 1963 onwards confirm the Long New Wave, too, as fundamentally a cinema of adaptation, but the cinematic influence of the radical creative practices tested theatrically at the Royal Court, encompassing modernist and Brechtian strategies, is not fully evident until the post-New Wave films. As Lowe elaborates, ‘Jocelyn Herbert was part of a group at the Royal Court (among them directors Lindsay Anderson [and] John Dexter) who, influenced by Brecht and directions in European theatre, were moving away from the constraints of naturalistic [stage] design’ (Lowe 2000: 76). Between 1963 and 1987 Herbert was also creatively involved in Richardson’s, Reisz’s and Anderson’s films: first as colour consultant on *Tom Jones*, then as the production designer of Reisz’s *Isadora*, Anderson’s seminal *If...* (1968) and *O Lucky Man!* (1973), and several projects for Richardson including the naturalistic historical drama/countercultural Mick Jagger vehicle *Ned Kelly* (1970).

Queerness and its intersections in the Long New Wave

The defining features of the Long New Wave I have outlined above (clear continuities with but also development beyond the New Wave, innovations in period genres and adaptation, the importance of continuing and evolving collaborations with New Wave stars, the wider importance of *continuing* creative collaborations often established still earlier) all carry across to, and intersect with, the place(s) of queerness in the Long New Wave, which in turn can be found and approached across a range of registers. The centrality of gay and bisexual male directors (Anderson, Schlesinger, Richardson) and queer collaborations in shaping the British New Wave, points to a need to revisit the place of queerness, queer collaborations and collaborators, desire and the male as available object of the gaze within these filmmakers' longer oeuvres; not least in Schlesinger's groundbreaking direct contributions to a post-1967 queer cinema in *Midnight Cowboy* (1969) in the US and *Sunday Bloody Sunday* (1971) in the UK, but also, I shall argue and establish, more widely.

In the twenty-first century, a widened understanding of the queerness(es) of the New Wave itself has been enabled by the new visibility of archival and diaried documentation, especially in relation to Anderson: the suppression and censorship of queer story elements in *This Sporting Life* (1963), and the role of unspoken same-sex desire as creative impetus. This has occurred alongside now-visible and spoken queer audience investments in the broader New Wave canon, most prominently evidenced in the gay British director Andrew Haigh's intertextual riffs on Reisz's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960) in his Nottingham-set debut feature *Weekend* (2011). Haigh clarified that he chose *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* as his reference point for *Weekend* in preference to 'other queer films' because its concern with 'trying to understand how you fit into the world' most closely encapsulated 'the queer experience' he wanted his own film to explore (Haigh 2024: 46). While such examples expand our understanding of queerness within the New Wave canon – whether as a suppressed textual element or offscreen impulse which may leave (sub)textual traces, or in terms of queer readabilities and queer audience investments – extending this attention to the Long New Wave, and particularly to Richardson's and Schlesinger's Long New Wave work, yields significant further insights.

Networks of adaptation, collaboration and star power: case studies

A joint focus on queerness and period cinema in the Long New Wave confirms the ubiquity and centrality of adaptation – from both stage and page sources, and shaped by a range of

stage, page and cinematic collaborators – as a unifying feature of Richardson’s, Schlesinger’s and Reisz’s oeuvres, across their New Wave and post-New Wave films and, crucially, across past and present representations and across genres; arguably, more so than any consistent commitment to ‘social’ ‘realism’ or British regional representation. Just as crucially, it confirms the centrality of *continuing* collaborative relations and networks (and some new ones) with key stars, writers and producers – and also designers, cinematographers and composers – to the 1963–c.1971 films of all three directors. In particular, post-New Wave continuities of contemporary star power and performance styles were fundamental to both the success and the tonal and stylistic advances of Richardson’s, Schlesinger’s and Reisz’s post-New Wave interventions in the period costume romp, ‘classic’ literary adaptation and retro biopic in *Tom Jones*, *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *Isadora* respectively. In the American-backed *Tom Jones*, Richardson’s ‘liberal use of formal experimentation’, Duncan Petrie notes, ‘met with mainstream success and approval’ (Petrie 2019: 92) but its formal experimentation, in the service of playfully capturing a swinging Sixties zeitgeist of sexual freedom in period form, would arguably have gone nowhere without Finney’s persona and performance.

The continuing collaborations between directors, writers, stars and wider personnel, and their lines of development across the New Wave and post-New Wave films, invite varied interpretative approaches. A common feature, however, is that both the complexities of these collaborations and their creative outcomes challenge the history of critical debates around ‘realist’ versus ‘modernist’ film form and style, and received notions of ‘realist’ genres and subject-matter, particularly as these have commonly been applied to British cinema and the British New Wave.

While some recurring collaborations attest to the eclectic flexibility of creative talent, others are more significant as evidence of the continuities between the pre-New Wave and post-New Wave periods. In addition to designer Jocelyn Herbert, or cinematographer Walter Lassally’s contribution to various Long New Wave projects, we might equally consider the recurrent contributions of Richard Rodney Bennett as original soundtrack composer across three very different Schlesinger films: first *Billy Liar*, then the Hardy adaptation *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1967) – for which Bennett received an Oscar nomination – then, a decade later, the World War Two home front drama *Yanks* (1979): a personal project for Schlesinger, financed from the profits of *Marathon Man*, shot on location predominantly in Greater Manchester,

and exploring the cross-cultural and romantic encounters between American GIs and local young women.

Exemplifying that sense of creative continuity, the defining role of the writer John Osborne, the original 'kitchen-sink' playwright, in shaping the early British New Wave had of course originated in Osborne's close collaboration with Richardson at the Royal Court, which had opened in 1956 with Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* as its first production, directed by Richardson, changing the course of theatre history. However, the key feature of Osborne's contributions across the *Long New Wave* is that they were multifaceted. He served as both adapted source and self-adaptor (jointly with Nigel Kneale) of his own stage plays to film for *Look Back in Anger* (1959) and *The Entertainer* (play 1957, film 1960), both directed by Richardson; as co-founder with Richardson and Harry Saltzman of Woodfall Films, making these productions possible; then later as Woodfall's *adapting* screenwriter, transmuting Henry Fielding's sprawling 1749 picaresque novel into Richardson's *Tom Jones*, followed by uncredited, involvement in the script of *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (which likewise had adaptational origins).

Some recurrent collaborations have tangible intertextual and extra-textual effects, as with the unfolding star personae across successive projects of Albert Finney, and particularly for Schlesinger Julie Christie, as the iconoclastically independent Liz in *Billy Liar*, the narcissistic, restless Diana in *Darling* (1965), and Bathsheba Everdene in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. There are also Alan Bates' and Peter Finch's more distinctly queer collaborations with Schlesinger across multiple projects: Finch as Boldwood in *Far from the Madding Crowd* and, groundbreakingly, Daniel Hirsch in *Sunday Bloody Sunday*; Bates across *A Kind of Loving* (1962), *Madding Crowd* and later, on television, as the gay 'Cambridge Spy' Guy Burgess in Alan Bennett's *An Englishman Abroad* and in Terence Rattigan's *Separate Tables* (both 1983). In other cases, collaborative patterns draw our attention to the cross-cutting work of certain performers with a range of directors through the Long New Wave.

Notwithstanding his work with Schlesinger, Bates, like Finney, was also a cross-cutting star. In 1956, Richardson had directed Bates as Cliff (the friend for whom Osborne's protagonist Jimmy Porter harbours deeper feelings than for the women in his life) in the original Royal Court staging of *Look Back in Anger*. Finney and Bates both made their

feature-film debuts in Richardson's 1960 film of Osborne's play *The Entertainer*. In the same year, Finney starred in his breakthrough film role as Arthur Seaton in Reisz's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, and on stage as *Billy Liar* in Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall's West End adaptation of Waterhouse's 1959 novel; while Bates starred as the vicious Mick in the original London stage production of Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*, later reprising the role in Clive Donner's 1963 film. Bates' breakthrough to film stardom followed in 1961, as the fugitive in Bryan Forbes' *Whistle Down the Wind* and then as the miserably married, trapped, Vic in Schlesinger's *A Kind of Loving*, both scripted by Waterhouse and Hall. By 1963, *Tom Jones* had of course brought Finney global stardom (and a 10% profit share). Finney's own production company, Memorial Productions, is significant as the producer of Lindsay Anderson's *If...* (1968) and Peter Watkins' *Privilege* (1967), and also enabled Finney's directing debut, the Manchester-centred comedy-drama *Charlie Bubbles* (1968), scripted by Shelagh Delaney, the author of *A Taste of Honey* (directed by Richardson in 1961).

Vanessa Redgrave's *wholly* post-New Wave stardom was 'cross-cutting' in the more limited sense that it was manifested across the films of two directors – Redgrave's then-husband Richardson, and Reisz – in a concentrated period between 1966 and 1968, during which Redgrave also starred opposite David Hemmings in Antonioni's *Blow Up* (1966). This run of roles – as Leonie, the impeccably fashionable upper-class wife of unsuccessful artist, and working-class communist, Morgan (David Warner) in Reisz's *Morgan: A Suitable Case for Treatment* (1966); as Ian Bannen's spurned fiancée in *The Sailor from Gibraltar* and a solitary cabaret singer in the musical short *Red and Blue* (1967), both directed by Richardson in the midst of marital breakdown and Richardson's passion for Jeanne Moreau; in *The Charge of the Light Brigade*; and as the radical dance pioneer Isadora Duncan in Reisz's *Isadora* – maps the journey of the immediate post-New Wave cinema itself, from Swinging London and surreal satire towards the leftist politics and aesthetics of 1968 and post-1968.

Post-New Wave modernism: querying Wollen through the Long New Wave

The eclectic features of post-New Wave cinema, reconceptualised as a Long New Wave, productively challenges critical binaries of cinematic 'realism' versus 'modernism' which have been deployed against the British New Wave films, their directors, and British cinema's

longer cultural association with adaptation, decried by its critics as an ‘overdependence’ (Lowe 2000: 67). The evident collaborative lineages, influences, and on-screen styles and strategies which develop in the Long New Wave challenge, and even refute, Peter Wollen’s (1993) contention in his essay ‘The Last New Wave’ that the 1959–1963 British New Wave was not really a New Wave at all, its directors (with the possible exception of Anderson) were woefully uncinematic strangers to modernism, and British cinema did not achieve a true – fully, fundamentally, consciously *cinematic* – New Wave until the 1980s.

As we have seen, from *Tom Jones* onwards, a spectrum of broadly modernist impulses and stylistic influences are evident in the post-New Wave cinema across both its period and queer film strands. These include the Brechtian strategies forged theatrically, in a specifically British iteration, at the 1950s–1960s Royal Court, and 1960s countercultural inflections – tonal, aesthetic, political – which extended to the selection and treatment of period-film subjects and styles, casting, and film promotion (as in *The Charge of the Light Brigade* or *Ned Kelly*). However, there are also clear and present elements of the *cinematic* modernism which Peter Wollen declared absent from the British New Wave cinema of 1959–1963. His argument was that to call the British ‘Angry Young Men’ films of 1959–1963 a New Wave at all was ‘both inappropriate and misleading’ (1993: 36), particularly because the cycle’s reliance on adaptation (and, worse, self-adaptation) was, ostensibly, antithetical to the true idea of a New Wave, which ‘involved putting film first and not subordinating it to literature or theatre’ (Wollen 1993: 37). Wollen’s core objection, however, was that ‘both critics and the directors themselves explicitly justified [the] films in terms of “realism”’ (1993: 37), in a cultural–historical context in which a reductive notion of ‘realism’, ‘bound up with nationalism’, remained overvalued and weaponised in British film criticism (Wollen 1993: 38; see also Ellis 1978 and Murphy 2003). In contrast, Wollen argued, the French New Wave directors (and presumably French critics) had been able to ‘transcend this shallow antimony [and the] third term that made this possible was, of course, “modernism”’ (1993: 38). In short, even adaptation was excusable if the resulting films ‘placed themselves clearly in a modernist tradition’ or adapted modernist sources: Wollen approvingly cited Alain Resnais’s collaborations with Nouveau Roman ‘writers like [Alain] Robbe-Grillet and [Marguerite] Duras’ (1993: 38).

Among several ironies within this line of argument, Wollen ignored that that the British New Wave’s roots were in *modernist* theatre. Richardson, indicatively, was no

stranger to experimental staging or non-realist modern European drama in his theatre career; his directing credits since the 1950s included works by Eugène Ionesco and Bertolt Brecht (and indeed, interest in avant-garde European drama was so widespread in 1950s–1960s Britain that Brecht, Ionesco and Sartre featured in amateur-theatre repertoires). The theatrical lineage of the experimental, pop-modernist, pop-Brechtian aspects of Richardson's *Tom Jones* has already been noted. And – contrary to Wollen's claims – by 1963, the stylistic influences of the *nouvelle vague* and wider European art cinema were equally evident in the late New Wave and post-New Wave British films of Schlesinger and Reisz: as self-conscious stylistic flourishes in *Billy Liar*, more organically in Schlesinger's *Darling* and Reisz's *Morgan*.

Wollen's crowning oversight, however, is to ignore Richardson's three European and/or French co-produced films in the mid-to-late 1960s; one of these, *The Sailor from Gibraltar*, starring Jeanne Moreau, in fact adapted from Duras, a significant feminist filmmaker in her own right as well as a novelist and the screenwriter of Resnais' *Last Year in Marienbad* (1959). The feminist film scholar Michelle Royer records that Duras also had a hand in Richardson's earlier Moreau project *Mademoiselle*, despite not being credited on the completed film (Royer 2019: 122). As Rebecca M. Pauly notes in her richly detailed account of the complex genesis and development of these two films, 'By 1965, Richardson had been following the explosive energy and innovations of the *nouvelle vague* for some years' (1999: 143). As *Mademoiselle* and *The Sailor from Gibraltar* are significant yet near-forgotten queer collaborative contributions to the Long New Wave canon, I return to both films in greater detail in the last section of my essay.

In these two Moreau- films and a third, the Nabakov adaptation *Laughter in the Dark* (1969), co-starring Anna Karina and Nicol Williamson, the European and modernist connections extend beyond mere influence. Although all produced by Richardson's regular producers Oscar Lewenstein and/or Neil Hartley for Woodfall, the first and third were French co-productions. *The Sailor from Gibraltar*, although it was financially British, and cast Ian Bannen and Vanessa Redgrave as British leads alongside Moreau, was thoroughly international in its locations and wider casting (which included 1960s-typical absurd cameos from Orson Welles and Hugh Griffith). Moreover, it was shot by Godard's and Truffaut's cinematographer Raoul Coutard between Godard's *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*

and *La Chinoise* (both 1967), though it does not share these films’ political-modernist strategies.

By 1968 and into the early 1970s, the influence of Godardian political modernism could also be felt and observed directly in some of the culturally British post-New Wave films, exemplified by the variety of ‘Brechtian’ foregrounding and interruptive devices deployed by Lindsay Anderson in *If...* (1968) and particularly *O Lucky Man!* (1973). The status and political adequacy of such uses of political countercinema techniques in a British, and relatively mainstream, context did not go uncontested, particularly in the emerging field of politicised Screen Theory. Colin MacCabe, in his essay ‘Realism and the cinema: notes on some Brechtian theses’ (1974), notably attacked *O Lucky Man!* for what he perceived as merely fashionable, facile *faux*-Brechtianism. More pertinent for the current analysis, however, is the evident shift in style, influence and political consciousness between the cine-Brechtianism of *Tom Jones* in 1963 (mannered playfulness, foregrounded commentary on the action) and the more obviously interruptive, consciously political and polemical, cine-Brechtianism of *The Charge of the Light Brigade* by 1968 (most famously in Richard Williams’ satirical and explanatory animated sequences).

Registers of queerness in the Long New Wave

One of Peter Wollen’s 1993 criticisms of the British New Wave films is that none of them attempted to directly represent queer experience, with the unsatisfactory, ultimately marginalised, exception of Geoffrey (Murray Melvin) in *A Taste of Honey*. Wollen contrasted this failure with the temporally parallel, yet consistently less-revered, efforts of the director–producer team Basil Dearden and Michael Relph to directly represent queer – and black – British experience in their 1950s and early 1960s ‘social problem’ films. This comparison was especially pertinent in the case of Dearden and Relph’s *Victim* (1961), which had been directly conceived as a campaigning film seeking to bring about the decriminalisation of male homosexuality in the UK, which at that date the Eden and Macmillan Conservative Governments had refused to implement despite the recommendations of the 1957 Wolfenden Report.

I would argue, however, that it is essential to place the New Wave directors’ ‘failure’ in precisely that historical context. In contrast with Relph and Dearden, Anderson,

Richardson and Schlesinger were all queer but unable to be so openly, while working at a time of socio-legal limbo with regards to the UK laws governing both gay male and female sexuality and sexual freedoms. The films of the British New Wave cycle pre-dated the 1967 Abortion Act, a timing which has been widely commented upon. But they also emerged from, and within, the ten-year limbo between the 1957 publication of the Wolfenden Report and its delayed implementation in the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, which only *decriminalised* homosexual acts between two males, both aged over 21, in private. That Anderson, Schlesinger and Richardson were queer directors working in this context heightens the need for a sensitivity to potential queer layerings within their films which, in an adaptational and collaborative context, may be rooted in complex (and not always fully knowable) creative agency as well as residing in the textual potential for queer readings.

With this context in mind, it may be helpful to think about the varied forms and layerings of queerness which we might identify and debate in (particularly) Richardson's and Schlesinger's films of the Long New Wave in terms of '**registers of queerness**'. Below, I sketch a provisional five-register framework for this purpose. While a simplified linear approach to queer representation might chart advancements in terms of a 'progression' from Register 1 to Register 5 (from the covert and marginalised to the overt and central), it will be evident that my Registers 2, 3 and 4 do different work, seeking to capture – and prompt thinking about – multiple dimensions of queerness. Thus Registers 2, 3 and 4 note and denote the presence of (respectively) queer creative inputs and creative agencies, available material for queer readability, and available forms of queer spectatorial pleasure.

My proposed registers are grounded in, and respond to, the observed patterns within and across the Long New Wave's films and creative agencies, and their specific contexts in British queer history and the history of queer representation (or non-representation, suppression and its symptoms) in British film, rather than being modelled directly on post-1990 queer theory. Queer theory's interrogation of the normative, conformist value systems that societies impose in terms of gendered social expectations and identities as well as sexuality and sexual expression (from Rubin 1984 onwards) is nonetheless highly pertinent to how I apprehend queerness(es) within and across the Long New Wave films, in which cumulative themes of entrapment by (heteropatriarchal) social norms versus alternative desires, dissatisfaction and resistance, social and sexual liberation and their limits –

particularly as amplified by the performative energies of the films' stars – are often highly suggestive for queer readings.

Register 1: The inclusion of **minor or ultimately marginalised queer characters**, or alternatively the **suppression of queer plots or characters** during adaptation.

Register 1 might be subdivided into: **(1a)** Minor queer characters. **(1b)** Significant but ultimately marginalised queer character(s): Geoffrey in *A Taste of Honey* and Malcolm in *Darling* are the clearest exemplars, both in films made and released during the pre-1967 limbo period. **(1c)** Suppression of a queer plot or character during adaptation and/or due to censorship.

Register 2: Queer collaborations. As we have seen, collaboration may encompass many and complex forms of creative involvement, not always credited above the line. Similarly, the queerness of a collaboration or its individual participants may be ambiguous or not a matter of record, and may or may not have a legible impact on creative outcomes. Examples might include: The involvement of queer literary or script sources or adapters. Instances of queer casting which might be viewed as having collaborative agency; or which confer queer readability on a film; or which heighten its wider registers of queerness.

Register 3: Potentiality for queer readings.

Register 4: The available-to-be-looked-at male. One of the key appeals of the post-New Wave costume romp *Tom Jones*, unsubtly replicated in its belated 1977 successor *Joseph Andrews*. Both films' low-born, good-natured, socially mobile heroes appealed to 1960s–1970s egalitarian optimism, but with a further key feature: they are irresistibly attractive, and thereby able to rise above their humble beginnings. Sexual temptation and the lechery of older, more powerful characters, female and male, feature prominently. From a queer perspective, the joyous eroticism of both films offered rare equal-opportunities pleasure, with Finney – and still more markedly *Joseph Andrews*' star Peter Firth – openly constructed as male objects of the polysexual gaze, both textually and promotionally. As the 1963 film poster declared: 'The whole world loves Tom Jones!'

Register 5: Direct representation of queer experience: ideally, narratively centred, complex and realist.

The British New Wave films and their immediate successors were products of a decade when the ‘boundaries of permitted pleasure’ (in the words of Carrie Tarr, 1985: 50) were at stake: explicitly for girls and women, more tacitly for queer men. Despite the dangled promise of the ‘permissive society’, 1960s social/sexual experience was governed by where those boundaries lay: between possible desires and the impermissible, or between fulfilment and denial. Many of the tensions expressed or encoded within the films thus speak, I would argue, from a moment when a rejection of social conformity – heteronormative marriage – for alternative ways of living can be *imagined*, but (within a realist framing) the alternatives are presented as remaining a social *impossibility*. In *A Taste of Honey*, Jo (Rita Tushingham) and Geoff (Murray Melvin) can *imagine* a family of choice, but not form one. In *A Kind of Loving*, heterosexual marriage is nothing but a trap, but not one Vic (Alan Bates) can escape.

I wonder what might be gained by reading Billy Fisher (Tom Courtenay)’s stasis at the end of *Billy Liar* in these terms, too: as metaphor, as more disquieting than comic, and perhaps readable as an instance of queer failure. Billy’s last-minute, self-willed failure to escape his hated provincial life by joining Liz on the train to London has been widely debated, but his self-thwarting is given a distinctively disconcerting quality by the fierce energy he puts into it, in line with the wider sense of repressed excess in Courtenay’s performance. This excess raises the question: why is Billy so afraid of the very thing he craves (escape)? In a commentary on the Swinging London films, Robin Griffiths suggests that ‘the queerness of the 1960s Swinging London cycle [is] associated with the new sexual utopia of a mythically “permissive” London’ which figures as a ‘site of pleasure and autonomy’ (Griffiths 2006: 83). But for Billy, perhaps this very promise is what he fears.

A restless but never-satisfied drive for a different *kind* of life similarly haunts Diana (Christie)’s selfish and ultimately unhappy life choices in *Darling*, even though the film frames these as merely a symptom of hollow ambition. What happens if we revisit Christine Geraghty’s (1997) structural observations on *A Taste of Honey* and *Darling* through a historically situated queer lens?

[In *Darling*, Diana's] proto-family relationship with the gay Malcolm (like that of Jo and Geoff in *A Taste of Honey*) has possibilities of friendship, fun and style, free of heterosexual complications, but the fantasy ... is destroyed by Diana's jealousy. The family she adopts through her marriage to the Italian prince is dominated by patterns and rules to which she cannot conform. *Thus a narrative pattern like that of A Taste of Honey is set up in which a search for a different form of family is an important mainspring of the plot, but one which is doomed to fail.* (Geraghty 1997: 157–158, my italics)

1963 had brought the joyous equal-opportunities eroticism of Richardson's *Tom Jones*. In 1968, the Situationist slogan urged France's insurgent youth, students and workers to '*Prenez vos désirs pour la réalité*' ('Take your desires for reality'). By 1971, in Schlesinger's *Sunday Bloody Sunday*, alternative sexual, family and lifestyle choices had become a possibility – but within limits, and not for everyone. As *Sunday Bloody Sunday*'s Alex (Glenda Jackson) responds when Bob (Murray Head), the carefree bisexual lover she shares with Daniel (Peter Finch), declares: 'We're free to do what we want' – 'Darling, other people often do what they don't want to do at all.'

Queerness in *Mademoiselle* and *The Sailor from Gibraltar*

In a clearly less 'realist' but invigoratingly transgressive reaction to the conditions of the times, between Schlesinger's *Darling* in 1965 and *Sunday Bloody Sunday* in 1971, Richardson's two European projects with Jeanne Moreau had taken female (or nominally female) desire to queer extremes at a historical juncture which both queer and female liberation were being deferred in the UK. As well as starring Moreau in two overtly libidinous female roles, *Mademoiselle* and *The Sailor from Gibraltar* are of further importance as – intriguing, un-British – queer collaborations within the post-New Wave canon.

Notably, *The Sailor from Gibraltar* was adapted from Marguerite Duras's (non-realist, allusive, erotic) breakthrough novel *Le Marin de Gibraltar* (1952) by a team which included the gay British writer Christopher Isherwood (by the 1960s, settled in California) following Isherwood's work as joint adapting screenwriter with Terry Southern on Richardson's Hollywood-produced (MGM) funeral-business satire *The Loved One*. *The Loved One* is noted in Vito Russo's *The Celluloid Closet* (along with several other

Richardson and Schlesinger films): not for Isherwood's involvement, however, but for the presence of Liberace as 'a flaming homosexual casket salesman' (Russo 1981: 253). Belying Wollen's generalised claims, all three films are cinematically precise, and demonstrate a modernist sensibility in their stylistic choices, though with some caveats. Both *Mademoiselle* and *The Sailor from Gibraltar* owe much more to earlier-1960s European art cinema (and, in *Mademoiselle*, Clouzot) than to the emerging countercinema style of Godard's contemporaneous films. And while *The Sailor from Gibraltar* fails to translate Duras's non-realist writing to cinema, it is of interest for different reasons.

During an Italian holiday with his endlessly solicitous fiancée Sheila (Redgrave), Alan (Bannen), a figure defined by chronic existential discontent, becomes instantly obsessed with a wealthy widow, Anna (Moreau) – anachronistically known as 'The American' – and dumps Sheila to sail the Mediterranean with Anna for the rest of the film, a voyage without direction in which Alan (and Bannen) are frankly no match for Moreau. Bannen, ostensibly the male romantic lead, was widely regarded as miscast, including by Richardson himself. Despite an unconvincing tacked-on heterosexual happy ending, the film's power, fascination and – queer – erotic energies lie entirely elsewhere, namely with Anna/Moreau, her all-male crew, and a quest which is readily open to queer readings.

As Pauly (1999) and wider sources have documented, Richardson's motive for making *The Sailor from Gibraltar* was more personal than artistic. Duras's *Le Marin de Gibraltar* was a favourite novel of Moreau's and, following their previous collaboration on *Mademoiselle*, Richardson wanted a project which would enable them to work, and be, together: a practical goal which drove many of the film's decisions, including location choices and related adaptational changes. In Richardson's version (not Duras's) the story shifts first from Florence to Bocca di Magra on the Ligurian coast, then – once we and Alan join Anna on board her yacht – around the Mediterranean to Greece, Ethiopia and ultimately Alexandria. As personified by Moreau, Anna exudes assured modernity combined with a powerful and ambiguous erotic charge, holding court over her complicit and knowing all-male crew as she permanently cruises (in both senses) in search of her perhaps-mythic lost lover, or perhaps merely on a free-spirited quest for erotic adventure. After all, as Anna's queer-coded young male friend and enabler Noori (Zia Mohyeddin) jokes, there are so many sailors and so many ports.

Set in a small, remote French village, the fetishistic, cracklingly sound-designed *Mademoiselle* tells an allegorical cautionary tale which today stands comparison with Michael Haneke's *The White Ribbon* (2009). Alongside its transgressive queer story source, it is significant as the first of Richardson's six collaborations with David Watkin, a great cinematographic innovator. The project was Watkin's first experience of working in an anamorphic widescreen aspect ratio (Watkin n.d.), and *Mademoiselle*'s black and white composition makes unusual use of it: Watkin often confines the detailed mise-en-scene to only a small area of the frame, surrounded by dark negative space; and Moreau is often placed at the margin of the frame, or shot using devices such as mirrors to express the *Mademoiselle*'s duplicitous, fractured psyche.

Despite their efforts to contribute to the community, a group of attractive, virile Italian migrant woodcutters face constant prejudice, ultimately culminating in a mob lynching, while Moreau's sadistic, sexually repressed schoolmistress, a supposed pillar of the community, is given a free pass to commit acts of terrible destruction and cruelty. As Pauly elaborates: 'the script's surface thematic of destructiveness, sexual awakening, isolation, humiliation, and sexual frustration was the transposition of Genet's erotic ambivalence rooted into his own childhood into the characters of *Mademoiselle*' (1999: 142). Both *Mademoiselle* herself, and the motherless pupil Bruno (Keith Skinner) – who is attracted to *Mademoiselle* and who she constantly humiliates, while lusting after Bruno's Italian woodcutter father Manon (Ettore Manni) – channel elements of Genet's sexuality and psyche. As a not-insignificant transtextual sidenote, Genet had at one time worked as a transvestite prostitute in Gibraltar, servicing its sailors.

Queer milestone: *Sunday Bloody Sunday*

Returning to the UK, and from European modernism to realist framings of representational extension, I fast-forward to the post-1967 period to argue that both the fifth register of queer representation (direct representation of complex queer experience, narratively centred) and post-New Wave cinematic realism in their most evolved forms are exemplified in Schlesinger's pre-eminent contribution to a post-1967 openly queer cinema, *Sunday Bloody Sunday* (Schlesinger's *Midnight Cowboy* achieves complex realist representation but remains ambivalent around the queerness of its core relationship). *Sunday Bloody Sunday* stands as an exemplar of the evolution and achievement of both complex, *social* realism and queer representational extension in the post-New Wave British cinema.

Criterion's trailer for *Sunday Bloody Sunday*'s 2012 Blu-ray release suggests 'three reasons' to discover or revisit Schlesinger's film: 'London 1970', 'Liberated Lifestyles' and 'Complicated Relationships': all three, I would argue, are pertinent to the film's distinctive achievement as realist, queer cinema. Schlesinger's treatment of the film's 'complicated' – three-way, gay/bisexual/straight – relationship is warm and entirely unsensationalised, presenting a nuanced, balanced, empathetic exploration of 'modern' life choices and their realist(ic) tensions without either smugness or tragedy. In a marked contrast with Joe and Ratso's marginal lives in *Midnight Cowboy*, *Sunday Bloody Sunday*'s queer (and straight) protagonists are integrated into society, and into the full life of contemporary 1970 London – but, more distinctively, into a *range* of fully realised, complex, credible social spaces. This approach does not merely achieve a direct, realist, complex, centred treatment of queer male experience; we meet a spectrum of nuanced *queer and straight* characters with intersectional identities, and the web of social connections (lovers and friendships, work and religion) is naturalistically situated in the spaces of 1970s London.

Central to this representational richness and extension is the performance of Peter Finch as the handsome, successful, middle-aged, gay Jewish physician Daniel Hirsch – but the social and cinematic spaces through which Daniel moves, and the breadth of his human encounters in these, are also key. In the course of the film, we observe Daniel in at least five such spaces. Firstly, his professional setting, a characteristic North London Georgian townhouse where he both works and lives. An early scene establishes that many of his patients are unhappy straight married women, contrasted with the arrival of Daniel's younger, bisexual, lover Bob (Murray Head) who is also in a relationship with Alex (Glenda Jackson), a divorced office worker in her 30s. Secondly, the spaces of Bob's home – a more bohemian townhouse – introduce Bob's wider queer social circle, of a younger generation than Daniel, who appears by comparison staid in their company. Thirdly, we meet the trio's socially progressive straight mutual friends: the (absolutely authentic) middle-class Hodsons (Vivian Pickles and Frank Windsor), their many precocious kids, and a wider social circle which includes the black Professor Johns (Thomas Baptiste). Fourthly, we see Daniel in the North London Orthodox Jewish community, at synagogue and at family events, where he stands out as an unmarried man and is subjected to heteronormative pressure. Lastly, we see Daniel driving around the spaces of gay male London at night where, in an ambiguous encounter, he

gives a lift to (or possibly picks up) a Scotsman with bad teeth (Jon Finch) with whom he evidently has a past history.

All of these spaces are captured with an exceptional realism of place and social milieu. In a departure from the British New Wave canon, *Sunday Bloody Sunday*'s social realism resides not in Northern England but in London, and in a precise observation of plural, highly specific, London milieux which Schlesinger (Jewish, gay and born in Hampstead) must have known intimately.

Conclusion

In this essay I have explored the insights to be gained from an approach which re/frames the post-New Wave films of the British New Wave directors in terms of a Long New Wave, considering their post-New Wave projects collectively rather than individually. In particular, my intervention has refocused attention on two significant, sometimes intersecting, emergent areas across the films of Richardson and Schlesinger (and, in Reisz's smaller filmography, *Isadora*) between 1963 and the early 1970s, which dislodges the persistent critical framing of all three as pre-eminently directors of *Northern, British, social, realism*: their significant interventions and innovations in the 'pre-heritage' historical/costume film and multifarious contributions, both direct and oblique, to the advancement of queer representation and queer audience pleasures. Giving attention to a *Long New Wave*, in these terms, has revealed much that merely revisiting the 'short' New Wave would not. Lowe's (2020) work has generated new understanding of the importance of experimental theatre practices, new performance styles and complex creative collaborations forged at the 1950s Royal Court in shaping the 1959–1963 New Wave films, alongside other calls for a more positive reappraisal of the New Wave's place in British cinema's frequently denigrated tradition of adaptation (Geraghty 2019). However, it is only with the post-New Wave films that the full centrality of adaptation - its highly diverse styles and forms, the complex role of collaborations as a shaping force, and the formal-aesthetic and performative influences of Royal Court experimental practices - are fully felt and can be fully witnessed, along with newly emerging dimensions, or registers, of queerness.

More specifically – and of key significance – the post-New Wave films of the Long New Wave are where Brechtian strategies and wider modernist influences become fully (and *widely*) apparent, fused with the contemporary performance styles (sometimes 'realist', sometimes heightened) and star personae of the new stars forged by the British New Wave –

and these distinguishing elements come together *not* in social realism but in the experimental period cinema of the 1960s–1970s Long New Wave, beginning but not ending with *Tom Jones*. A further shared feature of the Long New Wave cinema is that Brechtian and modernist principles and styles pollinate a wide range of cinematic modes and genres. I have foregrounded Richardson's near-forgotten European art cinema projects with Jean Moreau, films which were modernist on multiple levels in their intent, sources, collaborators and (with fuller success in *Mademoiselle* than in *The Sailor from Gibraltar*) actualisation, as well as complexly queer. But an entirely different legacy, rooted in *Tom Jones*, can be seen, I would argue, in a further – and mostly critically excoriated – vein in both Richardson's and Schlesinger's later transatlantic projects, namely a taste for over-the-top/ excessive modes of satire and gross or dark comedy. Richardson's Hollywood funeral-business satire *The Loved One* was critically panned on its release but is today appreciated as a cult film. Even Schlesinger's notorious big-budget US box-office failure *Honky Tonk Freeway* (1981) – a raucous scattergun comedy-satire of 1980s America organised around car culture, desperate small-town corruption and endemic dysfunction – offers fertile ground for reconsideration from this angle. Julia Prewitt Brown (2016) explains the film's disproportionately outraged reception (from its studio executives as well as US critics) as a symptom of Reaganite America: 'It's true that the United States of *Honky Tonk Freeway* is, among other things, crass, foolish, and disagreeable, but no more so than the United States featured in other comedies of the period like *Animal House* (1978), *Airplane!* (1980), *Caddyshack* (1980) [...] none of which offer *Honky Tonk Freeway's* arch critique of the United States' (Brown 2016). Both *The Loved One* and *Honky Tonk Freeway* include gross-out scenes involving food (in both films, lobster as a stereotypically American excess), continuing the lineage of *Tom Jones's* famous 'erotic eating' scene in contemporary American form. While Richardson's *The Loved One* blends American satire with cinematic modernist style, Schlesinger's multi-strand narrative belongs to the picaresque post-New Wave lineage established two decades earlier in *Tom Jones*. *Honky Tonk Freeway* also notably makes a car-load of gay men its least dysfunctional characters. My point here is that genres and modes of excess – satire, comedy – have as firm a place in the Long New Wave and its legacies as any form of social realism, while still dealing with realist subjects. Indeed, it might be argued that queer textual presence in the films of the Long New Wave journeys from the key-but-marginalised figures to the equal-opportunities costume-film pleasures of the available-to-be-looked at male, queerness via and in satirical/comedic 'excess', the transgressive queer layerings of the Moreau projects,

and ultimately to a highly evolved, new, decisively non-Northern, social realism in *Sunday Bloody Sunday* and to exemplary gains in queer representational extension.

To return, in closing, to the question of 'realism' in British cinema and its critical reception, Richardson's, Schlesinger's and Reisz's filmographies over the longer term thoroughly disprove Wollen's (1993) claim that that these directors gave primacy to or overvalued 'realism' (or a cinematically cramped notion of it) in their framing (or execution) or their own work. Where Wollen was correct is that critical reception has continued to fetishise and elevate all three directors' 'realist' projects – both of and beyond the 1959–1963 New Wave – while variously forgetting, excoriating or ignoring their remarkably varied body of work across a range of non-realist or less-realist modes. The positive contemporary reception of the trio's 1960s period films (and, later, Reisz's 1981 *The French Lieutenant's Woman*) was an exception – but subsequent critical framings of the New Wave legacy, fixated on social realism, have all but discounted this later body of work, and certainly shelved the possibility of relating it back to the films of the 1959–1963 New Wave period. In short, the overvaluing of 'realism' which Wollen complained of emerges as a continuing limitation of, and in, British film criticism. But it was demonstrably not shared by the directors themselves in their Long New Wave work.

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