An Overview of the Working Classes in British Feature Film from the 1960s to the 1980s: From Class Consciousness to Marginalization

Stephen C. Shafer
University of Illinois

Abstract

The portrayal of the working classes has always been an element of British popular film from the comic music hall stereotypes in the era of Gracie Fields and George Formby in the 1930s to the more gritty realism of the "Angry Young Man" films that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s. Curiously, in the last thirty years, the portrayal of the working classes in popular film has become somewhat less sharply drawn and more indistinct. In an odd way, these changes may parallel criticisms directed toward politicians about a declining sense of working-class unity and purpose in the wake of the Margaret Thatcher and post-Thatcher eras.

When noted English film director and commentator Lindsay Anderson was asked to contribute an overview article on the British cinema for the 1984 edition of the *International Film Guide*, he ruefully observed that from the perspective of 1983 and, indeed, for most of its history, "British Cinema [has been] . . . a defeated rather than a triumphant cause."[1] Referring to the perennial financial crises and the smothering effect of Hollywood's competition and influence, Anderson lamented the inability of British films to find a consistent national film tradition, adding that "the British Cinema has reflected only too clearly a nation lacking in energy and the valuable kind of pride . . . which cherishes its own traditions."[2] In particular, Anderson observed that when, on occasion, the British film industry had attempted to address the interests and needs of its working classes, the "aims" of the film-makers "were not supported . . . partly because amongst the British themselves resistance to change [and the] acceptance of the strait-jacket of middle class social-artistic conformism was too strong."[3] Elsewhere Anderson's criticism of the absence of a consistent commitment to working-class subject matter had been even more direct; at one point he observed that the "number of British films . . . with [genuine] working class characters all through, can be counted on the fingers of one hand . . . [which amounts to a] virtual rejection of three quarters of the population of this country," a fact which Anderson condemned not only as "a ridiculous impoverishment of the cinema" but also as "a flight from contemporary reality."[4]

Whether or not Anderson's critique about working-class films was overstated, the fact is that this objection has been a remarkably consistent criticism about the depiction of the working classes in British film over the decades. For

International Labor and Working-Class History
No. 59, Spring 2001, pp. 3–14
© 2001 International Labor and Working-Class History, Inc.

instance, in the 1930s, when British films often were criticized for having little to do with real life, most depictions of the working classes were limited to the comic images of music hall performers like George Formby, Gracie Fields, and Arthur Lucan's "Old Mother Riley." More recently, the thoughtful, critically well received films of talented directors like Mike Leigh, Stephen Frears, and Ken Loach are productions that the film-makers, despite critics' praise, have often had to struggle to finance. In general, then, the effort to make realistic or even meaningful portrayals of the working classes in British films has met with inconsistent success over the years; even on those occasions when a small trend favoring such films has arisen, it seldom has been sustained.

This inconsistency in portraying the British working classes is particularly striking when the output of the film industry from the early 1960s to the early 1990s is considered. In reviewing annual production summaries like those in the *International Film Guides*, it is depressingly apparent that at times during these decades, film production in the United Kingdom virtually dried up; on other occasions, the films emerging from British studios were either limited to horror/fantasy genre films and low-budget comedies or to American-financed productions intended for an international market. On occasion, however, British features were centered on domestic subjects, and in those periods when such productions flourished, the characterizations and the concerns addressed in the films might have a working-class perspective.

The most celebrated expression of this approach occurred with the emergence of a remarkable cycle of films in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Referred to alternatively as "Angry Young Man" films, "kitchen sink" realistic films, or the "British New Wave," these gritty, realistic dramas took a refreshingly honest look at the people who lived in the grimy industrial communities in the Midlands and in the North of England. With their drab "kitchen sink" settings, their realistic dialogue, and the almost documentary-like cinematography with which they were filmed, these productions had a different look, sound, and texture from other more familiar, more traditional British releases. Directed by young talents like Tony Richardson, Lindsay Anderson, and Jack Clayton, and starring new faces like Tom Courtenay, Albert Finney, Rita Tushingham, and Richard Harris, the films examined the desperate lives of characters generally trapped in an existence they despised.

Several factors contributed to the emergence of this trend toward realistic British films. Clearly the boldness of theatrical presentations a few years earlier, most notably John Osborne's ground-breaking stage play, *Look Back in Anger*, with its uncompromising depiction of working-class frustrations, was an obvious influence. Osborne's drama and other literary works were adapted to screenplays for most of these films. Likewise, some have suggested that the emergence of the French New Wave also served as an inspiration by demonstrating that low-budget productions, prepared by young, previously untested and inexperienced film-makers, could nonetheless tell timely and honest stories about real life on film in a commercially viable manner.[5]

Another obvious source of these features came from some of the products

of the celebrated Documentary Movement from the 1930s; for instance, film historian Andrew Higson has identified the visual style and cinematography of these “kitchen sink” movies as being heavily indebted to the works of the Documentary Movement.[6] In particular, historian Terry Lovell has traced the urban imagery in these films especially to Humphrey Jennings’s 1939 film *Spare Time*, which she calls “a powerful influence on film-makers of the New Wave, [with] . . . imagery from high-angle long shots of the industrial landscape, [and] with massive, ugly, smoke-belching plants, down into closer focus on the streets and houses huddled in their shadow.”[7]

The connection of these productions in the “British New Wave” to the “Free Cinema” documentary movement from the acclaimed film showings at London’s National Film Theatre from 1956 to 1959 constitute another important source; according to film scholar Adam Lowenstein, the “gritty, spare aesthetic of kitchen sink realism is heavily indebted to the documentary style of Free Cinema, which focussed on depictions of the English working class.”[8] Among those participating in the Free Cinema Movement were individuals like Karel Reisz, Tony Richardson, and Lindsay Anderson, all of whom were to become involved in the British New Wave.

Lowenstein cites at least one other source, in this case a literary influence, for these realistic film releases; he observes that the “somewhat complex prehistory of the New Wave [also] . . . grew out of ‘The Movement,’ a literary circle of the early and mid 1950s that included Philip Larkin and Kingsley Amis.”[9] Lowenstein adds that this Movement “gained a mythical dimension with the addition of the Angry Young Man” in the works of John Osborne and of novelist John Braine.[10] Historian Peter Stead also notes the effect of the continuing editorial push from critics like Penelope Houston and others writing in publications like *Sight and Sound*, which were always calling for a “new political and cultural sophistication” as part of the notion that “British films would only get better by becoming more realistic.”[11]

All of these influences, then, converged to produce an extraordinary, though brief, cycle of films flourishing from 1958 to 1963. Among the first of these productions was Jack Clayton’s 1958 *Room at the Top*, based on Braine’s novel. Released shortly before Tony Richardson’s memorable 1959 adaptation of Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger*, these two films seemed to signal critically a new direction in British cinema. As one author put it, they “burst like a lightning bolt on the English-speaking film world”; the “naturalistic, often vulgar, dialogue and realistic characterization,” along with the “language and sexual attitude” that made *Room at the Top*, in particular, at that time “the most adult movie ever to come from a British studio,” paved the way for other “frank and realistic pictures.”[12] Joe Lampton (played by Laurence Harvey) in Clayton’s film and Jimmy Porter (portrayed by Richard Burton) in Richardson’s production are in many ways unlikeable figures who are trapped by their circumstances and who are willing to take advantage of women in part to compensate for their frustrations in society. Both characters are intelligent and eager to get ahead in the world; but they find themselves stifled by socioeconomic and class restric-

tions. Lampton is only able to emerge from his circumstances by pursuing an unloving marriage to the boss's daughter, after his rejection of the one woman for whom he apparently cared results in her death; spiritually dead, he is able to make "room at the top" of society at the cost of his own values and independence.

Karel Reisz's 1960 production of Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* is one of the most memorable releases from this cycle, and again the protagonist, Arthur Seaton (depicted brilliantly in a career-making performance by Albert Finney) is a free-spirited but restless North Country lathe operator who is fond of alcohol and brawling on the weekends for which he impatiently waits all week. Irresponsible and self-centered, he also is a nonhero who uses women, impregnating the wife of a fellow worker and ultimately marrying a young woman whose traditional morals he rejects, warning her that he intends to continue his independent lifestyle. With footage shot on location in pubs and factories, the film's black and white photography has a decidedly realistic, documentary-like quality. Again, the image of the working-class lifestyle is unpleasant, grim, and utterly unromantic.

Another one of Sillitoe's fictional works served as the basis for Tony Richardson's 1962 production of *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*. Tom Courtenay's inspired performance as the alienated eighteen-year-old Colin Smith, the oldest son in the unloving family of a Nottingham slum dweller, is a depiction of a cynical, rebellious youth who is arrested after a robbery. Sent to a reformatory, he shows promise as an athlete, and after training extensively for a cross-country race, he shows his contempt for authority by giving up a certain victory in a final race, even though he knows he is passing up opportunities to improve his circumstances.

Lindsay Anderson's 1963 production of David Storey's novel *This Sporting Life* is yet another example of the "Angry Young Man" dissatisfied with the circumstances of his life in the drab world of North country factory towns. A coal miner, Frank Machin, played by Richard Harris, sees the life of professional rugby as a way to improve his circumstances. After renting a room from a widowed landlady played by Rachel Roberts, Machin uses his pent-up aggression as a means of distinguishing himself in a violent sport; he becomes successful as a player, and a relationship with the lonely landlady follows. Spending much of his income to impress others, he tries to flaunt her as his mistress, but she objects, and after an angry confrontation, he leaves. Later, realizing he wants to be with her, he learns that she has had a cerebral hemorrhage, and while trying to show his genuine emotion for her during a hospital visit, she dies. Machin then returns to rugby with even more anger and aggressiveness.

Not all of the films in this cycle had male protagonists, however. For instance, adolescent alienation along with such additional social issues as illegitimacy, alcoholism, race relations, and the mistreatment of young people are themes explored in Tony Richardson's 1962 production of *A Taste of Honey*, which gave Rita Tushingham her introduction to film. Playing the seventeen-year-old Jo, Tushingham is a sad figure in the story set in and around the Salford

docks. Unloved and abandoned by an alcoholic, promiscuous mother who is off on a spree in Blackpool with her boyfriend, Jo has a brief relationship with a black sailor on his last night in port, which results in a pregnancy. When her mother returns married, Jo must move out, and she arranges for an apartment with a kindly homosexual fellow worker named Geoffrey, who takes on the role of a dutiful husband for the depressed young woman. But when her mother's relationship breaks up, the mother moves back in with Jo, and against the girl's wishes, the mother expels Geoffrey. Historian Sarah Street has commented that *A Taste of Honey* is "a film which probes female subjectivity to a further degree than most of the New Wave films."[13]

In all of these films, whether overt or implicit, the class structure in British society is seen as an important factor in the alienation felt by the protagonists. The bleak, drab environment in which they live, the suffocating and tiresome work, and the hopelessness felt, if not articulated, by these individuals influences their behavior and their reactions. This persistence of "class consciousness" was reflected in society as well; as Street has observed, "even the existence of a Labour Government did not mean that class divisions were eroded, and many sections of the working class still experienced profound economic difficulties despite the media's obsession with affluence" during this period.[14] Even when characters like Frank Machin and Joe Lampton achieve a degree of financial success, the money seems comparatively meaningless to them; it is something to be spent or wasted, an attitude also demonstrated by Arthur Seaton. Some parts of the social order are just not accessible to these protagonists, and they in turn are more deeply alienated by that fact; as Joe Lampton is told in *Room at the Top* in reference to Susan Brown, "That's not for you, lad."

These pioneering films explored English class consciousness more intently and more realistically than any British motion pictures had done to that time, and they received considerable acclaim and generally positive critical recognition for this honesty. For instance, *A Taste of Honey* earned four British Academy Awards, including Best Picture, and it received recognition at the Cannes Film Festival. *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* took British Academy Awards for Best Picture and Best Actor. Tom Courtenay also won a British Academy Award for his portrayal of Colin Smith. *Room at the Top* earned two American Academy Awards and four other nominations as well as British Academy Awards for Best Picture. The film also earned an award at Cannes. Likewise, *This Sporting Life* earned two American Academy Award nominations. However, some critics found the films depressing and pretentious; film historian Anthony Slide summed up this criticism, observing that to many filmgoers and critics, these movies represented "a protest from film-makers who had labelled themselves working class without having experienced a working class upbringing"; Slide went on to comment:

> They set out to depict a world as far removed as possible from the middle class outlook of British film-makers up to that time [but] in so doing they ignored the fact that . . . the British working class has one overall ambition—to become mid-

> dle class—and that those living in poverty and despair are unenthusiastic about seeing their drab existence exploited by film-makers fresh from British public schools and universities.[15]

Whether one agrees with Slide or not, it is undeniable that these films were not all that successful at the box office, and most of the social problem features made substantially less than escapist comedies, spy films, and horror/adventure movies.[16]

In general, film attendance in Great Britain had declined dramatically from five hundred and fifteen million in 1961 at the height of the British New Wave to only about fifty-four million in 1983, according to a 1987 study, and much of that decline in attendance was noted especially among the skilled and unskilled working classes, which represented only about a third of the audience in 1983.[17] Whatever the case and however influential these films were culturally and cinematically, none of them represented a smashing box office success.

Although film historians and contemporary critics generally have been appreciative of the tendency in these films to show industrial settings and to place an emphasis on working-class characters and their motivation as a central focus in films, the trend launched in the late 1950s was remarkably short-lived. By the mid 1960s, British films had shifted much of their focus to the so-called "Swinging London" features. Additionally, some observers like John Hill and Sarah Street have found that, regardless of the attention given to the working classes, "the New Wave films of 1956–63 by no means reveal a progressive image of society"; they argue that

> Although new themes were introduced to the cinema screens, they were presented in such a way as to reveal an intensely traditional and conservative bias. Many of the films concern the problems of young men who feel trapped by a provincial and class background, in search of an affluent lifestyle which will enable them to forget all about class barriers and mental obligations, move to London, and become successful. But this scenario is shown to be fundamentally flawed.[18]

The characters are depicted at the end of the films as "utterly miserable," morally bankrupt, or left in an unreal "fantasy world."[19] Likewise, the portrayal of women is "dismissive," with female characters "shown as the new consumers of television sets, washing machines, out to trap men into marriage by becoming pregnant and often with little intelligence."[20] Although these films deserve their recognition for the attention they give to working-class settings and for the accuracy with which they attempted to portray the concerns of the working classes, they should not be regarded as unequivocal forces for progressive change in society.

In the years since the British New Wave, the attention of the film industry to the working classes varied. The influx of American investment into English studios in the mid-1960s and its subsequent departure some years later changed the focus of British movies away from national concerns. Only when much of

domestic film-making came to be financed by television with funding from Channel Four and from the Department of Independent Film and Video (which sponsored low-budget, independent movies) did some motion pictures with a domestic perspective find their way into production.[21] By the mid-1980s, additional film preparation under Granada Films, Thames Television's Euston Films, and Central Television meant that television ultimately "became the most significant source of British film finance during the 1980s."[22] As Hill concludes, then, the process of making "social art" cinema, in which social realism and working-class concerns are combined with "art-cinema" narration (as in the British New Wave productions of the early 1960s), finally "gathered momentum in the 1980s" after a period when relatively few such films had been made in the England; this new attention

> was given a particular impetus by [television financing] . . . as a result of its joint commitment to the support of a 'national cinema' (which would win prestige internationally by circulating as 'art') and to the fulfillment of a public service remit (which favored a degree of engagement by cinema with matters of contemporary social concern).[23]

By the 1980s, most observors of British film characterized production in the United Kingdom as being focused either on depictions of the past or on present-day social issues. This latter more socially engaged cinema with contemporary settings and sometimes politically controversial content was regarded as being related to the "New Wave," realistic films of the 1960s. Frequently financed by television money, these productions were "predominantly critical of Thatcherism"; in general, the films reflected an attitude that was "indignant about the social tensions and hardships that resulted from the spread of Thatcherite policies and culture."[24] Leonard Quart summed up this criticism as it appeared in these films, observing that, from this perspective, Thatcherism "turned England into a more morally callous, crude, and desperate society" with a "falling quality of life . . . where the rich got richer and consumed more conspicuously, while the ethic of social responsibility began to unravel"; he concluded:

> Her policies which included cuts in public spending, tax reduction [for] . . . the affluent, and . . . the privatization of social services, have led to the growth of a visible, embittered underclass—twenty percent of the people living under the poverty line, the number of homeless up to one million . . . and the highest per capita prison population within the European community.[25]

Film-makers like Ken Loach, Mike Leigh, Alan Clarke, and Stephen Frears sought to depict in their productions the devastating effect these policies had on people, and in this sense, their productions were much more direct in their sociopolitical criticisms than the New Wave films of the 1960s. As director Ken Loach put it,

> In the sixties we didn't have the mass unemployment we have now. We didn't have such [a degree of] alienation. We didn't insist that the workforce should be ever more flexible, ever more exploited. All that was endorsed by Thatcher. Her politics [insisted that] . . . the working classes must pay; the organized working class must be disorganized. And that's exactly what she did.[26]

This critique of Thatcherism is explicit in some of these films. For instance, in the opening of Stephen Frears's 1987 film *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, the image of a decaying urban landscape is presented with an ironic voiceover of Mrs. Thatcher cheerily pointing out that "we've got a big job to do in some of those inner cities." Likewise, in Mike Leigh's 1989 film *High Hopes*, one of the cacti raised by Cyril and Shirley is known as Thatcher because, as the character comments wryly about the Prime Minister and the cactus, "they're both a pain in the arse."

Of course, apart from overt political references, most of these latter films of social realism are infused with problems that indirectly arose from Thatcherism. As Ken Loach himself noted in reference to his 1991 production *Riff Raff*, about the plight of some poorly paid construction workers, "the defeat of the unions in the eighties had opened the door for the return of the old days . . . where building workers had no protection from danger, exploitation or instant dismissal."[27] As funny as the film is, the irony of the workers—who are essentially homeless—preparing lodgings only the wealthy could afford is a brutally frank condemnation of the policies that make such political and economic anomalies possible.

Likewise, the physical and spiritual effect of unemployment on a father simply trying to be able to afford a new communion dress for his daughter is at the heart of Loach's more recent 1994 film *Raining Stones*. As one reviewer observed at the time of the film's release, Loach's film poignantly examines the preoccupations of "men clinging precariously to their self-respect in a world with no jobs for them."[28] The fact that unemployment drives the father to steal sheep is Loach's eloquent further condemnation of policies that deprive men of a reasonable livelihood.

Certainly, the rather overt attack on government policies is a significant contrast with the nature of the "Angry Young Man" films of the 1960s. But the pointed criticism of Tory social, political, and economic initiatives is not the only substantial difference between the films of social realism made in the early 1960s and those made in the 1980s and 1990s. The British New Wave thirty years earlier examined the lives of the working classes at a time when the country was undergoing considerable social and economic change that was manifesting itself in British culture. As John Hill notes, these films therefore "reveal an anxiety about the demise of the 'traditional' working class, associated with work, community and an attachment to place in the face of consumerism, mass culture, and suburbanisation"; as a result, the emphasis is on the "working class male who seeks to resist the pressures toward embourgeoisement and social conformity (including domesticity)."[29] This process in the films of social realism in the 1980s

and 1990s becomes even more restrictive; as Hill comments, “a further narrowing down of social space” occurs in these films as the working class “is increasingly identified in domestic and familial terms.”[30] Conflicts take place, not only in the pubs or other public places, but they also occur in the homes where tensions arise among individuals from lack of money and problems related to a diminished sense of self-worth. Hill observes that the “decline of the traditional working class” is related in the newer films not to upward mobility, but rather to the “collapse of traditional heavy industries (especially in the North) and the associated experiences of unemployment and poverty.”[31] Thus, the concern in these films is no longer centered on the possible erosion of a strong sense of community identity and culture that come with common employment and place of living; rather, it had to do with the more practical fears of joblessness and making ends meet. A specific illustration of the change in the latter films is demonstrated by Richard Eyre’s 1983 film *The Ploughman’s Lunch*, which has been compared to *Room at the Top*; however, the reworking of the plot has taken the story out of the context of the working-class environment of the first film. Hill concludes that this feature “shares [with many other films of the 1980s] . . . an increasing difficulty in representing the working class in terms other than decline.”[32]

Another consequence of this change is that the working-class characters in the newer social realist films now have somewhat modified gender roles, and they occupy different positions in the communities they inhabit. Where female characters were associated previously with domesticity, in the films of the Thatcher era, they tend to be seen with the same concerns that the “Angry Young Men” had. Typically, they are now shown in public places like the streets or clubs, and they are also more sexually active. In fact, characters like Teresa in Chris Bernard’s 1986 *Letter to Brezhnev* and Rita in Lewis Gilbert’s 1983 *Educating Rita* are seldom seen at home. By contrast, male characters in the films of the Thatcher period, because of their unemployment and lack of money, are more often associated with “domestic space and intra-familial tensions” than were the protagonists in the earlier films of the 1960s.[33] Consequently, few of the working-class films of the 1980s center specifically and exclusively on the male characters.

Some stylistic differences also can be identified. Where the earlier films were tightly scripted, latter day social realist film-makers like Mike Leigh and Ken Loach often use improvisation and weeks of association to be able to work up a scene.[34]

Since the earlier films were highly dependent on scripts, the different methodology of newer directors permits the actors to absorb the characters and enables the more individualistic stylistic techniques of the directors to be expressed. In the case of Leigh, also, the realistic quality of his production is “cued by various aesthetic devices, such as a focus on ‘ordinary’ people, the use of real locations, loosely structured plots, and a visual style characterized by limited camera movement and cutting.”[35]

These techniques also lend a documentary-style realism to the cinematography used for the films.

The imagery in the films from the 1980s provides another difference from the earlier New Wave. As Hill characterizes this visual contrast, "the iconography of rows of small terraced houses and cobbled streets characteristic of 1960s realism [had] given way to run-down housing estates with boarded up windows" and to factories that had become "wastelands"; the "images of work" now were "linked to the service sector . . . rather than manufacturing."[36] This dislocation from the traditional imagery of the working-class environment paralleled the changes in working-class culture that had been present at the time of the earlier English New Wave. Additionally, the presence of women and other members of the working classes who had arrived as immigrants from Asia, Africa, and elsewhere also had a much more prominent position in these later films.

But some consistent themes from the earlier period remained in the productions from the 1980s. Certainly, the theme of "escape" from one's circumstances that existed in some of the earlier films can again be seen in the efforts of characters like Rita in *Educating Rita* and Elaine in *Letter to Brezhnev* to get away. In Mike Leigh's 1993 film *Naked*, the protagonist Johnny pointedly refuses to return "home" at the end of the film, preferring essentially to be homeless rather than to go back to the place where he started, the life in the grim industrial North country. In these latter films, while women are not necessarily simply objects for male conquest, the same degree of frankness and honesty in depicting relations between people is present in these productions. Aggression and violence, either overtly expressed or barely repressed, often are experienced by the characters, and alienation remains a characteristic of many of the personalities in the films.

In general, though, the most significant difference in the two sets of films is that the traditional working classes portrayed in the features made during the Thatcher era have been even further marginalized in their society, both economically and culturally. With the critique of Thatcherism, the films of social realism of the 1980s and early 1990s are concerned primarily with these people essentially as economic refugees of a socioeconomic system that has left them behind. Unlike the characters in the films of the 1960s who at least knew their origins (even if they were alienated from them), in recent films, the working classes are isolated and left outside society. John Hill emphasizes that the losses these films document are not only economic, but social as well:

> It is not only the loss of traditional industries and their consequences for the social and political traditions of the working class that these films map. For the decline in manufacturing and [in the] growth of long-term male employment are also seen as precipitating a weakening of the ideologies of masculinity which have traditionally underpinned both work and trade union action. Thus, in focusing on unemployment and industrial decay in the north of England, the 1980s and 1990s films often suggest the crisis in masculinity associated with the collapse of those social roles as wage earner and head of the family that have traditionally sustained a sense of male identity.[37]

In essence, then, many of the people who inhabit these films are not just out of work; they have lost their status within society and within their own family structure.

Thus, with the decline in that part of the English working class identified as manual workers, the notion of what constitutes the traditional image of the working class has been changing, and this change is observable both in society and in the films that have been attempting to portray the lives of the working classes. Hill concludes that "in seeking to re-instate the importance of class politics . . . or in celebrating a model of community based on the traditional working class, . . . there has been a tendency to marginalise or under-estimate the experience . . . of [some] workers"; these films nonetheless have provided against Tory political resistance "a reminder of the continuing economic divisions within Britain . . . giving voice to the desire for a different kind of society in which community and social achievement are accorded greater importance."[38]

The recent films from this period have recognized and depicted this marginalization, as the notion of an identifiable working class becomes less and less definable. Ironically, then, some members of the film industry over the last two decades have answered Lindsay Anderson's criticism that British films have typically abandoned the working classes by portraying the hopelessness many of them have experienced, and by offering a critique of Tory government policies, at precisely the same time that these policies, in themselves, some would argue, are essentially abandoning the working classes.

NOTES

1. Lindsay Anderson, "British Cinema: The Historical Imperative," in *International Film Guide: 1984* (London, 1984), 15.
2. Ibid., 21.
3. Ibid., 20.
4. Quoted in Adam Lowenstein, "'Under the Skin Horrors': Social Realism and Classlessness in *Peeping Tom* and the British New Wave," in *British Cinema: Past and Present*, ed. Justine Ashby and Andrew Higson (London, 2000), 226.
5. Sarah Street, *British National Cinema* (London, 1997), 82; and Anthony Slide, *Fifty Classic British Films, 1932–1982* (New York, 1985), 109.
6. Andrew Higson, "Space, Place, Spectacle: Landscape and Townscape in the 'Kitchen Sink Film'," in *Dissolving Views: Key Writings on British Cinema*, ed. Andrew Higson (London, 1996), 135–36.
7. Terry Lovell, "Landscapes and Stories in 1960s British Realism," in *Dissolving Views*, 160.
8. Lowenstein, *Dissolving Views*, 227.
9. Ibid., 225.
10. Ibid., 225.
11. Peter Stead, *Film and the Working Classes* (London, 1991), 179.
12. Jerry Vermilye, *The Great British Films* (Secaucus, 1978), 178.
13. Street, *British National Cinema*, 83.
14. Ibid., 80.
15. Slide, *Fifty Classic British Films*, 100.
16. Street, *British National Cinema*, 83.
17. David Docherty, David Morrison, and Michael Tracey, *The Last Picture Show? Britain's Changing Film Audience* (London, 1987), 29, 31.

18. Street, op.cit., 82.
19. Ibid., 82.
20. Ibid., 82.
21. John Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s* (Oxford, 1999), 54–7.
22. Ibid., 60.
23. Ibid., 66–7.
24. Ibid., 66–7.
25. Leonard Quart, “The Politics of Irony: The Frears-Kureishi Films,” in *Re-Viewing British Cinema, 1900–1992: Essays and Interviews*, ed. Wheeler Winston Dixon (Albany, 1994), 241.
26. Graham Fuller, ed., *Loach on Loach* (London, 1998), 113.
27. Ibid., 86.
28. Roger Ebert, “*Raining Stones*,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, April 29, 1994.
29. John Hill, “From the New Wave to ‘Brit Grit’: Continuity and Difference in Working Class Realism,” in *British Cinema: Past and Present*, ed. Ashby and Higson, 250–51.
30. Ibid., 251.
31. Ibid., 252.
32. Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s*, 166.
33. Hill, “From the New Wave,” 252.
34. Michael Coveney, *The World According to Mike Leigh* (London, 1997), 9.
35. Hill, “From the New Wave,” 258.
36. Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s*, 167.
37. John Hill, “Failure and Utopianism: Representations of the Working Class in British Cinema of the 1990s,” in *British Cinema of the ‘90s*, ed. Robert Murphy (London, 2000), 178.
38. Ibid., 186.