



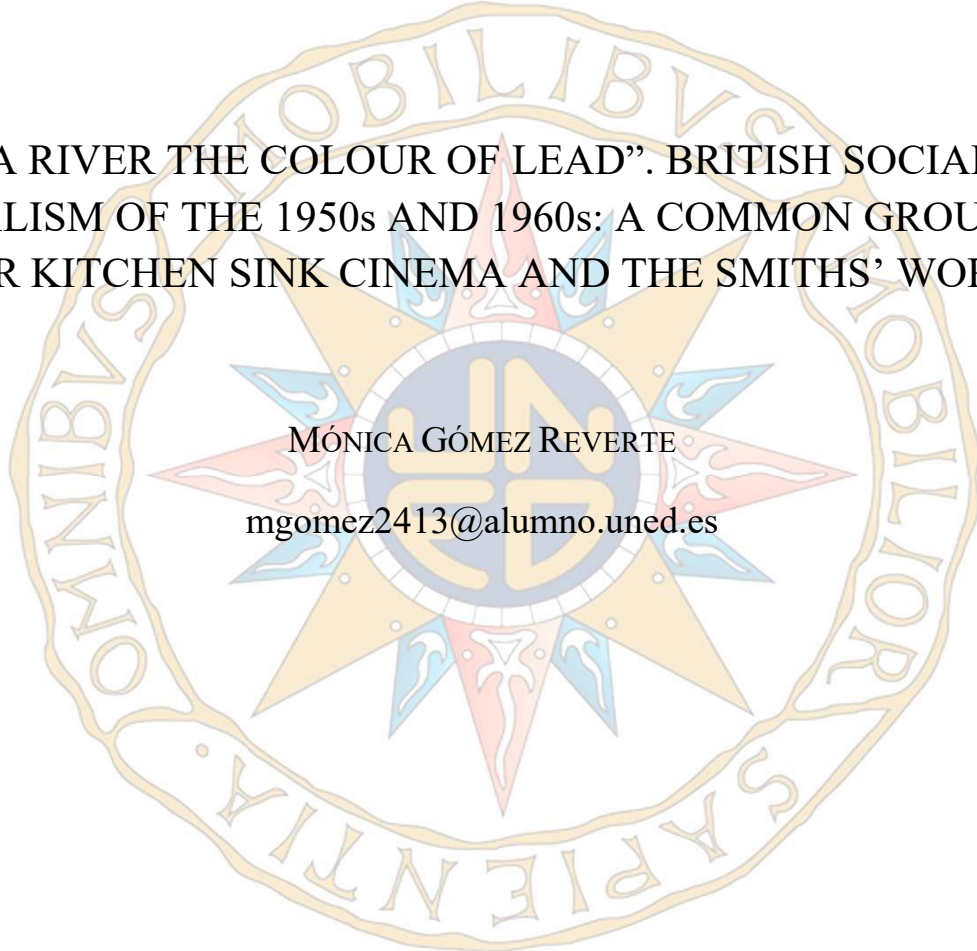
TRABAJO FIN DE GRADO

GRADO EN ESTUDIOS INGLESES: LENGUA, LITERATURA Y CULTURA

**“A RIVER THE COLOUR OF LEAD”. BRITISH SOCIAL
REALISM OF THE 1950s AND 1960s: A COMMON GROUND
FOR KITCHEN SINK CINEMA AND THE SMITHS’ WORK**

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But you know where you came from, you know where
you're going and you know where you belong.

—The Smiths, “These Things Take Time”

ABSTRACT

This final project aims to follow the thread of Social Realism in British cinema from the Documentary Movement of the 1930s, through the Social Problem film and the Free Cinema movement of the 1950s, to the British New Wave. Henceforth, we will analyse the Kitchen Sink film cycle and specifically consider Shelagh Delaney’s debut drama, *A Taste of Honey*. Hereinafter, through textual comparison, we will show how her work immensely influenced that of The Smiths, arguably the most influential British band since The Beatles.

By the end of the paper, we will be aware of the extent to which the lyrics of the Mancunian band are pervaded with traits of Social Realism and replete with direct references and quotations from Kitchen Sink films, notably from Shelagh Delaney’s work.

KEYWORDS: *A Taste of Honey*, British Social Realism, Kitchen Sink, Shelagh Delaney, The Smiths

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1. General Introduction

This paper aims to demonstrate that The Smiths' songs produced in the Manchester of the 1980s share common ground with the northern Kitchen Sink films of the 1950s and 1960s. Through comparative analysis, we will illustrate how both artistic manifestations are grounded in the enduring British tradition of Social Realism.

Following the lead of Social Realism through different periods in British film history, we will describe how Kitchen Sink cinema greatly influenced the lyricist and frontman of The Smiths. In order to achieve our goal, we will carry on a detailed analysis of *A Taste of Honey* —Shelagh Delaney's debut play— as she is Morrissey's most noticeable influence after Oscar Wilde. This comparison will allow us to recognise and point out some of the allusions, references, and direct quotations related to Kitchen Sink films in The Smiths' work.

Chapter two will explore the different manifestations of Social Realism in British cinema from the Documentary Movement of the 1930s to the Poetic Realism of the New Wave and the Kitchen Sink Cycle, through the Social Problem film and the Free Cinema movement of the 1950s.

As a sample of Kitchen Sink film, we will analyse Shelagh Delaney's play, *A Taste of Honey*. Although this is one of the canonical films within the Kitchen Sink cycle, this work was selected because it is an unconventional one. We will show the reasons why in chapter three, which we envisaged as a liaison between the Kitchen Sink films and The Smiths' songs, as both share *A Taste of Honey* as an indispensable element in their own realm.

The last chapter of this paper will demonstrate the influx that the texts and films belonging in the British social realist tradition had over the artistic production of The Smiths, one of Britain's most influential bands of the eighties and celebrated all around the world for almost four decades. Chapter four has been structured into three sections. Firstly, we will set the band in its specific time and place, moving on then to analyse some samples of the influence of Kitchen Sink films over The Smiths' songs, and finishing with the determinant influx of Shelagh Delaney in the third section, "Under the influence".

Finally, we will exhibit some of the conclusions that we have drawn from this research paper, and we will outline some exciting possible subject matters for further research.

The research method employed to elaborate this paper has been based on qualitative research. We aimed to describe the characteristics of Social Realism within the British cinema, specifically in Kitchen Sink films and Shelagh Delaney's play *A Taste of Honey*. In order to do so, we conducted an extensive search of information, collecting a large amount of qualitative data from books, films, theses, interviews, websites and radio programmes. In order to clarify concepts, we examined data from various sources to find similarities that would lead us to find common ground for them all. Comparative textual analyses have been carried on to isolate defining features of Social Realism in Kitchen Sink films, specifically in *A Taste of Honey*.

2. British Social Realism

2.1. Introduction

Realism, as an artistic movement, emerged in Europe around the French Revolution of 1848. In art and literature, realist works seek to depict ordinary moments, activities, and characters of everyday life "as they are", departing from the preceding Romanticism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and moving towards Naturalism.

In his article "A Lecture on Realism", Raymond Williams analyses Ken Loach's play *The Big Flame* from the perspective of his conception of realism and provides us with three defining characteristics for identifying a realist text. The first one declares that there must be a conscious movement towards social extension in the sense that realist texts should tend to broaden the range of representation of different social strata. This purpose could be fulfilled by foregrounding characters from certain social classes that, up to that point, had been underrepresented, had played a marginal role, or had merely been used as a comic element, perpetuating old class clichés. The second feature refers to the tendency to situate the action plot in the present time, contemporaneously to the artistic creation. In the third place, and

most important of all, Williams proclaims that there has to be a manifest emphasis on the secular nature of the action in the spirit of the development of rationalism and the scientific attitude of the period: no metaphysical, supernatural, or religious elements shall guide human actions at any time (R. Williams 107).

The very definition of the term *reality* is challenging, provided that what is commonly accepted as real at a particular time and place in human history may not be considered so in another time and space. As reality changes over time, so does the subject of realism. Reality is a constantly changing concept, impossible to grasp beyond the moment in which it is contemplated.

Within British cinema, Social Realism is a sub-genre focused on portraying working-class characters' lives, usually shot in black and white film stock, while developing plots imbued with working-class issues. Social Realism reached its zenith during the 1960s with the emergence of the British New Wave (preceded by the brief Free Cinema movement) and the Kitchen Sink Drama cycle.

Hallam and Marshment associate the term "Social Realism" to films that focus on portraying the relationship between "location and identity", the environment and the characters, and how this interaction moulds the latter (Hallam and Marshment 184).

From the early documentaries of the 1930s, through the British New Wave, British social realist texts have focused their output predominantly on northern working-class Britons, giving them a leading role that they never had before. Moreover, these new central characters and their lives are observed within their natural environment in industrial towns and impoverished communities.

2.2. British Social Realist Cinema

Social Realism is a long-time tradition in British cinema that can be traced back to the Documentary Movement that flourished in the United Kingdom in the 1930s. Some critics consider that Social Realism has always been present as a "hard-bitten tradition" in British cinema (Thorpe). On the other hand, John Hill argues against this particular view:

While Thorpe is clearly right to suggest lines of continuity between the realism of the 1960s and subsequent British film-making, she is also too eager to identify this as a relatively unbroken tradition and to run together differing forms of film-making practice. ("From the New Wave" 249)

Hills advocates for a more marked differentiation between the different periods, rather than encompassing them all under the same term, while recognising the continuity of the genre throughout history.

There is not an unequivocal definition of Social Realism. On the contrary, it seems to be an overused term that has been applied to different artistic manifestations through different times in British history. As Hill states, "There is probably no critical term with a more unruly and confusing lineage than that of realism" (*Sex, Class and Realism* 57).

Social Realism —also known as documentary realism— is chiefly concerned with the representation of the working class. For Kellett, this might be a standard feature shared by different forms of Social Realism: "British social realism is concerned with themes such as drugs, sex, religion, politics and class. The latter theme dominates not only the British variant, but that of other forms of social realism" (Kellett 7). Hence, we can distil that British Social Realism would address a broader range of social issues apart from the class theme, familiar to every other stance of Social Realism around the world.

In social realist films, working-class protagonists are not only shown in the places that define them as members of a specific social class —e.g. the production line— but alternatively in other environments and situations that arise during leisure time, such as in pubs, dance halls, jazz clubs, cinemas, at home, or simply living their ordinary lives on the streets.

As we have pointed out, Social Realism in British cinema is a well-established tradition that extends its roots from the Documentary Movement of the 1930s to the present day. This traditional genre includes titles¹ belonging in the British New Wave and the Kitchen Sink cycle of the 1950s and 1960s, such as Tony Richardson's *Look Back in Anger* (1959), Karel Reisz's *Saturday and Sunday Morning* (1960), Lindsay Anderson's *This Sporting Life* (1963), or John Schlesinger's *A Kind of Loving* (1962).

¹ For a list of representative films, see the database created at m.imdb.com/list/ls500552508

In terms of contemporary British Social Realism, the defining common characteristic themes revolve around a disenchanting youth searching for a common identity and a sense of belonging. In Shane Meadows' words, there is "[a] focus on marginalised young protagonists, disconnected from their environments and searching haplessly for meaning and structure in their lives" (Shane Meadows: *Critical Essays* ch. 3). New filmmakers have traversed this path, leaving behind titles such as Ken Loach's *Kes* (1969), Mike Leigh's *Secrets and Lies* (1996), Danny Boyle's *Trainspotting* (1996), Gary Oldman's *Nil by Mouth* (1997), or Shane Meadows' *This is England* (2006), set in the early 1980s.

2.2.1. Documentary Movement

Documentary is said to be the most accurate form of reality representation. Scottish producer John Grierson was the first to apply this term—a straight translation from the French *documentaire*—to cinema in a 1926 review of Flaherty's film *Moana*. However, Grierson's definition of the term as "the creative treatment of actuality" (Balcon and Grierson 8) has been much commented upon over the years, calling into question the veracity of documented reality.

In the 1930s, Britain was immersed in what is commonly known as the Great Depression due to the Wall Street Crash of 1929 in the United States of America. The impact on the United Kingdom was devastating, as it had not yet recovered from the social and economic consequences of the First World War. American export demand for European goods fell sharply, resulting in high unemployment levels; subsequent poverty brought famine and disease to British homes, as the economic crisis became a social one.

John Grierson, who is now regarded as the founder of the British Documentary Movement, was commissioned to "bring the Empire alive" by the Empire Marketing Board (hereinafter "EMB"), a small governmental organism established in 1926 to promote the distribution of British and colonial goods through pamphlets, newspapers, films, and its very distinctive modernist posters. The EMB provided financial support for the works of the Documentary Movement. The great success of *Drifters* (1929), a silent documentary film about North Sea herring

fishermen, allowed Grierson to found the EMB Film Unit and to recruit young filmmakers to collaborate with, such as Basil Wright, Paul Rotha, Robert Flaherty, Stuart Legg, Arthur Elton, Donald Taylor, Edgar Anstey, and others (Aitken 311).

Grierson genuinely believed in the educational purpose of films. In his opinion, the most rewarding aspect of the Documentary Movement was "the use of film for simple purposes", such as teaching basic medical knowledge or educating the population on fundamental issues of health and hygiene. (Sussex and Grierson 24-25).

Although most EMB films did not go down in history, the Film Unit is nowadays considered to have been a successful experimental school. In 1933, the EMB Film Unit was transferred to the General Post Office, responsible for the creation of documentary films until 1940. When it became part of the Ministry of Information, its name was changed to "the Crown Film Unit". During this time, Humphrey Jennings grew to become the poet of the Documentary Movement. This was especially true for Lindsay Anderson who, in a burst of admiration, praised him with this bold statement: ". . . it might reasonably be contended that Humphrey Jennings is the only real poet the British cinema has yet produced" (Anderson and Jennings 5). Jennings' documentary films transcended the mere function of propagandistic works to convey a wide range of feelings associated to his poetic vision of reality in films such as *London Can Take It!* (1940), *Listen to Britain* (1942), *Fires Were Started* (1943) and *A Diary for Timothy* (1945) (D. Williams 173).

John Grierson opened his essay "First Principles of Documentary (1932-1934)" with a concise observation: "Documentary is a clumsy description". He continued then by declaring that the main criterion to consider a film within the documentary category was the use of *natural material*. This raw material would be obtained by shooting on location: "Where the camera shot on the spot (whether it shot newsreel items or magazine items or discursive 'interests' or dramatised 'interests' or educational films or scientific films proper or *Changs* or *Rangos*) in that fact was documentary" (Grierson 19).

In "First Principles", John Grierson laid out the foundations of the British Documentary Movement, the first principle being a belief in the possibilities of the real world as opposed to the artificial films being produced at the time. In the second

principle, Grierson championed the "original (or native) actor and the original (or native) scene" over professional actors and locations. Grierson's third principle emphasised the spontaneity of gestures directly captured from raw reality over the scripted and acted. To conclude this brief manifesto, Grierson summarises, "Add to this that documentary can achieve an intimacy of knowledge and effect impossible for the shim-sham mechanics of the studio, and the lily-fingered performances of the metropolitan actor" (Grierson 21).

The Documentary Movement paved the way for future movements in British cinema. As we will show later in this paper, Humphrey Jennings was meant to be the inspiration to a new group of filmmakers thirty years into the future, the Free Cinema Movement.

2.2.2. The Social Problem Film

In the aftermath of World War II, Britain faced a desperate economic and social situation. From September 1940, to May 1941, German air raids known as The Blitz had been destroying entire cities, farms, factories, and over two million homes across Britain. Once the war was over, nearly 750,000 dwellings were needed to accommodate an impoverished population which, in addition, had to face a bleak scenario of demolished transport infrastructures and industries, resulting in widespread shortages of food and raw materials. Almost everything had to be built anew.

After the Second World War, and until the early 1960s, British cinema witnessed the advent of a new kind of film concerning problematic issues in contemporary society, especially those affecting the youth, namely drugs addiction, drunkenness, juvenile delinquency, racial issues, homosexuality, gender inequalities, prostitution, miscegenation, abortion, and so forth. The range of social issues tackled was extensive.

A defining characteristic of the Social Problem film concerns the way in which the underlying social issue is addressed, embedding it into a broader generic genre by framing it within conventional fictional narratives such as thrillers, mystery, suspense, or crime novels, in order to appeal to a more extensive range of

cinemagoers. For example, in Basil Dearden's *Sapphire* (1959), Janet Green seeks to address the race issue while developing a detective history involving a crime. The film was released in 1959, just one year after the Notting Hill race riots in London.

Director Basil Dearden and producer Michael Relph formed a partnership that is now regarded as a crucial element of the British Social Problem film period. At Ealing Studios, they created their best-known films, including *Sapphire* (1959) and *Victim* (1961). The latter is considered to be the first British film that overtly presented the social issue of homosexuality, and the first to use the word *homosexual*. As recalled in Coldstream: "Homosexual' was a word that *no one* ever said. The word in those days was 'queer', which was derogatory and very unpleasant" (358). Just a few years earlier, Geoffrey Ingram had the privilege of being the first male gay character in a British drama to be portrayed in a genuine, earnest fashion in Shelagh Delaney's drama *A Taste of Honey* (1958). The culmination of male gay representation in British cinema would come years later when two men kissed on screen for the first time in John Schlesinger's film *Sunday, Bloody Sunday* (1971).

Dearden's Social Problem films dealt with other different issues, such as the co-existence with the Germans after World War II in *Frieda* (1947), Irish nationalism and the IRA in *The Gentle Gunman* (1952), delinquency in East End London slums in *A Place to Go* (1963), religious fundamentalism in *Life for Ruth* (1962), or juvenile delinquency in *The Blue Lamp* (1950), *I Believe In You* (1952), and *Violent Playground* (1958) (Hill, "The British 'Social Problem' Film" 34).

Some authors consider the Social Problem films of the 1950s to be the continuation of the Documentary Movement of the 1930s, as both strands sought to achieve an educational purpose by exploring reality through contemporary social issues. Moreover, many of the documentary filmmakers responsible for the output of the documentary units in the 1930s went to work for Ealing Studios during the Second World War (e.g. Alberto Cavalcanti, Harry Watt), where a significant number of Social Problem films were conceived (Lay ch. 4).

In the same way that the Social Problem film was, in a sense, a continuation of the previous Documentary Movement, the themes outlined within these Social Problem films were further developed and incorporated as social realist texts in the

British New Wave films and the Kitchen Sink Drama cycle of the 1950s and 1960s, although portraying a more extensive and complex picture of the working-class life (Brooke).

2.2.3. *Free Cinema*

Free Cinema was a brief cinematographic movement that pervaded the British cinema panorama from 5 February 1956, to 22 March 1959, born as a rejection of the mainstream cinema and the documentary tradition led by John Grierson in the 1930s. In Lindsay Anderson's 1985 essay on film entitled "Free Cinema", he recognises Free Cinema as part of the "British film tradition" ("Lindsay Anderson's Essay" 03:28). He also credits Jennings' Documentary Movement of the 1930s and the realist tradition as its most recognisable influences: ". . . and it's not surprising that when a group of young filmmakers got together thirty years ago, they found that Jennings was the predecessor they admired most, and realism was the tradition they inherited" ("Lindsay Anderson's Essay" 05:28-05:40).

Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz, and Tony Richardson were determined to craft a different kind of film that would be far removed from those fighting for the top of the charts, the mainstream tendency, and the American cinematographic style. A kind of film free from the pressure of the Box Office and free from the Establishment. The problem was that their films, which were already finished, were not being screened. Hence, they decided to create a movement that would embrace these films so that critics would find some interest in them: "The directors were Karel Reisz, Tony Richardson, and myself, with Walter Lassally as cameraman, and John Fletcher on camera and sound. We called ourselves 'Free Cinema'" ("Lindsay Anderson's Essay" 07:25-07:40).

The group presented their films at the National Film Theatre —where Reisz was conveniently in charge of programming at the time— alongside a Manifesto accompanying the "First Free Cinema Programme". Although the films screened at the first Free Cinema Programme had been made independently, they soon realised that they all shared a similar frame of mind. Four directors signed the First Programme Manifesto: Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz, Tony Richardson, and

Lorenza Mazzetti, an Italian student granted by the British Film Institute who was adopted by the group because “like us, she believed in the poetry of everyday” (“Lindsay Anderson’s Essay” 12:25-12:29).

Building on the success of the first programme, five more were scheduled, including three programmes dedicated to introducing the work of foreign filmmakers such as Roman Polanski’s *Two Men and a Wardrobe* (1957) in Free Cinema 4 “Polish Voices”, or Francois Truffaut’s *Les Mistons* (1957) in Free Cinema 5 “French Renewal”, amongst others. By the time these screenings took place at the National Film Theatre in London, a revolutionary movement was emerging in France, which would soon give birth to one of the most influential cinematographic movements of all times, the *Nouvelle Vague*.

Meanwhile, in Britain, all the films and documentaries under the Free Cinema banner were being made outside the film industry, remaining loyal to the group’s fundamentals. This posed some added technical difficulties, as they could not use the highest quality material in the hands of big commercial film studios. As Walter Lassally exemplifies, “*Momma Don’t Allow* is a film made with a Bolex and a ladder . . . so the longest take you could have was twenty-two seconds; and the ladder... the ladder came in handy” (“Free Cinema” 03:02-03:32). The financial contribution of a few patrons alleviated this shortage of resources. The Free Programme’s films and documentaries were funded mainly by two sponsors: the Ford Motor Company and the Experimental Fund of the British Film Institute.

In the end, the technical difficulties they had to endure were just another feature to add up to their characteristic style: they were low-budget short films, shot with a lightweight, portable hand-held camera —usually on 16mm black and white film stock— starring unknown, working-class actors, and on location.

On 22 March 1959, the movement came to an end. On that day, the last Free Cinema Programme (its sixth edition) was screened. After Karel Reisz’ *The Lambert Boys*, the Ford Motor Company withdrew its financial support for the movement, and shortly afterwards, the National Film Theatre announced that it was unwilling to lend its facilities for the Free Cinema group to continue screening their films. They were “too political” —they said (“Lindsay Anderson’s Essay” 27:39-28:02).

2.2.4. *The Poetic Realism of the New Wave: Kitchen Sink Cinema*

At the end of the 1950s, one of the most important movements in the history of cinema emerged in France, the *Nouvelle Vague*. A new generation of enthusiastic writers who were collaborating at that time with the French magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma* stepped forward from reflection to action and from criticism to direction: François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Jacques Rivette, Claude Chabrol, and Eric Rohmer were some of the distinguished representatives of a new way of filmmaking that was destined to change the way films were made around the world.

The French *Nouvelle Vague* inspired a whole generation of young directors — and the birth of local movements— such as Pier Paolo Pasolini and Bernardo Bertolucci in Italy; Roman Polanski in Poland; or Win Wenders in the German *Neuer Deutscher Film*. In Britain, this new movement became to be known as the British New Wave, and it dovetailed with the previous Free Cinema movement in that both shared formal characteristics, as well as a disregard for fashionable cinema and a similar way of filmmaking.

The British New Wave has its roots deeply anchored in Jennings' poetic realism within the Documentary Movement of the 1930s and the Free Cinema cinematographic style of the 1950s (Hallam and Marshment 45). At the time, New Wave realism was labelled “poetic realism” by the critic, as Jennings was the most admired referent for the New Wave directors (Higson, *Dissolving Views* 169-170).

The British New Wave also drew from a literary movement from the mid-1950s known as the “Angry Young Men” (Hallam and Marshment 45). This tag was applied to a group of young novelists and playwrights such as John Braine, Alan Sillitoe, Kingsley Amis, or John Osborne who, disenchanted with the zeitgeist of their time, rebelled against the literary tradition of the drawing-room plays and well-made dramas in the fashion of Noël Coward and Terence Rattigan, so in vogue in those days.

As we have shown, unlike the *Nouvelle Vague*, the British New Wave did not spring out of cinema but from theatre. Specifically, from the Royal Court Theatre (Stock, *The Film Programme. British New Wave* 06:40), where John Osborne and Tony Richardson staged some of the Angry Young Men's plays. In 1956, the Royal

Court Theatre in London premiered the debut play of John Osborne as director, *Look Back in Anger*. Initially, the critic mostly loathed it; but Kenneth Tynan's review in *The Observer* left a memorable, enthusiastic statement for British film history: "I doubt if I could love anyone who did not wish to see *Look Back in Anger*. It is the best young play of its decade" ("From *The Observer*").

In 1958 Tony Richardson, John Osborne, and Harry Saltzman joined forces to found the Woodfall Film Productions, a company that would produce many of the social realist films which comprised the British New Wave and most of Kitchen Sink films.

Within the British New Wave, we can identify a group of films gathered at the time under the title "Kitchen Sink Realism", "Kitchen Sink Drama", "working class realism", or "social realist texts" —although some scholars defend the use of these terms as interchangeable (Lay 72). For some authors, such as Ken Loach, "Kitchen Sink" was a disparaging term: "I must say I did have a problem with the term 'Kitchen Sink'. I think it was a pejorative term, and... whatever are their origins, but the way it was used was pejorative, and it was a way to dismiss and put down reflections on working-class life" (Ahmed, *Night Waves - British Social Realism in Film* 02:28-02:46).

"Kitchen Sink" was a term coined for the visual arts to refer specifically to a group of four painters known as the Beaux-Arts Quartet². These painters celebrated ordinary life in their paintings, depicting varied scenes from the everyday life of ordinary people within the framework of Social Realism in the visual arts. Somehow —although the kitchen sink only appears on screen in a few films— this term spread to cinema. As Joely Richardson recalls, "[Kitchen Sink] wasn't about everyone looking perfect and beautiful against that wonderful backdrop with beautiful costumes. It was like 'this is your kitchen sink; this is what happens in your living room'" (Sweet, "BBC Radio 3" 08:25-08:36).

The Kitchen Sink Drama cycle comprises a group of films that share some particular characteristics: they are all film adaptations of novels, dramas, and short stories from the Angry Young Men literary movement, released between 1959 and

² The Beaux-Arts Quartet was composed by John Bratby, Derrick Greaves, Edward Middleditch, and Jack Smith

1963, mostly shot on location over black and white film stock, and performed by unknown or non-professional actors. Kitchen Sink films are realistic portrayals of working-class characters born and raised in the northern regions of England. As such, they speak with —more or less— proper northern accents, something never seen in cinema before, but for the sake of humour or in representing class clichés. Kitchen Sink films develop narratives featuring disenchanting, working-class youths faced with unwanted pregnancies and backstreet abortions, poverty and class clash, frustration, and forbidden romances as they try to escape from their lives. Most importantly, all these events unfold without a trace of sentimentalism or vocation to indoctrinate the spectators. The aim is to portray these characters at a definite moment of their lives just as they are, without any artifice or hidden ulterior motive.

Recurrent scenes and iconic landscapes and places abound amongst Kitchen Sink films: the riverside of a polluted river the colour of lead³, the local fairground, long railways departing from the train station, the pub, the narrow streets between straight lines of red-brick terraced houses, high smoky factory chimneys in the distance, tumbledown landscapes and, of course, this signature shot that became an iconographic cliché of Kitchen Sink films: “That Long Shot of Our Town from That Hill”, beautifully studied in Andrew Higson’s article “Space, Place, Spectacle”.

More often than not, Kitchen Sink films include scenes showing the characters in the intimacy of their homes, unveiling domestic scenes not frequently shown. For the first time, the audience came face to face with the private lives of the characters: family and friends crammed into small living rooms that share the space with the kitchen area, where real life takes place; clothes hanging on the clothesline, and dirty pots and pans in the sink; communal bathrooms, and characters in their pyjamas, the opposite of what was being shown in Terence Rattigan’s well-made plays staged at the time. Kitchen Sink dramas made it visible to the world that working-class people had a life besides their work —a humdrum one perhaps, but their own life to ruin their own way⁴.

³ “A river the colour of lead” is part of The Smiths’ song “This Night Has Opened my Eyes”. It is also part of Jo’s lines in Shelagh Delaney’s play *A Taste of Honey*: “That river, it’s the colour of lead” (S. Delaney, *A Taste of Honey* 54).

⁴ A reference to Helen’s line in *A Taste of Honey*, Act I, Scene I: “Anyway, it’s your life, ruin it your own way” (S. Delaney, *A Taste of Honey* 13). Also, a reference to Morrissey’s song “Alma Matters”: “It’s my life to ruin / My own way” (Morrissey and Whyte), inspired in this same part of the play.

A pivotal element in Kitchen Sink dramas is the ubiquitous presence of female characters. However, their relevance is frequently overshadowed by the role attributed to them. In these realistic dramas, women are twofold. As Samantha Lay poses it, there are potential “wives and mothers”, and there are potential “mistresses and lovers”. Thus, women are ascribed to two exclusionary roles and pigeonholed as suitable “for marriage” and child-bearing, or just “for sex and fun” (Lay ch. 4).

So far, we have considered some features of Kitchen Sink cinema; but, what makes a film suitable for being considered as part of the cycle? As occurs in other fields, the titles within the Kitchen Sink Drama cycle vary according to the scholar or the research consulted. Nevertheless, we can identify a hard core of films included in almost every catalogue. After collecting information from different sources within the references at the end of this paper, we have compiled a list of canonical Kitchen Sink films (see Appendix). At the top of this canon is Tony Richardson’s *Look Back in Anger* (1959), an adaptation from John Osborne’s 1956 play of the same name. In second place is Karel Reisz’s *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960), adapted from Alan Sillitoe’s 1958 homonym novel. The third place on the list is for Lindsay Anderson’s *This Sporting Life* (1963), another adaptation from David Storey’s 1960 novel of the same name. Next on the list are Jack Clayton’s *Room at the Top* (1959), and Tony Richardson’s *A Taste of Honey* (1961) and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1962). Some scholars would also include films such as Bryan Forbes’ *The L-Shaped Room* (1962), John Schlesinger’s *Billy Liar* (1963), John Lee Thompson’s *Woman in a Dressing Gown* (1957), or Ken Loach’s *Poor Cow* (1967), which some other would dismiss on the basis of being —respectively and simplistically— too women-centred, too fantastical, too premature, or —in the case of *Poor Cow*— too colourful, London-based, featuring a female protagonist, and performing pop songs.

It is commonly accepted that the British New Wave reached its end by 1963. Lindsay Anderson’s *This Sporting Life* had been critically acclaimed but a big failure in the box office, “which gave John Davis, the chairman of the Rank Organisation, the chance to say he wouldn’t produce any more of this squalid little films —his words” (Allen 19:59-20:11), referring to North-based, working-class protagonists Kitchen Sink films.

The end of the Kitchen Sink cycle gave way to a new, more optimistic and less realistic cinema. *Swinging London* meant a radical departure from the direction taken by the poetic realism of the Kitchen Sink drama. However, British Social Realism would continue to have a voice in the following decades with films such as Ken Loach's *Kes* (1969), Hanif Kureishi's *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), Danny Boyle's *Trainspotting* (1996), Gary Oldman's *Nil by Mouth* (1997), Shane Meadows' *This is England* (2006), or Andrea Arnold's *Fish Tank* (2009).

3. A Case Study: Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey*

This section of the paper is devoted to the study of Shelagh Delaney's debut play, *A Taste of Honey*, and its subsequent adaptation to cinema, which became one of the essential films within the Kitchen Sink cycle. Besides, it is also the most noticeable link between the Kitchen Sink culture and The Smiths' work, arguably the most influential band⁵ the United Kingdom produced since The Beatles. In the next chapter of this work, we will illustrate how both elements are related.

Amongst all the films gathered under the Kitchen Sink label, we have selected this one fundamentally because of the influence it exerted upon The Smiths' work, chiefly through its lead singer. Steven Patrick Morrissey has been obsessed with Shelagh Delaney and her work since he was a child, as he metaphorically expressed: "I fed myself on films like *A Taste of Honey*" (Van Poznak 33).

Another equally important reason for choosing this film for further study is that, although *A Taste of Honey* is considered to be one of the most representative films in the cycle, it is a non-typical Kitchen Sink film. As we will show, *A Taste of Honey* was a groundbreaking play in many senses.

The first sign that distinguishes *A Taste of Honey* as an atypical Kitchen Sink film is gender-related. As we have shown, Kitchen Sink films were mainly based upon the Angry Young Men's literary work, starring angry young men as main characters, and directed by angry young male directors. As we showed in 2.2.4., in

⁵ In the 50th anniversary special edition (April 2002) of *The New Musical Express* (NME)—one of the most relevant magazines in British musical panorama—The Smiths ranked number one in the list of "The Greatest Artist of All Time", ahead of pop and rock legends such as The Beatles (that came second), David Bowie, Elvis Presley, or The Rolling Stones.

Kitchen Sink dramas, women mostly are secondary characters playing their parts in the plots as ancillary to men, always at their disposal, available for men to love them, use them, and leave them. However, departing from the rest of Kitchen Sink films, *A Taste of Honey* is written by a young woman, featuring the lives of two working-class women, and directed by a woman making her way through theatre, a traditionally male-dominated sector.

Another element that marks the difference between *A Taste of Honey* and most Kitchen Sink dramas is the overall tone of the story and the absence of negative feelings pervading the main character. Although Josephine's life has not been—and will not be—easy, she is neither angry and frustrated as Jimmy Porter in *Look Back in Anger* or Arthur Seaton in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, nor is she utterly ambitious as Joe Lampton in *Room at the Top*. Despite the hardships of Jo's life, Shelagh Delaney draws a story free of sentimentalism, self-pity, and paternalism: "No one in my play despairs. Like the majority of people they take in their stride whatever happens to them and remain cheerful" (Shelagh Delaney, *A Taste of Honey* xx). As Lindsay Anderson states, "[o]ne of the most extraordinary things about this play is its lack of bitterness . . . with wry and humorous invention, she [Shelagh Delaney] made sentimentalism impossible" (Anderson 43).

Sheila Mary Delaney was only nineteen when she wrote her first play, *A Taste of Honey*. Legend has it that Sheila had just discovered the theatre a few weeks back then, and as she came in contact with the stage, she felt a terrible urge to write. After two weeks struggling with her newly acquired typewriter, Sheila sent the manuscript of *A Taste of Honey* to Joan Littlewood, the director of London's avant-garde Theatre Workshop, hoping that she might help her. Sheila accompanied the play with a personal letter which she, as a proud descendant of working-class Irish emigrants, signed as "Shelagh Delaney", what she might have thought to be the Irish spelling of her name and would represent her new persona as a playwright. Despite Shelagh's self-deprecating introduction⁶: "I'm quite unqualified for anything like this" (Delaney, Letter from Shelagh), Littlewood saw great potential in her play and decided to take it to the stage.

⁶ Some scholars agree with Selina Todd's line of thought (Todd ch. 1) that Shelagh's naïve introduction to Joan Littlewood was a studied artifice to attain her goal, as she consciously downplayed her literary experience in order to offer a more appealing background for her story.

Shelagh Delaney's original script was modified by Joan Littlewood to adapt it to the stage. Under Littlewood's direction, *A Taste of Honey* was premiered at the Theatre Royal Stratford East on 27 May 1958, and transferred to Wyndham's Theatre in the London's West End the following year, where it ran for 368 performances.

As in other Kitchen Sink films, the use of local accents and a marked colloquial language were defining characteristics of Shelagh Delaney's work. It reflected her upbringing in the northern English region of Salford, in Greater Manchester. Shelagh's interest in local people and their surroundings is manifested through the language she employed in her plays. *A Taste of Honey* reflects in its vivid dialogues how working-class people talked around the Salford area in the 1950s. As Shelagh Delaney explained in a 1959 interview to *The Times*: "I was twelve at the time. I already realized I could write and I am grateful to Miss Leek [her teacher]. What I wrote she understood, and she didn't harp so much as others on rigid English. I write as people talk" (Kitchin 168). Shelagh Delaney's pride in her language and origins is a noticeable feature of her work.

Contrary to popular belief, Shelagh Delaney did not write *A Taste of Honey* as a reaction against Terence Rattigan's treatment of sexuality in *Variations on a Theme*, but after watching a production of *Waiting for Godot* whilst she was working as an usherette at the Manchester Opera House, as her daughter Charlotte recounts. She felt that "there were other voices that absolutely needed to be written and to be heard" (C. Delaney). Shelagh Delaney meant to bring those "other voices" to life in her works, and she succeeded. She brought to life marginal characters such as Helen (a drunk, detached mother), Jo (a pregnant teenage girl who is expecting a mixed-race baby), or Geoffrey (a young homosexual art student). Moreover, Shelagh Delaney offered challenging perspectives on maternity, motherhood, and family, far from acceptable and undoubtedly uncomfortable for most of the public at that time.

Delaney's vision of the family model was ahead of her time and by no means typical. Her ideas were aligned with what we would associate nowadays with the women's liberation movement of the 1970s. Delaney proposes a different family model, beyond the traditional happy, homely mother, the hard-working father, and

the well-behaved daughters and sons. She advocates diversity and anticipates new and manifold familiar structures. In *A Taste of Honey*, the female main characters form a family unit in which the mother is a sexually active woman in her forties who prioritises her independence over her role as a traditional mother; and a young daughter who long time ago learned how to live by herself with an absent, uncaring mother. No men are needed, but to have a good time.

Another unusual kind of family proposed in the play is that formed by a young white woman and a black man (although the marriage does not finally materialise) in a time when mixed-race couples were still frowned upon. Towards the end of the play, Delaney goes even further and sketches the most radical family structure — although only for a while— when the audience is faced with the possibility of a family dramatically far away from the traditional model, consisting of a young white woman, a homosexual white man, and a mixed-race child. In the film version, coming full circle, by the end of the film, all men have disappeared from the scene, and Jo and Helen continue their lives with no men around: no husbands or fathers in sight.

As advanced previously, *A Taste of Honey* narrates the story of Josephine, a seventeen-year-old schoolgirl who lives with her neglectful mother, depicted in the stage notes as “a semi-whore” (S. Delaney, *A Taste of Honey* 7). Jo, the main character, has a brief romance with a black sailor who sailed away soon after, leaving her expecting a baby. When Jo abandons school and finds a job, she rents a flat just for herself, as her mother is involved in yet another relationship that alienates her from her daughter. At this juncture, Jo meets Geoffrey, a young homosexual art student who will be her most important support during the following months, until her due date.

The main characters in *A Taste of Honey* epitomise certain parts of society that were openly marginalised in the United Kingdom around the time the play was written and staged, whether because of their social status or profession, the colour of their skin, or their sexual preferences. All the problematic societal issues treated in the play are handled as naturally as possible, just like another element in the protagonist's reality.

In *A Taste of Honey*, Shelagh Delaney dared to tackle with incredible boldness some taboo issues of her time. Some of these themes were common to

other Kitchen Sink films, such as the unwanted pregnancies and their consequences, but some others were not even referred to on stage. *A Taste of Honey* was one of the first productions to introduce inter-racial love relationships to theatre audiences.

Another controversial issue addressed in *A Taste of Honey* was homosexuality. At a time when same-sex relationships between men were criminally prosecuted in the United Kingdom, only a few writers and directors ventured to present a gay character—if not under the veil of well-known clichés such as being *sensitive*—but none of them would dare to use the word *homosexual* in their plays, not even in the stage directions. The Lord Chamberlain Office, the body empowered to allow a particular play to be performed on stage or ban it from the theatres, was responsible for verifying that all plays abided by the established criteria. The reader's report of *A Taste of Honey* for the Lord Chamberlain's Office concluded, "This is a surprisingly good play – though God knows it is not, to my personal taste. But the people are strangely real and the problem of Geoff is delicately conveyed" (Heriot). Shelagh Delaney's play was one of the first to benefit from the Wolfenden Report⁷, which would relax the harsh censorship policy against plays dealing with homosexual issues and characters hold until then (Buzwell).

Shelagh Delaney's treatment of homosexuality in *A Taste of Honey* may as well be considered to be a milestone in British cinema. It was the first time that a male gay character was not presented as effeminate to the extent of being ridiculous, grotesque, or in need of the audience's pity. Geoffrey is a young man who does not like talking about what he does in bed. He does not feel the need to tell other people whom he sleeps with: "I don't go in for sensational confessions", answers to Jo when asked to share some confidences with her: "I want to know what you do. I want to know why you do it" (S. Delaney, *A Taste of Honey* 48). For the first time in British drama, a male gay was presented as a complex character with a regular, ordinary life beyond his sexuality.

⁷ On 4 September 1957, the Wolfenden Committee released its report recommending the decriminalisation of gay sex between consenting adults over 21, except in the armed forces. It stated: 'homosexual behaviour between consenting adults in private should no longer be a criminal offence' (British Library).

Shelagh Delaney's play fulfilled her idea of giving voice to those who did not have it by presenting working-class characters who had not been staged until then in a natural, straightforward way, without trying to moralise or make them victims of society. MacInnes' review of *A Taste of Honey* perfectly captured the play's tenor:

Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey* is the first English play I've seen in which a coloured man, and a queer boy, are presented as natural characters . . . It is also the first play I can remember about working-class people that entirely escapes being a "working-class play": no patronage, no dogma —just the thing as it is, taken straight. (MacInnes 70)

In these few lines, MacInnes encapsulates the play's boldness of presenting eccentric working-class characters on the fringe of society as relevant participants who live their regular, ordinary lives beyond the barriers others impose on them.

In 1959, Shelagh Delaney sold the rights to her play to Tony Richardson, with whom he collaborated in writing the screenplay for the film version. Tony Richardson's *A Taste of Honey* displays most of the defining characteristics of British social realist films while keeping the romanticised view of Kitchen Sink dramas.

Richardson's *A Taste of Honey* was the first British feature film to be shot entirely on location. Director of photography Walter Lassally transferred his knowledge and experience from documentary realism into the fictional realm. Under the natural winter light of Manchester and Salford —Shelagh Delaney's home town— Walter Lassally's camera walks Salford's narrow streets flanked by red-brick terraced houses, showing long shots of the northern industrial skyline broken by towering red-brick smoky chimneys and red-brick factories, filthy canals, departing trains and iron bridges, children playing on the streets amongst the debris of destroyed buildings, the fair, the jazz club, the pub, and "That Long Shot of Our Town from That Hill" (Higson, "Space, Place, Spectacle") that the spectator gets from Helen and Jo's kitchen window.

A Taste of Honey was gifted with several awards, such as the Charles Henry Foyle New Play Award in 1958, the New York Drama Critics Award in 1961, four Awards granted by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA), or two Cannes Awards in 1962, amongst others.

Shelagh Delaney's debut play has never been out of print since 1958, becoming part of the secondary school syllabus of the United Kingdom as a representative modern text in the modern drama area in the 1980s.

Even though Shelagh Delaney died in 2011, her legacy remains intertwined in British popular culture through revivals, artistic performances, and new adaptations of her works on stages and cinemas. It has also been a source of inspiration for many musical artists, from The Beatles to Television Personalities, and most notoriously for Morrissey, the lead singer of the 1980s Mancunian band The Smiths.

4. The Influence of Kitchen Sink Cinema and Shelagh Delaney on The Smiths' work

The Smiths were a Mancunian band formed in 1982 by Morrissey as the lead singer and Johnny Marr on the guitar. They were later joined by the bass player Andy Rourke and Mike Joyce on drums. By 1987 the band had already disintegrated. In less than five years of existence, The Smiths released four studio albums and seventy original songs, which granted them the honour of being considered one of the best bands to emerge from the British independent music scene of the 1980s. Over a span of just four years, The Smiths generated so much interest that, more than thirty years after their dissolution, they are still loved, hated, and discussed all around the world.

Many documents have been written about Morrissey and The Smiths: from columns in magazines, newspapers and peer-reviewed academic journals to books, master dissertations, and doctoral theses on subjects as diverse as suicide, philosophy, sexuality, class, Englishness and nationalism, the fandom phenomena, Catholicism, the fourth gender, or musical poetics amongst others.

Dr Colin Coulter condensed in three lines the relevance of the band at the academic symposium held on The Smiths organised by Manchester Metropolitan University in 2005: "The Smiths have had a singular impact on popular culture. They looked like nobody else and sounded like nobody else, and their music had an emotional depth that moved people in a way that no band has managed before or since" ("The Smiths: An Academic Conference").

However, if The Smiths as a band achieved such a significant consideration within the musical panorama, it was primarily due to its lead singer and frontman, Steven Patrick Morrissey, whose enthralling and unique personality was shaped over years of reading, watching, and listening to old-day books, films, and songs. He is an avowed fan of the British Kitchen Sink cinema of the 1950s and 1960s, *Coronation Street*, and James Dean. His musical background has been forged by the sounds of all-girls bands such as Martha & The Vandellas or The Supremes, and singers such as Cilla Black or Sandie Shaw, and in his lyrics, echoes of William Shakespeare, George Eliot, and Oscar Wilde resound.

This section of the paper will show why The Smiths are “the son and the heir”⁸ of the British Social Realism tradition of the 1950s and 1960s applied to pop music. More specifically, we will illustrate through textual comparison how The Smiths’ songs are infused with the spirit of Kitchen Sink films and, in particular, how Morrissey’s lyrics are most indebted to Shelagh Delaney’s work.

4.1. “I Am the Son and Heir of Nothing in Particular”

Morrissey is well known for his endless references and allusions to literary works, films, cultural, historical, and popular icons and facts. The (more or less reworked) quotations from films, novels, and other literary works that Morrissey incorporates within his own repertoire are not just some borrowed words that he takes for convenience at a given moment, but his personal form of paying homage to those works and artists with whom he shares a poetic vision of reality and a particular sensibility in the way of displaying it.

As documentary filmmaker Tim Samuels states, “The Smiths were the product of a specific time and place” (“Not Like Any Other Love: The Smiths” 02:13). In the early 1980s, Britain was in the midst of a critical economic recession, as unemployment rates exceeded three million people across the United Kingdom. Violent waves of riots swept the country. Margaret Thatcher’s government’s policies favoured private enterprise, and living conditions improved for a selected section of

⁸ The Smiths, “How Soon Is Now?” All The Smiths’ lyrics referenced in this paper have been obtained from the website Passions Just Like Mine (passionsjustlikemine.com/lyrics-smiths.htm)

society. However, traditional northern industries such as shipbuilding, steelworkers, and coal mining not only did not benefit from her policies but were adversely affected by the deindustrialisation, and the gap between the wealthier South and the impoverished North widened. It was at “this specific time and place” that the band came together.

4.2. “That’s the Story of My Life”

In the same way that the British social realist films of the 1950s and 1960s confronted a kind of cinema that said nothing about the lives of most of the British population at that time, The Smiths’ songs were a reaction to the musical panorama of their own time. In the Manchester of the early 1980s, Morrissey perceived the same feeling that Shelagh Delaney had expressed more than two decades earlier:

To me they [young people] just are lost, and they shouldn’t be lost, and they are; and they left, and they don’t know what to do, and I didn’t know what to do. When I was seventeen, I was in a terrible mess. I didn’t know what to do with *me*self. I knew I wanted to do something, but what, I couldn’t find out. I was lucky I thought I could write. (Channel 4 News 12:58-13:20)

Like Shelagh Delaney, Morrissey thought that he could write about the genuine working-class youth of his time, and in so doing, he was painting a portrayal of society in the Manchester area of the 1980s with the brush and colours of the classic social realist films that he so much loved.

Morrissey’s lyrics reflect the northern landscape, its people, and its atmosphere as if it were a four-minute Kitchen Sink film. Referring to The Smiths’ songs, Poet Laureate Simon Robert Armitage stated, “The North figured large in these songs, you know; they’re shot through with a sort of Manchester melodrama. These were lyrics just full of the details of everyday domestic life” (“Not Like Any Other Love: The Smiths” 09:24-09:37). Morrissey created for The Smiths’ lyrics a set of poetic images that include elements familiar to Kitchen Sink films, such as the iron bridge (“Still Ill”), the train railways and the platforms (“London”), “a river the colour of lead” (“This Night Has Open My Eyes”), “a hillside desolate” (“This Charming Man”), a train going by (“Nowhere Fast”), “the last night of the fair / by the big wheel generator” (“Rusholme Ruffians”), or “a humdrum town” (“William, It Was Really Nothing”).

As in Kitchen Sink films, the characters in Morrissey's lyrics are northern *lads* and *lasses* trying to escape from their lives, but never quite managing to do so:

I left the North again
I travelled South again

.....
My throat was dry, with the sun in my eyes
And I realised, I realised
I could never
I could never, never never go back home again (The Smiths, "Is It Really So Strange?")

The Smiths' "Is It Really So Strange?" was the first of three songs Morrissey wrote about how northern city dwellers were trying to escape from high unemployment rates and widespread poverty by moving towards the more affluent South in search of a better life that they would never achieve: "I find that mood of a Northern person going to London and then returning home very poignant" (Bell 17). The other two songs in the same vein were "Half a Person":

And if you have five seconds to spare
Then I'll tell you the story of my life:
Sixteen, clumsy and shy
I went to London and I
I booked myself in at the Y.W.C.A⁹ (The Smiths, "Half a Person")

and "London":

Train
Heave on - to Euston¹⁰
Do you think you've made
The right decision this time?
You left
Your tired family grieving
And you think they're sad because you're leaving
But did you see the Jealousy in the eyes
Of the ones who had to stay behind? (The Smiths, "London")

In "London", the narrator is addressing a young boy heading south to Euston, and it seems that this was not his first time trying to escape from the North: "Do you think you've made / The right decision *this time?*" (emphasis added). Meanwhile, friends and family who have to stay cast an envious eye on the one departing.

As in the other two songs aforementioned, the journey south to London is presented as an opportunity for young people to attain a better life, even if it meant estrangement from the people and the place they leave behind. However, not

⁹ The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) is a grassroots-driven, global movement rooted in the leadership of women, young women, and girls (worldywca.org).

¹⁰ London Euston railway station is the southern terminus of the West Coast Main Line, and the United Kingdom's busiest inter-city railway (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euston_railway_station)

everyone was ready to move ahead, follow their dreams, and try to make them come true in London. In John Schlesinger's film *Billy Liar*, we follow the daydreaming stories Billy Fisher creates to mentally escape the reality around him, picturing himself as the beloved and respected ruler of an imaginary country. Nevertheless, when the time comes for him to escape to London, he cannot do so and fails to board the train that would have taken him to London with his girlfriend, who is already on board.

Morrissey's "London" portrays the reverse story of William Fisher in *Billy Liar*, who stays on the platform while the one who flees from the town towards London, leaving everything behind (including himself) in search of a more exciting life, is his girlfriend.

This displacement in search of a better life is also the main thread running through Jack Clayton's film *Room at the Top*, in which Joe Lampton is eager to escape from his life in an impoverished town and flees to Warnley in pursuit of getting rid of his working-class origins by becoming a denizen of the Top, a stylish neighbourhood for wealthy people. By using a young upper-class woman in love with him (Susan), whom he impregnates, he conquers the social summit, but not without a high cost:

ALICE. . . . Finally, you've got everything you wanted, haven't you? . . .

JOE. Look Alice, I'm going to marry Susan. All right, maybe I do love you, but I'm going to marry her. (*Room at the Top*, 01:38:58-01:39:59)

Soon after, Alice dies, probably by taking her own life. Her words are paralleled in Morrissey's lyrics: "[Y]ou've got everything now / and what a terrible mess I've made of my life" (The Smiths, "You've Got Everything Now"). In escaping his working-class life, Joe Lampton gets what he wants but loses what he loves.

This class clash, the inadequacy of trying to break the established social barriers, and the consequences of doing so configure a common theme in Kitchen Sink films, and it is also considered to be a seminal motif in Morrissey's lyrics for The Smiths:

So, goodbye
please stay with your own kind
and I'll stay with mine

There's something against us

.....
So, goodbye, goodbye, goodbye, goodbye (The Smiths, "Miserable Lie")

The persona in this narration is well aware of his/her social background and that of his/her lover¹¹. There is a manifest class confrontation that hinders the sentimental relationship. Both characters' social classes are presented as opposed in the first verse of the song: "[P]lease stay with *your own kind* / and I'll stay with *mine*" (emphasis added). This class clash finally leads to the separation of the couple.

Sometimes, a song can be linked to several Kitchen Sink films, as occurs in The Smiths' "The Queen Is Dead", where the first thing we hear is a cut from Bryan Forbes' *The L-Shaped Room* taken directly from the scene where the dwellers of the house are gathered in the leaving room singing a World War I song, "Take Me Back to Dear Old Blighty" (01:46:40-01:46:54). In the second part of "The Queen Is Dead", Morrissey incorporated a line from John Schlesinger's *Billy Liar*: "Then we'll go for a walk where it's quiet" (00:42:52-00:42:56), that can be heard several times: "We can go for a walk where it's quiet and dry / and talk about precious things / like love and law and poverty" (The Smiths, "The Queen Is Dead"). These lines can also be related to the scene in the film in which Billy is walking through a cemetery with one of his girlfriends, Barbara, who is talking about their future.

Other times, the same work can be referenced in several songs, as occurs with *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. A reference to Karel Reisz's film *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* can be found in The Smiths' song "There Is a Light That Never Goes Out": "Take me out tonight / where there's music and there's people / who are young and alive". These lines are taken from the film version starred by one of Morrissey's favourite actors, Albert Finney, to whom Shirley Anne Field says, "Why don't you ever take me where it's lively and there's plenty of people?" (*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* 01:00:22).

Another reference to *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, this time to Alan Sillitoe's first novel, can be found in Morrissey's lyrics to The Smiths' "*Vicar in a Tutu*": "I was minding my business / lifting some lead off / the roof of the Holy Name church". These lines reproduce the words in Alan Sillitoe's novel: ". . . sent to Borstal

¹¹ Morrissey's lyrics have the distinctive characteristic of being gender-reversible. More often than not, the characters in his songs cannot be identified either with a male or with a female.

when a kid for breaking open gas meters and ripping lead from church roofs" (Sillitoe 125).

Also related to *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, The Smiths' song "Rusholme Ruffians" is set in a fair scenario, where a boy is assaulted and robbed:

The last night of the fair
by the big wheel generator
a boy is stabbed
and his money is grabbed
.....
then someone falls in love
and someone's beaten up (The Smiths, "Rusholme Ruffians")

This last couplet refers to an unspecified lover who is assailed at the fairground, somehow linking the facts of being in love and being beaten, as occurs to Arthur Seaton in the film. Arthur is in a relationship with an older, married woman. Although they are in love, theirs is an illegitimate relationship, as Brenda is already married. This fact leads to the male protagonist being battered by some relatives of his girlfriend's husband after discovering the improper relationship between his wife and the younger Arthur, a similar situation to the one presented in the song.

Songs like "Rusholme Ruffians", "This Night Has Open My Eyes", or "William, It Was Really Nothing" are complete and rounded social realist films condensed into a few verses of pop music capable of conveying the same sensations as those belonging in the Kitchen Sink cycle of the 1950s and 1960s.

Morrissey's ability to extract the essence of a Kitchen Sink narrative and imbue it into a three-minute song has been amply recognised by authors such as Simon Goddard, who has expressed his admiration for the singer's deftness to "distil an entire 90-minute Sixties kitchen-sink drama into less than 20 lines of pop prose", referring to Morrissey's lyrics to The Smiths' song "William, It Was Really Nothing" (Goddard, *Songs That Saved Your Life* ch. 1984). This song, as some others we have analysed before, has much of John Schlesinger's *Billy Liar*, one of his favourite films. Morrissey narrates in these lyrics how the addressee of this song is trapped in "a humdrum town", which "has dragged [him] down" while the rain would not cease to fall. The singer persona in the song tries to talk him out of the idea of marrying "a fat girl" whose only interest seems to be focused on an engagement ring. These few hints, plus the name in the title and refrain (William), the overall atmosphere of the

narrative, and the fact that it is one of Morrissey's favourite films, leads to think that The Smiths' song "William, It Was Really Nothing" is based on John Schlesinger's film *Billy Liar*.

Morrissey's appreciation for this film is shown once more in these lines from The Smiths' song "Vicar in a Tutu": "The next day in the pulpit / with Freedom and Ease / combating *ignorance, dust and disease*". The last line is adapted from one of Billy's reveries in which he imagines the state funeral organised for his recently deceased grandmother, of whom he says, "[S]he struggled valiantly to combat ignorance and disease" (*Billy Liar* 01:30:07).

As we have shown, Morrissey imbued his lyrics with endless references to social realist texts and films from the 1950s and 1960s, and in so doing, he finely crafted short stories and transformed pop songs into the most singular, miniature Kitchen Sink films. Nonetheless, his obsession with the old-time films and actors was not limited to words but extended to The Smiths' artwork: record sleeves, music video clips, and massive backdrop stage images in live performances. As it happens with the quoted fragments, references, and allusions in Morrissey's lyrics, there are too many visual instances to be mentioned.

4.3. Under the Influence - Shelagh Delaney

Morrissey's lyrics for The Smiths paint a landscape that can be easily connected to the black and white backdrop of social realist texts and Kitchen Sink films. Yet, if there is a film that has had an exceptional influence on Morrissey's work, it is Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey*, as he acknowledges: "I've never made any secret of the fact that at least 50 per cent of my reason for writing can be blamed on Shelagh Delaney who wrote *A Taste of Honey*" (Pye 30).

Several songs in Morrissey's repertoire contain direct references to Shelagh Delaney's work and personal life, starting with a song with her name in the title, "Sheila Take a Bow":

... – but I must know
How can someone so young
Sing words so sad?
.....

Sheila take a, Sheila take a bow
Throw your homework into the fire (The Smiths, "Sheila Take a Bow")

As we pointed out in the last chapter, Sheila Mary (as spelt in The Smiths' song) was Shelagh Delaney's original first name. In the first verse of this song, the singing persona refers to Sheila's youth and the sorrow in her words. It should be borne in mind that Shelagh Delaney wrote her first play (*A Taste of Honey*) when she was very young (just nineteen years old) and that she withdrew from Grammar School at the age of seventeen, a fact that is subtly conveyed in the antepenultimate line of the song: "Throw your homework into the fire". Besides, the invitation to "take a bow" is related to the theatre stage, clearly connected with Shelagh Delaney.

Morrissey frequently introduced references, allusions, and bits of Shelagh Delaney's texts into his works. Fragments of her second play, *The Lion in Love*, are mentioned throughout Morrissey's lyrics for The Smiths, as occurs in this piece of dialogue between Kit and Frank:

KIT. Work's hard to find.
FRANK. Anything's hard to find if you go around looking for it with your eyes shut. (23)

This line was adapted as a couplet in The Smiths' song "Accept Yourself": "[A]nything is hard to find / when you will not open your eyes".

Another sample extracted from *The Lion in Love*:

KIT. I never said you were. Don't worry, I'll go out and get a job tomorrow.
JESSE. You needn't bother; (102)

This part of the dialogue was rephrased and incorporated into The Smiths' song "Still Ill" as follows: "[A]nd if you must go to work tomorrow / well if I were you I wouldn't bother".

As we have seen, there are several instances of Morrissey borrowing small pieces of Shelagh Delaney's work to include them as part of his lyrics. Indeed, some of the names for The Smiths' songs were also extracted from Shelagh Delaney's play *The Lion in Love*:

NELL. And getting nowhere fast.
ANDY. These things take time. (28)

Morrissey employed these two consecutive lines from the dialogue between Nell and Andy from *The Lion in Love*, without any rewording, to name two songs, respectively “Nowhere Fast” and “These Things Take Time”.

In accordance with Johnny Marr’s melodies, Morrissey’s words created brief, meaningful stories in the shape of lyrical songs. These musical compositions akin to short social realist films reached its maximum expression in The Smiths’ theme “Jeane”. Over an uplifting musical beat in contrast to a defeatist undertone, Morrissey’s lyrics describe the disillusion of the singing persona after a time living with his or her partner. The couple has been living together in a dwelling in the likes of that of Helen and Jo that Shelagh Delaney described in the stage directions for *A Taste of Honey*: “*The stage represents a comfortless flat in Manchester and the street outside*” (S. Delaney, *A Taste of Honey* 7).

In Morrissey’s “Jeane”, the “comfortless flat” is represented by “a room with its cupboard bare” and the “ice on the sink where [they] bathe”. Right after this line, it comes a couplet that may reinforce the idea that Morrissey’s lyrics to The Smiths’ “Jeane” are yet another tribute to Shelagh Delaney’s *A Taste of Honey*. These two lines in the second verse run through the metaphor of the home as a grave: “So how can you call this a home / When you know it’s a grave”. This metaphor has its correlate in Shelagh Delaney’s play —as a simile on this occasion, though — when Helen compares the bed to a coffin:

JO. Thanks. I’ll do that. What’s the bed like?
HELEN. Like a coffin only not half as comfortable. (21)

A few lines afterwards, in the same scene of the play, Jo asks her mother:

JO. Aren’t we going to clear this lot up?
HELEN. No, it’ll look all right in the dark (21)

Once more, we appreciate a resemblance to Morrissey’s words in “Jeane”:

But you still hold the reedy grace
As you tidy the place
But it will never be clean
Jeane (The Smiths, “Jeane”)

References to tidying up and cleaning a house that “will never be clean” in order to make it look like something it is not —no matter how hard they try— can be related to the central message of the piece, repeated throughout the song up to twelve

times: “We tried and we failed”. From the beginning of the theme, the singing persona is expressing that he or she is tired of the life they are living, and “[t]he low-life has lost its appeal”. This sentiment can be related to the craving for a better life and social upgrading typical of the working-class characters trying to escape from their lives in Kitchen Sink films. They might be in love, but they are poor and unhappy with their situation, and as we observed in Jack Clayton’s *Room at the Top*, love is not enough.

However, Morrissey’s most devoted work to honour Shelagh Delaney was arguably his lyrics to The Smiths’ song “This Night Has Opened My Eyes”. As he acknowledges, “‘This Night Has Opened My Eyes’ is *A Taste of Honey* song putting the entire play to words. But I have never in my life made any secrets of my reference points” (Pye 30).

Morrissey’s lyrics to The Smiths’ song “This Night Has Opened My Eyes” retell Jo’s story from the second act onwards. Although Jo does not want to have the child she is expecting, she has come to terms with her situation by the end of the play. What happens next, however, it is not said. She may or may not have had her baby. She might have given it up for adoption, or she might have kept it. Whatever her decision was, life goes on.

In the opening verse of the song, we are presented with the idea of a baby emerging (being born) from a river the colour of lead:

In a river the colour of lead
emerge the baby’s head¹²
wrap her up in the News [o]f [t]he World¹³
dump her on a doorstep, girl

These four lines contain several references to Shelagh Delaney’s play. In the first place, the description of the river in the first line of the song is taken from Act II, Scene I, when Jo complains about the filth surrounding the place: “This place stinks. . . . That river, it’s the colour of lead. Look at that washing, it’s dirty, and look at those filthy children” (54).

¹² However, these lines have been interpreted as an attempt to terminate the baby’s life by submerging her head under the water, probably due to the similarity between the words *immerse* and *emerge*, from the Latin *ēmergō*, meaning “to bring forth, bring to light, to come forth, come out, to rise up, emerge” (perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0059:entry=emergo).

¹³ A cross-reference with another classic Kitchen Sink film, *Room at the Top*: “A Sunday treat of fish and chips, wrapped in a greasy ‘News of the World’” (*Room at the Top* 00:06:43).

A few lines forwards into the play, we find the source of the reference made in the third and the fourth lines of the song:

JO. What a pretty little dress.
GEOF. It's got to wear something. You can't just wrap it up in a bundle of newspaper.
JO. And dump it on a doorstep. . . . (55)

Geoffrey and Jo, the expectant mother, are talking about the baby she is going to have, even though she is not very happy with her condition, and frequently talks about different ways of getting rid of it:

JO. . . . I'll bash it's brains out. I'll kill it. I don't want his baby, Geof. I don't want to be a mother. I don't want to be a woman.
GEOF. Don't say that, Jo.
JO. I'll kill it when it comes, Geof, I'll kill it (75)

Geoffrey tries to reassure her by talking about the baby's father, of whom Jo says,

JO. . . . He was only a dream I had.
.....
GEOF. Oh well, the dream's gone, but the baby's real enough. (75)

These lines were incorporated into the song through the couplet: "The dream has gone / but the baby is real". The following lines of the song present a series of dichotomies (poet versus fool; good thing versus bad thing; happy versus sad) that reflect Jo's contradictory feelings about her baby:

oh you did a good thing
she could have been a poet
or, she could have been a fool
oh you did a bad thing
and I'm not happy
and I'm not sad (The Smiths, "This Night Has Opened my Eyes")

The last pair of lines in this verse of the song has its correlate at the end of Act I, Scene II of Shelagh Delaney's play:

HELEN. I don't suppose you're sorry to see me go.
JO. I'm not sorry and I'm not glad. (44)

In this scene, Jo is acting distant because Helen—who does not yet know she is pregnant—is leaving her to marry her last conquest.

In the same vein as Shelagh Delaney's play, Morrissey's lyrics do not provide a definite answer to the question of whether Jo finally had her baby or whether she had it and placed it for adoption. The message conveyed and repeated throughout The Smiths' song can be thought of as being addressed to women in Jo's situation:

“So, save your life / because you've only got one” and, as it occurs in the play, no matter what happens, or what you ultimately decide, life goes on.

Morrissey's fascination for Shelagh Delaney's play *A Taste of Honey* pervaded some other of his songs, and more fragments of Shelagh Delaney's text were adapted to fit Morrissey's lyrics to The Smiths' songs, as in "Reel Around The Fountain": "I dreamt about you last night / and I fell out of bed twice", initially written in the play as follows:

JO. Dream of me.
BOY: I dreamt about you last night. Fell out of bed twice. (26)

This is a word-by-word transposition from the original text from Act I Scene II, when Jimmy (called *Boy* in the play) is first introduced in the play, and they have already spent some time together.

There are two more quotations from *A Taste of Honey* in The Smiths' song "Hand in Glove" related to Jimmy:

And if the people stare
then, the people stare
I really don't know
and I really don't care

These lines are a reworked form of Jo's answer to her boyfriend when he kisses her at the entrance to her house, and he asks her:

BOY: Afraid someone'll see us?
JO. I don't care
BOY: Say that again.
JO. I don't care.
BOY: You mean it too. You're the first girl I've met who really didn't care. (22-23)

As commented earlier in this paper, Jimmy is described in the stage directions for the play as "*a coloured naval rating*" (22). A young, white girl being kissed by a black man in the street certainly was a disturbing image in the conservative British society of 1958, when the play was written and performed in theatres. The lyrics of The Smiths' song repeat Jo's statement against racial discrimination. This time, however, the unspoken minority here is not the black community, but homosexuals: "No, it's NOT like any other love / this one is different / because it's us!" Morrissey's lyrics are

said to have homosexuality as an underlying theme running through many of his songs, and his own sexuality has been a matter of discussion for nearly forty years¹⁴.

The second reference to *A Taste of Honey* found in The Smiths' song "Hand in Glove" can be observed in the line: "I'll probably never see you again", repeated three times at the end of the song. This is another direct quotation from the play, taken from Act I, Scene II, when Jo tells her boyfriend: ". . . I'll probably never see you again. I know it" (38).

Further references to Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey* can be found in The Smiths' songs "Barbarism Begins at Home", "Shoplifters of the World Unite", or "I Don't Owe You Anything", amongst others.

Morrissey's lyrics to The Smiths' songs introduced Shelagh Delaney's work to a significant number of fans around the world. His profound devotion to Shelagh Delaney was rewarded when, towards the end of her days —as her daughter Charlotte Delaney recalls— she told her: "'When I'm dead you can take care of *A Taste of Honey*,' she said. 'And send that Morrissey chap something from me.' Done and done" (C. Delaney).

5. Conclusions

All through this paper, we have provided evidence enough to conclude that, as we hinted in the introduction, The Smiths' work and Kitchen Sink films share common ground in the British tradition of Social Realism. We rest this claim on the fact that both —Kitchen Sink films and the songs of the Mancunian band— are constructed upon a tight relationship between character and place, portraying realistic working-class characters and issues against the backdrop of a social clash that ranges from latent to evident.

In the first half of this research paper, after a compendious history of British Social Realism, we established that the Documentary Movement, the Social Problem

¹⁴ An unconcealed blurredness in the boundaries of gender and sexuality has been celebrated by the members of The Smiths and their fans all over the world since the beginning of the band. Terms such as *homosexuality*, *celibacy*, or *asexuality* are commonly associated with Morrissey in papers, articles, books, and academic essays written about him or the band (see *Why Pamper Life's Complexities? Essays on the Smiths*).

film, and the Free Cinema movement comprise the solid foundations of the subgenre that emerged in the late 1950s within the British New Wave, the Kitchen Sink cinema. Specifically, we determined that this brief cinematographic movement nourished from Jennings's poetic documentary style, adopted the thematic issues of the Social Problem film, and incorporated the filmmaking techniques of the Free Cinema movement as its own.

By analysing Shelagh Delaney's play *A Taste of Honey* and its film adaptation, we identified some of the typical features of Social Realism that uphold this film as part of the Kitchen Sink cycle. More interesting, though, the analysis revealed the uniqueness of this film within its peers and offered us a glimpse of the elements that Morrissey—as the lyricist of The Smiths— would later integrate within his lyric creations, as we displayed in the following chapter.

Throughout the second half of this research paper, comparative textual analyses have been carried on to isolate defining features of Social Realism in Kitchen Sink films, specifically in *A Taste of Honey*. By comparing this film with the extensive analysis conducted on the seventy songs Morrissey wrote for The Smiths, we have been able to determine that both share the common background of British Social Realism.

Building from previous works on Kitchen Sink films and The Smiths, we have established a direct relationship between fragments of social realist texts of the 1950s and 1960s and Morrissey's lyrics for The Smiths.

The original contribution of this paper to the academic study of The Smiths' work revolves around the presentation of the results obtained by the comparative analysis of the source texts with The Smiths' lyrics. A detailed location of the fragments quoted in the lyrics of The Smiths' songs has been provided so that the reader can easily locate the quotation, reference, or allusion in the films and texts from which the fragments were extracted. We have also included a brief contextualisation of these borrowings into the broader frame of the song or the film in order to compare them to each other.

Due to constraints on the length of this paper, we have only been able to lightly touch on a few topics that we consider interesting enough for further research, such as the role of women in British cinema in the 1950s and 1960s or the broad topic of literary, cultural, and popular references that suffused the lyrics of Morrissey and The Smiths.

This paper has provided a sample of how intricate references and allusions interweave within The Smiths' songs, endowing them with a richness far removed from the vacuity of most pop songs and transforming them into a riddle for fans and researchers to find hidden meanings and unexpected connections yet to be discovered.

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The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner. Directed by Tony Richardson, British Lion Films, 21 Sept. 1962.

This Sporting Life. Directed by Lindsay Anderson, The Rank Organisation, 7 Feb. 1963.

Appendix

Kitchen Sink Drama Cycle - Selected Works and Its Sources

Year	Original work	Author	Film	Director	Year
1956	Look Back In Anger (play)	John Osborne			
1957	Room at the Top (novel)	John Braine			
1958	Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (novel)	Alan Sillitoe			
	A Taste of Honey (play)	Shelagh Delaney			
1959	Billy Liar (novel)	Keith Waterhouse	Room at the Top	Jack Clayton	
	The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner (short story)	Alan Sillitoe	Look Back In Anger	Tony Richardson	1959
1960	A Kind of Loving (novel)	Stan Barstow			
	This Sporting Life (novel)	David Storey	Saturday Night and Sunday Morning	Karel Reisz	1960
	Billy Liar (play)	K. Waterhouse & W. Hall			
			A Taste of Honey	Tony Richardson	1961
			A Kind of Loving	John Schlesinger	1962
			The Loneliness of the LDR	Tony Richardson	
			Billy Liar	John Schlesinger	1963
			This Sporting Life	Lindsay Anderson	

Source: own creation