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## Towards 'a new drama for television'

### *Diary of a Young Man and The End of Arthur's Marriage*

Ken Loach was born in Nuneaton, Warwickshire on 17 June 1936. Born into a respectable working-class family (his father was a foreman in a machine-tools factory), Loach succeeded in winning a scholarship that allowed him to go to grammar school. A spell of National Service in the RAF followed before Loach proceeded to St Peter's College, Oxford to read Law. At Oxford he became active in the Oxford University Drama Society (of which he became President). Opting for the theatre rather than law on graduation, he worked as an actor before winning sponsorship from ABC Television to train as a director at Northampton Repertory Company. In a subsequent move that might be said to have transformed his life, he then joined the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) as a trainee television director in August 1963.

The time at which Loach entered the BBC constituted a period of significant change both within television and society more generally. In the case of the BBC, Hugh Greene had become the new Director-General at the beginning of 1960. In a speech in Germany in 1958, Greene had boldly declared that public-service television could 'dare to be experimental and adventurous' and he subsequently presided over what has been widely regarded as a period of liberalisation and innovation at the BBC.<sup>15</sup> In this, he was provided with extra ammunition by the *Report of the Committee on Broadcasting 1960* (chaired by Sir Harry Pilkington and presented to Parliament in June 1962). Although the growing popularity of ITV during the 1950s had placed the BBC under increasing pressure to increase audience share in order to justify the continuation of the licence fee, the Pilkington Report was clear that television should not simply give 'the public what it wants', suggesting how this could lead to 'a lack of variety and originality' and 'an adherence to what was "safe"'.<sup>16</sup> As a result, the Report suggested it should be the responsibility of television to 'focus a spotlight' on 'the growing points' of social change and to 'be ready and anxious to experiment, to show the new and unusual, to give a hearing to dissent'.<sup>17</sup> In this way, as John Caughie suggests, the Pilkington Report not only restated the importance of public-service broadcasting in the face of

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15. Quoted in Michael Tracey, *A Variety of Lives: A Biography of Sir Hugh Greene* (London: Bodley Head, 1983), p. 166.

16. *Report of the Committee on Broadcasting 1960*, Cmnd. 1753 (London: HMSO, 1962), p. 16. The Report famously summed up these criticisms in terms of a trend towards 'triviality'.

17. *Report of the Committee on Broadcasting 1960*, p. 20.

commercial competition but also offered an 'enabling discourse' that lent support to innovation and experiment within the BBC.<sup>18</sup>

Although innovation was evident across a range of genres (as in the case of the late-night satirical programme *That Was the Week That Was*, launched in 1962), it would be fair to say that it was in the area of television drama that the readiness to experiment, and to give expression to new and dissenting voices, was most evident. A significant contributory factor in this respect was the arrival of Sydney Newman as the BBC's Head of Drama in January 1963. Newman was a Canadian who had moved to Britain in 1958 to take over as Head of Drama at the ITV company, ABC TV. Inspired by the new directions in British theatre inaugurated by John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* in 1956, he quickly acquired a reputation for encouraging new kinds of writing and directing attuned to 'the dynamic changes taking place in the Britain of today' by virtue of his productions for ABC's 'Armchair Theatre' such as Alun Owen's *No Trams to Lime Street* (tx. 18 October 1959), Clive Exton's *Where I Live* (tx. 10 January 1960) and Harold Pinter's *A Night Out* (tx. 24 April 1960).<sup>19</sup> On his arrival at the BBC, one of Newman's first moves was to reorganise the Drama Department into different groups responsible for series, serials and single plays and encourage the emergence of popular new programmes such as *Doctor Who*, launched in 1963. However, Newman was also conscious, following Pilkington, that plays should be regarded as 'more than trivial entertainment' and that his department should produce plays that sought not only to 'interpret their age' but also to do so through 'a new kind of dramatic communication.'<sup>20</sup> In this respect, Newman was also articulating the growing sense of dissatisfaction with the prevailing conventions of television drama that had already begun to gather momentum within the BBC.

### 'Nats Go Home'

For while ABC's Armchair Theatre may have succeeded in introducing new kinds of contemporary material into television drama, and encouraged a freer use of cameras, there was still a strong sense among a growing number of producers and writers that television had failed to find the new forms of expression equivalent to those found in the 'new waves' of British theatre and cinema. While this could be attributed, in part, to the constraints of technology, it was also the result of aesthetic choices. In the early 1960s, the bulk of television drama was still shot in the studio, employing a limited number of sets and often transmitted live. Although the introduction of videotape in 1958 had allowed drama to be pre-recorded, it remained expensive and cumbersome to use and extensive editing was discouraged. As a result the recording of television drama remained very close to the live broadcast, normally consisting of a continuous recording following a few days of studio rehearsal. Thus, while John Caughie draws attention to the increased camera mobility involved in the recording of television drama during the late 1950s and early 1960s, he also suggests how the dominant aesthetic of television remained wedded to the idea of theatrical

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18. Caughie, *Television Drama*, p. 87. Caughie's account of the significance of the Pilkington Report is part of a larger argument suggesting how 'the Golden Age' of television drama in the 1960s should be understood within the greater context of post-war political and cultural shifts.

19. Newman quoted in Philip Purser, 'Head of Drama,' *Contrast* vol. 2 no. 1, Autumn 1962, p. 36.

20. Sydney Newman, 'Drama,' *Journal of the Society for Film and Television Arts* no. 15, Spring 1964, p. 4.

performance and the use of the studio as a ‘performative space.’<sup>21</sup> Although this aesthetic was regarded by some as well suited to the specific characteristics of the television medium, others were coming to the conclusion that television drama must break free of the ‘proscenium presentation’ associated with traditional forms of television drama.<sup>22</sup> As early as 1956, the Head of Television Drama at the BBC, Michael Barry, had established an Experimental Group to consider the role of experimental television programmes in the development of new production methods, including the exploration of ‘new methods of storytelling and ... stories that cannot be told in conventional form.’<sup>23</sup> This eventually led to the establishment of the short-lived Langham Group, led by Anthony Pélissier, which became responsible for a small number of experimental dramas, including *Torrents of Spring* (tx. 21 May 1959) and *Mario* (tx. 15 December 1959), devoted to the testing of new techniques. Although the Group explored new methods of camera movement, montage and sound, its efforts met with a mixed response and critics attacked the Group’s work for being too preoccupied with experiment for its own sake.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, the Group’s enthusiasm for moving beyond the limits of conventional television drama, and employing more visual forms of storytelling, survived in a growing campaign against what came to be identified as television ‘naturalism’. This was expressed most famously in a manifesto, ‘Nats Go Home’, written by Troy Kennedy Martin and published in Spring 1964 in *Encore*, a magazine strongly associated with the new currents in British theatre. As its title indicates, the main focus of Kennedy Martin’s critique is ‘naturalism’ which he insists is ‘the wrong form for drama for the medium.’<sup>25</sup> From a contemporary point of view, the choice of the term ‘naturalism’ may appear to be an odd one, given that it is not the features commonly associated with naturalism (such as the representation of contemporary realities) that are Kennedy Martin’s main object of attack. However, at the time the manifesto was written, the idea of ‘naturalism’ was largely understood to refer to the ‘theatrical’ approach to television drama that prevailed at the time and it is certainly this that Kennedy Martin was criticising when he declared that ‘[a]ll drama which owes its form or substance to theatre plays is OUT.’<sup>26</sup> For Kennedy Martin, this theatrical – or ‘naturalist’

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21. Caughie, *Television Drama*, p. 77.

22. This was the view of the former film director, and leader of the Langham Group, Anthony Pélissier, in the *Radio Times*, 11 December 1959, p. 4.

23. Minutes of the meeting of the Experimental Group, 30 May 1956, BBCWAC T5/2147/1.

24. For an assessment of the Langham Group, see John Hill, “‘Creative in Its Own Right’: The Langham Group and the Search for a New Television Drama”, in Laura Mulvey and Jamie Sexton (eds), *Experimental British Television* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 17–30.

25. Troy Kennedy Martin, ‘Nats Go Home: First Statement of a New Television Drama’, *Encore*, March–April 1964, p. 21.

26. Kennedy Martin, ‘Nats Go Home’, p. 23. Although he mainly uses the term ‘naturalism’ as a synonym for televised theatre, Kennedy Martin also follows Brecht in identifying naturalism with the theatrical tradition associated with the work of the Russian director Konstantin Stanislavsky at the Moscow Art Theatre. Stanislavsky’s ideas had, of course, been taken up by the Actors Studio in New York, founded by Lee Strasberg in 1947, and gone on to enter television through the plays of Paddy Chayefsky (the author of the famous 1953 television play *Marty* starring Actors Studio alumnus Rod Steiger). For Kennedy Martin, however, the ‘Method’s’ enthusiasm for a dramaturgy of psychological motivation and vulgarised Freudianism simply reinforced the performance-driven theatricality of television and failed to provide the kind of access to ‘interior thought’ that he believed non-naturalistic forms could deliver.

– approach to television drama was characterised by a number of key features. ‘“Nat” plays’, he argues, involve the telling of ‘a story by means of dialogue’ rather than other means; they work within ‘a strict form of natural time’ in which ‘studio-time equals drama-time equals Greenwich Mean Time’, and they rely heavily upon the use of close-ups – the photographing of ‘faces talking and faces reacting’ – which it was assumed would act ‘subjectively upon the viewer’ to generate emotional involvement in ‘a character’s predicament’. For Kennedy Martin, therefore, the ambition of ‘the new drama’ had to be to challenge these conventions and to ‘free the camera from photographing dialogue ... free the structure from natural time’ and abandon the pursuit of subjective identification with characters through the exploitation of ‘the total and absolute objectivity of the television camera.’<sup>27</sup> Kennedy Martin’s arguments are not always as clear as they might be and, subsequently, there has been debate regarding the precise meaning of some the terms he employs, including his notion of the television camera’s ‘objectivity.’<sup>28</sup> However, Kennedy Martin’s essay was not simply a piece of theory but was accompanied by an extract from a screenplay that he and John McGrath had written (and which was then under negotiation with the BBC).<sup>29</sup> Although, for a time, it looked as though it would not proceed to production, the script subsequently became a six-part series, entitled *Diary of a Young Man*, broadcast on BBC1 during August and September 1964. The original idea appears to have been that McGrath would direct the series. In the event, however, the job went to two relative newcomers: Kenneth Loach (who directed Episodes 1, 3 and 5) and Peter Duguid (who directed the rest).<sup>30</sup>

### ‘Teletales’: *Catherine* (1964)

Although *Diary of a Young Man* was accompanied by an ‘experimental’ manifesto, the series itself was conceived as a mainstream production, broadcast on a primetime Saturday slot on BBC1 and featured on the cover of the *Radio Times*. It is therefore testimony to the Drama Department’s spirit of adventure (or possibly shortage of TV directors) that the direction of the series should be entrusted to two relative novices. As already noted, Loach had only joined the BBC the previous year when he had been recruited for a trainee directors’ course established in anticipation of the launch of the BBC’s second channel, BBC2, in 1964. According to Loach, the course only lasted six weeks after which he was expected to direct his first play.<sup>31</sup> This consisted of a contribution to the late-night series ‘Teletales’ which was to prove significant in terms not only of the people with

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27. Kennedy Martin, ‘Nats Go Home’, p. 25.

28. My own assessment of Kennedy Martin’s position may be found in ‘A “New Drama for Television”?: *Diary of a Young Man*’, in Mulvey and Sexton, *Experimental British Television*, pp. 48–69.

29. Kennedy Martin and McGrath had previously worked together on the long-running police series, *Z Cars*, for which Kennedy Martin wrote, and McGrath directed, the very first episode, ‘Four of a Kind’ (tx. 2 January 1962). Following their departure from *Z Cars*, the pair worked on *Diary of a Young Man*, although the precise contribution of each has since become a matter of dispute. See Lez Cooke, *Troy Kennedy Martin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 79–81.

30. For a long time, only one episode (Episode 1) was known to have survived. However, two further episodes (Episodes 5 and 6) were later ‘discovered’.

31. Fuller, *Loach on Loach*, p. 6.

whom he came into contact but also the ideas about television drama to which they adhered. The producer of the series was the young Scottish producer, director and actor, James MacTaggart who had won critical acclaim for his production, in the BBC's Glasgow studio, of Jack Gerson's *Three Ring Circus* (tx. 2 February 1961). This had then led to an invitation to join the BBC in London to work, with Troy Kennedy Martin, on the drama series 'Storyboard' (tx. July–September 1961). Although this series consisted of literary adaptations, it was nonetheless promoted as an innovative attempt to tell – in 'visual terms' – stories with a 'strong narrative thread'.<sup>32</sup> What this meant in practice was described by John McGrath who recalls how the team sought 'to get away from ... the whole pseudo-theatrical approach to television' in order 'to create narrative drama' that, in the case of one episode of the series, involved the use of thirty-six settings in thirty minutes (despite the live conditions of broadcast).<sup>33</sup>

A similar philosophy of 'visual storytelling' also underpinned the approach to 'Teletales', which consisted of a mixture of adaptations and original plays written by Roger Smith and Christopher Williams. Smith and Williams had worked with MacTaggart on the follow-up to 'Storyboard' – the series 'Studio 4' (tx. January–September 1962) – and it was they who conceived the rationale for 'Teletales':

The stories will be told with maximum economy and condensation. The juxtaposition of scenes and the cutting between them will be crucial to the narrative. The style of narration will be fluid, using and exploring the resources of framing, camera mobility and studio space. Narrative and camera will select the relevant 'information' in each scene. We hope that this method will allow us to liberate the action from the accepted necessities of naturalism, while not detracting from the interest of the story.<sup>34</sup>

What this meant in practice is revealed in Loach's contribution to the series, an original play by Smith called *Catherine* (tx. 24 January 1964) dealing with the experiences of a young woman (played by Kika Markham) following the break-up of her marriage. Described by MacTaggart as 'breaking most of the accepted rules of television', the play was shot in a bare studio with no conventional sets.<sup>35</sup> In order to achieve maximum narrative 'fluidity', the production employed an anonymous narrator, used lighting to signal changes in scene and cut extensively, employing over 120 shots in less than thirty minutes. This was partly due to the inclusion of short montage sequences that condensed the narrative action as when Catherine is shown dining with a succession of unappealing men.<sup>36</sup> Thus, from the very beginning of his television career, Loach was encouraged to adopt an experimental approach to television and was involved with associates – MacTaggart and Smith – with whom he would continue to work (most notably on 'The

32. *Radio Times*, 20 July 1961, p. 51.

33. John McGrath, 'TV Drama: The Case against Naturalism', *Sight and Sound*, Spring 1977, p. 103.

34. Memo from Roger Smith and Christopher Williams to Elwyn Jones, BBCWAC T5/2399/1. In an interview linked to the launch of 'Teletales', MacTaggart praised Smith and Williams for 'doing things which are way out and crazy' and stressed the need 'to write in terms of the pictures' and not just the words. See Marjorie Bilbow, 'Writers Are Afraid of Medium's Limitations', *The Stage and Television Today*, 9 January 1964, p. 10.

35. *Radio Times*, 16 January 1964, p. 45.

36. Although the play was recorded, no copy of *Catherine* appears to have survived. I am therefore relying on the shooting script and contemporary accounts of the production for information.

Wednesday Play').<sup>37</sup> Perhaps even more significantly, *Catherine* was the first production to team Loach up with his future story editor and producer, Tony Garnett. At this stage Garnett was still an actor, playing the role of Richard, Catherine's husband. However, partly encouraged by Smith, Garnett was himself set to join the BBC Drama Department as a story editor, initially working with MacTaggart and Smith on the 'First Night' series, and then as a producer responsible for some of Loach's most famous work for the newly established 'Wednesday Play'.

### 'Television of the first order': *Diary of a Young Man*

Following *Catherine*, Loach went on to direct three episodes of the long-running police series *Z Cars*, first broadcast in 1962. This provided him with invaluable experience on one of the BBC's most popular programmes and, even though the bulk of the action was set in the studio, it also furnished him with a first opportunity to shoot inserts on 35mm film. However, it was undoubtedly due to his involvement in *Diary of a Young Man* that he first began to acquire a reputation as a television director. Although not all the reviews of the series were favourable, there was a general recognition that the series had set out to do something new and reinvent, as Peter Black put it, the 'grammar' of television drama.<sup>38</sup> Within the BBC, Sydney Newman was especially enthusiastic, writing to James MacTaggart to tell him that the first episode of the series, which Loach had directed, would be 'regarded in the years to come as a major breakthrough in television story telling' comparable to *No Trams to Lime Street* five years before. 'I could be wrong', he continued, 'but for sheer variety in the total use made of live action, film and stills combined with the highly original and imaginative use of words, music and sound effects, this is television of the first order.'<sup>39</sup> As Newman's comments indicate, *Diary of a Young Man* may also be seen to have delivered the kind of 'anti-naturalist' drama that Kennedy Martin's manifesto had promised.

The story itself concerns the escapades of two northerners, Joe (Victor Henry) and Ginger (Richard Moore), who arrive in London at the start of Episode 1 in pursuit of 'a bird, a pad and some money'. Partly modelled on the picaresque novel, the story is narrated by Joe and consists of a series of loosely connected episodes in which the central figure Joe (a character of 'low estate') undergoes various encounters with characters in a more economically and socially advantaged position.<sup>40</sup> In line with Troy Kennedy Martin's call to break free of the temporal and spatial constraints of conventional studio drama, however, the story is told with a degree of disregard for both surface

37. Smith has, in fact, remained one of Loach's collaborators throughout his career, reuniting with Loach in the 1990s to act as a script consultant on a number of films, including *Land and Freedom* (1995), *My Name Is Joe* (1998), *Bread and Roses* (2000), *The Navigators* (2001), *Sweet Sixteen* (2002), *Ae Fond Kiss ...* (2004), *It's a Free World ...* (2007) and *Looking for Eric* (2009).

38. *Daily Mail*, 10 August 1964.

39. Memo from Head of Drama Group, Television, to James MacTaggart, 13 August 1964, BBCWAC T5/630/1.

40. Kennedy Martin's debt to the eighteenth-century picaresque novel may be linked to his preference for 'story rather than plot' ('Nats Go Home', p. 31). This, in turn, appears to draw on Brecht's distinction between 'dramatic theatre', which he associates with 'plot' and 'epic theatre', which he identifies with 'narrative' and 'story'. See 'The Modern Theatre Is Epic Theatre' in *Brecht on Theatre*, trans. John Willett (London: Eyre Methuen, 1964), p. 37.



'A major breakthrough in television storytelling'

verisimilitude and psychological realism. The drama itself employs a familiar narrative of arrival in which an 'innocent' is faced with an unexpected series of events. The emphasis, however, is less on Joe's personal and psychological growth than on the situations into which his character is propelled and the revelations about contemporary society that may be derived from them. As a result, the people that Joe meets are less 'rounded' characters than social types who occupy particular social positions or roles such as clerk, constable or businessman. Indeed, as if to reinforce the drama's lack of interest in psychological realism, certain actors – such as Frank Williams – play more than one part or – in the case of Glynn Edwards who plays a variety of policemen as well as a prison officer – variations on the same part. As this might suggest, the series also demonstrates a strong satirical impulse (undoubtedly influenced by the iconoclasm of programmes such as *That Was the Week That Was*), poking fun at the 'establishment' and seeking to lay bare the greed and hypocrisy with which it is associated.<sup>41</sup> Thus, in Episode 1, there is a montage of the London 'rat race' consisting of shots of various members of the establishment – MPs (including actual footage of the then Conservative Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas Home), military personnel, policemen and bankers – as they leave work. The sequence then concludes with some of the same 'generals, admirals and detectives' being welcomed by a 'model' as they go through a Soho doorway (this, it will be recalled, was only one year after the Profumo affair).<sup>42</sup> Joe himself is invested with rather more psychological depth but is also a social type fashioned along the lines of the sexually aggressive northern working-class hero derived from the social-realist literature and films of the period. The series also inherits much of the 'masculinism' of this tradition, organising the story in terms of male experience and linking Joe's ('rake's') progress with the sexual conquest of women of higher social status

41. The idea of the 'establishment' achieved growing currency during the late 1950s and was the title of a collection edited by the historian Hugh Thomas in 1959. The term gained an added resonance when Peter Cook and Nicholas Luard opened a satirical nightclub in Soho called 'The Establishment' (which, in effect, cemented satire as an 'anti-establishment' phenomenon).

42. A War Minister in Harold Macmillan's Conservative government, John Profumo was forced to resign in 1963 when it was revealed that he had been conducting a relationship with a call-girl, Christine Keeler, who was simultaneously involved with an official from the Soviet embassy. His liaison not only became a rich source of satire but also came to symbolise the apparent 'decadence' of a political party that had been in power since 1951.

(Rose in Episode 1, Fred in Episode 5).<sup>43</sup> This is particularly evident in Episode 1 when Joe's growing resentment of Rose (Nerys Hughes), and her supposed humiliation of him, leads to him effectively forcing his way into her flat and then into her bed. Although, as indicated below, the series acquired a reputation for sexual explicitness, the 'virility' of the working-class hero had, by this time, become such a familiar landmark that Joe's misogynistic outbursts ('All I wanted to do was to strip her and take her like the empty thing she was, a doll, a useless object who humiliated Ginger and me') went virtually unnoticed (or was simply attributed to the character's boorishness).

In line with Kennedy Martin's call for less dependence upon dialogue, Joe is also employed as a narrator, telling the story in the style of a diary entry. However, the use of voiceover is not always consistent (verging at times on recitation) and also creates a degree of disjunction with the way that Joe's character is otherwise shown. Much of Joe's narration, for example, is told in a *faux-naïf* style suggestive of his deprived background (in an orphanage) and poor education. However, at various points within the series Joe acquires an articulacy and intelligence at odds with the simple persona suggested by the voiceover. Thus, in the first episode when Joe and Ginger end up in Covent Garden after a night's drinking, their encounter with Uncle Arthur (Will Stamp) provides the pretext for a debate about the Blitz in which Joe demonstrates sufficient knowledge of World War II (including a grasp of relevant statistics) for Uncle Arthur to suspect he is 'a student, a reader of books, an intellectual'. In this way, Joe functions less as a conventional, psychologically coherent character than an 'Everyman' pressed into the service of a variety of 'gestic' social encounters illustrative of prevailing social attitudes and dispositions.<sup>44</sup>

As such, *Diary of a Young Man* may also be understood as a drama of ideas rather than simply actions. In his account of television naturalism, Kennedy Martin had argued that:

When it deals with people's personal relationship with God, or with nature, or with themselves it does by refraction through some dialogue style. When it deals with any of the abstracts – fear, impotence, hunger, hate, love or hope it does so indirectly through symbols or again through dialogue with other people – wife, colleague or even a stranger.<sup>45</sup>

In certain respects, this desire to deal with 'abstracts', and to find a new televisual vocabulary in which to do so, also underpins *Diary of a Young Man*. This may be seen in Episode 5, 'Life or a Girl Called Fred' (directed by Loach), which deals explicitly, if somewhat ironically, with the question of 'the meaning of life'. In this Joe meets a beautiful older woman, Fred (Jean Marsh), at his new place of work, a public-relations firm. After they have slept together, Joe reveals that he is in fact married and Fred threatens to commit suicide. In order to prevent Fred from taking her own life, Joe then embarks upon a pursuit of 'the meaning of life' that involves a wide-ranging tour of people who might assist him, including a psychiatrist, a biologist, a priest, the Chief of the British Beats,

43. This characteristic of working-class realism is discussed in John Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956–1963* (London: BFI, 1986), Ch. 7.

44. Brecht employed the idea of 'gest' to indicate how an interpretative attitude may be embedded in dramatic gestures and actions regarded as expressive of prevailing social relationships. 'The social gest', he argued, was 'the gest relevant to society, that allows conclusions to be drawn about the social circumstances.' See Brecht, 'On Gestic Music', in *Brecht on Theatre*, pp. 104–5.

45. Kennedy Martin, 'Nats Go Home', p. 24.



A 'gestic' encounter: Joe (Victor Henry) argues with Uncle Arthur (Will Stampe) in *Diary of a Young Man* (Episode 1)

a philosopher, the Chief Lord Justice, a Chelsea pensioner, the 'man in the street' and a Buddhist. As this description indicates, Joe's quest is presented less as a dramatically probable set of meetings than a series of emblematic encounters, shot through with elements of absurdism (the Chief Lord Justice, for example, is found in a supermarket where he is subsequently arrested for shoplifting). These meetings also follow on from each other with relatively few concessions to 'realism'. Hence, there are cuts from place to place – such as the biology lab to the priest's home (where Joe is shown enjoying a cooked breakfast) – with no attempt to explain how Joe got there, knew where to go or was in a position to make contact with these particular characters. Indeed, for James MacTaggart, this was one of the main virtues of the series which he referred to as 'taut, condensed and utterly devoid of flabby realistic fill in stuff'.<sup>46</sup>

In 'Nats Go Home', Kennedy Martin had, of course, called for an increased use of editing in order to condense dramatic action and excise the 'dead time' involved in the 'real time' of 'naturalistic' drama. This emphasis upon eliminating time in the interests of narrative economy is taken one step further by the extensive use of stills within *Diary of a Young Man*. The Langham Group appears to have made use of stills in *Mario* (1959) and one of the most distinctive features of MacTaggart's *Three Ring Circus* was the way in which it had employed extended montages of stills. In a similar manner, combinations of still images are employed in *Diary of a Young Man* to achieve a

46. Memo from James MacTaggart to HDGTel, 2 July 1964, BBCWAC T5/630/1.

quickened form of movement through time and space (and partly to capture something of the tempo of modern city life). Hence, in Episode 1 there is a montage, consisting of over fifty stills, showing Joe and Ginger spending a night 'on the tiles' in the company of various hangers-on and false friends. In a sequence such as this, the action (occurring over several hours and across a variety of London locations) is presented through a series of core images which, in Kennedy Martin's terms, 'distil' – rather than 'restate' – narrative information.<sup>47</sup> However, while montages such as this may, through the compression of time and space, provide a distillation of narrative action, they also permit a degree of departure from narrative linearity. In Episode 1, for example, one series of stills reveals Joe and Ginger's difficulties in obtaining a hotel. However, as this proceeds, the pace of cutting is increased and a number of stills are then repeated in a rearranged – and non-chronological – order.

What this indicates is how montage, and stills, can function not simply to speed up events but, in combination with voiceovers, provide a commentary upon them as well. As has been seen, the gathering 'anti-naturalist' movement had championed the use of a narrator, borrowed from the novel, as a means not only of freeing up time but (as in *Catherine*) allowing the viewer access to narrative information and commentary that could not be readily supplied through exchanges of dialogue alone. In *Diary of a Young Man*, the use of a first-person narration also permits an access to the main character's inner thoughts and reflection upon events that have occurred. Thus, in the case of the hotels montage, we do not simply see and hear what occurred but are presented with an attitude towards them as well. In this respect, the off-screen narration, when combined with stills and images of real people and places, takes on some of the characteristics of the documentary voiceover and the more discursive forms of exposition and explanation with which the documentary is associated. Thus, in Episode 5, there is a sequence in which Joe is shown sitting at the foot of Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square. As he meditates upon the meaning of life, the series of shots that follows mixes moving images of Trafalgar Square and other locations (such as a church and a railway station) with still images of both people (the Chief of the British Beats and the philosopher) and places (Buckingham Palace, the National Gallery, the law courts) relevant to Joe's quest. In this way, the combination of voiceover and montage assumes the characteristics of a short 'essay' in which the images are organised according to Joe's reflections (and his contemplation of 'abstracts') rather than chronicling his physical movements or dramatic actions.

In this way, such montages provide the access to the interior thought which Kennedy Martin had also sought to achieve by breaking with extended dialogue sequences. However, another significant feature of the programmes is that, at certain junctures, they abandon 'realism' altogether and include explicitly subjective sequences. This may be seen, for example, in Episode 1 when Joe and Ginger, having failed to find a place to stay, fall asleep at the foot of the Albert Memorial. A brief montage of both stills and camera shots of the Memorial then follows in which Joe imagines, in a style indebted to photomontage and pop art, the heads of members of The Beatles and Sir Alec Douglas Home to have been superimposed upon different statues. A more extended dream sequence occurs in Episode 5. In this, Fred, dressed only in her underwear, inspects a band of grenadier guards as well as the many people (such as the biologist, priest and Chelsea pensioner) to whom Joe has talked during the course of the episode. In a scene containing visual allusions to

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47. Kennedy Martin, 'Nats Go Home', p. 27.

*The Seventh Seal* (1957), these characters then pursue her across open land where she falls down a well-like hole. The faces of the gathered crowd are then seen, from her point of view, while a teleprinter at the bottom of the screen reports, in a manner reminiscent of the football results, the human voice's admission that it does not know the meaning of life. Fred then places the rope thrown down to her around her neck while the group proceeds to pull her to her death.

In this respect, *Diary of a Young Man* constitutes a kind of television drama that draws on a range of models. Although often referred to as Brechtian, due to its episodic structure, use of social types and in-built social commentary, it is also indebted to Eisensteinian forms of associative and intellectual montage, to the exploration of subjectivity and interiority characteristic of contemporary 'art cinema' (especially evident in the work of Alain Resnais) and to the newer forms of television documentary and current affairs. In his original article, Kennedy Martin does, of course, draw on examples from cinema in support of his case and much of the dissatisfaction with television drama at this time undoubtedly stemmed from the sense that television had failed to match the innovations that had occurred in cinema. Thus, as early as 1960, Anthony Pélissier, of the Langham Group, had despaired whether television drama would ever be in a position to 'reply' to '[f]ilms like "Hiroshima Mon Amour" or "The Boyar's Plot"'.<sup>48</sup> It is for these reasons that Kennedy Martin's manifesto is often interpreted as a call for television to move closer to cinema and shoot on film rather than in the television studio. In fact Kennedy Martin does not explicitly argue for television drama to be shot on film and, in a subsequent article, suggested that it is the telerecording of studio action (rather than discontinuous filming) that should provide the basis for the kind of editing of television drama that he envisaged.<sup>49</sup>

Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that it is the use of film in *Diary of a Young Man* that accounted for much of its distinctiveness. For while the inclusion of film inserts, shot on 35mm, was not uncommon in 1964, *Diary of a Young Man* was still unusual in the amount of film material it contained, and the way in which it is intercut throughout – rather than just at the beginning of – each episode. In this respect, it is the employment of film that is central to the film's success not only in freeing up temporal relations but also in showing contemporary city life and expressing the world of dreams and the unconscious. It is, perhaps, not surprising therefore that Tony Garnett (still an actor at this stage), in one of a number of responses to Kennedy Martin's manifesto to be published in *Encore*, should contend that 'the traditional differences between film (i.e. cinema) and television drama production are not essential differences, but accidental, historical or imaginary'. 'Once you deny the usefulness of the concept of absolute continuity', he went on, 'and admit editing after the event rather than the selection of available shots concurrent with the event, then most people would contend that you were making films.'<sup>50</sup> However, *Diary of a Young Man* also indicates that, while the adoption of film may encourage the break-up of the 'absolute continuity' of studio drama, it did not move television drama in a specific aesthetic direction. Although it was assumed that one of the advantages of filming on location would be added 'realism', the most striking film sequence directed by Loach in *Diary of a Young Man* is actually the dream sequence in Episode 5, which is heavily indebted to the 'art cinema' of Bergman and Fellini and clearly defies the norms of social

48. Letter from Pélissier to Michael Barry, 22 February 1960, BBCWAC T31/292.

49. Troy Kennedy Martin, 'Up the Junction and after', *Contrast*, Spring 1966, pp. 139–40.

50. 'Reaction', *Encore*, May–June 1964, p. 45.



An extended dream sequence in *Diary of a Young Man* (Episode 5)

realism. So, while *Diary of a Young Man* represents a significant stepping-stone in Loach's incorporation of film in television drama, it is not until 1967, with *In Two Minds*, that his productions for television are shot completely on film. Moreover, although Loach only makes limited use of stills in his subsequent work, the example of *Diary of a Young Man* continues to exert considerable influence over his subsequent work, particularly in terms of his use of storytelling techniques, voiceover and montage. So, while documentary-like methods of filming were set to become more prominent in Loach's work, they did not immediately supplant the elements of modernist experiment that continued to play a significant role in Loach's productions for at least another three years.

#### 'A television musical': *The End of Arthur's Marriage* (1965)

The clearest example of this may be found in one of Loach's productions of the following year, *The End of Arthur's Marriage* (tx. 17 November 1965). Filmed and recorded in May and June of 1965, the programme was initially withheld from transmission but then shown following the *cause célèbre* of *Up the Junction* (tx. 3 November 1965). The play had experienced difficulties during production and had run over budget with the result that the finished product was regarded as something of a failed experiment. Loach himself was later to suggest that the play was 'a total cock-up' and that he had lacked 'the technique or experience to bring it off'.<sup>51</sup> However, the play's apparent formlessness and excess of technical experiment undoubtedly made more sense following the success of the later production. Thus, while some reactions were lukewarm, there was also a degree of enthusiasm for what Peter Black described as the 'exciting new direction' in which the production was taking the television play.<sup>52</sup>

The play itself was co-written by the poet and humourist Christopher Logue who had previously contributed the songs to Harry Cookson's play, *The Lily-White Boys* (1960), satirising the

51. Fuller, *Loach on Loach*, p. 19.

52. Peter Black, *Daily Mail*, 18 November 1965. Despite the doubts about the play within his Department, Sydney Newman himself commented that the production was 'an advance on "Up the Junction" in its imaginative use of the medium and its ingenious story telling'. Television Weekly Programme Review Minutes, 24 November 1965, BBCWAC.

methods considered necessary to get ahead 'in Britain 1960'.<sup>53</sup> *The End of Arthur's Marriage* might equally be described as a satire, poking fun at both middle-class conformity and the rising tide of consumerism in 'Britain 1965'. However, whereas it was the young, sexually aggressive male (inherited from 'new wave' films such as *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* [1960]) who represented the 'Everyman' of *Diary of a Young Man*, the unlikely 'rebel' in *The End of Arthur's Marriage* is a hen-pecked husband Arthur (Ken Jones) who, according to the *Radio Times*, opts for 'a few hours' happiness' over 'a lifetime's boredom'.<sup>54</sup> At the play's beginning, Arthur is sent off by his family to place a deposit (provided by his father-in-law) on a house that his wife Mavis (Janie Booth) has found. However, when he loses the house to another family (who possess the requisite 'security'), he decides to take his daughter Emmy (Maureen Ampleford) on a shopping spree (on the grounds, as an anonymous narrator explains, that 'no one may ever spend a lot of money on her all at one go'). This not only involves a trip to Fortnum & Mason's but also to London Zoo where they acquire an elephant. The elephant attracts the attention of a number of mods on Lambrettas with whom Arthur enjoys an impromptu party aboard a canal barge. However, although he initially appears to have discovered a novel sense of liberation with his new-found companions, they end up abandoning him when, following a bout of fevered dancing with a half-dressed teenager, he throws his remaining cash into the canal.

As this might suggest, the play is hardly conventional in character. Described by story editor Roger Smith as 'a television musical' intended to 'break away from conventional dream-spinning and phoney realism', the production not only seeks to take television drama out of the studio but to integrate social observation with fantasy.<sup>55</sup> Whereas Loach's earlier work had contained sequences shot on 35mm, *The End of Arthur's Marriage* was the first to shoot extensively on 16mm with the result that the majority of scenes take place on location rather than in the studio. However, while shooting in actual locations clearly demonstrates the play's determination to break with the 'phoney realism' of the television studio, the use of film, as in *Diary*, is not governed by a 'realist' impulse so much as an enthusiasm for the absurd and surreal. In this respect, the production draws heavily on the example of the French *nouvelle vague* (and Godard, in particular) in the way in which it combines techniques associated with documentary (hand-held camera, natural light, casual camerawork, jagged editing, voiceovers) with formal experiment, in-jokes (including one at the expense of *Last Year in Marienbad* [1961]) and elements of modernist self-consciousness (such as the scene in which Loach himself appears in front of the camera arguing with another camera crew filming the real-life journalist Kenneth Allsop interviewing people on the street). As in *Diary of a Young Man*, these techniques may also be seen to draw upon both Eisensteinian montage and Brechtian 'epic' theatre.

Like *Diary of a Young Man*, the plot is loose and episodic, consisting of scenes that are primarily 'gestic' – rather than strictly narrative – in character. This is particularly so of the use of songs that constitute a substantial proportion of the production and provide many of the scenes with their *raison d'être*. Brecht himself had been drawn to 'the irrationality of the operatic form' in which

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53. Christopher Logue, *Songs from the Lily-White Boys* (Northwood: Scorpion Press, 1960), p. 2. Logue also compiled a column of unusual 'True Stories' for the satirical magazine *Private Eye*, one of which is believed to have inspired the idea for the play.

54. *Radio Times*, 11 November 1965, p. 41.

55. *Ibid.*



Self-consciousness about the film-making process: Loach appears in front of the camera in *The End of Arthur's Marriage*

it was possible for songs to occur in defiance of the norms of verisimilitude.<sup>56</sup> In a similar way, *Arthur's Marriage* makes use of song in order to sidestep the norms of psychological realism and allow characters to step outside the usual parameters of social behaviour. Thus, when Arthur and Emmy visit Fortnum & Mason's at the start of their shopping trip, they are served by an assistant (played by a youthful John Fortune) who unexpectedly begins to sing, quite literally, the praises of a ludicrously expensive watch ('it shows the phases of the moon, is waterproof, rustproof, anti-magnetic, has a stop-watch fixture, centre-second-sweep-hand, luminous numerals etched on its ivory face, a perpetual date-just, and built-in alarm ...'). In his account of 'epic opera', Brecht had also called for a 'separation of elements' in which '[w]ords, music and setting become more independent of each other.'<sup>57</sup> Logue (and Loach) were also keen to employ songs in a way that did not merely supplement the drama but also commented upon the action or provided a social and political interpretation of it. This is evident early on in the play when shots of Arthur's in-laws, engaged in 'ordinary' domestic activities, are accompanied by a song identifying them as 'little investors' and 'decent people' who pay their 'taxes' but also as 'boring' and 'frightened of negroes, Jews, intellectuals and sex maniacs'. Verses of the same song are also employed when Arthur leaves home, continuing over a short montage of aerial shots of suburbia (that anticipate a rather more muted introduction to suburbia in Loach's later film *Family Life*).

As this indicates, the use of songs (and film) within the production also encouraged various kinds of 'non-narrative' editing and montage (of the kind called for by Kennedy Martin). Although the production does not follow *Diary of a Young Man* in using stills, it does employ montage to traverse time and place and, in Kennedy Martin's sense, 'distil' a sequence of events. Thus, when Arthur and Emmy resume their shopping after a short break, the song 'Auntie Mary Had a Canary' accompanies a series of shots of the pair inside shops, and on the street, at different times of the day and, in Emmy's case, in different outfits. In other instances, the montages also incorporate extra-diegetic

56. Bertolt Brecht, 'Notes to the Opera *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*', in John Willett and Ralph Manheim (eds), *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny and the Seven Deadly Sins of the Petty Bourgeoisie* (London: Methuen, 1979, orig. 1927), p. 87.

57. Brecht, 'Notes to the Opera *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*', p. 89.

elements involving pre-existing footage. The presence of an African chef in a café, for example, provides the pretext for an (ideologically questionable) montage of images of his native land accompanied by his country's 'national anthem'. The couple's visit to the zoo also involves an extended sequence of footage of wild animals intercut with shots of 'Adam and Eve' evolving into a modern suburban couple. In this case, the soundtrack itself consists of a complicated montage of spoken and sung elements, combining spoken narration, musical variations, Keeper Bent's (Dickie Owen) half-sung recitation (about the end of a 'Zoo Called Paradise') and stanzas sung, in different musical styles, by members of a vocal group.

Given the play's musical character, and predilection for montage, the use of film does not invest the production with a particularly pronounced documentary character. Nevertheless, some of the most striking sequences communicate a new sense of excitement about the possibilities of location shooting (enlisting lightweight 16mm cameras). When Arthur and Emmy leave home, for example, there are a series of mobile hand-held shots of them walking along the street intercut with close-ups of their faces. This is one of the first examples of what Loach was later to describe as his 'go-in-and-grab-it type of filmmaking' in which actors are filmed in real locations among real people (and actual traffic that unexpectedly passes in front of them).<sup>58</sup> David Bordwell has suggested how modern European film-making (and particularly the tradition indebted to neo-realism) has converted 'the simple act of walking' into a dramatic event (rather than treating it as 'dead time' to be eliminated from the narrative).<sup>59</sup> In the same way, Loach's move out of the studio reveals a relish for the opportunity simply to show characters on the streets and scenes of characters walking are set to become a significant feature of many of the productions that follow, including *Up the Junction*, *The Coming Out Party* (1965) and *Cathy Come Home*. In his later work, these scenes, it will be argued, possess a sociological dimension involving a clearer 'documentation' of the places (or physical environments) in which people live. In *The End of Arthur's Marriage*, this documentary impulse is present but is subordinated to a more general interest in the strangeness of what is observed. This may be seen, for example, in the sequence in which Arthur and Emmy decide to take a shortcut through a disused gasworks and we see shots of them climbing a slag heap and engaging in relatively inconsequential conversation. During this sequence, the film also makes use of a number of voiceovers in which the history of the works is described. These, however, are not spoken by the narrator whom we have previously heard explaining the characters' situations and motivations but appear to be recordings (simulated or otherwise) of people associated with the gasworks. The inclusion of unidentified voices on the soundtrack is destined to become an important feature of both *Up the Junction* and *Cathy Come Home*, in which it serves as a mode of generalising out from the individual experience. Here, however, it is a relatively isolated device and the same sequence also involves a major change of gear when a couple on a scooter arrive and the song 'Kinky Dolly' (which is apparently playing on the radio belonging to the girl on the scooter) may be heard on the soundtrack. This leads to an impromptu dance with Emmy and Arthur (who is shown waving his coat at the scooter in the manner of a bullfighter before giving Emmy a piggy-back). No explanation is given for this and, like the later footage of the elephant leaving the zoo,

58. John Hill, 'Interview with Ken Loach', in McKnight, *Agent of Challenge and Defiance*, p. 162.

59. David Bordwell, *Figures Traced in Light: On Cinematic Staging* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 57.



'The simple act of walking':  
Arthur (Ken Jones) and Emmy (Maureen  
Ampleford) outside the gasworks in  
*The End of Arthur's Marriage*

the documentary elements of the film function in part to make the supposedly 'extraordinary' appear rather normal and 'ordinary'.

### 'Filth and depravity'

If *The End of Arthur's Marriage* stands as testimony to the continuing aesthetic influence of *Diary of a Young Man* (and Troy Kennedy Martin's ideas) upon Loach, it is also linked to the earlier production by a certain kind of confrontational stance towards the viewer. *Arthur's Marriage* begins with shots of youngsters on television dancing (à la *Ready, Steady Go!* [1963]) to the accompaniment of a pop song (performed by the r'n'b singer Long John Baldry) in which the singer recalls his disappointment on arriving in 'Heaven' with his 'bird' and finding 'too many things you couldn't do, and things you couldn't touch.' The programme on TV is intercut with shots of an elderly couple (Arthur's in-laws) watching the dancers with a growing sense of dismay before 'Dad' (Charles Lamb) attempts to switch channel using a newly acquired 'armchair selector'. While the scene clearly signals, at an early stage, the play's critique of middle-class conformity and narrow-mindedness, it also acknowledges, in a playfully self-referential way, the upset to audiences for which television, including television drama, may be responsible. Partly because of the domestic circumstances in which television was viewed, there was particular sensitivity among broadcasters about the inclusion of material in programmes that viewers, like those in *Arthur's Marriage*, might find offensive. This was especially so of the portrayal of sex in television drama which was proving a recurring source of anxiety for the BBC. As early as February 1959, for example, the Head of Drama, Michael Barry was forced to respond to complaints that BBC plays, particularly those of a 'kitchen-sink' variety, were responsible for showing sex in a way that was 'unnecessary to the plot and unsavoury'.<sup>60</sup> The transmission of *Say Nothing* (tx. 19 February 1964), written by James Hanley and directed by Philip Saville, revived concerns about the moral outlook of BBC plays at the beginning of 1964, leading to demands from the BBC's Board of Governors for an end to the

60. 'Sexiness in BBC Television Plays', memo from Michael Barry to DSA, 2 February 1959, BBCWAC T16/62/3.

'sheer dirt' and 'bedroom fixation' that was supposedly evident in the Corporation's drama output.<sup>61</sup> Not long afterwards, the inaugural meeting of the 'Clean Up TV Campaign', organised by Mary Whitehouse and Norah Buckland, took place in Birmingham on 5 May 1964 and involved the launching of a Manifesto that objected to 'the propaganda of disbelief, doubt and dirt that the B.B.C. pours into millions of homes through the television screen, specifically in the form of 'a stream of suggestive and erotic plays which present promiscuity, infidelity and drinking as normal and inevitable.'<sup>62</sup> Given this climate of concern about the content of television drama, it is hardly surprising that *Diary of a Young Man* should have attracted criticism, particularly given its explicitness about the sexual appetites of the main character and the inclusion of scenes of sexual seduction (apparently in defiance of Sydney Newman's instructions to avoid bedroom scenes at this time).<sup>63</sup> The BBC's own Audience Research Department reported how some viewers had found the first episode, directed by Loach, 'thoroughly unappetising' and even, in places, 'disgusting'.<sup>64</sup> A Nottinghamshire vicar also gained widespread publicity by attacking the programme's 'filth and depravity', singling out the 'carrying-on' between Joe and Fred in the fifth episode (directed by Loach) as 'particularly offensive'.<sup>65</sup> These criticisms of the programme were sufficient to warrant a discussion of the series by the Board of the Governors. However, although the Chairman of the Board, Lord Normanbrook, agreed that some of the programme's 'themes were open to objection', he also considered the production to have been 'a success d'estime as an experiment'.<sup>66</sup> In this respect, despite the Board's earlier reservations about the sexual content of BBC drama, the programme's formal invention and obvious seriousness of purpose were seen as sufficient defence against the mounting 'clean-up' campaign. However, this was really only an opening skirmish as it was the following year that the clashes over television drama were really to gain momentum. Particularly significant, in this regard, was the advent of 'The Wednesday Play' as a distinctive strand of drama. According to Irene Shubik, Sydney Newman had, in fact, launched the new 1965 season of 'The Wednesday Play' with the promise of 'less of the "kitchen sink", more strong story-lines, and less sex'.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, the year's output was to prove even more controversial than the plays that had gone before. No less than six of these (including *The End of Arthur's Marriage*) were directed by Ken Loach and included *Up the Junction*, one of the most fought-over plays in the battle over the limits of television 'permissiveness'.

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61. Minutes of the Board of Governors, 20 February 1964, BBCWAC R1/32/1.

62. A copy of 'The Manifesto' is contained in the BBC file on the Clean Up TV Campaign where it is attached to a memo headed 'The Birmingham Women's "Vigilante" Group', BBCWAC T16/585/1. It is also cited by Mary Whitehouse in *A Most Dangerous Woman?* (Tring: Lion Publishing, 1982), p. 14. The Manifesto subsequently formed the basis of a petition that was presented to Parliament in June 1965.

63. Partly in response to the concerns of the Board of Governors, Sydney Newman had issued a call for 'the total elimination of scenes of men and women in bed with sex in mind' (Memo from Head of Drama Group, Television to Peter Luke, James MacTaggart, Cedric Messina and Eric Tayler, 25 March 1964, BBCWAC T5/2239/7).

64. '*Diary of a Young Man*', BBC Audience Research Department, 31 August 1964, BBCWAC T5/630/1.

65. 'Vicar Raps the BBC's "Filthy Young Man"', *Daily Herald*, 8 September 1964.

66. Minutes of the Board of Governors, 24 September 1964, BBCWAC R1/32/2.

67. *Daily Telegraph*, 11 December 1964, cited by Irene Shubik, *Play for Today: The Evolution of Television Drama* (London: Davis-Poynter, 1975), p. 59.

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