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SHOPKEEPERS, PROFITEERS, AND LIBERTINES
Thatcherism in British films of the 1980s

Studying the image of the entrepreneur in motion pictures made for cinema and television is a large task. Film, the most popular medium of the twentieth century, has always been geared to the broadest possible audience, and as a result popular narrative stereotypes, such as the picture of the "wicked" wealthy man, the entrepreneur, or the capitalist, are richly represented. For example, populism, an ideology which has particularly cherished the simple man of the people and his political interests, has a strong tradition in American film. A classic director such as Frank Capra is an obvious example here, with films such as *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), in which James Stewart's small-town hero defeats avaricious capitalists. One could also mention a current director such as Oliver Stone and his film *JFK* (1991), where Kevin Costner becomes a modern James Stewart, in his attempt to find Kennedy's killer and ends up on the trail of the corrupt arms industry.[1]

There are, however, well-defined periods and places in the history of film where the image of the entrepreneur appears particularly interesting and controversial, and where a study of the present format is a more reasonable task. One such time and place is Britain between 1979 and 1990.

Thatcherism: a historical sketch

The 1980s were a time of change in Britain. Toward the end of the 1970s the Labour government was in a profound crisis. The economic problems were insuperable, and British international prestige was at its lowest level. In 1979 the Conservative Party won a majority in parliament and Margaret Thatcher became prime minister. Thatcher's recipe for Britain's ill was to promote private enterprise, with an economic policy modeled on Milton Friedman's monetary theories.

The traditional welfare state – cemented in political consensus since the end of the Second World War – was subjected to furious attack: public spending in areas such as social welfare, public transport, and education was cut back. Thatcher also declared war on the unions, and during the coalminers' strike in the winter of 1984–85 she more or less succeeded in bringing the British union movement to its knees. Businessmen and entre preneurs were to lead the way toward a British renaissance, a new Great Britain with the same glory as in the days of the empire. Just as Queen Elizabeth I had rewarded brave seafarers such as Francis Drake, Thatcher raised new company managers – "boardroom buccaneers" – such as Lord King, head of the newly privatized British Airways, to the sphere of the power élite.[2]

The concrete political means to increase private enterprise were reduced taxes: the highest surtax brackets and the maximum capital taxation were reduced from 83% and 98% respectively to

60%. At the same time, the corporate tax rate was lowered from 52% to 35%. The consequences were rapid economic growth (for example, 4% in 1988, after seven years of steady increase) and the formation of a new, tone-setting middle class in the 1980s. Leonard Quart describes the process as follows:

> British society became Americanized: much more efficient, hedonistic, cash-obsessed, and competitive. It was now dominated by a driven New Class, one utterly removed from the more moribund, communally oriented working class and the complacently paternalistic upper-class cultures that traditionally dominated British life.[3]

Chariots of Fire

A film which represented in allegorical terms Thatcher's access to power and the new cultural, social, and economic priorities was Hugh Hudson's *Chariots of Fire* (1981), which was premiered in London with due pomp and circumstance at a royal gala – The Royal Film Performance – in May 1981.

The film is about two British sprinters, Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddell, both gold medal winners – in 100 and 400 meters respectively – at the Paris Olympics in 1924. The story is told with a retrospective structure, with synthesizer music by Vangelis, and with pictures of traditional British settings, such as the University of Cambridge and the highlands of Scotland. As Sheila Johnston has pointed out in a study of the film, both the characterization and the patterns of action are symbolically linked to the new Thatcherite trends in Britain.[4] Both old gentlemanly ideals and the aristocratic scorn for money are totally rejected.

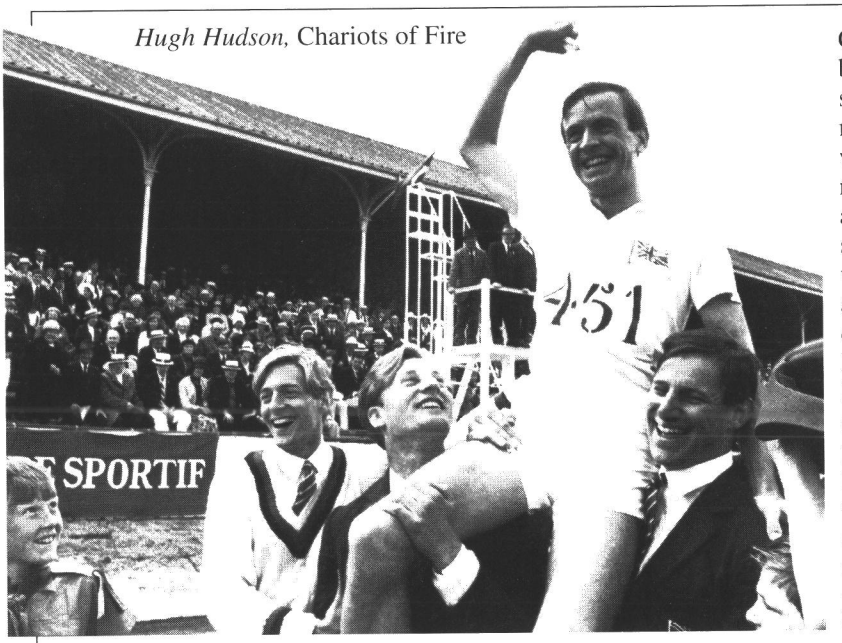
The two Cambridge dons, played by Lindsay Anderson and John Gielgud, vainly defend the cause of amateurism, sportsmanly virtues, and traditional Englishness. They make no impression on Abrahams, a Jewish youth of Lithuanian origin, who is firmly determined to become a real Englishman. He joins forces with a professional coach, Sam Mussabini, half-Italian, half-Arab. With his professional approach and his ethnic origin, Mussabini defies powerful taboos. Together Mussabini and Abrahams aim for the stars. And they succeed. Abrahams wins a gold medal in Paris, and he also wins the "princess" when he returns in triumph to England.

Liddell is an outsider too. Profoundly religious, he refuses to run his trial heat on a Sunday, thus more or less giving up a certain gold medal in the 100 meters. Not even the Prince of Wales can make Liddell bend his principles. Rescue comes when Lord Lindsey – an aristocrat and a gentleman who practices hurdling with full champagne glasses on the hurdles – offers Liddell his place in the 400 meters. The result is a gold medal and a new world record for Liddell. Lindsey's role is of course important in this context. Just as he had previously given way to Abrahams in the fight for the woman, he now steps back for Liddell. He gives up his hereditary position for the Jewish foreigner and the religious fanatic, the new proselytes, the ones who will show that a new society can be built on the ethic of profitable action. Success must be won through hard work. "The future lies with me!" exclaims Abrahams prophetically: "I believe in the pursuit of excellence!" With a business mentality, an iron-hard meritocracy, and liberal tolerance, it is possible to reconquer the lost ground, represented here symbolically by the supposed imperial glamour of the 1920s and the jeunesse dorée of Cambridge. In the new Britain there was room for everyone under the banner of neoliberalism.

Chariots of Fire was a huge box-office success in both Europe and the USA. It won several awards at the Oscar ceremony in Los Angeles in 1982. The scriptwriter, Colin Welland, hugging his newly won statuette, proudly proclaimed to the multi-million television audience: "The British are coming!"

A British film renaissance

One of Thatcher's targets in the hunt for cutbacks in public spending was national and local subsidies for the arts. Since 1947 a statute known as "the Eady levy" had compulsorily transferred a proportion of box-office takings from all films to finance British productions, as a means of creating a "national cinema", a non-Hollywood film representing "British" values for "British" audiences. However, audiences, of course, could never be monolithically reduced to just being "British" as viewers were also of different classes, races, sexes, regions, religions and so on. The statute was abolished in 1985. In the same spirit, the National Film Finance Corporation was privatized in the same year; since 1949 this state-owned company had financed British film production. These measures put an end to all state intervention in the film industry. Possibly, this political decision to withdraw from film



Hugh Hudson, Chariots of Fire

production by the Thatcher government was a part of its ideological battle against what it perceived to be destructive values, like "the communally oriented working class and the complacently paternalistic upper-class cultures" since, as Andrew Higson has remarked about national film industries: "the state intervenes only when there is a felt fear of the potential power of a foreign cinema".[5] Any fear of Americans never seemed to occur to Mrs Thatcher, and she also always expressed her personal contempt for the cinema as a medium.

The general entrepreneurial spirit and the market euphoria that characterized the early 1980s nevertheless created a number of alternatives, with companies such as Goldcrest, Handmade Films, and Boyd's Co.[6] The tradition of large budgets and epic grandeur begun by *Chariots of Fire* continued with Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi* (1982), which, like its predecessor, won a batch of Oscars. However, it was not on account of the sudden success with international blockbusters that people began to speak of a British film renaissance; the term "renaissance" was coined around 1984, when the American journalist James Park published a book about the new British film.[7]

By far the most important part of the renaissance was the low- and medium-budget films that now began to be produced.[8] It was the less expensive type of films that created continuity and a series of critical and box-office successes. They have often been financed by television, by the new commercial station; Channel 4 which started broadcasting in 1982, with the special task of catering to minority interests. The model was that the film was first released in the cinemas to arouse interest and then shown soon after on television. In this way the films achieved audience ratings that the dramatist and film director David Hare called "crazy": British-produced films reached a considerable part of the population and were watched by between 3 and 12 million viewers in a single evening.[9] Other television companies took over this strategy which proved so lucrative for film, with the result that today there is hardly any British film production that is not at least partly financed by television.

Obviously just as important for the "film renaissance" as television financing – and the new economic thinking and entrepreneurial spirit of Thatcherism – was the fact that there was now suddenly a welcome subject to represent in film. Diametrically opposed to the ideology of *Chariots of Fire*, those who worked with film – scriptwriters, directors, and often the film critics of the quality newspapers – assembled in protest against what they perceived as the devastating consequences of Thatcherism. (*Chariots of Fire* was nevertheless a source of inspiration, since it had shown that it was possible to achieve international success with British subjects too.) Jonathan Hacker and David Price write:

> The "oppositional" films are part of a counter-culture reacting in various ways against the influences of Hollywood or what they see as the staidness of the "traditional" British films. [—] Many of their films have strong political, often left wing undertones, and are highly critical of Britain: for example, the films of Loach, the satires of Anderson, the films of Ron Peck (*Nighthawks, Empire State*), Mike Leigh (*Bleak Moments, Meantime, High Hopes*), some of those of Frears, and films like *Ploughman's Lunch, Babylon, Business as Usual, Comrades*, or *Letter to Brezhnev*. Kureshi, writer of *My Beautiful Launderette* and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, commented, "Whenever a right wing paper calls one of our films sick, Stephen [Frears] and I know that we must be doing the right thing".[10]

One film after the other, many of them inter-

national critical successes such as Lindsay Anderson's *Britannia Hospital* (1982), Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985), and Derek Jarman's *The Last of England* (1987), ridiculed the Thatcherite shopkeeper mentality, sometimes with sly satire. The films had suddenly acquired a shared political task: to create a front against laissez-faire policies, against the yuppie mentality, and against what was regarded as the unfair distribution of the new prosperity.

In the rest of this paper I will look at three typically critical films from the period to see how the Thatcherite entrepreneurial spirit is articulated and duly criticized. The films were all directed by widely appreciated and well-reputed directors: Stephen Frears' *My Beautiful Launderette* (1985), Ken Loach's *Riff-Raff* (1990), and Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* (1989). The films were generally well received by the critics, and in the case of Frears and Greenaway they were also great financial successes. The paradox is, then, the fact that Thatcherism at the same time managed to be repressive towards, and yet productive in the development of a new film culture in Britain. This film culture that was aggressively anti-government and at the same time reached large parts of the population and was also highly inventive in its political rhetoric. This was something that had never occurred in Britain before, although there had since the 1930s been independent British productions, critical of mainstream cinema as well as of the government, such as, the workers' film movement in the 30s.[11]

The jovial shopkeeper

My Beautiful Launderette was the archetype for Channel 4's new model for film production. It was made as a relatively cheap television film but was then such a big hit at the Edinburgh Festival in 1985 that it immediately found a cinema distributor. Later that year it was shown on television for the first time. Stephen Frears directed and Hanif Kureshi, an author of Pakistani origin, wrote the script; both were convinced anti-Thatcherites. "I am part of a group of filmmakers making films opposing this government," said Frears.[12] He describes the film as an "ironic salutation to the entrepreneurial spirit in the eighties that Margaret Thatcher championed, as her govern ment transformed the postwar socialist state into a "nation" courting and supported by private capitalistic enterprise".[13] The film is about a Pakistani immigrant family in southern London. It is loosely structured around the slum environments there, featuring homeless immigrants, racial conflict, and unemployed English youths from the National Front. The success ful immigrant businessman Nasser runs a family enterprise. According to David Robinson's review in *Sight and Sound*, Nasser is a "cheerful exponent of the Thatcherite enterprise philosophy".[14] Pam Cook of the *Monthly Film Bulletin* similarly describes the business as "intent on turning Thatcherite enterprise economics to their own advantage".[15] The satirical barbs aimed at Thatcher's policies were thus identified immediately.

Nasser owns real estate and a garage and also does shady business together with Salim, who deals in, among other things, drugs and pornography. Nasser lets his nephew Omar take over an old, run-down launderette. With the aid of Johnny, an English man, Omar refurbishes it, and also begins a homosexual affair with Johnny. Ironically, the launderette is named "Powders." As Susan Torrey Barber has pointed out, this is a reference to the fact that the entire renovation was financed by drug money stolen by Omar from Salim.[16]

The launderette is a Thatcherite microcosm, a symbol of the entrepreneurial mentality of the 1980s. The film articulates the fundamental dishonesty of this mentality. The entrepreneurial spirit that is supported at any price is alleged here to be based on crime. Moreover, Omar and Johnny's homosexuality is a stab in the back for the Victorian family policy championed by the government. Homosexual representation in art was the subject of the Thatcher government's somewhat absurd local government law, Clause 28, which prohibited local authorities from "encouraging" homosexuality. The undisguised portrayals of homosexuality on Channel 4, especially Derek Jarman films such as *Caravaggio* (1986), provoked widespread outrage. The first boss of the channel, Jeremy Isaacs, says that he was duly informed by Thatcher's minister Norman Tebbitt that the minority interests that Channel 4 was supposed to satisfy were not "homosexuals and such" but rather "golf and sailing and fishing."[17]

My Beautiful Launderette is a satirical comedy in which the entrepreneur, in this case Nasser, is described with irony, as a shopkeeper, a rogue, and an upstart immigrant. There is a scene where Nasser, who has evicted a troublesome West

Indian from one of his properties with Johnny's help, is accused of being a racist. The modern capitalist entrepreneurial culture, Nasser replies promptly, has nothing whatever to do with what race you belong to. Nasser is a figure whose shady dealings have become possible thanks to Thatcher's policy, through an inverted racism that apparently encourages criminality.

The result, in Kureshi and Frears' vision, is social chaos. Their spokesman in the film is Omar's alcoholic father, a disillusioned left-wing journalist who wants Omar to give up his capitalistic dreams and start to study instead. At the end of *My Beautiful Launderette*, the characters are in a way condemned. Salim is beaten up by National Front youths in a racist attack, and his "fellow-traveler" Johnny also gets attacked, but Omar saves him. Although Johnny and Omar have each other, there do not seem to be many opportunities for a better life; it is a harsh society, a seedbed for conflict. Stephen Frears and Hanif Kureshi were to be even more condemnatory in their criticism of contemporary Britain and the Thatcherite entrepreneurial spirit in their next joint film, *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1988).

Invisible profiteers

Ken Loach's *Riff-Raff*, produced by Channel 4, was not premiered until 1991, that is, after Margaret Thatcher's enforced resignation in the fall of 1990. The film was shot in 1990, however, when Thatcher was still in power, and she is even mentioned by name in the film, as the root of all evil. Immediately before *Riff-Raff*, Loach had directed *Hidden Agenda* (1990), a thriller about police corruption taking place against an IRA background in Northern Ireland. The story of *Hidden Agenda* is a plot, about a conspiracy with distinct fascist overtones which brought Thatcher to power in the 1970s.

Ken Loach is one of Britain's most internationally renowned directors, with classics such as *Kes* (1969) and *Family Life* (1971) to his credit. He openly declares his Marxist views: "His views of class itself are orthodox Marxist (he supports an exclusively economic interpretation), dismissing wider sociological explanations," write Jonathan Hacker and David Price.[18] It is thus no surprise that Loach should have been a sworn enemy of the Thatcher government.

Riff-Raff, directed in Loach's customary style of social realism, is about Stevie, a working-class youth who, after a spell in prison, starts working as a builder on a renovation job in London: doing up an old hospital in luxury style – significantly, so that it can be transferred from the public to the private sector. As David Wilson put it in his review in *Sight and Sound*, it is all about "The comradeship of the work place (here a building site), the conspiracy of subversion, the anarchic working class humour".[19] The workers are employed one day at a time, they receive the minimum wage, and the slightest mistake leads to dismissal on the spot. There are signs warning them not to urinate on the building site, and one worker is fired for saying that they should have joined the union.

The builders have temporary accommodation in abandoned council flats. Thatcher had allowed the tenants of rented property to buy their homes from the local councils that owned them; areas where the inhabitants could not afford to do so quickly became slums. There is total decay: we see the workers chasing rats in Stevie's urine–stinking flat. The rats are naturally associated with their own wretched existence. Yet they do not complain much. "Depressions are for the middle classes," says Stevie to his junkie girlfriend, a young girl from Northern Ireland with hopeless dreams of a career as a singer.

The contrast between high and low is marked humorously when one of the workers needs to go to the toilet. He flinches at the sight of the toilet laid on by the bosses, so the other workers tell him to go to the finished bathroom in the luxury show flat. Tempted by the inviting bathtub, he cannot resist having a refreshing bath. A luxury car pulls up and a well-dressed lady escorts two veiled Arab women to the show flat. They are shocked at the sight of the poor surprised worker, concealing his genitals with a protective helmet.

All through the film the workers point out their enemies: Thatcher, the Conservative government, capitalism, and the company management. The building contractor, the man they accuse of profiteering from their toil, is invisible, however – a physical absence that is highly charged with significance. His presence as a governing force is thus denoted by his absence, an expression of Loach's aspiration for absolute realism. The oppressor is concealed from the oppressed. Only on one occasion do we see the engineer who directs the work from his office, and then it is in a parodic scene where he does not know whether to pick up the ordinary phone or the mobile phone when he hears it ringing.

The mobile phone is the instrument of power. The foremen on the site come from the same background as the workers, but they are described as class traitors, just like the Jewish kapos in Treblinka. The mobile phone is the symbol of their elevation. One of the workers borrows the phone for a joke to call his mother. When his subversive prank is discovered, he is of course fired. In his anger he throws the phone from the roof of the building and head-butts the foreman.

Anarchic humour and working-class disillusioment in Ken Loach's Riff-Raff.

As a result, the police come to arrest him, but the hour of rebellion has finally come. When one of the workers falls from the roof because of insufficient safety arrangements, the anger boils over. In the night Stevie and a workmate set fire to the whole building, an expression of Loach's revolutionary passion: "I am not optimistic at all in the short or medium term. [—] But people's capacity to fight back is inexhaustible. The tide will turn sooner or later. [—] I'm optimistic about that."[20]

For Loach, then, concrete action, even violence, is the only way to stop the ravages of Thatcherism.

The passions of the libertine

One of most surprising attacks against Thatcherism was Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* from 1989. Greenaway (a filmmaker who has often been associated with aesthetic experiments and a self-conscious, sometime chilly formalism, in films such as *The Draughtsman's Contract* (1982) and *Drowning by Numbers* (1988)) describes the film as a political allegory, reflecting "my anger and passion about the current British political situation".[21] In a meditation upon the gradual invasion of British film by modernism, a process in which Greenaway was a central figure alongside Derek Jarman, Peter Wollen says: "This school of modernism, unlike neo-roman ticism, was historically decoupled from politics, yet, under the pressure of Thatcherism, Greenaway too turned to political invective in *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover*".[22]

The film, a stylized universe like all of Greenaway's films, is about Albert Spica, an upstart with a working-class background, who dines every evening at the luxury restaurant "Le Hollandais" with his elegant wife Georgina and some rather less elegant henchmen. Spica has bought the restaurant, one of those typical French gourmet establishments that were frequented by London's new yuppies in the 1980s.

Spica is a rogue and a libertine, whose passions know no bounds. He holds forth in broad Cockney for everyone to hear, boasting about the money he has earned from "deals", he has exquisitely bad table manners and an affected French accent that is like a parody. In addition, he takes a sadistic pleasure in ridiculing and insulting everyone around him: his henchmen, his wife, and the chef. Spica also tortures those who refuse to bow to his will at once, and he beats and sexually abuses his wife. In his review in *Sight and Sound*, Sean French wrote:

> He is like a big psychopathic child, smearing one of his victims with dog shit in the opening sequence, gleefully outdoing a long line of misogynist gangsters by pushing a fork into the cheek of a girl. He's also a theatrical Jacobean villain, with the gang as his depraved courtiers and the curtained dining-room as the stage where he finally receives his desserts.[23]

French's description of Spica as an archetypal theatrical villain is also found in Michael Walsh's study of the film, in which Spica is

Peter Greenaway, The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover

derived from Brecht's conception of the entre preneur as a gangster.[24] Walsh also reads Spica's name as an anagram: "a spic", an Italian or ultimately a mafioso; in addition, Walsh continues, in view of the Cockney tendency to add an "r" to a final vowel, the name evokes associations with "Mr. Speaker" presiding over the House of Commons, just as Spica decides who has the right to speak.[25] The political symbolism here suggests that it is characters like Spica who have seized power, even over parliament, one of the bastions of democracy.

Spica's wife Georgina, however, is the one who leads him to his downfall. She longs for sexual liberation – the sexual sphere in all the films considered here is a forum for lustful resistance to the hated Thatcherite repression. She finds it in the bookseller Michael, who also dines at the restaurant. He often reads an exquisitely bound book as he eats. Michael is the opposite to Spica: he belongs to the middle class, says virtually nothing, and has a formal education. The choice of actors here serves particularly well to reflect the difference in character: Michael Gambon (well-known from the television series *The Singing Detective*) as Spica is stylized and dominant; Alan Howard (a well-known Shakespearean actor) as Michael is classical and restrained. Georgina and Michael have their stolen moments of love, first in the toilet (as in *Riff-Raff*, the toilet is the symbolic site of counter culture), later in out-of-the-way corners of the kitchen, protected by the cook, who hates his boss.

Spica, furiously jealous, eventually discovers what is going on. His revenge is merciless. Together with his henchmen, he breaks into Michael's bookstore and they suffocate the antagonist by tearing pages out of books and stuffing them into his mouth. An act that expresses their total scorn for culture and learning. Georgina is just as merciless in seeking revenge. She begs the chef to cook Michael's dead body and forces Spica at gunpoint to atone for his crimes – to eat up his words – in an involuntary cannibalistic ritual. "Try the cock, Albert," Georgina suggests with sublime wickedness. "It's a delicacy. And you know where it's been!"

The symbolic dimensions and the contemporary allegory signalled by the film are quite obvious. Spica is represented as an avaricious nouveau riche upstart, possible only in a nation where the official policy – Thatcher's – has supported all kinds of villainy in the name of free enterprise. The gourmet dinners in turn connote the curse of the consumer society. And Spica's punishment can be metaphorically associated with the purgatory that Britons can be forced to suffer if they refuse to recognize the transitory nature of material things.

Despite its artistic magnificence and the brilliant construction of some of the scenes, it seems to me personally that the moral message of

Greenaway's film is too shallow. There is a downright condescending attitude to Spica, a proletarian monster in a Thatcherite costume, showing vulgarity and lack of bourgeois upbringing. Spica's opposite, Michael, is just as one-dimen sional in his sophisticated refinement and book learning. However, the government used the language of power throughout the 1980s, and *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* was a kind of rancorous reaction which Thatcherism gradually provoked. The malicious portrait of the Thatcherite proselyte, Spica, is so crude that the film could also be seen as an apocalyptic vision. Britain was on the eve of a recession in 1990-91, when economic growth stagnated and Thatcher herself fell from power. It should also be pointed out that the film was not financed by television; its symbolism would probably have been too coarse for screening on television in Britain. In the cinemas, however, the film was a great success on both sides of the Atlantic.

Reactions and debates

The most highly publicized reaction to the new British film was an article in the *Sunday Times*, "Sick Scenes from English Life" (10 January 1988), written by the conservative historian and Oxford professor, Norman Stone, one of Margaret Thatcher's personal advisors. Stone literally fulminated against modern British film, primarily filmmakers like Derek Jarman and Stephen Frears, because they were "sick," "pessimistic," and displayed a "two-dimensional ideology". Stone reacted in particular to the blatant sex: "there is much explicit sexuality, a surprising amount of it homosexual and sadistic". Stone contrasted this new kind of film with traditional British quality films made by, in his eyes, brilliant directors such as Michael Powell, David Lean, and Carol Reed.

As a historian of film I find it difficult to agree with Stone. The artistic richness of British film of the 1980s is now obvious to most observers. In addition, it was undoubtedly a development of British film traditions – especially from the flourishing period of the 1940s, when film was the medium that tried to unite the nation during and after the Second World War with the directors named by Stone. If these films were "positive" to all things British and toward the government, this was due to the shared interest in defeating the Germans. The radical difference is that the films in the 1940s, as, Antonia Lant has shown in her study of the period, were conceived during a time when cinema was regarded as "the most powerful medium for building national identity"[26] by the state and in the service of the state. At the end of the 1980s, a large part of the films made in Britain were busily engaged in trying to denounce the state, which in its turn had denounced cinema.

On the other hand, the ideological reactions from the supporters of Thatcherism are understandable: they believed that increased prosperity could be generated by private enterprise and deeper class gaps. I for one do not think, however, that the films played that much role in the political media war since the films were made by anti-Thatcherites for anti-Thatcherites who were more than half of the nation (this generalization is made on having lived in Britain during the period). For these people, propaganda against the new entrepreneurial spirit and privatiza tion was an affirmation of long-cherished attitudes in defence of socialist ideals. Prominent among the groups that Thatcher never succeeded in attracting to her economic crusade was precisely the large traditional, university-educated middle class, with their great media clout. And it was this particular group of people who produced, and as far as I am aware, constituted the main audience for the British films mentioned.

Margaret Thatcher did succeed, however, albeit indirectly, in creating an artistically rich period, and it is significant that British film changed character after her fall. There is no longer any unifying symbol for ideological struggle in the domain of film. Film thus lost some of its political teeth, which should of course also be seen in the light of the general recession of 1990-91. Stephen Frears has been working in the USA since the end of the 1980s, directing such successful films as *Dangerous Liaisons* (1988). Ken Loach has directed, for instance, *Raining Stones* (1993), a film with much less of a sting than its predecessor. Peter Greenaway has returned to his passion for aesthetic experiment in, for instance, *Prospero's Books* (1991), based on *The Tempest*. And Shakespeare's drama, in Greenaway's hands, is about completely different matters than those that were politically controversial in Britain in the 1980s.

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Notes

[1] Hedling 1992, pp. 30 ff.

[2] See Elsaesser 1993, p. 57.

[3] Quart 1993, p. 21.

[4] Johnston 1985, pp. 99 ff.

[5] Higson 1989, p. 43.

[6] For a detailed chronological survey of the development of the British film industry 1971-1985 see Walker 1985, pp. 273-287.

[7] Park 1984.

[8] Goldcrest's would-be blockbuster, and in fact the whole company, met its Waterloo with *Revolution*, a grandiose miscalculation produced by David Puttnam and directed by Hugh Hudson in 1985.

[9] Giles 1993, pp. 71 f.

[10] Hacker and Price 1991, p. 21.

[11] See Harvey 1985.

[12] Ibid., p. 174.

[13] Torrey Barber 1993, p. 221.

[14] Robinson 1985/86, p. 67.

[15] Cook 1985, p. 332.

[16] Torrey Barber 1993, p. 225.

[17] Isaacs 1989, pp. 65 ff.

[18] Hacker and Price 1991, p. 274.

[19] Wilson 1991, p. 61.

[20] Hacker and Price 1991, p. 303.

[21] Smith 1990, p. 55.

[22] Wollen 1993, p. 47.

[23] French 1989, p. 277.

[24] Walsh 1993, p. 272.

[25] Ibid., p. 274.

[26] Lant 1991, p. 19.