

# The Museum of Modern Art

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## BRITISH FILM: TRADITIONS--REALISM PART ONE: FICTION

September 10 - October 27, 1988

In BRITISH FILM: TRADITIONS, The Museum of Modern Art continues its examination of the traditions that distinguish the history of British film. Presented in two sections, the fifth part of this ongoing exhibition is devoted to REALISM. PART ONE: FICTION explores the use of realism in forty-nine feature-length narratives, dating from the late twenties to the present. PART TWO: DOCUMENTARIES will be examined in a subsequent segment. With two screenings daily and three on weekends, PART ONE is on view from September 10 through October 27, 1988.

Realism is a stylistic approach derived in part from the pioneering efforts of early British documentary filmmakers, John Grierson and Humphrey Jennings. During the Second World War, a new generation of filmmakers--influenced by Grierson and Jennings--applied realism to fictional films. As the British classes united to fight a common enemy, these films generated a rousing reaction and inspired a certain amount of patriotism. Examples include Basil Dearden's The Bells Go Down, Frank Launder and Sidney Gilliat's Millions Like Us, Charles Frend's San Demetrio-London, and Anthony Asquith's We Dive at Dawn--all 1943, and Carol Reed's The Way Ahead of 1944.

When applied to fiction films, the term realism denotes settings shot on location and narratives situated in the real world, often in a working class milieu. This is evidenced by the countryside in Bernard Miles and Charles Saunders's pastoral comedy, Tawny Pipit (1944); the unfortunate mining town in Philip Leacock's The Brave Don't Cry (1952); the hospital in Pat Jackson's

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drama, White Corridors (1951); and the prison in Gordon Perry's Now Barabbas was a Robber. . . (1949).

In the late fifties and early sixties, several filmmakers examined the social fabric of England and made a number of explicitly critical and provocative works. Films that center around working class people in contemporary situations include Guy Green's The Angry Silence (1960), Ralph Thomas's No Love for Johnnie (1961), Sidney J. Furie's The Leather Boys (1963), Jack Clayton's Room at the Top (1959), and Karel Reisz's Saturday Night and Sunday Morning (1960). By using as subject matter such social issues as sexuality, violence, post-war affluence, and juvenile delinquency, filmmakers demonstrated that audiences were interested in seeing their own lifestyles reflected on the screen.

Some of the more recent films in the program include Ron Peck's objective detailing of gay life, Nighthawks (1978); two dramas on racial questions, Peter Smith's A Private Enterprise (1975) and Horace Ové's Pressure (1975); and Alan Clarke's suburban sexual comedy, Rita, Sue and Bob Too (1986).

The 35mm prints in the exhibition have been loaned by the National Film Archive, a division of the British Film Institute, London. BRITISH FILM: TRADITIONS was organized by Laurence Kardish and Adrienne Mancina, curators, Department of Film, with the National Film Archive. The exhibition is made possible in part by the Roy and Niuta Titus Fund.

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For further information or photographs, please contact Sarah Eaton, film press representative, Department of Public Information, 212/708-9752.