

PROOF

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44

# 13

## *Up the Junction: Ken Loach and TV Realism*

*Cecilia Mello*

The years between 1956 and 1963 have been customarily regarded by studies of post-war English film as marked by a move towards realism. The first witnessed the start of the Free Cinema movement, as well as the 'official' launch of the populist trend of the plays and novels of the 'angry young men'. The last is seen as the year in which kitchen-sink realism and the whole post-war populist wave lost impact. A closer look reveals, however, that the spectrum of post-war innovation, closely linked to an aspiration to realism, should be enlarged, for cinematic realism was very much alive on television after the death of the kitchen-sink dramas.<sup>1</sup> As John Caughie crucially argues: 'The breach which was opened in 1956 and seemed to close in 1963 actually remained opened in a place that very few "serious" critics thought to look: in television, and specifically in BBC television drama after 1964' (2000, p. 58).

This chapter will be concerned with one television film, which in its innovative format both incorporated and negated the realist tradition of the post-war years. *Up the Junction*, directed by Ken Loach in 1965, showed that perhaps English cinema needed television finally to embrace the subversion of film language pioneered a few years earlier by various 'new waves' across the world. Usually overshadowed by Loach's best known work for television, *Cathy Come Home* (1966), *Up the Junction* was an innovative film not only in the context of television dramas but also in relation to English cinema, and established an important bridge between both worlds.

In the mid-1960s, television was still on the cusp of achieving the ubiquitous status it holds now, and it could be seen as a relatively new medium in its formative stages. 'Drama' was one of the many formats supported by the vehicle, and after an initial period of cementing conventions it began to be challenged by new possibilities in terms of subjects and languages. Caught in a tradition of theatricality, which meant most television plays were shot or transmitted live from the studio in the mode of a theatre play, the late 1950s and early 1960s saw an insurgence of voices questioning the constraints of such conventions and stressing the need for innovation. The new medium of television thus invited a new language in its search for specificity.

1 What distinguished television from film and theatre, alongside its produc-  
2 tion modes and the technology of reproduction, was its essential domestic-  
3 ity. Television was quotidian, everyday, and belonged to the 'unsanctified'  
4 space of the living room, deprived of the aura of the theatre (and of the film  
5 theatre). And in its domesticity it was an essentially demotic medium, hav-  
6 ing the potential to reach and 'speak to' the nation as a whole. Moreover,  
7 in 1965 the rise of commodity culture and of affluence meant that the  
8 working classes could afford to own television sets. This defining character-  
9 istic in some ways set the tone for television drama's specific challenge in  
10 the 1950s–60s. A rejection of theatricality involved a conscious attempt to  
11 introduce everyday life on television, and the search for new ways to address  
12 the everyday.

13 In a first instance, film technology played a crucial part in the develop-  
14 ment of a new language, but television drama was searching for something  
15 other than theatre or film, trying to find what could be specifically televisual.  
16 *Up the Junction* is a seminal work in that it embodies this search for specificity  
17 and for new ways to articulate everyday life. Its break with theatricality was  
18 immensely helped by the 16mm technology, which allowed not only for loca-  
19 tion shooting with synchronous sound, but also for the post-shoot editing,  
20 subverting the limitations of electronic studio and live shooting. It somehow  
21 brought to the 'unsanctified' space of television elements of the 'respected'  
22 art of film, benefitting from television's ephemerality and fragmentation and  
23 turning them into the very essence of its filmic language.

24 It is possible to detect an interesting paradox in the moment television  
25 drama incorporates film and with it the ability to record and edit. John  
26 Caughie has called this transitional moment television's 'Fall from inno-  
27 cence', in that it lost the immediacy of live transmission: 'A moment  
28 between the "pure" television drama of liveness and immediacy and  
29 a television drama which had begun the process of becoming film' (2000,  
30 p. 101). The innocence or 'purity' of live drama transmission, however,  
31 seemed too much like the 'purity' of theatre itself. *Up the Junction* and its  
32 moment epitomized not so much a distancing from a 'pure' or uncorrupted  
33 television drama, but rather a search for the specificity of television drama,  
34 or in other words for its 'purity'. And despite having assimilated film, televi-  
35 sion drama (or television film) knew it could never really be cinema. It had  
36 to move towards something televisual, and *Up the Junction* was particularly  
37 successful in absorbing influences and creating something fresh. It incor-  
38 porated television's current-affairs format, and especially the direct address,  
39 to its mixture of 16mm and electronic images, thus bringing the old stu-  
40 dio drama, film and the specific televisual style together for the first time.  
41 The paradox refers to the fact that the immediacy of live drama generally  
42 resulted in a still and stuffy style (the theatrical), while the incorporation of  
43 film (or the loss of immediacy) resulted in a vibrant and 'alive' style which –  
44 in aspiring to be cinema – occasionally found the televisual.

1 *Up the Junction* was the fruit of a realist impulse that contained an  
2 important subversion of the traditional conventions of film language. As  
3 a work of fiction, it invited the element of the 'document' into its diegesis. It  
4 is, in the words of Tony Garnett (2000, p. 18), 'a dramatic document', which  
5 set out to capture everyday life's fragmentary essence and the 1960s spirit of  
6 change, rejecting the coherence of illusionism and inaugurating a new form  
7 of realism in the English audiovisual landscape.

#### 8 9 10 **'A little closer to the modern scene'**

11 *Up the Junction* was first shown on BBC1's third season of the *Wednesday Play*,  
12 on 3 November 1965, from 9.40 p.m. to 10.50 p.m. It was based on a series  
13 of short stories by Nell Dunn, first published in book form in 1963. Dunn  
14 wrote her stories from personal experience: bored with her comfortable life  
15 in wealthy Chelsea, she decided to move across the river to Battersea and,  
16 in the words of Pulp's singer/songwriter Jarvis Cocker, 'live like common  
17 people'. She got a job in a chocolate factory and became fascinated by the  
18 liveliness and warmth of the working-class community of that area. *Up*  
19 *the Junction* was mainly founded on observation, and the first story, 'Out  
20 with the Girls', firmly places the first person narrator as an outsider to the  
21 community being portrayed, as seen in the following dialogue:

- 22  
23  
24 - You come from Battersea, don't yer?  
25 - Yeah, me and Sylvie do. She don't though. She's an heiress from  
26 Chelsea.

(Dunn, 1988, p. 13)

27  
28  
29 The short stories, despite not following a continuous narrative, mainly focus  
30 on episodes in the lives of Sylvie, Rube and the narrator – the heiress from  
31 Chelsea – who live in Battersea and work in the same factory. Extensively  
32 based on interviews, the stories are structured around dialogue written in  
33 the vernacular, increasing their observational character. Dunn's fiction has  
34 a straight dialogue with reality which brings it close to the world of the  
35 newspaper and journalism, and it is fitting that four of the 16 stories in *Up the*  
36 *Junction* first appeared on the pages of the *New Statesman* in the early 1960s.

37 Loach considers *Up the Junction* his first real film. It was produced by James  
38 MacTaggart but owes a lot to the collaboration with Tony Garnett, who  
39 worked as story editor before assuming the producer title in *Cathy Come Home*,  
40 marking the start of a collaborative process with Loach that would last many  
41 years. *Up the Junction* had an audience of almost ten million viewers, and  
42 its three main roles were played by Geraldine Sherman (Rube), whose only  
43 previous film experience had been an uncredited appearance in *A Hard Day's*  
44 *Night* (Richard Lester, 1964); Vickery Turner (Eileen), making her screen debut;

1 and Carol White (Sylvie), an experienced if not renowned actress who was to  
2 star in Loach's two following films, *Cathy Come Home* and *Poor Cow* (1967).

3 The production history of *Up the Junction* somehow matches the spirit  
4 of immediacy of the book. Loach recalls how 'there was a gap in the BBC  
5 schedule, and so we had six weeks to get something together. ... It was  
6 agreed that I would knock a script out of this little book and make a collage  
7 of events and mood pieces' (Fuller, 1998, p. 13). As mentioned before,  
8 television drama until the mid-1960s had mostly been transmitted live  
9 from a studio, with pre-recorded material being inserted on the spot. For  
10 the pre-recorded material, the shooting still operated as if during a live  
11 transmission, perpetuating the theatrical format. The use of film during  
12 production and post-production in television remained exclusive to the  
13 documentary and the news department. In a move that would deeply affect  
14 the whole production of *Up the Junction*, the BBC finally yielded to the  
15 pressures of Garnett and Loach and allowed a few days shooting on location  
16 with a 16mm camera. During this time, their cameraman Tony Imi played  
17 an essential part in making the most of the short time they had, and shot  
18 approximately half of the film on location.

19 *Up the Junction's* location sequences were shot on an Éclair, a small hand-  
20 held silent (self-blimped) 16mm camera with a separate sound recording  
21 system (an electrical battery powered tape recorder connected by cable to the  
22 camera, which emitted a synchronized pulse), developed by André Coutant  
23 in the beginning of the 1960s. The Éclair's manoeuvrability allowed for incon-  
24 spicuous shooting on the streets, increasing the impression of authenticity  
25 and immediacy of the images. The other major breakthrough of the Éclair  
26 was the possibility of shooting on 16mm with synchronized sound, which  
27 increased the reality coefficient of the images and led to new definitions of  
28 realism. This move caused a shift of the creative input from the writer to  
29 the director during the process of production, since being on location with  
30 a 16mm camera allowed for a strong element of improvisation.

31 *Up the Junction* benefitted immensely from the new 16mm synch-sound  
32 technology, and from the sense of spontaneity of location shooting, of being  
33 in direct contact with the 'real'. This is noticeable in sequences that show  
34 Rube, Sylvie and Eileen almost as *flâneurs* in the streets of Battersea, echoing  
35 Jo's 'unmotivated' walks through Salford in *A Taste of Honey* (Tony Richardson,  
36 1961).<sup>2</sup> The space of the city in the film is indeed dominated by the three girls:  
37 they are seen in a long tracking shot walking down the street and singing (in  
38 synch sound) 'I Should Have Known Better' by The Beatles. They go past piles of  
39 rubble, reinforcing the idea of the fluidity of space in the ever-changing 1960s  
40 London. Later in the film, Rube is seen walking aimlessly across the Common,  
41 in a series of shots displaying her in full body, close-up or profile, and always in  
42 a tracking movement. And the film ends with a sequence of shots of the girls  
43 walking down a busy street, looking at shop windows, playing pinball, talking  
44 and laughing among the hustle and bustle.

1 Perhaps the most famous location sequence in *Up the Junction* is the swim-  
 2 ming pool sequence, in which the girls go for a night swim with three boys  
 3 they had met in the pub earlier in the evening. The whole sequence is edited  
 4 in jump-cuts of the six jumping in the water stripped to their underwear,  
 5 playing with each other like kids and finally kissing and hugging. The close-  
 6 ness and the thrill of these more erotic than romantic encounters is conveyed  
 7 by beautifully shot close-up images of the couples' embraces and kisses,  
 8 captured by Tony Imi with the *Éclair* from inside the swimming pool.

9 As well as benefitting from the mobility of the *Éclair*, Loach made sure  
 10 that the studio sequences in *Up the Junction* were shot in a way not dissimilar  
 11 to the location sequences, privileging improvisation over a carefully  
 12 planned structure. And because these sequences were shot less like television  
 13 and more like a film, it became almost impossible to edit on tape, still  
 14 a cumbersome and slow technique at the time. Loach explains:

15  
 16 The only solution was to cut it on the 16mm back-up print that the  
 17 BBC used at the time as a safety measure. This was greeted with absolute  
 18 horror because they said it wasn't up to broadcast quality – it was very  
 19 grey and misty. ... But they let us cut on 16mm in the end because it was  
 20 the only way they could salvage the material.

(Fuller, 1998, p. 14)

21  
 22  
 23 *Up the Junction* epitomized the search for a new language, but it was also the  
 24 product of changes being felt in the world of television drama since the end of  
 25 the 1950s, when new tendencies began to be embraced. Sydney Newman, the  
 26 crucial figure behind two of the most important slots for the presentation of  
 27 new drama on television at the time, first at ABC and later at the BBC, should be  
 28 seen as a catalyser of the reactions against drama conventions rather than as the  
 29 sole figure responsible for them. He did, however, foment innovation on more  
 30 than one level, by encouraging the inclusion of topical issues and working-class  
 31 themes – a move in tune with the populist vein of literature, theatre and cinema  
 32 at the time – and by promoting television drama's break with the theatrical and  
 33 welcoming the work of new writers and directors, as well as giving power to peo-  
 34 ple such as James MacTaggart and Tony Garnett, great advocates of innovation.

35 Ken Loach was among the new team of directors working for the  
 36 *Wednesday Play*, Newman's slot for drama at the BBC, which started to air on  
 37 Wednesday evenings in October 1964. His first directorial opportunity came  
 38 in early 1964 with three episodes of the popular police series *Z Cars*. At the  
 39 end of the same year he directed Troy Kennedy Martin's and John McGrath's  
 40 (the creators of *Z Cars*) six-part series *Diary of a Young Man*. This series already  
 41 signalled a shift away from the more established conventions of television  
 42 drama, as Stuart Laing points out: 'The style was explicitly non-naturalistic  
 43 and self-regarding, using stills, voice-overs, fantasy sequences and time-  
 44 shifts freely to disrupt the straightforward narrative' (1997, p. 15).

1 Earlier in 1964, Troy Kennedy Martin's article 'Nats Go Home: First  
 2 Statement of a New Drama for Television' had been published in the theatre  
 3 magazine *Encore*. An open attack on the theatricality of television dramas,  
 4 the article called for the development of a new mode of production and  
 5 a new language for television. The 'nats' in the article's title referred to  
 6 the naturalism inherited from the theatre, defined by Martin as an over-  
 7 reliance on dialogue and a dependence on 'a strict form of natural time',  
 8 a consequence of plays being broadcast live from a studio. He believed that  
 9 the 'dictatorship' of the text limited the camera to photographing dialogue,  
 10 and the absence of pre-recorded material eliminated the creative possibilities  
 11 of the editing. Moving away from the theatrical presupposed the erosion  
 12 of the text as the spinal cord of the work. Martin advocated the use of  
 13 voiceover narration to take the weight off the stage dialogue, consequently  
 14 allowing for an increased use of the 'lost speech of everyday life' that is  
 15 characteristic of cinema.

16 Martin's arguments are not as clear cut as they might seem, but what is  
 17 important here is to place *Up the Junction* in the context of his crucial call  
 18 for a demotic televisual language, 'a new idea of form, new punctuation  
 19 and new style' and 'something which can be applied to mass audience  
 20 viewing' (1964, p. 21). His article, which also echoed other calls against the  
 21 theatricality of television drama at the time, set out to awaken the director  
 22 to the stimulus of the contemporary:

24 It is to be hoped that the great demands this kind of drama makes will  
 25 stir some kind of response – and that their [the directors'] basic television  
 26 thinking, which is reminiscent of Victor Sylvester's fox-trots being  
 27 danced in the world of the Beatles, will be fragmented into something  
 28 a little closer to the modern scene.

(1964, p. 32)

### 32 **The fragmentation of everyday life**

34 *Up the Junction* was put together as a jigsaw of images and sounds, not strictly  
 35 to 'tell a story' but to describe and comment on a world. As in the book, it  
 36 is set around three main events: Rube's abortion, Terry's fatal motorcycle  
 37 accident and the death of Mrs Hardy. These are, however, interwoven in the  
 38 film's kaleidoscopic structure and only stand out for their nature and not  
 39 for their treatment, happening naturally alongside sequences devoid of any  
 40 strong narrative motivation. From the book, which in Loach's words 'was  
 41 made up of little vignettes, like newspaper pieces or descriptions' (Fuller,  
 42 1998, p. 13), the film also incorporated the element of the document to its  
 43 fiction, thus infusing it with the immediacy and direct contact with reality  
 44 present in the world of the news. The document was brought into the film

1 especially through the use of images and sounds directly addressed to the  
2 viewer (henceforth referred to as 'direct address').

3 Topicality plays a part in approximating *Up the Junction* to the journalistic  
4 practice, as exemplified by the inclusion of a powerful sequence on abortion,  
5 in tune with the debate on legalization which indeed came two years later  
6 in 1967. It is, however, in the film form where the dialogue between film  
7 and journalism is best observed. This was in tune with the subversion of  
8 film language carried out by the French *nouvelle vague* and other new waves  
9 in the early 1960s, a time when filmmakers seemed fascinated with the  
10 contemporary and ephemeral character of the newspaper and the radio.

11 *Up the Junction's* incorporation of the 'document' through the direct-  
12 address technique revealed Loach's intention partly to emulate the style of  
13 the news and current-affairs programmes on television:

14  
15 It was very much to do with our programming slot. For about forty weeks  
16 a year, the *Wednesday Play* aired every Wednesday at 9pm, after the late  
17 evening news. We were very anxious for our plays not to be considered  
18 dramas but as continuations of the news. The big investigative document-  
19 ary programme at the time was *World in Action* ... and we tried to copy  
20 its techniques and cut with a rough, raw, edgy quality, which enabled us  
21 to deal with issues head on.

(Fuller, 1998, p. 15)

22  
23  
24 *World in Action* was Granada's current-affairs programme, which ran from  
25 1963 to 1998. Unlike *Panorama*, the studio-based BBC rival programme,  
26 *World in Action* avoided the 'guests-talking-to-the-anchor-who-talks-to-  
27 the-audience' format, and abandoned the studio in favour of the streets.  
28 It devoted each half-hour programme to a single issue and, making the  
29 most of the mobility of lightweight film equipment, pioneered a form of  
30 pictorial journalism on location. Innovative also was its use of the direct  
31 address, through which interviewees talked straight to the camera without  
32 the mediation of an anchorman, thus breaking the spatial divide between  
33 television and the living room.

34 *Up the Junction*, through Dunn's book, brought in from the television  
35 world the fragmented character of televisual news and especially of *World*  
36 *in Action*, incorporating its use of the direct address to bring in 'pieces'  
37 taken from reality with no apparent articulation, producing a different kind  
38 of realism from that achieved by means of illusionistic representations of  
39 reality. One eloquent example is the long sequence focusing exclusively on  
40 a tallyman, who is driving a car and directly addresses the camera as if he  
41 were talking to someone in the back seat. He explains the rules of his trade  
42 in detail, and the film gives no indication of whom he is seemingly speak-  
43 ing to. His voice thus becomes an unarticulated element within the film's  
44 fiction (Figure 13.1).

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16



17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44

*Figure 13.1* Direct address in *Up the Junction*: Who is the tallyman speaking to? Reproduced with kind permission from BBC and Ken Loach.

The use of voiceovers in *Up the Junction* is perhaps the main means through which the 'document' is interwoven into the diegesis. Here it is important to point out that although Dunn's book was written in the first person, from the perspective of an outsider narrator, in the film the subject of enunciation is fragmented as a result of the elimination of the outsider character and of a single subjective point of view. This enabled the film to achieve a more democratic and demotic structure: it is the camera and the tape recorder that observes and registers, and the resulting vision does not need to be validated by that of an outsider/observer character.

This democratization of the subject of enunciation becomes explicit through the use of voiceovers in the film's soundtrack, which includes not only commentary by the three main characters but also by many other characters in the film, as well as unidentifiable voices speaking in the first person and relating an experience. This means that the episodes in the lives of the three girls are underpinned with comments introduced through the technique of the direct address. The effect is the social contextualization of the individual drama. Caughie makes an important point in relation to the hierarchy between what he calls 'the voice of the drama' and 'the voice of the documentary' in *Up the Junction*. In his view, 'the voice of the drama', for instance the diegetic dialogue between two characters, 'exists at the same level of banal "typicality" as the inserted monologues of the background voice-overs – the "voice of the documentary"' (2000, p. 116).

*Up the Junction's* use of the direct address in a variety of witness-style voiceovers is in tune with a Brechtian rejection of illusionism, as Raymond Williams explains in *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*: 'What Brecht seized on was the exclusion, by particular conventions of verisimilitude, of all direct commentary, alternative consciousness, alternative points of view' (1973, p. 318). *Up the Junction* indeed privileges through the direct address the

1 presentation of alternative points of view, and invites the active engagement  
 2 of the spectator with the richness of what is heard and seen. Despite not  
 3 clearly adopting the tableaux structure, the film is nevertheless composed  
 4 of self-contained segments not linked by causal relationship, once again  
 5 indicating the fragmentary essence of everyday life.

6 *Up the Junction* opens with a close-up image of a man looking straight  
 7 at the camera – thus acknowledging the audience – and singing ‘Oh, oh  
 8 little girl, pretty little girl, you’re such a good little girl, why don’t you let  
 9 me make you a bad girl?’. What follows is a montage of shots cut to this  
 10 song (‘Bad Girl’), which has words by Nell Dunn and alludes to teenage  
 11 sex – a theme that runs through the film. This prelude sequence – entirely  
 12 cut to music – contains a few important movements that relate to the film as  
 13 a whole. It sways between inside and outside, the detail and the general, the  
 14 old and the new. The sequence starts inside the club, moves outside to estab-  
 15 lish the location – the station sign and the chimneys of the power station  
 16 leave no doubt that this is Battersea – and then moves back inside the club  
 17 where the action takes place. The constant zooming in and out alternately  
 18 highlights the detail and the general, a movement suggestive of the very  
 19 structure of the film, based on the articulation between the individual and  
 20 the collective. The zoom was commonly associated at the time with the new  
 21 kind of film language derived from direct cinema and *cinéma vérité*, which  
 22 privileged the 16mm handheld camera and the freedom it engendered. *Up*  
 23 *the Junction’s* repeated use of the zoom also indicates a rejection of the con-  
 24 ventions of both studio drama and classical narrative film associated with the  
 25 35mm gauge. Finally, old and new are juxtaposed in the same image as the  
 26 tracking shot of a row of old terraced houses ends on a new tower block.

27 Rube, Sylvie and Eileen, first seen at the station platform, are now inside  
 28 the club talking to three young men, Terry, Dave and Ron. Most of the  
 29 dialogue heard is of the ‘behavioural’ type, the ‘lost dialogue of everyday  
 30 life’ retrieved and spoken in the vernacular, and not conveying any essen-  
 31 tial narrative information. Rather than shot-reverse shot montage, with its  
 32 customary reactive dialogue, the sequence is edited to present only frag-  
 33 ments of conversations. The soundtrack is further complicated by pieces  
 34 of other people’s conversations, as well as the song in the background. The  
 35 imagetrack is made of an abundance of close-up images of the three girls  
 36 and boys and other people in the club, as well as extreme close-up shots of  
 37 hands and mouths. It is therefore not only the speech but also the body that  
 38 is fragmented by the editing and the camerawork.

39 A long sequence inside the chocolate factory is another example of frag-  
 40 mentation of the narrative voice in *Up the Junction*. The camera lingers on  
 41 workers talking about their lives before revealing Sylvie and Eileen work-  
 42 ing in the production line (Figure 13.2). The soundtrack is once again very  
 43 busy, with dialogue, factory noise and background music competing against  
 44 one another. The montage principle dominates, dialogue only heard in

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19



Figure 13.2 *Up the Junction*: The mechanical nature of work in the chocolate factory's production line. Reproduced with kind permission from BBC and Ken Loach.

20 fragments and never carried forward. The camera movement used to film  
21 a conversation between three women working at the conveyor belt is revealing  
22 of this democratic structure: the camera pans left from one close-up to  
23 the next, stopping to capture what each of them has to say, and finally tilts  
24 down to reveal the conveyor belt and the repetitive movement of hands  
25 putting chocolates in a box.

26 The montage principle of the factory sequence is exaggerated by the use  
27 of cutting to music, which results in a much faster editing, aimed at mim-  
28 icking the repetitive and mechanical nature of the factory work. A close-up  
29 shot reveals a circular machinery structure going round and round to the  
30 beat of Johnny Kid & the Pirates' 1963 song 'Hungry for Love', and images  
31 of the workers alternate in rapid succession with a close-up shot of the loud-  
32 speaker, of the conveyor belt and of hands putting chocolates in a box. The  
33 pace of the editing is dictated by the song and the mechanical and fragmen-  
34 tary nature of the factory work.

35 This music-video structure, recurrent in *Up the Junction*, was pioneering at  
36 the time. Dunn had already used quotes from popular songs referring to spe-  
37 cific passages in her book, and the film explores pop music's potential even  
38 further by using it intra- and extradiegetically in almost every sequence.  
39 Hits from the 1960s such as The Kinks' 'I Need You', Sonny & Cher's 'I  
40 Got You Babe' and The Searchers' 'Sugar and Spice' are essential to the  
41 creation of a contemporary atmosphere in the film, and frequently relate  
42 to sex and romance, establishing a contrast with the problematic relation-  
43 ships portrayed. *Up the Junction's* link with pop music finds an echo in the  
44 1978 release of an eponymous record by the band Squeeze, which reached

1 number two on the UK singles chart that year. The song relates indirectly to  
 2 the book and the film, offering a first-person description in the vernacular  
 3 of the hardships of working-class life in Clapham, as well as dealing with the  
 4 subject of an unexpected pregnancy. The disappointing cinema version of  
 5 *Up the Junction* (Peter Collinson, 1968) also contained an eponymous song  
 6 by Manfred Mann, which compares as unfavourably to Squeeze's song as  
 7 Collinson's film to Loach's.<sup>3</sup>

8 Rube's backstreet abortion episode occupies the central part of the film.  
 9 The subject is introduced by a series of images of pregnant women walking  
 10 down the street, accompanied by unidentified voiceovers commenting on  
 11 the hardships of motherhood, unwanted pregnancies and abortions. It starts  
 12 with the following testimony:

13  
 14 I never once lay down with him. I used to meet him in a back alley off  
 15 the Latchmere. I never really knew what he was at. I never got no pleas-  
 16 ure out of it. I didn't know I was carrying till I was five months. I couldn't  
 17 believe it. I kept thinking it would pass off.

18  
 19 This initial part of the sequence operates in an asynchronous mode, in  
 20 that the voices heard do not belong to the women seen on the imagetrack,  
 21 despite relating to them through the subject of pregnancy. However, both  
 22 tracks have the value of 'document', inserted as they are into the fiction's  
 23 fabric with no articulation, and remain illustrative throughout, providing  
 24 the backdrop context for Rube's abortion. This is introduced by an extreme  
 25 close-up of Rube's face (Figure 13.3), and by the return of the synch sound.  
 26 Gazing at the camera, she says in a fatalistic tone: 'When you love a boy,  
 27 you want to give him the best thing in the world. And there's only one  
 28 thing, isn't there?' This statement calls the film from the general back to the  
 29 particular, from the document back to fiction, and next Rube is seen with  
 30 Eileen looking for Winnie, the abortionist. Over a shot of the girls walking  
 31 through the Common, new voiceovers are introduced, relating more stories  
 32 of pregnancies and abortions. Also heard is the more authoritative voiceover  
 33 of a doctor, who provides a 'scientific' take on the issue, in sharp contrast  
 34 with the vernacular voices heard until this point:

35  
 36 In my surgery I see at least one woman a week who is seriously con-  
 37 templating an abortion. Quite apart from the 35 deaths per year that  
 38 we know are directly attributable to the back street abortions, the most  
 39 common and seriously disturbing result must be that this girl is unable  
 40 to have any more babies. She may not be able to have any. She may be  
 41 unable to have a family.

42  
 43 Rube sees Winnie, but it is later, once back in her room, that she has to  
 44 endure the abortion process itself, suffering immense pain and sickness.

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16



17 *Figure 13.3 Up the Junction: Rube's matter-of-fact statement: 'When you love a boy,*  
18 *you want to give him the best thing in the world'. Reproduced with kind permission*  
19 *from BBC and Ken Loach.*

20

21 Her wall is decorated with ripped up pictures and posters of Elizabeth  
22 Taylor, an allusion to cinema, pop culture and to her young age (she is  
23 just 17 years old). After a series of jump-cuts of extreme close-up images of  
24 her face, sweating and frantically shaking with pain, the voiceover of the  
25 doctor is reintroduced, silencing her screams: 'Take the lowest figure: 52,000  
26 abortions a year. That's 1000 abortions a week. Something like five or six  
27 every hour of every day. And that's taking the minimum figure.' This state-  
28 ment is abruptly and unexpectedly followed by Ben E. King's 'Yes', a song  
29 about a woman giving in to sex (and which had been used by Dunn in the  
30 abortion chapter 'Bang on the Common'): 'Yes, you can hurt me / Yes, you  
31 can squeeze me / Yes, you can have my caress.'

32 This song relates directly to Rube's fatalistic statement ('when you love  
33 a boy'), and provides, in Brechtian style, a commentary to her present situ-  
34 ation, as well as a soothing counterpoint to the images of her pain and the  
35 sound of her screams. The song continues to play over a sequence of images  
36 of Rube in the Common, on the station platform and in the pub toilet. Here,  
37 it is perhaps worth noting the importance of Joan Littlewood and the Theatre  
38 Workshop, especially their 1963 production of *Oh What a Lovely War*, in the  
39 spread of Brecht's ideas within the English context. Heavily influenced by  
40 Brecht's epic theatre and drawing on music hall techniques (song and dance,  
41 the sketch structure), the widely acclaimed play about World War I had had  
42 a considerable impact on Loach and Garnett. Stephen Lacey recalls that in  
43 the play 'the newspanel announcement of losses of 85,000 men at Verdun  
44 was juxtaposed with the singing of "Goodbye-ee", an ironic song about

1 a soldier leaving to go off to war' (Lacey, 1995, p. 160). *Up the Junction* uses  
 2 exactly the same strategy by contrasting the doctor's statistics on abortions  
 3 with the song's invitation to sex. The sequence finally ends with an abrupt  
 4 cut from a close-up of Rube to one of Sylvie and the latter's voiceover: 'I was  
 5 the youngest bride in Battersea.' It is her 'story' that will now be told, and  
 6 her predominantly white image (she wears a white blouse and a white hair  
 7 band, a probable reference to 'youngest bride') contrasts sharply with Rube's  
 8 black hair, blouse and strong eye make-up.

9 Loach once claimed to have lost interest in Brechtian techniques  
 10 towards the end of the 1960s, suggesting that they had lost their impact.  
 11 Paradoxically, this rejection coincided with the gradual politicization of his  
 12 filmmaking, suggesting that his interest in Brecht around the time of *Up the*  
 13 *Junction*, *Cathy Come Home* and *Poor Cow* had not only been political but  
 14 also, and sometimes to a greater extent, formal. Loach admitted that back  
 15 in his university years as a law student 'Brecht was fashionable' (Fuller, 1998,  
 16 p. 4) and that he was aware of his work. *Up the Junction* shows that Brecht  
 17 was a decisive influence on him, both in terms of form (anti-illusionistic  
 18 storytelling) and political content.

19 The ephemeral and fragmented quality of the real resulting from the  
 20 narrative strategies adopted in *Up the Junction*, which draw directly from  
 21 television news style, characterizes the film as essentially modern. In 1863  
 22 Charles Baudelaire, in a well-known phrase, described modernity as 'the  
 23 transitory, the fugitive, the contingent' (1992, p. 355). Loach's filming style,  
 24 marked by a 'distracted' camera that never lingers on the same character  
 25 for too long, seems attracted precisely by what is fleeting and unstable, the  
 26 urban fragmentary experience which characterizes modernity. A telling illustration  
 27 is the film's third sequence, in which Eileen and Dave talk and have  
 28 sex inside a derelict house, followed by a series of shots of derelict houses  
 29 being demolished. This was a time of slum clearances, when old houses,  
 30 and with them an old way of life, were being pulled down to be replaced by  
 31 council estates. This transitory moment is reflected in both the demolition  
 32 images and the film's fragmented structure (Figure 13.4).

33 *Up the Junction* is indeed about fluidity and movement. It captures the  
 34 spirit of the time with its dynamic camera, jump-cuts and dense soundtrack.  
 35 It is not by chance that the three main characters are first seen standing on  
 36 a railway station platform and last seen walking around busy streets. They  
 37 embody the fluidity of space and sense of transformation as experienced in  
 38 the 1960s, bringing with them a breath of fresh air to English cinema and  
 39 television.

40

#### 41 **A dramatic document**

42

43 *Up the Junction* partly incorporated the realist tradition of the kitchen-sink dra-  
 44 mas in its use of location shooting, unknown or non-professional actors, and

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44



Figure 13.4 The fluidity of space in *Up the Junction's* 1960s London. Reproduced with kind permission from BBC and Ken Loach.

its concern with topical issues and the everyday lives of the working classes. Ken Loach, however, declared that, despite following in the footsteps of the kitchen-sink dramas, 'we felt ... that we could take that sense of authenticity a few notches further' (Loach, 2003). As a director, he was moved by an impulse towards a greater realism, which related dialectically with the preceding form of realism, a move that is well explained by John Hill: 'Realist innovations ... take place in a kind of dialectic with what has gone before, underwriting their own appeal to be uncovering reality by exposing the artificiality and conventionality of what has passed for reality previously' (1986, p. 127).

*Up the Junction's* realism exposed the artificiality of what had previously passed for reality, namely the structured organization of the real of the kitchen-sink dramas. Loach's realist principle implied that, to convey immediacy and actuality, it was necessary to incorporate chaotic and fragmented aspects of reality as they presented themselves to the camera, rather than reorganize them according to a given set of rules. It also had to incorporate the document as a non-articulated element into the fabric of the fiction.

With *Cathy Come Home*, Loach assumes a more rigid position as the spokesperson for the plight of the homeless, and the film's 'realism' works as an act of denunciation, intended to instruct, sensitize and awaken the public to a specific issue. *Up the Junction* was conceived more as a celebration and was motivated by a feeling of empathy rather than the duty of protest, working as a platform for the voices of ordinary people. It represents a rejection not only of the theatricality of television drama but also of the conventionalities of cinema's illusionist grammar, and therefore stands as a seminal work within (and between) both

1 worlds. It is a landmark in Loach's career as well as in the English audiovisual  
2 landscape.

### 4 Notes

5 I am grateful to Ken Loach and Eimhear McMahon of Sixteen Films, and Vicky  
6 Mitchell of the BBC, for granting me permission to use images from *Up the Junction*  
7 to illustrate this chapter. I also thank Laura Mulvey, who first encouraged me to write  
8 about *Up the Junction*. The original research for this chapter was sponsored by CAPES,  
9 Brazilian Ministry of Education.

- 10 1. My PhD thesis *Everyday Voices: The Demotic Impulse in English Post-war Film and*  
11 *Television* focuses on the aspiration to realism present in the post-war period of  
12 renewal, and redefines its boundaries to include the cycle of 'spiv films' (1945–51)  
13 and *Up the Junction* (1965).
- 14 2. Jo can also be seen as prefiguring the revelation of the working-class girl's voice as  
15 seen in *Up the Junction*.
- 16 3. In 1995 the band Pulp released the single 'Common People', which speaks of a girl  
17 who 'wants to live like common people', and thus rents a flat above a shop, cuts  
18 her hair, gets a job, smokes some cigarettes, plays some pool, pretending she never  
19 went to school. This is almost a checklist of the actions performed by the 'heiress  
20 from Chelsea' in the 1968 version of *Up the Junction*, which, unlike Loach's, kept  
21 the character of the outsider.

### 23 References

- 24 Baudelaire, Charles (1992), 'Le peintre de la vie moderne', in *Critique d'art: suivi de*  
25 *critique musicale*. Paris: Gallimard, pp. 343–84.
- 26 Caughie, John (2000), *Television Drama: Realism, Modernism, and British Culture*.  
27 Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 28 Dunn, Nell (1988), *Up the Junction*. London: Virago Press.
- 29 Fuller, Graham (ed.) (1998), *Loach on Loach*. London: Faber and Faber.
- 30 Garnett, Tony (2000), 'Contexts', in Jonathan Bignell, Stephen Lacey and Madeleine  
31 Macmurray-Kavanagh (eds), *British Television Drama: Past, Present and Future*.  
32 Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 11–23.
- 33 Hill, John (1986), *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956–1963*. London: British  
34 Film Institute.
- 35 Lacey, Stephen (1995), *British Realist Theatre: The New Wave in Its Context 1956–1965*.  
36 London: Routledge.
- 37 Laing, Stuart (1997), 'Ken Loach: Histories and Contexts', in George McKnight (ed.),  
38 *Agent of Challenge and Defiance: The Films of Ken Loach*. Westport, CT: Greenwood  
39 Press, pp. 11–27.
- 40 Leigh, Jacob (2002), *The Cinema of Ken Loach: Art in the Service of the People*. London:  
41 Wallflower Press.
- 42 Loach, Ken (2003), 'Audio Commentary', *Cathy Come Home* DVD. London: BFI Video  
43 Publishing.
- 44 Martin, Troy Kennedy (1964), 'Nats Go Home: First Statement of a New Drama for  
Television', in *Encore*, 48, pp. 21–33.
- Williams, Raymond (1973), *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*. Harmondsworth: Pelican Books.

PROOF