

CHAPTER 2

The 1960s

In Search of Self-fulfilment

The age of affluence

The wide consensus is that the 1960s were good for work and good for European cinema. Although ‘miracles’ and ‘small stabilisations’ (after clearing the rubble and rebuilding what was destroyed in the Second World War) began in the 1950s, the social benefits came largely in the 1960s (Booker 1969; Marwick 1998: 8; Mazower 1998: 296–316; Judt 2007: 324–59). At this time the income per capita went up and standards of living improved across practically the whole of Europe. As Christopher Booker reminisces: ‘There was suddenly more money around than would have seemed imaginable to any previous generation, and every year that passed seemed to bring yet more technical marvels, more change – transistor radios, jet airliners, motorways, new kinds of architecture in steel, concrete and glass’ (Booker 1980: 7). For the first time in history politicians were talking not about the difficulties and problems resulting from shortages and inequality but about ‘the miracle of growth’ (Mazower 1998: 296) and the ‘challenge of prosperity’ – such words are even uttered in one of the most famous British films of the decade, Tony Richardson’s *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*. The 1960s look even better against what Eric Hobsbawm describes as the ‘disturbed seventies and traumatic eighties’ (Hobsbawm 1995: 257), although of course those living in the 1960s could not have known this.

There were many factors contributing to this European golden age. One was peace in Europe or at least only the Cold War, as opposed to any ‘hot’ ones. Another factor was American help in the form of the Marshall Plan (see Chapter 1). What also contributed was the application by the majority of Western governments of Keynesian economic policy. Its main rules, based on the ideas of John Maynard Keynes, were an active role for the state in planning and stimulating economy, the existence of a large public sector, alongside the private sector, promoting full employment and a welfare state, the strong centralisation of capital that curbed inter-capitalist competition and the unions’ collaboration with management to raise productivity in return for wage gains that stimulated effective

demand (Lekachman 1967: 150–255; Harvey 1990: 121–40).¹ As this system subordinated economy to the needs of society, it is labelled ‘social liberalism’ (Hobsbawm 1995: 274) or ‘embedded liberalism’ (Harvey 2005: 11), the second term being a reference to Karl Polanyi’s ideas of embeddedness (Polanyi 2001), as well as ‘Keynesianism’.

David Harvey emphasises that embedded liberalism ruled in Western Europe irrespective of which party was in power. ‘Gaullist in France, the Labour Party in Britain, Christian Democrats in West Germany, etc. – engineered both stable economic growth and rising material living standards through a mix of welfare statism, Keynesian economic management, and control over wage relations’ (Harvey 1990: 135). Consumption and a relatively high living standard of the masses was helped by mass and standardised ways of producing goods, as pioneered by Henry Ford in the 1920s (see Chapter 1). Fordist approaches also dominated outside the sphere of commodity production, in the state institutions and trade unions. To reflect the domination of Keynesian and Fordist rules, Harvey uses the term Fordism-Keynesianism (Harvey 1990: 124; on the link between Fordism and Keynesianism see Pribac 2010).

One consequence of this regime was a division of the markets into ‘monopoly’ sectors and ‘competitive’ sectors, which also led to dividing workers into two groups: privileged, ‘affluent workers’, in industries such as car production, with strong unions and other, less well-treated workers (O’Connor 1973: 13–17; Harvey 1990: 138). Access to privileged employment was affected by factors such as gender and ethnicity; white men tended to have better paid jobs in a monopoly sector; women and immigrant workers ended up in low-paying jobs in a competitive sector (O’Connor 1973: 14). It is thus no accident that a well-known sociological study, *The Affluent Worker* (Goldthorpe et al. 1968), was based on male employees in traditional male industries, such as motorcar and ball and roller bearing production. The unions, anxious to preserve the privileges of ‘affluent workers’, tended to neglect the grievances of the underprivileged workers, such as women, with dire consequences in the 1970s for the whole of the working class (see Chapters 3 and 4), demonstrating that circumventing the principle of universality is ultimately fatal for the working class.

The picture that I have sketched did not cover the whole of what we tend to identify now as Western Europe. Spain and Portugal during this period were under fascist regimes, which rendered the positions of workers there more precarious in comparison with countries such as France, Britain or Germany. Italy, on the other

hand, is regarded as a country that experienced the greatest economic and cultural transformation, from a backward, largely peasant population, to a modern, urban, industrialised and consumerist society (Ginsborg 1990: 210–53; Drake 1999–2000: 62; for a repudiation of this claim see Agnew 1997: 39–40).

Eastern Europe, after the unfortunate technological and economic experiments of Stalinism and political purges, also enjoyed a relatively prosperous time in the 1960s, marked by greater political freedom and higher standards of living (Hobsbawm 1995: 259; on Poland see Davies 2005: 440–50). Although in the official propaganda the economic systems of the West and the East were entirely different, in practice during this period they had much in common, not least because the embedded liberalism included many elements of socialism, such as the active role of the state in the economy and a full-employment policy.² Governments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union retained many elements of capitalism, such as wage labour, and in some countries private ownership of land and small enterprises. The societies under what Marx would describe as crude communism were not classless or egalitarian, but preserved and even increased many inequalities pertaining to the capitalist system (Lukes 1974; Burawoy and Lukács 1992: 146–47).

In some socialist countries attempts were made to bring the economy closer to the market system (Sutela 1990). In Hungary the government encouraged the development of a legal second economy that would supplement wages and at the same time counter the rigidities of the state sector (Burawoy and Lukács 1992: 149). Following the break with the Soviet Union in 1948, Yugoslavia opted in 1950 for self-managed socialism: a system of autonomous cooperative enterprises (Allcock 2000: 76–78). In one way this system was closer to the Marxist ideal than other types of crude communism by allowing workers more power at the factory level but, in another way it was closer to capitalism, by accepting unemployment as an inevitable by-product of an efficient economy (Kirn 2010). Yugoslav filmmakers, working as freelance professionals rather than – as in other socialist countries – being chained to the centrally funded studios, confirmed this reading of Yugoslav socialism as quasi-capitalist (Levi 2007: 15).

In the course of the 1960s the economic trajectories of the East and the West not only came closer together, but also started to diverge. In the West, industrialisation reached its peak and started to decline. In the East, the factory remained the privileged site of creation of the country's wealth. There, the overwhelming majority of former peasants were directed into labour-intensive

mining and industrial manufacture. There was a tendency towards excess, to ‘Magnitogorsk mentality’ (the term taken from the rapid development of the town, which was a flagship of Stalin’s Five-Year Plan) or ‘investment fetishism’, which manifested itself in big enterprises, often employing thousands of people (Cohen 1985; Dyker 1990: 56; Bunce 1999a: 24; Allcock 2000: 72; Davies 2005: 440–50). In the short run the industrial emphasis of the command economies appeared impressive (not least to many Western observers), but in the long run Eastern Europe had become ‘one large museum of the industrial revolution’ (Bunce 1999a: 21).

Europe during this decade was on the move, literally and metaphorically, with millions of people leaving the countryside and moving to the city to climb the social ladder (Judt 2007: 327–28). This vertical movement was facilitated by an expansion of university education and the growing power of youth. Intellectual ferment was felt everywhere, and led to lasting developments in philosophy, literature, art and cinema, even today strongly affecting European culture and society (Diski 2009). This period is also marked by an unprecedented cultural exchange between these two ‘blocs’, with Eastern European artists fêted in the West and Western European cultural personalities travelling to the East (French 1982: 218). Despite these movements in all spheres of human life, this decade, in an important sense, still belongs to ‘solid modernity’, as defined by Zygmunt Bauman, because institutional power was centralised and there was a broad agreement about what constitutes social progress – increased prosperity coupled with equality (Bauman 2000a). However, there is also wide concurrence that the 1960s mark the endpoint of modernity as understood in such terms.

The cultural changes that occurred in the 1960s attracted much more attention than the economic developments, although they were closely connected. Nowhere was this more visible than in Britain, where in the 1960s the music industry brought more income to the country’s economy than the motor industry. The 1960s are regarded as being contaminated by the media to such an extent that some authors argue that it is impossible to distil the ‘real 1960s’ from the weight of their representations (York 1980: 182).

The question of when the 1960s began to be conceived in such positive terms is rarely discussed, because there is a continuity of political, economic and cultural trends from the mid to late 1950s to the late 1960s, and in the West even from the end of the Second World War until the late 1960s. By contrast, at the end of the 1960s many dramatic political events happened in Europe, finishing in political

‘springs’ and ‘thaws’. For most observers the political endpoint of the 1960s is May 1968 in France, marked by widespread strikes and radicalisation of left-wing intellectuals (see Chapter 3). But in East Germany, the happy 1960s had already reached their end in the middle of the decade, due to the thwarting of cultural liberalisation with the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961. In Poland, the 1960s were closed by anti-Semitic purges following Israel’s victory in the Six-Day War of 1967. In Czechoslovakia, the armies of the Warsaw Pact crushed the Prague Spring in August 1968, leading to the introduction of a neo-Stalinist regime. In terms of living standards, the ‘good’ 1960s in the West finished some time in the early to mid-1970s. Hobsbawm lists such signs of its end as the collapse of the Bretton Woods international financial system in 1971, the OPEC oil crisis of 1973 and the general ‘overheating’ of the world economy in 1972–73 (Hobsbawm 1995: 286).

Cinema of the 1960s is remembered as the period of new waves, heralded as a pinnacle of cinematic modernism. The fact that the term ‘new wave’ is used to describe the cinema in France, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Poland suggests that in the 1960s the differences between European countries decreased. The term ‘new wave’ connotes breaking with the old precepts of filmmaking. Indeed, the waves brought new, young characters and less tightly structured stories, often shot on location. Cinematic modernism is often defined by privileging space by using spatial devices to challenge the supremacy of narrative causality (Thompson and Bordwell 1976: 42; Heath 1976: 73). For this reason Michelangelo Antonioni is regarded as a model modernist director. The new waves’ allegiance to modernism is also based on their self-reflexivity. Filmmakers reflected on what it meant to be an artist, including whether this was a fundamentally different occupation to working in a factory or an office.

As work in the 1960s was relatively stable and ‘placed’ (people worked in the same place for many years and their social position was defined by belonging to this place), in this chapter I will focus on the topography of work. Space and, especially architecture, as I mentioned, was an obsession of 1960s cinema, to a large extent reflecting the embeddedness of the 1960s economy. This chapter is also embedded in the first volume of Marx’s *Capital*, which is preoccupied with production and consumption.

Work in the countryside

In the West in the 1960s, films about agricultural work became a rare species, which reflects the previously mentioned demographic transformations and the diminishing role of agriculture in Western Europe's economy after the Second World War. Especially in British cinema there was a sense that agriculture belonged solely to the past. This was because the processes of economic marginalisation of the countryside had begun a long time ago, during the industrial revolution. In *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, published for the first time in 1845, Engels wrote that:

The increased demand for cloth raised the wages of the weavers and so led the peasants who had worked at the loom in their spare time to give up their work on the land in order to earn more money by weaving. We have seen how the growth of large farms forced the peasants off their holdings, turned them into wage-earners and then in some cases drove them into the towns. (Engels 2009: 88)

For Engels, this process was unfortunate because towns (he refers to the 'great' English towns of London, Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds) were crowded and polluted (ibid.: 30–87).

In postwar Britain the acceptance of Engels' diagnosis came hand in hand with an unspoken agreement that the clock could not be turned back. Almost all British films showing work on the land are set in the past and imbued with nostalgia for premodern life, such as *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1967) by John Schlesinger. In British New Wave films, such as Karel Reisz's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960), Tony Richardson's *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1962) and Lindsay Anderson's *This Sporting Life* (1963) the countryside is evoked as a place of brief escape from the constraints of urban life, not a place to build one's new life. In both *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* and Peter Watkins' *Privilege* (1967), we hear the hymn 'Jerusalem', with words by William Blake. This is the most popular patriotic song in England, where the 'dark, satanic mills' of the Industrial Revolution are contrasted with the 'green and pleasant land' of the earlier period. The fact that this song is appropriated by all main political parties in England (a fact ironically evoked by Watkins in *Privilege*) is a sign that living on and from the land at the time when these films were made was regarded as an ideal

that everyone could subscribe to without risking the test of reality. However, it shall be mentioned that what was true about cinema did not apply to British television or radio, with *The Archers*, set in rural England, being the world's longest-running radio soap opera.

The situation was different in Eastern Europe, where many people in the 1960s still lived on the land, especially in countries such as the Soviet Union, Poland, Yugoslavia and the Slovak part of Czechoslovakia and, at the same time, industry was privileged in economic plans and edified in cultural discourses at agriculture's expense. Such a view reflected Stalin's conviction that farm life is necessarily backward and inferior to city life and the countryside is a bastion of resistance against communism. Stalin claimed that under communism agrarian-industrial associations will gradually emerge; agriculture will combine organically with the industrial processing of its produce and the kolkhoz villages will grow into amalgamated urban communities, leading to elimination of socio-economic and cultural distinctions between town and country (Stalin 1971: 209–96). Agriculture's inferior position in relation to industry is subtly conveyed in one of the most familiar Soviet images: the statue of Vera Mukhina, 'The Industrial Worker and Collective Farm Girl'. In this statue the secondary role is assigned both to agriculture and a woman by allocating the sickle to the woman, the hammer to the man (Waters 1991: 238). Even if the vast majority of the population of Eastern Europe did not assimilate Stalin's scornful attitude to rural life, by the late 1950s the countryside economically lagged so much behind the towns that it was only natural to regard it as a place to run away from. This also applies to Yugoslavia. Although it broke with the Soviet Union and Stalinism in 1948, from the 1950s resources, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, were pumped out from the countryside to generate development in industry and to develop towns (Dyker 1990: 59). Consequently, Eastern European films tend to render agriculture as a relic of the past or at least question its relevance to modern life, as in *Sami swoi* (*Our Folks*, 1967), directed by Sylwester Chęciński, Štefan Uher's *Slnko v sieti* (*Sunshine in a Net*, 1962) and *Kad budem mrtav i beo* (*When I am Dead and Pale*, 1967) by Živojin Pavlović.

Although *Our Folks* is set shortly after the Second World War, I am discussing it here because at the time of its release and until the 1970s it was regarded as the ultimate portrayal of rural life in postwar Poland. Chęciński's comedy presents two families, the Pawlaks and the Karguls who, following Poland's change of borders, relocated from the East (*Kresy*), which in 1945 was given to the Soviet Union, to

what was previously the Western part of the German Reich, now called the Regained Territories (*Ziemia odzyskana*). The source of much of the film's comedy are the families' traditional ways of working and living, contrasted with the more advanced agricultural techniques exercised by the Germans who lived there previously, as testified by the machinery they have left behind. The Poles, who do not know how to use it, get rid of it, replacing it with their old and primitive tools. Kazimierz Pawlak and Władysław Kargul, the patriarchs who decide how things will be done, are both elderly. Their power ensures that little will change there in the years to come. That said, *Our Folks* presents the village as a lively place of genuinely communal working and living, even if marked by a continuous conflict between the Pawlaks and the Karguls. This is because, paradoxically, in Poland after the war the majority of the land remained in private hands; agriculture thus offered the possibility of nonalienated work and Kargul and Pawlak encapsulate it better than any other characters in Polish cinema of this period. They are prepared not only to work from dawn to dusk on their pieces of land, but even to die for it. The use of long shots, emphasising the beauty of the Regained Territories, not unlike John Ford's westerns, adds to the sense of the nobility of their pursuit. This is all the more surprising as they do not work on land on which their ancestors lived, but on new land. One wonders how great would be their dedication to work if they were not put in the position of migrant workers. Pawlak and Kargul's attitude can also be seen as a measure of opposition by the Polish society at large against crude communism, introduced in Eastern Europe after 1945.

Štefan Uher's *Slnko v sieti* (*Sunshine in a Net*, 1962), one of the earliest examples of the Czechoslovak New Wave, is set partly in Bratislava and partly on a cooperative farm in the country. Even more than in *Our Folks*, all regular farm workers are old, showing socialist agriculture as lagging behind industry. Unlike Chęciński's film, which casts as main characters people who know no other life than on a farm, *Sunshine in a Net* adopts the perspective of an outsider, Fajolo, a teenager who comes to the countryside from the city to work in a youth brigade, volunteering to help the agricultural workers. Undoubtedly such a perspective is more conducive to presenting agricultural work as a vestige of the past. This is indeed the case; Fajolo challenges the farm foreman about the outdated, deficient machinery the brigades have to use and, in a wider sense, points to the negligence towards machinery under communism. The young volunteers' objections might also be seen more obliquely as referencing the new, technocratically inclined Czechoslovak economists who were at the time seeking to revise the outdated

‘machinery’ of socialist production methods. If this is the case, then *Sunshine in a Net*, as Jonathan Owen argues, allegorises the very debates that kick-started the Prague Spring reform drive, focused on the importance of technological development and the growing inadequacy of traditional labour- and capital-intensive production (Owen 2012: 194).

One aspect of *Sunshine in a Net* points to the difference between farming life in Poland and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. In Poland, as Chęciński shows us, the farmers’ work is nonalienated because they own the means of production. In Czechoslovakia, this is not the case: the land and the machinery belong to the state, the ‘universal capitalist’, as Marx put it, from which they feel estranged. This aspect is first illuminated by exposing the sham nature of ‘volunteering’ to work in the youth brigades. Fajolo’s enrolment in the brigade is undertaken for the sake of his father’s ‘file’, as a means for the latter to regain his standing in the eyes of the regime. In this sense *Sunshine in a Net* already typifies the Czechoslovak New Wave’s association between work and the false and mercenary (ibid.: 193). Both in the country and in the city work is performed badly; the negligent farm foreman has his equivalent in the lazy superintendent at the apartment block where Fajolo’s girlfriend Bela lives. Yet on the other hand, the scenes of the brigades working outside, half-stripped and sun-tanned, have an idyllic, erotic quality, and Fajolo’s work facilitates his sexual initiation. This work has no obvious political or regime-supportive aim and even involves theft of state property. Nevertheless, it reveals itself as a source of dignity and pleasure. At such moments, as Owen observes, Uher is able to extract meaningful work from both the Stalinist ideological discourse he eschews and the mercenary motives he cannily underlines (ibid.: 194–95).

Such an assessment of agricultural work cannot be made about *When I am Dead and Pale*. The countryside as represented by Pavlović has all the negative characteristics of its counterparts in Chęciński’s and Uher’s films, but none of their redeeming features. Villages are shown as poor and in decay and there is no solidarity to be seen, as was so pervasive in the two films discussed previously. Furthermore, the Yugoslav countryside suffered from unemployment – this being a consequence of the previously mentioned self-management – which led to passing a large part of the duties of the socialist state towards the citizens themselves. Such representation provides a contrast with the situation in Slovak films, where the countryside is so poor in labour that it has to import it from the city. As Gal Kirn argues, the central opposition between village and city is

epitomised in the recognition and production of music. The folk music of the countryside with its gypsy sounds could not be reconciled with the urban sounds of rock 'n' roll. This fissure is reflected in the city audience's rejection of the performance of a folk song by the film's young protagonist. For Kirn, the countryside's decay and rejection of folk music demonstrates the failure of self-managing socialism in creating a united, cohesive Yugoslav society (Kirn 2009), a conclusion with which I agree.

Western factories and their alternatives

In the 1960s employment opportunities for Europeans increased beyond the traditional manufacture, agriculture and trade. As a result, manual work in factories started to look backward. This affected its cinematic representations: throughout the 1960s there was a decline in the number of films about factory work. Nowhere is this more visible than in British cinema, where the beginning of the decade was marked by an upsurge of films set in the industrial North and the second half by 'Swinging London' films, set among the metropolitan celebrities. Working class characters do not accept factory work with gratitude, but begrudge it. In this sense, they are different from their predecessors in Italian neorealist films or Eastern European socialist realist films, who had to fight for material necessities and regarded a regular wage as a sign of good luck. Another feature is adopting the perspective of an outsider to factory life. This might happen by choosing as a main protagonist somebody who does not work in a factory, or by employing cinematic techniques that put the viewer in the position of an unsympathetic voyeur, observing working class life as if it were something repulsive yet fascinating. Such an approach pertains to British films of the early 1960s (Hill 1986: 136; Leach 2004: 55). Yet, although the narrative function of the factory diminished in 1960s cinema, visually it increased. Some 1960s films are so dominated by images of factories that their characters, as Seymour Chatman wrote in relation to Antonioni's films, look 'like mannequins in architectural models' (Chatman 1985: 102).

I begin my discussion with films made in Britain, the country where the industrial revolution began. Reading histories of British cinema one might conjecture that when it diverts from depicting the working class, it betrays itself. The most sophisticated version of this argument and its critique are presented in the seminal book by John Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956–1963*

(1986). Hill argues that in contrast to wartime cinema, which attempted to project a sense of collectivity on the screen, the cinema of the late 1950s and early 1960s is individualistic, as confirmed by its marginalisation of work (Hill 1986: 138). Playing down work and accenting individualism, in Hill's view, reflects the fact that the films' authors, despite their declared leftism, ultimately adhered to bourgeois values. It also attests to the difficulty of presenting work within the confines of narrative realism (ibid.: 139). I would like to qualify Hill's arguments by pointing out that individualism became a value cherished in the 1960s by all sections of British society, including the working class; it became a working class value, even if choosing it testified to the 'false consciousness' of its adherents. Regarding the issue of insufficient focus on work, as I noted in the introduction, this argument was made many times before and after Hill. However, we cannot say whether it is valid because we lack a standard for a film that represents work in a 'right' way.

In three classic British New Wave films, also known as 'kitchen sink films', *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960), directed by Karel Reisz, *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1962), directed by Tony Richardson and Lindsay Anderson's *This Sporting Life* (1963), true to Hill's claim, we do not see much work being done, as is implied by their titles. However, the question of job opportunities for the working class characters plays a crucial role in their narratives, and without the factory scenes, as Stuart Laing argues in relation to *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, we will not gain insight into the inner lives of the characters (Laing 1986: 120–21). I will begin, chronologically, with *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, set in Nottingham. Its protagonist, Arthur Seaton, is an 'angry young man', a type summarised by Penelope Houston as 'a young man in a provincial lodging, precariously poised between working-class origins and professional future, openly derisive of the "system", the Establishment, taking out his frustrations in buccaneering talk and a raw social and political awareness' (quoted in Spicer 2001: 150). Arthur works in an engineering factory, operating a machine producing axles, and is paid by the piece. He is presented as an appendage to the machine: its rhythm defines his rhythm. The factory hall is noisy and cramped; he works in close proximity to other workers and eats his sandwiches in the same place where he works. Cinematography adds to the impression of confinement: long shots are avoided and it feels as if the camera is unable to isolate Arthur from other workers; somebody else is always pushed into the frame. In an internal monologue he confesses that he regards his work as hard and boring and he is never paid in proportion to his effort. He is aware that his work benefits those above him

disproportionally: the capitalists, managers and foremen. However, Arthur neither engages in political action to fight this perceived injustice nor attempts to find a 'room at the top', as is the case with a young accountant in the film of this title by Jack Clayton (1959). Instead, he tries to make his life inside and outside the factory enjoyable enough to bear his everyday hardship. One strategy consists of 'making out': pretending to make more pieces than he does in reality, or producing them below the required standard. He does not lose any opportunity to upset his superiors and co-workers, such as planting a rat in a pile of pieces made by a fellow female labourer. What he regards as an innocuous joke can be seen as a sign of the resentment of male British workers towards competition from female workers (in subsequent decades this is combined with resentment towards foreign workers). The supervisor tells Arthur to avoid such jokes, but there is no real sanction; Arthur feels secure at work, taking his employment for granted. This might be a reason why, although he is visibly angry and restless, he does not leave his job.

Immediately after leaving the factory Arthur mounts his bike and rushes home. True to the tradition that started with *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory* (1895) by the Lumière brothers, we see the factory building when the workers leave it, not as they enter it. Unlike the episodes showing Arthur at work, his journey by bike is presented in a long shot, which underscores his after-work freedom. His movements are wide, as if he wants to fill half of the road; there are no cars in sight so it appears that the road belongs to the workers. The use of a long shot showing Arthur in his free time foretells that soon working class history would be more the history of non-work (leisure and unemployment) than of work.

When not working, Arthur is out of his house, fishing with his miner friend, visiting a funfair, walking with his married lover, Brenda, or his new girlfriend, Doreen. Arthur also goes to the pub, but the pleasures of fresh air are more to his taste. He needs to detach himself from the confinement of the factory and be able to return to work. His behaviour conforms to the notion of 'free time' as elucidated by Theodor Adorno: 'Free time must not resemble work in any way whatsoever, in order, presumably, that one can work all the more effectively afterwards ... Time free of work should be utilised for the recreation of expended labour power ... precisely because it is a mere appendage of work' (Adorno 1991: 164). As if to confirm this opinion, wherever Arthur goes, we see the factory in the background. Showing Arthur's life after work also allows Reisz to present improvement in the living standard of the British working class, marked by new fancy clothes and numerous pints of beer, which Arthur can easily afford.

The most conspicuous sign of Arthur's rebellion is his affair with Brenda, the wife of Arthur's foreman, Jack. In the process of his social climbing Jack, who is also of working class origin, aged prematurely and lost his virility, of which the ultimate proof is the ease with which Arthur cuckolds him (Spicer 2001: 153). Jack is not even able to avenge his humiliation personally. To teach Arthur a lesson, he gets two soldiers to beat him up and asks Arthur to leave his family in peace. He has neither desire nor power to punish Jack at work, not least because the private and the public spheres of their lives are separated; the factory life is governed by bureaucratic rules, not personal preferences (Zaretsky 1976: 78–127). Arthur's pride in his masculinity is thus one reason why he wants to remain an ordinary worker. Such a link between the working class and sex was an important element in the self-perception of the British working class after the war (Hoggart 1957: 97–101) and, perhaps even more, constituted the way the upper classes viewed British proletarians (Booker 1969: 145). The narrative of working class super-virility can be seen as a specific ideological tool – what I will term a 'compensation narrative'. For working class men it was a means to help them to come to terms with their low social position, and for those on the higher rungs of the social ladder to render the status quo as natural, reflecting different types of human capital represented by those at the top and bottom. The idea that those who spend long hours as appendages to the machine are extra virile is at odds with Marx, who regarded industrial workers as severely debilitated.

Reisz suggests that the life of the British working class is improving, as demonstrated by the new housing estate built on the outskirts of the town, which Arthur looks at with his girlfriend Doreen. He throws a stone in its direction, which some critics interpreted as a sign of his continuing rebellion. For me, however, it is rather a sign that Arthur accepts the status quo, but is unwilling to admit it, because conformity does not agree with his self-perception. For him, being working class means being angry and rejecting cooperation with the authorities, including the state engaged in providing affordable housing for the working class. Doreen criticises his gesture, since one day the house might be theirs – his gesture is thus a symbolic one of self-harm.

While Arthur does not want to test an alternative to the life of working in a factory, the main character in *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* is offered such an alternative and the protagonist of *This Sporting Life* actively seeks it. Colin Smith in Richardson's film comes from a working class family and ends up in a borstal as a result of breaking into a bakery and stealing money. There his athletic

pro prowess is discovered by the borstal governor and he is given a chance to move away, physically and metaphorically, from the confinement of the other working class delinquents. He is allowed to undertake unsupervised training in preparation for a cross-country race. The governor promises him that if he wins the race, his privileges will multiply and the victory will pave his way to further opportunities, even taking part in the Olympics. Sport is thus presented to Colin as a fast track to joining the higher classes and achieving personal fulfilment. Yet only the fast runners succeed and it is an opportunity open only to individuals, not the masses. Colin, however, blows his chance by purposefully losing the race to a boy from a public school. He does so to stay 'true to himself': nonconformist and hostile towards the Establishment. 'Truthfulness to oneself' is also an important concept in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and in other British New Wave films (Leach 2004: 56). Typically, the films' authors are sympathetic to this value, which can be regarded as a sign of their leftist respect for the ways of the working class. Yet equally they show that being merely 'true to oneself' leads to stasis, as in the case of Arthur, or defeat, as in the case of Colin. We see it at the end of the film, when



Figure 2.1 Sport as an escape from working class life in *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*

Colin is demoted from the position of the governor's favourite to the manual job of assembling gas masks. Ultimately, irrespective of whether he is a rebel or a conformist, Colin continues to serve the governor and the system – he has no choice but to do so. He is even more at the mercy of the system after his rebellion than he would have been if he were a successful runner, as underscored by the military connotation of the work with gas masks. Such an analysis is supported by sports historian John Hughson, who, quoting Paul Willis's well-known sociological study on the career paths of rebellious working class 'lads' (Willis 1977), argues that they paid for their nonconformity by poor educational results that destined them to futures in unskilled jobs, such as those in which their fathers had been employed (Hughson 2005: 46). Rebellion of the kind performed by Colin thus not only failed to subvert the system, but ultimately strengthened it.

Colin is contrasted with his mother who, like Doreen in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, openly cooperates with what Colin perceives as their enemy – the capitalist class. She accepts compensation from the management of the factory following an accident resulting in the death of Colin's father, and spends it on shopping. Colin regards her behaviour as disgraceful, because it indicates her acceptance of the way the management measured his father's life and death. Yet his way of challenging such reckoning is an internal emigration – a strategy that suits the capitalists and alienates Colin from his own working class milieu.

This Sporting Life offers a portrait of another working class character, a Yorkshire miner called Frank Machin, who rejects the predictable existence of a labourer in order to find a better life through playing rugby league. What attracts Frank to rugby is money and power; he decides to be a professional player upon noticing that ordinary workers are not allowed into a night club, while sportsmen and sport managers are welcomed. Yet Frank does not want to break with the working class milieu entirely, only to improve his lot. He continues renting a room from a poor widow, Mrs Hammond, even when he earns enough money to move out, and he attempts to gain her heart by buying her clothes and taking her and her children for excursions. He also provocatively rejects upper class ways by keeping his distance from his boss and his snobbish wife and behaving in an ostentatiously 'working class' manner in an expensive restaurant.

Rugby league has working class connotations (on sport and class distinction see Bourdieu 1978), not least because muscular strength is more important in this sport than technical skill. Anderson underscores the working class character of Frank's play by focusing on the moments of greatest brutality, when the players are injured.

There is thus an analogy between the injury-prone labour down the mine and on the rugby pitch. Both Mrs Hammond's husband and Frank were seriously injured during their careers and the men themselves were accused of self-damage. Both the factory and the rugby pitch are controlled by people from the middle class, who direct those on the shop floor and the pitch from behind the scenes. In the case of rugby, the important decisions are made in hotels and private houses. Nevertheless, there is a limit to this analogy as Frank is paid many times more as a sportsman than when he was a miner and Mrs Hammond's husband loses his life during his work, while Frank only loses his teeth. The work and death of Mr Hammond is off-screen. Frank's work, by contrast, is part of a spectacle; without an audience it loses its meaning. Anderson criticises the way factory work is hidden and sport is displayed, by pointing out that because nobody saw how the miner died, Mrs Hammond was refused compensation, and by rendering the rugby match as a gladiatorial contest, in which spectators revel in the pain suffered by the combatants. At the same time, Anderson is complicit in representing work and sport in such a way because he does not offer us any alternative.

Frank's desire to remain in a working class milieu while enjoying the economic and social privileges of belonging to a higher class remains unfulfilled. One reason is that to his managers he is disposable. He is paid well as long as he plays well on



Figure 2.2 Frank and Mrs Hammond in *This Sporting Life*

the pitch, producing surplus value, and off the pitch he behaves in the way that is expected of him, but when he loses his talent and indulges in alcohol, his status diminishes. At the same time, Mrs Hammond, who gradually warms to Frank and even has sex with him, ultimately rejects him, as she believes that once Frank is a rich man, there will be a class division between them and she could not be his partner, only his paid 'slut', justifiably despised by her neighbours. There is a chance that Mrs Hammond's prejudice might be overcome by the sheer power of Frank's devotion, but this chance is shattered by her illness and death, which leaves Frank devastated. Such a tragic solution, however, saves the author and the audience from a moral assessment of the character who successfully transcended class boundaries.

If we look at other sources, then we notice that successful transitions from the working class to higher social positions via sport happened in the 1960s and even more so in subsequent decades. The 1960s was a period when sport and especially football in England started to pay very well, according to Jeffrey Richards, to the detriment of the standards of behaviour of the sportsmen and their fans. The best documented example was the great star of the 1960s, George Best, as well as such bad boys of soccer as Rodney Marsh and Stanley Bowes, who, according to Richards, 'drank, gambled, womanised and drove fast cars ... squandered their talent and lived for the moment', unlike the 'classic footballer of the 1940s and 1950s, a player never cautioned or sent off, a symbol of respectable working-class Englishness – modest, well-behaved, honourable, decent, skilful, cool and sensible, gentlemanly on and off the field' (Richards 2004: 102). The difference between the sombre mood of *The Long Distance Runner* and *This Sporting Life* on the one hand and the more cheerful 1960s stories of the real sportsmen of working class background on the other ultimately testifies not to the difference between the reality of the working class in this period and its cinematic representation, but to the then-dominant discourse of the British working class. This discourse, as espoused by the previously quoted Richard Hoggart, projected it as cohesive, anti-individualistic, reconciled with its place behind the machine and at the kitchen sink, and threatened by the development of mass media. His argument had its equivalent in other countries. Even such an unconventional thinker as Michel Foucault construed the French industrial class in a similar way and, like Hoggart, mourned its media-induced decline (Foucault 1975).

In the three British films the focus is on male members of the working class, never on a woman, despite the fact that women presented in the films are factory

workers (Doreen, Colin's mother) and look after small children, often on their own (Mrs Hammond, Colin's mother). There is a sense that a man is punished by working in a factory, while for a woman it is a privilege, so she has no right to complain about her predicament. Sympathising with male workers at the expense of female workers can be interpreted as a sign of accepting a Keynesian logic (supported by the trade unions and the Labour Party) with its division of labour force into working in the privileged, male 'monopoly sector' and the 'competitive' sector, dominated by female workers. Furthermore, women in these films are associated with (over)consumption, being presented as either ardent consumers or agents of corruption of the male workers. The latter refers to *This Sporting Life*, where Frank is the main spender, but the main reason for his recklessness with money is a need to impress Mrs Hammond by showering her with expensive gifts.

Discourses activated by these films point to the tension between the old and new concepts of the working class that circulated in the 1960s. In a wider sense, they demonstrate that the working class as, indeed, any class, is always in the process of making. On this occasion, there is a tension between the working class as united, homogenous and happy to remain 'true to itself' and one consisting of individuals pursuing their own consumerist desires. The filmmakers could not ignore the individualistic mindset, but equally found it difficult to accept, either because of their left wing, anticapitalist views or, if we read their films less sympathetically, due to their unexpressed hostility to the upward mobility of some members of the working class. This is one of the reasons that their films convey a sense of both movement and stasis.

The three films, together with some others of this period, such as *A Taste of Honey* (1961) by Tony Richardson and *A Kind of Loving* (1962) by John Schlesinger, belong to the most celebrated examples of realism in British cinema and, at the same time, the seminal depictions of working class life in this country. This raises the issue of the relationship between realism and the representation of the working class, including work as its defining feature. In Britain, the opinion prevails that realism is more conducive to such representation than non-realistic styles. My position is that realism is a question of intertextuality, namely of a position of the cinematic text against other texts (Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis 1992: 184–221). Only through comparing a film at hand with other films are we able to decide about its realism or non-realism. If the film appears to capture work accurately, this is because of its position within film history, rather than due to its essential qualities. As if to confirm this view, Christopher Booker notes that 'Karel

Reisz's "neo-realistic" style of film-making was to serve him to equally good purpose in making television commercials, his "hard" and "realistic" photography and "exciting" choice of angles being equally effective whether used to glamorise the smoky skyline of Nottingham or a bowl of cornflakes sparkling in the sun' (Booker 1969: 145). John Hill reaches a similar conclusion. He argues that ultimately British New Wave films attested to the difficulty of presenting work within the confines of narrative realism and defends films such as the *Carry On* series and *The Kitchen* (1961), directed by James Hill, which thanks to their episodic structure and eschewing of a central character offered a new model of realism, more appropriate to capture the experience of the working class (Hill 1986: 140–43). The question of realism also pertains to Eastern European films.

Heaven and hell in a socialist combine

In the East of Europe, industry in the 1960s was still growing, as much in quantity as in size – the socialist dogma was that the larger the factory, the better. As a result, the cult of work was very strong in this decade, if not in reality, then in official discourses. Industrialisation was coupled with improvements in the standard of living, but also had negative effects, such as uneven development. In Poland, for example, Silesia in the south was overdeveloped, to the detriment of the natural environment, while the north-east suffered due to the lack of investment and, consequently, poor wages and poor quality of life. Because socialist factories lacked mechanisms to encourage an increase in productivity, they were always hungry for people. There was a need to mobilise women and potential workers from the rural areas, and in the case of East Germany even from abroad, to fill the available posts. However, by the 1960s, when countries such as Poland, Yugoslavia and Hungary embarked on programs of modernisation, the shortage of specialists exceeded that of unskilled workforce.

The totalising character of socialist industrialisation is conveyed by the term 'combine' (*kombinat*), functioning in a number of languages, and referring to a big industrial enterprise that links several factories, such as a mine and a power station, under one administration. A typical combine was accompanied by a housing estate built for its workforce, which was detached from normal cities. The employees of combines constituted the privileged part of the socialist workforce, being an equivalent of the Western 'monopoly sector'. Their wages were higher

than in the other branches of industry and employees were edified in the socialist rhetoric, of which a sign was establishing special national holidays, to celebrate occupations such as mining or steelwork (Stenning 2003). In the end, however, such policies proved unfortunate for the socialist establishment. In Poland large factories became the bastions of the anticommunist movement and played a crucial role in the demolition of crude communism (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Eastern European cinema of the 1960s reflects the importance of combines, by using them as a setting for numerous films, some of which became classics of European cinematic modernism. I will discuss here three Polish films from this period: *Złoto* (*Gold*, 1962) by Wojciech Has, *Walkower* (*Walkover*, 1965) by Jerzy Skolimowski and *Molo* (*The Pier*, 1969) by Wojciech Solarz and one from Yugoslavia, *Čovek nije tica* (*Man Is Not a Bird*, 1965) by Dušan Makavejev. They were shot in places of special pride for the communist establishment: *Gold* in Turoszów in Lower Silesia, where seams of brown coal were exploited on a large scale; *Walkover* in Płock, the site of the largest Polish oil refinery; *The Pier* in the Gdynia shipyard, which produced the most modern ships in Eastern Europe, and *Man Is Not a Bird* in the Bor region of Eastern Serbia, one of the largest and most productive copper mining centres in the world. They all focused on people working there, but (to reflect the modernisation drive) more often on specialists than ordinary workers.

Gold and *Walkover* cast as main characters young men just arrived in the industrial complex, either, like Kazik in *Gold*, to escape personal problems, or an uncertain existence, as in the case of Leszczyc in *Walkover*. Their escape is successful; in the plant they are given the opportunity for a meaningful life. However, not all is rosy in combines. In *Gold* nobody encourages the workers to take responsibility for the organisation of the plant; this is left to the authorities. All the employees, except for the idealistic manager, want to escape this place. For one labourer working in the plant is only a means to earn enough money to invest in his farm. The centre of communal life is not the workers' hostel, which is presented as a site of continuous conflict, or the party headquarters, which is nowhere to be seen, but a restaurant with a friendly barwoman, which looks as if transplanted from prewar films. Here workers, managers and various shadowy local businessmen and drop-outs spend their free time having 'philosophical discussions' and drinking alcohol.³

Kazik owes his decision to stay in the plant to Piotr, an engineer with managerial duties who assumes the role of his mentor. Piotr points out to Kazik that extracting



Figure 2.3 Kazik and his factory in *Gold*

raw materials, the eponymous ‘gold’ from the Earth, serves nature. Piotr does not think at all in monetary terms and despises people who are preoccupied with material comfort, and for this reason is in conflict with his narrow-minded wife, who wants him to return to Warsaw. This woman’s origins are in a prewar petty bourgeois milieu, whose remnants the socialist politicians vowed to eradicate. Her especially harsh treatment within the narrative can be linked to the emphasis put by the socialist economy on accumulation, at the expense of consumption, unlike in the Keynes-following West, where consumption was seen as a motor of production.

Leszczyc in *Walkover* is also lured to stay in the combine by the friendly director of the plant and Teresa, a female colleague from a university who came there to become, as she puts it, 'somebody important'. At their first meeting, the director asks Teresa and Leszczyc to 'send wires to their acquaintances and friends to come, bringing their families with them'. For engineers there are apartments in the newly erected blocks, while the ordinary labourers must content themselves with places in the workers' hostel. The factory director himself, as his secretary mentions with pride, is the youngest *kombinat* director in the whole country. Yet, ironically, he is deaf. He talks, but he does not listen to people, making false assumptions, such as that Leszczyc is an engineer, while in reality he does not have a university degree. This affliction can be interpreted metaphorically as the deafness of the political and economic leadership (*nomenklatura*) to the needs of the workers. The director is played by Krzysztof Chamiec, the same actor who was cast as engineer Piotr in *Gold*. His cinematic trajectory from *Gold*, where he played an idealist in an old jumper, to *Walkover*, where he is a careerist in a black suit, who lures his future workmen by the promise of material gains, is symbolic of the changes that took place in cinematic discourses between the end of the 1950s, when socialist realism was still the norm, and the mid-1960s, when it disappeared from the screen. This tendency towards disenchantment with work will be strengthened in the films of the subsequent decade.

Unlike Kazik in *Gold*, who has no alternative to physical toil, Leszczyc hesitates between taking employment in the plant and continuing his life as a boxer. Work in the plant offers stability and the possibility of promotion. As a boxer, Leszczyc has a chance to lead a more adventurous life. However, being almost thirty he cannot take part in many more fights for nonprofessionals and is too mediocre to embark on a truly professional career. He thus drifts, meeting various people whose stories reveal various possibilities. Neither choice is free from problems, but together they show the remarkably wide opportunities enjoyed by Poles in the 1960s. Among those who take advantage of them is Teresa, although for her success comes at a higher price than for the men. She has to defend her project against a group of more experienced male engineers who regard it as too risky, and a hostile female colleague who cannot stand the success of another woman. We also learn that Teresa was an ardent communist, responsible for Leszczyc's expulsion from the university; political conformity is thus the price of moving up the social ladder.

The managers in these two films combine many functions, which in the capitalist factory would be separated. They appear to be everywhere and do

everything – from hiring people to inventing and applying new technologies. Andrzej in *The Pier* epitomises this tendency: he designs ships, supervises their construction and is responsible for preparing a ship-launching ceremony. Although he belongs to Fordist times, he behaves as a post-Fordist worker (on post-Fordism see Chapter 4). His talent and importance for the country's economy render him a celebrity, as testified by a crowd of journalists following him at the shipyard. Andrzej also enjoys an above-average standard of living, having a car and a wife who devotes herself to tending to his needs. Yet he has too much to do; he does not even return home for the night, but sleeps in the factory and feels so exhausted that he hallucinates at work. His gruelling schedule is a result of the 'dictatorship of plans', established by people driven by ideological imperatives. The pressure to finish a project on time is responsible for Andrzej's desire to escape from work. Another reason why he wants to flee his place of work is its decadence, alluded to during a banquet prepared to celebrate the shipyard's success. We hear the words of a man who reads praise for the Polish ship industry, but the camera focuses on what happens under the tables. Somebody is putting money in somebody else's pocket, a woman receives a key to use for a clandestine meeting, another person opens a bottle of wine and drinks it secretly. The dissociation of sounds and images creates a contrast between the façade of a successful and united Polish industry and its reality as ridden by corruption and clandestine hedonism. When the celebration is over and Andrzej leaves for the countryside, he meets the same corrupted, selfish and snobbish people. Their final dance, reminiscent of the last dance from *Wesele* (*The Wedding*, 1901) by Stanisław Wyspiański, a critical play about the Polish society of the nineteenth century, suggests that there is no escape from the situation. Significantly, among people celebrating the success of the shipyard there are no ordinary workers, only the representatives of *nomenklatura* and the media. Due to his important position in the shipyard, Andrzej can be compared to Piotr in *Gold* and the director of a combine in *Walkover*, but unlike these two men, Andrzej does not attempt to mentor younger people, being himself in need of guidance and looking for alternatives. He takes part in a motor race, visits an artist and escapes to a place in the woods that he calls a 'rancho'. Yet in the end he returns to the factory, which suggests that for well-paid technical intelligentsia there is no viable alternative: post-Fordism can be exercised only within the limits of a larger Fordist framework.

All three films also refer to the role of agriculture and the countryside in the country's prosperity. In *The Pier* there is no sign of farming; an exotic sounding

'rancho' is a place where tired 'townies' can rest. In *Gold* and *Walkover* agriculture still exists, but is represented as a poor relative of industry. This is indicated by the decline of agricultural infrastructure, such as a dilapidated building, on which one can decipher the words 'grain warehouse' (*magazyn zbożowy*), shown in *Walkover* and the fact that most people who find employment in the combines come from the countryside. One example is a man who works as the factory night watchman feeding a goat near the plant. He belongs to a large group of Polish 'peasant-workers' (*chłoporobotnicy*): small farmers who in order to make ends meet took employment in the factories, but did not entirely give up their small plots of land. The city/country division affects the unspoken hierarchy of workers, with peasant-workers being at the bottom of the pile, while managers and engineers displaying 'urban veneer' are at the top. Skolimowski shows a huge cross, located at the crossroads, being pulled out of the ground, to make way for a new road. Such action indicates that Polish industrialisation goes hand in hand with eradicating religion. Indeed, in the newly created industrial centres people used to go to church less often than in the country, not least because there were fewer churches there. Yet in *Walkover* removing the cross proves difficult, demonstrating that Poles were very attached to their religion, as they were attached to their scraps of land.

Man Is not a Bird begins with the arrival of Jan, a highly skilled technician who comes to the copper plant to install new machines. The choice of setting is poignant because metallurgy was a metonymy for the communist revolution – the process of forging the new order and new people (Bonnell 1997: 20–46; Golonka-Czajkowska 2010). In the combine shown by Makavejev there is the pressure of a plan. This time this is not a plan imposed directly by the government, as under self-management the factories belong to workers' cooperatives, but by the management, which recognises the need to sell their products for foreign currency as a means to invest and continue production. On the ground, however, it makes little difference whether work is enforced by a central planning agency or the factory director as both demand a lot from the workers. Jan does what is expected from him, but at a high personal cost. He works so much that he literally has no home; he is a travelling worker and is never able to settle. He also neglects his young girlfriend, hairdresser Rajka, whom he met in the nearby village. Rajka, for her part, betrays Jan with a less busy truck driver at the very same time that Jan receives a medal for his professional achievements. In the end Jan is very frustrated as demonstrated by him smashing a mirror, which can be read symbolically as his attempt to destroy his image of a perfect worker.

Of all the films discussed in this section *Man Is not a Bird* devotes the largest part of screen time to factory work. Daniel Goulding suggests that this serves Makavejev to contrast the socialist rhetoric about nonalienated work under socialism with the brutal reality of manual toil. As Goulding notes, showing a Gypsy worker stealing state property, some copper wire that he wraps around his torso, is hardly an advert for socialist working practices (Goulding 1994: 215). And yet I do not think that Makavejev's intention was to condemn work under self-management or socialist conditions at large; the message is more ambiguous, as work makes Jan both suffer and feel fulfilled. He balances on the threshold between ecstasy and exhaustion, until he learns that 'man is not a bird': what is unachievable, cannot be achieved. In this sense, he is a forerunner of Mateusz Birkut in Andrzej Wajda's *Man of Marble* (1977) (see Chapter 3).

The authors of these four films also refer to the role of art under socialism. In *Gold* the engineer, who represents the voice of the socialist ideologues, equates artistic creation with industrial work: work is able to transform worthless stones into beautiful jewels. What the earth gives us, after the workers' intervention, becomes so exquisite that there is no need to decorate one's apartment with pictures; industry is the highest art. Such a view, however, is undermined from the bottom by the workers who read American adventure prose and cite French poetry. The director of the combine in *Walkover* does not consider industrial production either a work of art or even a worthwhile topic for it. When two young women, possibly from art college, bring to his office some sketches of his plant, he dismisses them, saying that he has enough factory in the factory – on the wall he wants something different. His words can be taken as an expression of a need for autonomous art under socialism and an ironic comment about the limited potential for attracting audiences to films about the achievements of socialist industry. In *The Pier*, the factory is clearly separated from artistic production. Andrzej visits the artist's studio when his job is finished and revels in what he sees there. He enters this place only as a 'tourist', to admire, but not participate. Ironically, with his nonchalant disregard for social recognition and his idiosyncratic, 'surrealistic' way of looking at the world Andrzej appears close to the stereotype of an artist, more so than his artist friend.

The most complex relation between factory work and art is offered in *Man Is Not a Bird*. Makavejev exposes his workers to many kinds of art and entertainment: classical music, popular music, circus and hypnotist performers in a workers' club, in a factory hall and 'under the sky'. One of the workers, who used to be a circus

performer, attempts to repeat his circus act in the plant, thus transforming the plant into the utopian space of a circus. In common with the discourse on physical labour, Makavejev's take on art is ambiguous. Much of what we see comes across as vulgar, kitschy, fake or pompous. Nevertheless, all these types of art move the manual labourers emotionally; during the performance they laugh, cry or fight. The work itself also comes across as a magical performance. Watching this film today, when the authorities both in the West and in the East have shed most of their duties towards the citizens in the name of giving them more freedom, and physical work has not only stopped being celebrated but has also become invisible (see Chapters 4 and 5), one feels nostalgic for the times when workers were cared for so comprehensively and big orchestras came to the foundries to play Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* for them.

While the hard-working man in the plant is rewarded for his efforts with a medal and a concert by a symphonic orchestra, a woman's work in a hairdressing salon does not bring any recognition. Women in the world centred on heavy industry have no rights, as stated by one of the workers when his wife complains about him giving her dress to his lover: 'I feed her. I clothe her. I can beat her. She is my wife'. These words clearly convey the situation of the 1960s, with its asymmetry between monopoly and the female-dominated competitive sector and their Eastern equivalents.⁴ Makavejev does not condone this situation. On the contrary, he makes us confront its blatant injustice and appreciate female struggle to oppose it. Not surprisingly, in the recent re-evaluation of his cinema, Nina Power argues that 'Makavejev's films should be included in the small but important category of mid-twentieth century feminist films. Indeed, one of Makavejev's very great strengths is his portrayal of "modern" young women, beginning with Rajka, the strong-willed, independent heroine of *Man Is Not a Bird* (1965)' (Power 2010: 42).

Although the choice of the setting and the subject of these four films are 'social realistic', the mode of representing them is not. Their visual styles are close to surrealism. There is something strange, even uncanny about the combines they show. The mise-en-scène in *Gold* was compared to cosmic and underwater landscapes from the paintings by Yves Tanguy (Grodź 2009: 79–80) and this surrealist painter could be evoked in relation to the remaining films. In all of them machines and other human creations, such as a ship in *The Pier*, look like gigantic dragons and sea monsters, with lives of their own, rather than being obedient to their creators. Their sheer size brings to mind Marx's view of machines as a means of thwarting and enslaving the factory worker, although in the socialist realist,

especially Soviet context, machines encapsulated human power to conquer nature. The uncanny aura is confirmed by strange events taking place there. *Man Is Not a Bird* begins with a hypnotist discussing his work, who also appears later, performing his act for a working class audience. Upon his arrival in Płock, Leszczyc in *Walkover* witnesses a young woman, possibly his old flame, throwing herself under a train. The event is presented in such an elliptical manner that we are not sure if it happened in reality, or only in Leszczyc's imagination. The first people whom Kazik meets in Turossów are three young women who look like dancers (or high class prostitutes) transplanted from Polish prewar films, and a saxophone player, playing in the middle of the industrial desert. Moreover, unexpectedly workers quote (in French) François Villon.

Why to combine working class heroes, spaces and stories with surrealist universes? For Wojciech Has, who annoyed the authorities with his earlier films, *Pętla* (Noose, 1957) and *Wspólny pokój* (A Shared Room, 1960), deemed as unacceptably bleak and detached from the Polish reality, making a 'production film' (*produkcyjniak*) was a way to redeem himself in their eyes, while remaining faithful to his favourite style. The turn to surrealism, rather than simply making an attempt to purify socialist realism from its propagandistic excess, its blatant nonrealism, signalled that the filmmakers do not reject either socialism or realism, but want to offer us their alternative versions.

In order to appreciate it we shall realise that advocates of surrealism argued that it is not antirealism, but a superior type of realism, able to capture the deeper aspects of reality for which 'ordinary' realism is unable to account (Zusi 2004). Moreover, surrealism, not unlike socialist realism, was not only an artistic style, but also a political project, close to Marxism, but distancing itself from 'the official vulgate of the Comintern' (Löwy 2009: 22; see also Richardson and Fijalkowski 2001). As André Breton wrote in his first manifesto of 1924: 'Surrealism, such as I conceive of it, asserts our complete *nonconformism*' (Breton 1969: 47). Michael Löwy labels surrealism of this kind, most famously represented by Breton, as 'Gothic Marxism' and 'Romantic Marxism'. Hence choosing surrealism could be seen as an attempt to return to Marxism. This role was also played by self-reflexive moments in these films, such as discussions about the character of artistic representations, references to earlier films about industrial production and iconic socialist realist images, such as gigantic worker's hands in *Man Is Not a Bird* (Parvulescu 2009). This latter film is the most metasocialist realist, because it testifies to the director's rejection of the tenets of socialist realism and his

recognition that one cannot escape them fully – socialist realism will always act as a model for filmmakers from Eastern Europe. In this sense it can be seen as a predecessor to Wajda's *Man of Marble*, which even more openly demonstrates how socialist realism destroyed the innocence of the worker's image and attempts to redeem it. A desire to show a worker's life realistically is conveyed by the extensive use of long shots and long takes, *Walkover* setting a Polish record in this respect. Time in these films drags on, as if working and living under socialism required more effort than under capitalism.

Retail sector both sides of the Berlin Wall

While for the young male characters in British New Wave films the factory is still the most obvious destination, Antoine Doinel, the most famous creation of French director François Truffaut, who like Colin Smith in *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* begins his screen existence as a juvenile delinquent in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (*Four Hundred Blows*, 1959), spends very little of his working life in a factory. We only see him, played by the same actor, Jean-Pierre Léaud, briefly in a factory producing records in an anthology film, *L'amour à vingt ans* (*Love at Twenty*, 1962) and even there his job looks more like working in a shop than in a factory; we just see no customers. In the subsequent film, *Baisers volés* (*Stolen Kisses*, 1968), after being discharged from the army, Antoine finds work in the service industry, as a night porter in a hotel. Or rather the job is found for him – the father of his girlfriend, thanks to knowing the manager of the hotel, arranges it for Antoine. Every other job Antoine does, he gets without any effort and is accepted everywhere despite ineptitude, revealed when he is unable even to fulfil a simple task of wrapping a shoe box. His continuous bungling of employment opportunities, yet always receiving a second chance, and his lack of remorse when his job goes wrong, can be viewed simply as a means to move a romantic narrative forward. But it is also a reflection of the time when work was easy to get and there appeared to be more employers in search of employees than the other way round. The sense that life is easy for Antoine, that everything comes to him naturally is augmented by multiplying chance encounters and the overall style, inspired by Jean Renoir (Insdorf 1994: 75–77). The employee's power is also revealed in a motif by the owner of the shoe shop who uses a detective agency to find out why women working in his shop show him contempt. One can guess that it must be

cheaper to employ a private detective to get to the root of the problem than to sack the disrespectful sales assistants and employ some humbler ones. Truffaut suggests that in services that are feminised, a male employee tends to be treated better than the women. This is the case with Antoine. He does not shine either as a tradesman or a spy, but keeps his job and unlike his female colleagues in the shop is even offered the privilege of dining with the owner and his wife.

Antoine Doinel in *Stolen Kisses* can even be regarded as approaching the Marxist ideal of ‘hunting in the morning, fishing in the afternoon’ (Marx and Engels 1947: 22), without becoming a professional. However, Léaud’s later films, as I will argue in due course, testify to the increasing difficulty of fulfilling this ideal. Against the background of this actor’s later incarnations, *Stolen Kisses* comes across as depicting the happiest period in the life of a man who tries to avoid the shackles of alienated work.

Due to combining the roles of shop assistant and spy, Antoine invites comparison with a protagonist of Miloš Forman’s Czech film, *Černý Petr* (*Black Peter*, 1964). Petr begins his adult life as a supermarket apprentice. The film, however, begins even before Petr enters the scene, so to speak. First we see Petr’s boss, the supermarket manager, listening to a march played on the radio, which is an indication of the values to which the manager adheres and a premonition of potential conflict between the younger and older generations. The manager is an archetypal *homo real socialism*. He gives Petr little opportunity to express his opinion or show initiative. He tells his young employee repeatedly that he trusts his customers, but at the same time gives him the task of spying on them, because ‘some people are stealing’. In due course he demands from him greater vigilance, using better tricks to capture the thieves, such as wearing plain clothes rather than the shop uniform. Petr’s failure to catch any thieves is interpreted by the boss not as testimony to the honesty of the customers, expected in the perfect, communist system, but as proof of Petr’s incompetence.

At one point Petr’s boss claims that working in a shop is a good job, while later admitting that this occupation is dominated by women and only boys who are complete idiots come to work there. This situation gives the manager an immense advantage which he uses, bossing his female employees and making comments about their appearance as if the supermarket were his private harem. For Petr’s father the feminisation of the retail sector equals a greater chance for his son, whom he regards as a half-wit, to be promoted. He correctly assumes that where there are many women working in a particular profession, the only man among

them will be their boss (on working women under socialism see Scott 1976: 117–37; Gal and Kligman 2000). Nobody questions such blatant sexism, contradicting the official socialist ideology of equal opportunities for men and women. The world of work is thus dominated by men and by the older generation. The manager's rule extends outside work. When Petr disappears following a customer whom he suspects of shoplifting, the manager visits his home to find out what happened to the young man. The bosses are present in the places of leisure, observing their young workforce and interfering when they are unhappy with their behaviour. The pains young people go to to win the approval of their superiors can be explained by their awareness that presenting themselves to the foremen in an unfavourable light might have tangible repercussions at work. Such anxiety is well founded because, although in the 'workers' state' all contradictions pertaining to the capitalist mode of work officially had been abolished, in practice working as an ordinary labourer in a socialist country equalled being at the mercy of the foreman. Michael Burawoy uses the term 'dictatorship of the foreman', supporting its use by quoting Miklos Haraszti, a Hungarian poet and sociologist, who for two years (1971–72) worked as an ordinary labourer in the Red Star Tractor Factory. Haraszti wrote:

The foreman doesn't just organise our work: first and foremost he organises us. The foremen fix our pay, our jobs, our overtime, our bonuses, and the deductions for excessive rejects. They decide when we go on holiday; write character reports on us for any arm of the state which requests them; pass on assessments of those who apply for further training or request a passport; they supervise trade union activities in the section; they hire, fire, arrange transfers, grant leave, impose fines, give bonuses. (Burawoy 1985: 178)

However, not all workers were so powerless. Those who monopolised some skills (or had significant professional capital, to use Bourdieu's term), had some power over their superiors and could negotiate their duties. The least qualified, who had nothing special to offer, typically the youngest, were most vulnerable (ibid. 178–79), which *Black Peter* demonstrates. It is worth mentioning that in this respect the East was not unlike the West, especially the West from an earlier period. As Daniel Nelson observes, before 1900 and in most factories before 1920 the foreman was the undisputed ruler of the department, gang, crew or shop and the factory technical skills were the key to power (Nelson 1975: 42).

The power enjoyed by the foremen and other supervisors and bosses rendered them as more conformist than the younger generation. This is demonstrated in Petr's dealing both with his boss and his father. The father admits that he had little pleasure in his life and had to hide his views and control his emotions, in order to achieve what he achieved. He gives Petr such tips as: 'Do not interfere in anything!', 'One is lucky who is near the manger!', 'Observe and be vigilant!'. These tips are not only morally vicious, but unconvincing in the light of the father's modest achievements: his rather unappealing, cramped apartment, a prematurely aged and unsophisticated wife and a son who does not respect his father.

Ultimately, both Antoine and Petr come across as inept and distracted from their work by romantic pursuits. However, Petr is harassed by his manager and father, while Antoine effortlessly moves to a different job. Antoine's bungling of his tasks even provides him with opportunities for new adventures and, to use contemporary jargon, to develop transferable skills, such as learning English. Judging on this difference we can deduce that in the 1960s young people from humble backgrounds had more opportunities in the West than in the East.

Leaving the factory

The principal characters in Michelangelo Antonioni's films from the 1960s, *L'avventura* (1960), *La notte* (1961), *L'eclisse* (1962) and *Il deserto rosso* (*Red Desert*, 1964) are prosperous, reflecting the Italian 'economic miracle' of this period. They are much better off than their parents, shun manual work and appear not to be concerned about money. Vittoria in *L'eclisse*, who works as a translator, fits this description very well, while for her mother, as her daughter puts it, poverty was the worst thing in the world. For this reason, in her old age the mother tries to increase her modest income on the stock exchange. Antonioni mercilessly punishes the old woman and thousands like her for her trust in the system, by making her lose her savings, while the situation at the stock exchange affects Vittoria largely on an aesthetic level, as a testimony to the ugliness and strangeness of modern life.

Giuliana in *Red Desert* wants to set up a shop, but not to earn money, only to fill time; she does not even know what she wants to sell or to whom. It is thus paradoxical that these four films are known as a 'tetralogy of alienation', although the director hardly shows us the impoverished industrial workers, whose predicament Marx had in mind when using this term. This paradox, however,

points to the idea that alienation is infectious and universal; neither the producers of goods, nor the capitalists, nor their consumers can avoid it. This paradox will in some ways reappear in later films (see Chapter 4).

In Antonioni's films places of work, such as the stock exchange in *L'eclisse* and the factory in *Red Desert* take the central stage. Mitchell Schwarzer goes as far as



Figure 2.4 Fearful factory in *Red Desert*

to say that ‘Antonioni is unconcerned with plot, character development, and dialogue, he shifts the viewer’s attention to the wide-open confinements of the modern mise-en-scène’ (Schwarzer 2000: 198; see also Liehm 1984: 228; Chatman 1985: 99–113). This imposing architecture is a monument to the modernist ambition of constructing permanent things. Fittingly, Gerardini in *La notte* says with pride that only he, the grand industrialist, can create solid design, a lasting monument to the times. Gerardini, of course, will be an anachronism in the 1980s and 1990s, where immaterial and supposedly ‘clean’ production (for instance genetics) gained a superior position over the Fordist industries. Equally, it would not be an exaggeration to say that in Western European cinema Antonioni was the last director capturing literally ‘solid modernity’.

Yet only the architecture seems to be lasting in Antonioni’s films; families, human relations, traditions are all crumbling. The most extreme case of the disparity between the solidity of the external and human frailty is depicted in *Red Desert*, regarded as a culmination of the director’s tetralogy. The person most afflicted by this condition is Giuliana, wife of a factory manager. The reasons why she is so unhappy are not spelled out, but living near the factory and among people whose existence is permeated by technology is an important factor in her condition. She seeks contact with nature, but where she lives there is no nature uncontaminated by industry. Rivers are poisoned by chemical waste, the sea is used by the giant ships. Even birds, as she tells her son, learnt to avoid this environment. Elements of architecture are gigantic and grey, weighing heavily on Giuliana’s soul. The camera frequently ‘neglects the human characters in order to linger on mechanical and structural surroundings for their own sake’ (Brunette 1998: 93), as if to prove that in this part of the world what people created became more important than their creators, a conclusion very close to Marx. Antonioni’s heroine often walks in the proximity of a factory and seeks contact with people who work there, as there are virtually no people where she lives, which ‘in reality’ is Ravenna. We can conjecture that the factory, situated outside this historical city, sucked the life out of the city. Against the large factory building Giuliana comes across as minute and the factory is prison-like, with walls dividing it from the rest of the world. People who work there, including her own husband, have no time for her, simply because they are immersed in their duties, while she is idle. Although she tries to set up a shop or gallery in her town, it is unlikely customers will come, as there is virtually nobody in the neighbourhood. Ultimately Giuliana has no choice but withdraw into the privacy of her home and her body.

Her condition is mirrored in the behaviour of Corrado, a manager, who comes to the factory to recruit the workforce for an industrial plant in Patagonia. Although he has a specific task, we see him distracted when discussing the future in a distant land with the potential émigrés. This lack of interest in his work testifies to the estranging effect the factory has on him. Moreover, if he loses this job, he will find another, as he himself admits. The workers are also not easily lured away from their current job; they inquire what privileges they will gain if they move to a different country: whether they can phone home, have a good medical service etc. The motif of emigration is presented as proof that we are in the ‘age of welfare’ and widening opportunities for workers – self-fulfilment rather than mere survival is the goal of the workers. (Compare the conditions promised to the Italian workers with those suffered by Polish emigrants in Skolimowski’s ‘British films’ of the 1980s, as discussed in Chapter 4.) Simultaneously, it can be interpreted as a premonition of the time when heavy (Fordist) industry in Europe will disappear, off-shored to places such as South America.

The decline of the factory for the European economy is also predicted in another Italian film of this period: *Teorema* (*Theorem*, 1968) by Pier Paolo Pasolini. Here the capitalist abandons the factory, giving it to the workers for free. Although it is presented as a sign of the late 1960s left-wing revolutions affecting all sections of society, it can also be seen, perversely, as a cunning way for the capitalist to rid himself of a troublesome burden, by giving the workers what he does not need any more.

The media factory and the artist’s studio

Western films of the 1960s do not show writers, painters or even journalists visiting factories. Artists’ studios tend to be separated from the pollution and drudgery of industrial life. This is the case with the films of the Swinging Sixties, a paradigm more associated with artistic production and the media than any other movement in European film history. During this period London became the youth and cultural capital of the world, as signalled by the words published in *Time Magazine*: ‘The guards now change at Buckingham Palace to a Lennon and McCartney tune, and Prince Charles is firmly in the long-hair set’ (Halasz 1966: 32). From such endorsement emanates joy and a sense of easy life. Swinging London films,

however, suggest that London was not such an easy place to live and work, even for the privileged elite.

I would like to consider Swinging London films in the context of the ‘culture industry’, a concept first presented by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, the leading representatives of the Frankfurt School in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, published in 1947 and later in Adorno’s article ‘Culture Industry Reconsidered’, published in 1963. In these works Adorno presents himself as an ardent opponent of a model of popular culture whose sole purpose is generating profit, which, as he believes, dominated in his time, and which he terms the ‘culture industry’. In creating this concept Adorno borrowed from Marx, who argued that the capitalist market transformed art into a commodity to an extent it had never experienced before.

Adorno’s criticism has two components: aesthetic and moral, and by the same token, political. He argues that the products of the culture industry, such as Hollywood genre films and popular music, are mass-produced and standardised, therefore of low artistic value, although they try to conceal their character by inserting various pseudo-innovations. By expecting artists to comply with rules that are meant to increase profit for the industry, such as submitting to generic codes, the culture industry denies them the chance to fulfil their artistic potential, as only art free from commercial pressures is, in Adorno’s view, worthy of its name. The culture industry also denies autonomy to its consumers because, as he puts it, it ‘intentionally integrates its consumers from above ... Although the culture industry undeniably speculates on the conscious and unconscious state of the millions towards which it is directed, the masses are not primary, but secondary, they are an object of calculation; an appendage of the machinery. The customer is not king, as the culture industry would like to have us believe, not its subject but its object’ (Adorno 1975: 12). Ultimately, the culture industry locks artists and spectators into a reality that is bad for them in a political sense, due to denying them emancipation from the shackles of capitalism: ‘The advice to be gained from manifestations of the culture industry is vacuous, banal or worse, and the behaviour patterns are shamelessly conformist’ (ibid.: 16). At the same time Adorno edifies modernist high art, epitomised by the writings of Kafka (Adorno 2004: 301).

Darling (1965), directed by John Schlesinger, reflects and adds nuance to Adorno’s attitude to high and low culture. One of the early episodes presents the central couple, a model and actress Diana Scott and her journalist lover, Robert Gold, visiting an elderly writer, who lives in the countryside, as Robert puts it, in

‘virtual isolation’ (demonstrating that ‘virtual’ in the 1960s had different connotations from that which has now). The writer is nonalienated work incarnated; his values pure and noble. He admits that he only writes about what he believes, and preserves his independence rather than mix with people of influence or increase his popularity by pandering to widespread opinions. Robert, on the other hand, perceives himself as a mediator between the old world of high art and the new world of mass media. He does not create from scratch, as the writer apparently does, but only records what the writer tells him, to preserve his testimony for posterity. Robert values the writer highly, yet is equally aware, as is the writer himself, that this man of letters belongs to a bygone era and it makes little sense to emulate him. Nevertheless, the conservative style of the film, consisting of black and white print – in contrast to the later ‘Swinging films’, which are in colour – classical-style score and unnatural language, suggests that Schlesinger himself is in tune with this world.

For Diana, this temple of high art is charming but foreign. When the two men talk, her eyes move between ornaments decorating the writer’s study and she addresses the viewer in an internal monologue, admitting that she does not understand or care about what they talk about. Therefore her job as a fashion model, hostess of charity events and actress playing in film episodes where she remains mute, suits her well or at least it looks this way at the beginning. The boundary between her work and life is blurred; she makes her career by looking attractive: a darling or, as we say today, a celebrity. She is thus a post-Fordist worker in the midst of a largely Fordist world. Her final achievement is becoming the wife of an Italian prince much older than she, in a manner that brings to mind Grace Kelly and Diana, Princess of Wales, for whom being wives of important people became a career in itself. Yet although there appears to be a perfect match between her personality, her life and her work, in the end Schlesinger’s Diana is disappointed, in a way reminiscent of the real royal Diana. Her high-class job turns out to be alienating, when she discovers that glamour and a high social position are paid for with boredom (as shown in a sequence shooting a chocolate commercial) and spiritual void, as all the relations she enters into are either superficial or involve sexual exploitation. What she strove for thus turns out to be unworthy of her effort, but having no other capital to turn to than her attractive physique, she chooses to remain with her conventional and ultimately unloving prince and her life as a living advert of a prince’s life, a commodity. Diana could choose to remain poor, but in the Swinging Sixties films such an option is played

down. A tacit assumption is that, as is said in *L'eclisse*, poverty is the worst thing in the world, even worse than a spiritual void. The ideal of the time is to have both: material comfort and purpose, be affluent and lead a fulfilling life.

In Schlesinger's film high art is clearly the male domain, as is the upper echelon of the media, which we can identify as the BBC. But even below these high rows there is a clear gender hierarchy. Women audition for parts in theatre, film and adverts; men audition them. Women work on the shop floor in the media factories, posing for cameras; men are in positions of management, deciding where their employees should stand and look and which photographs of women to choose. Women, even as popular and successful as Diana, have no space of their own; they move between different apartments and beds owned by men. This is one reason why Diana is always restless; in Robert's flat she is disturbed by his typewriter; in the prince's palace by the emptiness of his huge rooms and portraits of people she knows nothing about. Ultimately, as Schlesinger demonstrates, women's role in the media industry is always close to that of a prostitute, men's to that of a pimp, which chimes with the Marxist view on women in bourgeois culture.

Darling refers to the interlocking worlds of the media, politics and business, especially in the scene of the charity event, when representatives of these spheres meet. In this context Diana suggests associations with Christine Keeler, the call girl involved in the downfall of John Profumo, the cabinet minister in Harold Macmillan's Conservative government. Although Schlesinger alludes to the fact that a pretty girl can destroy the career of a politician (Geraghty 1997: 157–58), this points even more strongly to the media's dependence on the political and economic establishment. We are thus still in the age of 'solid modernity', where politicians, not elusive capital and the media rule the world. At one point we also see Robert interviewing ordinary people on the street to find out what they are ashamed of in contemporary Britain. Two of the four, including one policeman, complain that nowadays British people do not work enough – they would like to have something for nothing. Street questionnaires tend to look comical on screen and in line with this rule, the condemnation of the lazy British citizens does not look very convincing. Nevertheless, the film offers neither a clear critique nor eulogy of such statements, leaving the viewer to decide whether British people in the 1960s passed or failed the 'prosperity test'.

While *Darling* focuses on the experience of a woman who makes her career in the media, *Blow-up* (1966) by Michelangelo Antonioni privileges the perspective of a male photographer, who specialises in fashion, but who also does more

‘serious’ work, such as photographing people in a homeless shelter. At first sight, Thomas encapsulates nonalienated work, as he enjoys full control over practically everything he employs: his studio, his photographic equipment and his employees. It seems as if there are no physical, technological or bureaucratic obstacles to what he can achieve: when he wants to photograph somebody, process his shots or manipulate them, he can do it immediately. Even more so than with Diana, there are also no boundaries between his work and leisure. Thomas lives in the place where he works and when he is not in his spacious studio, he still takes pictures. He uses his position as a trendy photographer to enjoy a high standard of living, as conveyed by his driving a convertible Rolls-Royce and the ease with which he seduces women. Equally, working is for him a source of erotic pleasure. As Robin Wood observes, ‘Thomas’s photographing of an erotically twisting and writhing model becomes not only a substitute for sexual intercourse but virtually indistinguishable from it’ (Wood 1968: 131). Thomas’s circumstances might serve as a eulogy of this type of work. Antonioni himself admitted to leading a similar life to that of Thomas and enjoying it (Brunette 1998: 114). Another example of a worker who appears to be liberated from the shackles of alienation is Thomas’s friend, a painter, who claims that he does not know what his painting represents and will not know until he finishes it. Yet the photographer’s pleasure at work is paid for by an exploitation of his current and prospective employees: young women who allow him to abuse them in the hope that he will make them famous (ibid.: 114–15). *Blow-up* thus shows (if one wants to see it, as most critics overlooked this aspect of the film) the same asymmetry of power in the media as that made visible by Schlesinger in *Darling*. Both directors also render this imbalance largely by spatial means: showing men as capitalists and masters of their own space and women as employees, never anchored in any space, practically homeless.

Ironically, the advantages of Thomas’s work turn out to be disadvantages in the end. While processing some photographs of a couple who did not want to be disturbed, he becomes convinced that he captured a murder on camera and finds the body of a man in the park where he took his shots. However, when he goes to the park for a second time, the body is not there and he ends up uncertain about the character of his discovery, as shown by him taking part in a game of tennis with an imaginary ball. Working as a photographer who does as he pleases leads to losing a sense of objectivity. But it is also possible that Antonioni wants to show that objectivity and subjectivity are both human constructions, they do not have an essence but depend on the context. A ball in the last scene appears through



Figure 2.5 Artist at work in *Blow-up*

the power of convention, to suit its context – the game of tennis played by a group of mimes. If this is the case, Antonioni believes in the power of human work or at least artistic work more than any other director discussed in this chapter, as for him man not only produces material and immaterial objects, but the conditions under which things appear as material/objective.

In a memorable episode of *Blow-up* its protagonist goes to the concert of a rock group (in reality The Yardbirds), whose fans listen to the music as if in a trance. The situation changes at the end of the performance when one of the players smashes his guitar and throws its remnants into the audience who fight for it. Thomas wins the fight and leaves the concert with a large chunk of the instrument, but as soon as he reaches the street, he throws it away, as if it were rubbish. We are led to believe that pop musicians are gods in their own restricted space, severed from the normal flow of life. Outside it, their power diminishes to zero.

Privilege (1967), directed by Peter Watkins, attempts to test this hypothesis – to establish how much power pop artists have over their audiences and who has

power over them. The film is set in what was, from a 1960s perspective, the near future of the 1990s. Such a futuristic setting was meant to heighten the features of the then-contemporary reality. The main character is Steven Shorter, the most popular British pop artist, who is on his way to conquer the world with his performance. His power over young audiences is the product of careful management by various people, who regard Steven's work and persona as a lucrative asset. We see Steven first performing handcuffed and locked in a cage, surrounded by policemen wielding truncheons, which is presented by the narrator (Watkins himself) as recreating Steven's act from the times when he was a troublemaker. Such a violent performance allows the audience to release their negative energy, as opposed to directing it towards the political establishment. Politicians even approach music agencies to stage violent performances to keep the youth of the streets. Steven is playing in an advert, sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and producers of fruit, which encourages people to eat more apples and his popularity is used to sell products of British manufacture, such as refrigerators, and increase the popularity of the Church. These three circles of power (politics, economy, religion), in a way recollecting Marxist critique of capitalism and Adorno's critique of the culture industry, are represented as united and reinforcing each other. All this happens when Britain is governed by a coalition government, and the programmes of the main political parties are indistinguishable, making a mockery of democracy. Even the Church, as represented by Watkins, although nominally Anglican, comes across as an amalgam of various Christian religions. In this way Watkins foretells the advent of neoliberalism, when political differences between left and right collapse and the main task of the state will be to support business and discipline labour.

In this world celebrities enjoy power only as long as the politicians and leaders of the economy allow it. When their support is withdrawn, their power disappears. This happens to Steven, who, following his revolt, is banned from public appearances in order, as the narrator puts it, 'to ensure that he does not again misuse his position of privilege to disturb the public peace of mind'. We also learn that 'within about a year, all that remained of Steven Shorter were a few old records and a piece of archive film with the sound, of course, removed'. Paradoxically, Watkins conveys the message of the incredibly powerful and united 'state-economy complex' of the future using aesthetics that render his film one of the first examples of postmodernism in British cinema, due to intertwining fiction and documentary techniques, gaps in continuity and mixing tragedy and humour.

Yet this paradox accurately reflects the character of neoliberal times soon to come, which are marked by the unshakable power of the dominant ideology, the fragility of the lives subjugated to this power and the heterogeneity of the art representing them.

As much as criticising the British establishment, Watkins is concerned with the welfare of the artist. We hear that Steven has a gruelling schedule, performing practically non-stop: at live concerts, on television and for charity events; not unlike the man who played Shorter, Paul Jones, who was a member of the popular 1960s group Manfred Mann (Pratt 2010: 18). In the process of becoming a star, Shorter is deprived of his subjectivity – he becomes the property of his managers, the political establishment and his audience, as conveyed by mentioning ‘Steven Shorter palaces, where people buy British products as if they were buying Steven Shorter’.

This phenomenon illuminates the perverse (post)modern fetishism of commodities – the fact that the labour of those who produce the commodities is concealed by putting on them, so to speak, the face of Steven Shorter who does not produce them, only sells them. It is suggested that fans love Steven so much not because of his talent but because, like Christ, he offers himself to his followers, performing with all his might, even cutting his wrists during concerts. Work in his case is perceived as crossing a boundary between work and martyrdom, in the way associated with artists, especially during the Romantic period. Yet Steven is perceived as a public property. We always see him in the company of other people and he has no space of his own, but moves from one public place to another. These places where he dwells are represented as media ‘factories’; they are full of machinery and Steven is expected to behave like a Fordist worker: be obedient and react rather than create. Although he serves as a model to follow, he is not allowed any autonomy, and is even more disempowered and ‘colonised’ than the manual workers previously discussed. His position illustrates Marx’s thesis that ‘the worker sinks to the level of a commodity and becomes indeed the most wretched of commodities’ and ‘the wretchedness of the worker is in inverse proportion to the power and magnitude of his production’ (Marx 1977: 66), although in this case the product is the public face of Steven.

Steven’s position as the darling of the crowds is contrasted with that of Vanessa Ritchie, a painter commissioned to make his portrait. Although she is also a popular artist and attracts the interest of the establishment, she enjoys more freedom than Steven. Fans do not follow her; she does not have a manager who

controls her private life and she paints what she wants, much like the writer in *Darling*. Unlike Steven, who is only talked about by others, in a voice-over Vanessa confesses that she found a strange emptiness about Steven, a lack of subjectivity, and therefore decided to paint him, as if confirming that she is a postmodern artist, preoccupied with surface, rather than depth. Unlike Steven, Vanessa possesses her own space: an artist's studio. It is the only space where Steven enjoys some privacy. Ironically, Vanessa is played by Jean Shrimpton, one of the most popular models of the 1960s and, more than Jones, somebody perceived at the time as public property.

The culture industry Eastern style

In the 1960s films about artistic production and work in the media were rarer in the East than in the West and they did not constitute a coherent movement as was the case with Swinging London movies. This situation would change in the 1970s, when we witness more films about artistic production than industrial work. Yet two films made by Polish directors: Wojciech Has and Andrzej Wajda, respectively *Jak być kochaną* (*How to Be Loved*, 1963) and *Wszystko na sprzedaż* (*Everything for Sale*, 1969), can be regarded as a mini-series entering into a dialogue with their British counterparts. They both investigate the case of an actor who resembles Zbigniew Cybulski, regarded as the most iconic Polish actor of all time. Cybulski is most famous for his role of Maciek Chełmicki in Andrzej Wajda's *Popiół i diament* (*Ashes and Diamonds*, 1957): an ex-Home Army man, who dies as a result of his faithfulness to heroic ideals. Has's film offers us what can be seen as an alternative version of Chełmicki: a man named Wiktor Rawicz who is not a true war hero, but only pretends to be one. As a result, he gets into trouble with the Gestapo and is forced to hide in the apartment of an actress who is in love with him. Frustrated by his position as an inadequate Polish man, he nearly destroys her life and commits suicide when the war is over.

But the gist of the film concerns not Rawicz but the actress, her war suffering and postwar recovery. After being banned from the theatre as a punishment for playing in a German theatre during the war (this being the price of offering Rawicz a safe place to live), she gets a role in a radio soap opera, *Radio Lunches at Mr and Mrs Konopka*, as a mature woman, wife and lover, Felicja. In this role she gains immense popularity, as much in Poland as among Poles living abroad. We see her

in the early 1960s on a plane on her way to the United States, where she is to meet a female fan who regards her as an adopted mother. It appears that the soap opera allowed the actress to overcome the war trauma, even gave her back the private life she had lost by taking in a fake war hero (Kurz 2005: 179). Her identification with Felicja is confirmed by the fact that the listeners see no difference between the actress and her role – her adopted daughter invites her as ‘Felicja’. As Elżbieta Ostrowska notes, we do not even learn the real name of the actress and practically all critics writing about Has’s film call her Felicja, although Felicja is only her radio name (Ostrowska 2011). The impression of the identification of an actress with the role is facilitated by showing Felicja in frames. The frames suggest that her roles imprison and dignify her, granting her immortality, as was the case of women whose portraits were made by famous painters.

The radio soap opera featuring Felicja neither serves as propaganda for socialism (which would be expected from the media in the 1950s, when socialist realism dominated Polish culture) nor promotes consumerism (which would be the case in 1970s Poland), but rather advocates building a society based on tradition and respect for ‘family values’, thus close to the Catholic ideal of culture. In the scene of recording we witness a cultural ‘cottage industry’ with only a few actors and technicians, who all know and like each other, unlike the huge and soulless ‘media factories’ that prevail in British films. Has’s film, like the Swinging London movies, points to the blurring of the boundary between living and playing. However, whereas in British films work and life are reduced to commerce, in Has’s film the place of work is upgraded to home. The popular media act as a positive corrective of an unjust past, not a means to twist and corrupt the present and foreclose the future.

The visual style of *How to Be Loved*, consisting of black and white print and precise framing, and of the choice of actors – the majority of whom are associated with the Polish School, a paradigm preoccupied with the Second World War – render *How to Be Loved* a somewhat old-fashioned and nostalgic film. In this sense it is a companion piece to *Darling*. Both films also reveal an attachment to old arts: literature in the case of Schlesinger’s film, theatre in the case of Has’s. Yet while Schlesinger suggests that media and popular art have no chance to be a site of nonalienated work and valuable experience for its consumers, Has edifies them. While films such as *Privilege* use a postmodern style to argue for the modernist separation of life and art/media and for a return to tradition and ‘reality’, Has’s film embraces the postmodern idea of bridging the gap between playing, working and

living. The difference can be attributed to the different working environments of Western and Polish filmmakers and media professionals at large in the 1960s, with the latter enjoying more prestige and, paradoxically, freedom.

This facet of Eastern European cinema is explored in *Everything for Sale*, whose director, Andrzej Wajda, played the role of its demi-god, enjoying a special position both within the domestic and international contexts. The narrative is triggered by the disappearance of an actor, in whom we can recognise the real-life Cybulski. He was to play in a film by a famous Polish director, similar to Wajda, but did not arrive at the shoot and Elżbieta and Beata, his wife and ex-lover, start looking for him. They go to places where the actor recently dwelled and talk to people who knew him. This journey provides an insight into the process of filmmaking: we see buckets of red paint used to mimic blood and are presented with various camera tricks that are used to yield a sense of reality on screen. But, as Tadeusz Lubelski observes, despite laying bare the technical process of filmmaking, the film ultimately points to a deeper truth of cinema thanks to its ability to construct national history, stir emotions and boost viewers' morale (Lubelski 2003: 37–38). Unlike the music in *Privilege*, cinema, in Wajda's lens, does not 'dumb down' culture or manipulate the viewers, but enriches and enlightens them. The filmmakers, as depicted by Wajda, might be sufferers, like Steven Shorter, but they suffer for a good cause.

The film's title does not mean that films are made for profit. The economic aspect of filmmaking is excluded from Wajda's narrative, reflecting the fact that money was not a problem in the socialist film industry and especially not for Wajda and his ilk. 'Sale' instead refers to a more profound trading in personal stories and emotions, to make truer films. Wajda suggests that his characters' sacrifice at the altar of art is, ultimately, the reason why film should be supported by the state. *Everything for Sale* can thus be viewed as a subtle, yet effective form of promoting its cause.

The film also speaks, perhaps against the intention of its author, of the class character of the Polish film industry. It bears similarity to the feudal court, with the director being a king (aloof, lonely and haunted by the memory of his deceased friends) and his internal circle consisting of decadent aristocrats and less well-off noblemen, eager to serve him in the hope of being promoted. Those of humble background have grave difficulty in reaching this 'inner circle', as exemplified by the case of a plain-looking young woman from the provinces, nicknamed 'Mała' (the Little One). Although mad about acting (she is a member of a local acting

club), she is repeatedly humiliated by Elżbieta and Beata, and advised by the director not to try to join the exclusive club of professional performers. The actress who played 'Mała', Małgorzata Potocka, in due course chiselled for herself a distinctive career, not only playing in films, but also producing them. However, she never became 'Wajda's actress', as if confirming the view expressed by the director in *Everything for Sale* that with her plebeian face and openly expressed ambition she would not fit into his refined world (on class and Wajda see Mazierska 2002).

To summarise this part I would like to quote Richard Shusterman, who in his discussion of popular art argues that its case provides a rare instance where right-wing reactionaries and Marxian radicals join hands and make a common cause against it (Shusterman 1992: 169). The cinema of the 1960s provides a more complex picture, with Eastern films rendering popular art as an enclave of nonalienated work and consumption.

Work in a camp

At the entrance to various Nazi concentration camps, most famously Auschwitz, a slogan was placed: 'Arbeit macht frei'. Even those with no command of German and little knowledge about the Second World War know that it means 'work makes one free'. The subject of work in Nazi concentration camps and other similar places has been tackled by many authors. For example, Stanislaw Grzesiuk, author of the popular Polish book, *Pięć lat kacetu* (*Five Years in the Camp*, 2010) who, true to his title, spent over five years in three different concentration camps (Dachau, Mauthausen and Gusen, Mauthausen's sub-camp), writes on the first page: 'The basis of the life in the camp was avoiding work and focusing on arranging food. Those who worked hard, fulfilling all orders of the camp's overseers, would certainly end up in the crematorium' (Grzesiuk 2010: 7–8). Georges Perec in his novel *W* creates an allegory of the concentration camp in the form of an island state, whose inhabitants do not work, but instead engage in sport. In the last chapter the author explains his choice by referring to such a description of the camp, provided in David Rousset's *Univers concentrationnaire*: 'The structure of punishment camps is determined by two fundamental policies: no work but "sport", and derisory feeding. The majority of inmates do not work at all, which means that work is seen as skiving off. Even the least job has to be done at top speed' (Perec 1996: 163). It is also worth adding that in the museum on the site of

the Majdanek concentration camp one can see a sculpture, designed by one of the prisoners, showing a tortoise, with the inscription 'Work slow'. It was assumed that following this directive would increase one's chance of survival and sabotage the Nazis' goal of exploiting and destroying the inmates.

These descriptions and symbols, while emphasising the difference between 'normal industrial work' and 'camp work', also suggest that they constitute a continuum. While the former involves alienation, due to being repetitive and tiring, leaving a worker a small margin for creativity and stripping him/her of individuality, camp work possesses all these characteristics in extreme measure. An alternative to industrial work used to be poverty and incarceration. Camp work involves incarceration and its alternative is death in the death camp. Although Marx and Engels lived in pre-Holocaust times, their writings (especially Engels 2009 and Marx 1977) shed a light on the connection between industrial work and camp work. The stories of twenty-year-old girls working sixteen hours without a break in dressmaking establishments, who died simply from overwork and malnutrition, are not dissimilar from those found in memoirs of people who endured Nazi concentration camps, such as Grzesiuk, Tadeusz Borowski or Primo Levi. This analogy does not elude David Harvey, who observes: 'Slave owners, Marx points out, can, if they wish, afford to kill off their slaves through excessive work provided they have a new source of cheap slaves at hand. But this is also true for the labour market' (Harvey 2010a: 145). His monumental study, *The Limits to Capital* includes a chapter entitled 'Inter-Imperialist Rivalries: Global War as the Ultimate Form of Devaluation', where we find this statement: 'Not only must weapons be bought and paid for out of surpluses of capital and labour, but they must also be put to use. For this is the only means that capitalism has at its disposal to achieve the levels of devaluation now required' (Harvey 2006a: 445).

Some well-known sociological studies, such as *Discipline and Punish* (1991) by Michel Foucault, Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust* (2000) and *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor* (2005), and Dario Melossi and Massimo Pavarini's *The Prison and the Factory* (1981), all of them in some measure indebted to Marx and Engels, also point to the similarity between 'normal work' and 'camp work', 'normal life' and 'camp life'. Bauman writes: 'Jeremy Bentham made no distinction between the regimes of "houses of industry": workhouses, poorhouses and manufactories (as well as prisons, lunatic asylums, hospitals and schools, for that matter). Whatever their ostensible purpose, he insisted, all faced the same practical problem and shared the same concerns: all of them had to impose one,

uniform pattern of regular and predictable behaviour upon a variegated and essentially unruly population of inmates' (Bauman 2005: 14). Melossi and Pavarini observe that:

The internal organisation of prison, the 'silent' and 'labouring' prison community, with time inexorably marked out in work and worship, the total isolation of each prisoner-worker, the impossibility of any form of association between them, the discipline of work as 'total' discipline become the paradigmatic terms for that which 'should be' in the so-called free society. The 'inside' aspires to an ideal model of what it should be like 'outside'. Thus prison assumes the dimension of an 'organised project for the subaltern social world': a model to impose, spread and universalise. (Melossi and Pavarini 1981: 149)

The battle to control, discipline and subordinate was fought through spatial means: discipline required enclosure and partitioning. A concentration camp based on these principles appears to be a perfect laboratory for creating a disciplined workforce. Of course, concentration camps also fulfilled other functions, such as dividing and eliminating people on the grounds of their supposed racial, ethnic or sexual inferiority. By and large, these functions are of greater interest to authors writing about concentration camps, but these are outside my core interest in this study. As a work laboratory it showed that forcing people to work through extreme means does not work well for capitalists, as it requires constant supervision and engenders an ethic of avoiding work. As if to confirm this opinion, Alexander Kluge in his television programme, *Lagergeld* (*Camp Money*, 1995), refers to the little known fact that in many concentration camps administrators circulated coupons and banknotes, valid only on the territory of a specific camp, to encourage prisoners to work 'productively', as opposed to faking effort. The money could be exchanged for such goods as extra food or a visit to a camp brothel. When they were valid, these coupons were worth very little, while nowadays, as Kluge informs us with irony, they are rare collectors' items of great value.

In 1960s cinema, the concentration camp experience was conveyed predominantly by filmmakers from Eastern Europe, especially Poland, the country on whose territory Auschwitz was built. I will focus here on Andrzej Munk's *Pasażerka* (*Passenger*, 1963), comparing it with Jiří Menzel's *Skřivánci na niti* (*Larks*

on a String, 1969–90), a film about a socialist work camp. *Passenger* is regarded as a breakthrough in the representation of camp life and even the ultimate ‘camp film’. Unlike the highly propagandist works of the previous period, socialist realism, in particular *Ostatni etap* (*The Last Stage*, 1947) by Wanda Jakubowska, Munk, inspired by the stories of Tadeusz Borowski, avoids strident proselytising and concentrates on documenting the typical days and nights in the camp. This means showing prisoners at work, barely included in Jakubowska’s classic. We see a group of men harnessed to a huge roller, which is a likely reference to the practices of the sadistic kapo Ernst Krankemann, and women working in detail sorting belongings from new transports. Munk’s film confirms the rule described by Grzesiuk – survival in the camp was at the price of avoiding the work imposed by the Nazis. The ratio of survivors among those who circumvented Nazi orders was higher than among the obedient servants, because prisoners tended to help the rebels and the Nazis themselves were attracted to the strongest inmates, in the same way the ruling class on the island of W was attracted to the best sportsmen, as described by Perec. This is the case for Marta, a Polish prisoner who becomes an assistant to Liza, the Nazi overseer put in charge of the *Kommando* sorting belongings of people sent to the gas chambers (so-called Kanada). Marta’s dignity and defiance attracts Liza. To gain Marta’s heart, Liza looks after her well, even tries to bribe her.

Munk suggests that the concentration camp is an extreme example of the capitalist system with its various features, such as industrialism and colonialism intensified. This is conveyed by the factory *mise-en-scène*. If we remove from the scene the people in striped clothes, we get a picture not different from those discussed in the ‘factory’ part of this chapter, except that the raw material processed in the factories are human bodies sent to the gas chambers. We also see the immense amount of goods looted by the Nazis during their extremely rapid colonising pursuits, which Liza’s *Kommando* is sorting. Many of them, such as ornamental vases, look oriental, evoking the colonial past of countries such as England or Spain, as well as of Germany’s dream to measure up to them. Munk shows that the speed of Germany’s colonisation exceeds its ability to use its fruits rationally. A large proportion of the goods brought by Jews and described by Liza as the ‘property of the Reich’ are thrown out. Likewise, there are too many slaves to engage them in fruitful work, therefore they are made to run in circles, push heavy objects up and down or provide entertainment for the Nazis. This treatment confirms the rule, identified by Bauman, that for the capitalist it is better if the

worker dies from unproductive work or hunger than if he rests and eats what the capitalist throws out because he is unable to consume (Bauman 2005: 118). The rationale behind this work ethic is that the labour force must be continuously occupied and threatened; only such treatment guarantees that it will remain placid and ensure the survival of the system. The camp ethic is rejected by the prisoners (it cannot be accepted voluntarily, as normal men do not agree to be slaves), but the Nazis sincerely believe that it benefits not only them, but humanity at large. Liza, in particular, is convinced that she works for a higher purpose – a better world, envisaged by Hitler – and her sacrifice is much greater than that of the ignorant prisoners. If we regard the concentration camp as an extreme case of work relations in capitalism, then the lesson is that the workers should not give in to the demands of capitalists, as their ultimate goal is exploitation and then destruction. Only through resistance to oppression, through class struggle, can the proletariat achieve any improvement in its position and, ultimately, a victory.

If *Passenger* can be seen as a critique of an extreme example of a capitalist system, then *Larks on a String* serves as an indictment of a totalitarian version of communism. Not surprisingly, the film was shelved for twenty years, to be released only after communism collapsed. Set in a steel reprocessing plant in the industrial town of Kladno, it focuses on various unworthy (from the socialist perspective) members of society who have been sent there to experience the advantages of re-education through manual labour. Among them we find a lawyer who believes that the accused have the right to a defence, a librarian who refused to destroy decadent literature, a saxophonist whose instrument has been banned as ‘bourgeois’, a Seventh Day Adventist who refused to work on Saturdays and an independent dairyman. Unlike the concentration camp, where the ultimate destination of the prisoner/worker is a gas chamber, the purpose of the socialist re-education camp is, true to its name, re-education: creating a new, socialist man by incorporating the defeated classes into the new social framework. However, the mise-en-scène of freight trains, chimneys and the heaps of remnants of human production and consumption is uncannily similar to *Passenger*, suggesting that if re-education fails to produce the required results, the next stage would be annihilation. Menzel, like Munk, draws attention to the gap between the official ideology and the reality of the camp. While the gate of Auschwitz was adorned with the epigram ‘Work makes one free’, here we find phrases such as ‘Work is a matter of dignity’. The irony of their situation is not lost on Menzel’s characters who repeat the slogans, pointing to their absurdity. Again, the only way to survive

in this cruel world is to subvert it, or to use de Certeau's terminology, find the appropriate tactics, by working as little as possible and finding alternative occupations, not envisaged by the supervisors: discussing Immanuel Kant, keeping fish, and meeting female detainees from a neighbouring camp.

Menzel also points to the hypocrisy of the prisoners' masters. The men's supervisor talks with pride about his working class origin, but avoids manual toil. Instead, he reveals his fanatical commitment to a campaign for bodily cleanliness, culminating in the sponging of a naked Roma girl which brings association with both paedophilia and ethnic cleansing. A union representative arrives in a chauffeur-driven car only to remove his tie and place a workman's cap on his head when he approaches the workers. While manual labour is thus put on a pedestal in the ideology of the 'workers' state', those who are in positions of power avoid it. What is painfully clear from Menzel's film is that those who were meant to be the avant-garde of the proletariat transformed themselves into the caricatured version of a class they embarked to eliminate: the bourgeoisie (Mendel 1971: 303), which would be later labelled 'nomenklatura'.

The sites of accented idleness

The 1960s was also a period when the necessity, usefulness and even morality of work were widely questioned. The most famous advocate of idleness was Guy Debord, leader of the group Situationist International and author of *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967). His political programme was summarised by three words, 'Ne travaillez jamais' (Never work ever), which he painted in 1953 on a wall on the Rue de Seine. Similar ideas can be also found in the work of another Situationist, Raoul Vaneigem's *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (1967) and Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* (1964).

The roots of the rejection of work, propagated by these authors, can be found in earlier works on idleness, such as Bertrand Russell's *In Praise of Idleness* (2004) and earlier Marxist thought, most importantly Marx's son in law, Paul Lafargue (2002). Debord argues:

The class which organised social labour ... also appropriated the temporal surplus value that resulted in its organisation of social time; this class thus had sole possession of the irreversible time of the living. The only wealth that could

exist in concentrated form in the sphere of power, there to be expended on extravagance and festivity, was also expended in the form of the squandering of a historical time at society's surface ... For ordinary men, therefore, history sprang forth as an alien factor, as something they had not sought and against whose occurrence they had thought themselves secure. (Debord 1994: 94)

At the same time, their ideas have a particular 1960s inflection; their background is Fordism–Keynesianism, with its mass production presupposing and fuelling mass consumption, full employment, welfare, consensus politics and paternalism of the state and workers' organisations, and faith in technology. They perceive capitalism as a vicious circle, in which production of objects and images leads to excessive consumption, which winds up production, and they articulate high aspirations of the affluent Western society of this period, as proposed by Vaneigem: 'From now on people want to live, not just survive' (Vaneigem 1994: 53). The imperative is to have a good life, filled with creative work, rather than simply producing the same objects in the same way for seven hours a day, and a life that is filled with pleasures tailored to each individual, rather than mass-produced entertainment, such as package holidays and television spectacles, which produce an alienated 'society of spectacle' (Debord 1994: 11–24). In their rejection of standardisation the aforementioned authors even muse on the period of archaic capitalism, where workers might have worked fifteen hours a day, but worked creatively, producing 'tiny masterpieces' (Vaneigem 1994: 53). In the later periods and especially since the 1980s, when due to neoliberalisation the 'vicious circle' of production and consumption was broken, labour was disciplined, wages declined, consumption halted; works like *The Society of Spectacle* and *The Revolution of Everyday Life* started to look somewhat dated, their enemies no longer existing. Debord affected French 1960s cinema in some measure, both by making his own films and by influencing other filmmakers, especially Jean-Luc Godard. Echoes of Debord and Vaneigem's concepts can also be spotted in later films (see Chapters 3 and 4).

I find a special affinity between Debord's concepts and the work of many Czechoslovak directors of this period. The fact that these films do not have their counterparts in other socialist countries can be explained by a strong approval for counter-cultural trends in 1960s Czechoslovakia, strengthened by its close links with the West. Furthermore, Czech literature is known for its apologies for those who choose not to work. The most famous example is Švejk from Jaroslav Hašek's

The Good Soldier Švejk, who prefers talking to doing, and who lives in a country where everybody is presumed a malingerer and hard work is punished. Another famous author, Karel Čapek, in two short essays, *In Praise of Idleness* and *In Praise of Clumsy People* (Kussi 1990), combines ideas that could be found later in the works of both Debord and Italian thinkers such as Virno and Negri: praise of idleness as a worthy, enriching pursuit and welcoming the development of technology that would allow everybody to work less and live more comfortably (ibid.: 241–46). Even the various categories of not working used by Čapek in *In Praise of Idleness* (ibid.: 241–42) suggest belonging to a culture that gave nonwork much thought, treating it not as the obverse of work, but as a wide spectrum of activities with different degrees of usefulness and sophistication.

Sedmikrásky (Daisies, 1966) by Věra Chytilová tags at the heels of two young women, Maria and Maria. They adhere to the Debordian ideal of ‘never working ever’ by not engaging in paid labour, but they also oppose it, by presenting themselves as ardent consumers, in the film’s finale literally filling and covering themselves with food. In common with the society of spectacle criticised by Debord, they appear to be unable to discern between reality and its image. This is demonstrated in an episode when they eat images of food cut out from colour magazines and praise their quality. However, the ostentatious character of such behaviour suggests that they might be well aware of the difference between material things and their representations, and their action can be viewed as a critique of authors such as Debord, who regard contemporary people as naively seduced by images.

The pranks of these young women are framed by images of war and nuclear explosions, as if to demonstrate that idleness and excessive consumption lead to war, because in order to feed one’s excessive appetite one has to exploit and kill. Such a socialist message, urging hard work and restraint in consumption, was transmitted by the director herself in a letter addressed to President Husák. Chytilová maintained that her film is in fact a ‘morality play, in which the roots of evil are shown as concealed in the malicious pranks of everyday life. The raucous and deceitful behaviour of the film’s heroines is typical of young people when they are left to their own devices, when their unfulfilled creative needs turn into destructive impulses’ (quoted in Owen 2011: 100). This message would be acceptable if not for *Daisies*’ unrealistic style, which in the context of East European cinema signified distrust of ‘crude communism’ and socialist realism. As Owen argues, ‘*Daisies* reveals a certain “excess” of meaning, an intractability to unitary

interpretation ... the surfeit of meaning culminates in its transcendence, a process abetted by remarkable visual effects and photographic experiments unseen anywhere before or since in Czech “mainstream” cinema, and paralleled by occasional flights into a near-abstract plasticity’ (Owen 2011: 99). One can draw a parallel between the excessive consumption of the female characters with that of the filmmaker, ‘consuming’ all the techniques she has at her disposal, and in this way rejecting the rigidity of socialist cinema, and, finally, the viewer, overjoyed if not overwhelmed by this excess. Consumption, as represented by Chytilová is thus not a sign of conformity to mainstream society, but testimony to a rebellion against it (Hanáková 2005: 71), especially against the socialist and patriarchal expectation of working hard and consuming little. It is not the opposite of production, but a higher form of it; it does not lead to alienation from the world, but rather allows experience of the world in a fuller way, engaging all the senses and intellectual faculties.

Perhaps consumption is the only way to engage with the world that the girls are allowed. Such interpretation is suggested in a sequence near the end of the film, when Chytilová’s two gluttonous anti-heroines travel, without obvious reason, to the Czech countryside. As Owen observes, the male labourers and farmers whom the girls encounter act as if they were invisible, while, at the end of the sequences, a montage of padlocked doors suggests how they are denied access to the masculine world of manual work. Unsurprisingly, the protagonists suffer an identity crisis during this trip, even beginning to believe that they don’t exist. It is only when they encounter a pile of husks, remnants of the corn they have been eating, that their existential doubts are resolved. Authenticity and existential consistency are thus confirmed, symbolically, in the act of consumption, not in work (Owen 2012: 196). It is also worth noting that the Marias lose their self-confidence and sense of identity when they are away from home. Home appears to be a crucial factor in their ability to indulge in their favourite lifestyle and carry it outside, to the cafés and dance halls. This opinion, as I will argue in the following chapters, refers also to the ‘lazy’ characters in later films. When deprived of their own space, they become less conspicuous and content in their idleness; it stops being a positive life choice and becomes the result of failure to do anything better.

I decided to finish this part and the whole chapter with *Vtáčkovia, siroty a blázni* (*Birds, Orphans and Fools*, 1969, released in 1990) by Juraj Jakubisko, which is a Slovak-French coproduction, and which can be regarded as a synthesis of Western and Eastern views on work and idleness. Although it premiered in Sorrento in 1969,

it was shelved and distributed only in the 1970s, thus constituting a bridge between the cheerful 1960s and less happy 1970s. It begins on a happy note, reminiscent of the optimism of May 1968 in France and the Prague Spring, gradually giving way to an apocalyptic tone, which can be viewed as a premonition of the upheaval that followed these events.

The film represents a trio of characters: Polish Andrej, Slovak Yorick and Jewish Marta, who decide to live outside (mainstream) society by abandoning work and engaging in 'free love'. They refuse to be normal citizens because they find normal life, encapsulated by dilapidated houses and orphanages, police patrols and continuous shoot-outs on the streets, frightening and repulsive. They rent a huge, run-down house from an old man and behave as if they were on an island, unperturbed by the waves passing through the sea that surrounds them. The time that normal people devote to work, they spend on play, 'clowning': putting on special clothes or even running round in circles. As with the two Marias in Chytilová's film, their fooling around comes across as a work of art, a magic spectacle that one cannot take one's eyes off.

Yet ultimately, Jakubisko demonstrates that the trio not only fails to make any change in the wider society, which appears to be their goal, but even to maintain their freewheeling lifestyle. Yorick is arrested when he stops a police car and asks for petrol, and is sentenced to a year in prison. This event marks the end of their *ménage à trois*. While Yorick is in prison, Andrej starts to work as a photographer and Marta becomes pregnant by him. The couple welcome Yorick back home, and for a while all of them again wear silly hats when running like mad through their house, but by this point their paths separate. Andrej and Marta move out, finding a smaller house to live in. Yorick cannot accept Martha's embracing of the future and domesticity, and he brutally murders her and takes his own life. Jakubisko thus shows the end of the utopia of idleness and free love, promoted by Debord and other adherents of counter-culture. The tragic ending parallels the apocalyptic images that close *Daisies*. In Chytilová's film, however, it is difficult to say who is responsible for the final apocalypse, whether it comes from within the protagonists or from outside. Jakubisko avoids such ambiguity: his characters are ultimately the agents of their own destruction. The film, despite its freewheeling form, thus embraces the conservative message that for the sake of the people, the era of unchecked searching for self-fulfilment should end and people ought to return to normality, domesticity, discipline and work.
