

Edited by **CAROLINE LANGHORST AND
ROBERT SHAIL**



**MALE ICONS
AND IDENTITY
IN 1960S BRITAIN**

Revolt into Style

ROUTLEDGE


MALE ICONS AND IDENTITY IN 1960S BRITAIN

Male Icons and Identity in 1960s Britain: Revolt into Style explores the profound social and cultural transformations of the 1960s through the lens of masculinity.

This collection of essays delves into how male identity, often resistant to change, serves as a barometer for the broader societal shifts of the era. Contributors from diverse academic backgrounds examine iconic figures from popular music (Paul McCartney and Mick Jagger), cinema (Michael Caine) and television (Patrick Macnee, Peter Wyngarde and Patrick McGeehan), as well as artistic polymaths like Anthony Newley and Peter Whitehead. The essays also venture into the realms of politics, football, fashion and fine art, providing a comprehensive view of how evolving masculine ideals influenced British culture. The collection highlights the tension between traditional values and emerging pluralistic ideals, offering a nuanced understanding of the period's cultural dynamics.

This collection is ideal for students and academics in gender studies, cultural history and sociology, as well as general readers interested in understanding a transformative decade when established norms of male identity faced unprecedented challenges.

Caroline Langhorst is a film and cultural historian/independent scholar and creative practitioner. She has a PhD from De Montfort University on rebellious actors, performance styles and nonconformist stardom in 1960s British cinema, and has published on performed masculinities, the long, transatlantic 1960s and the counterculture as well as actor/director collaborations.

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1

INTRODUCTION

Revolt into Style

Caroline Langhorst and Robert Shail

The 1960s have cast a long shadow. Echoes of that decade can still be heard all around us, from the latest styles in fashion and popular music through to arguments over the continuing relevance of left-wing politics or contemporary developments in feminist thinking. Few periods in the modern era have been the subject of such heated discussion over the nature of their legacy and influence, for good or bad. The failure or otherwise of the 1960s cultural revolution is still the source of speculation and contention among historians. So diverse are the feelings aroused by the decade that it is possible to outline comparative assessments which are diametrically oppositional in their conclusions. For some commentators on the political right the 1960s represents a time in which the ill-considered ideology of a self-appointed liberal elite held sway with devastating consequences for British society. This argument was neatly distilled in the early 1980s by the then Conservative Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, when she declared ‘we are reaping what was sown in the sixties ... fashionable theories and permissive claptrap set the scene for a society in which old values of discipline and restraint were denigrated’ (Thatcher 1982). The results, as far as she and others on the right were concerned, was a subsequent slide into national and moral decline. Problems as varied as juvenile delinquency, marital breakdown, and industrial unrest, as well as Britain’s declining international standing, could be traced to the dire influence on public attitudes exercised by the sixties.

This interpretation was prefigured by the work of cultural commentators such as Bernard Levin (1970) and Christopher Booker (1969) at the end of the decade itself. For Booker in particular, the sixties represented the triumph of trivial values and mass consumerism, in addition to a proliferation of self-indulgence in the arts. He painted the gloomy picture of a Britain in

which stable Christian values, honourable artistic traditions, and civilised behaviour had apparently been undermined by a public obsession with the new and youthful, whatever monstrosities this might produce. Critics from the political left were no less scathing, although for completely contrasting reasons. As Arthur Marwick describes it, for them 'it is the era when revolution was at hand, only to be betrayed by the feebleness of the faithful and the trickery of the enemy' (Marwick 1998, p. 3). The musician Robert Wyatt, interviewed by Jonathon Green, summarises these feelings when he says: 'I'm not surprised that we have proceeded to vote in lots of incredibly right-wing and chauvinistic governments. I don't see that as a reaction to the 60s, but as a direct result. What a pathetic thing to think: that you can just blow the castles down' (Wyatt quoted in Green 1998, p. 425). This position has surprising similarities to the arguments adopted by right-wing commentators in that there tends to be the same concern with the pernicious influence of materialism and individual loss of value. The central difference lies in the fact that for writers like Booker it was the demise of an older, better Britain that was to be lamented, whereas for the Left it was precisely the failure to overthrow that same society which was to be regretted. More recent pronouncements by both sides of the British political spectrum seem to echo these sentiments and show their lasting relevance.

In complete contrast to this, other commentators have celebrated the decade both for its creative diversity in artistic achievement and for the development of a more liberal agenda for British society. As early as 1970, another musician, George Melly was effectively replying to Christopher Booker in his own study of the period, *Revolt into Style*, which glories in its youthful vigour, freewheeling spirit and abandonment of repressive moral codes (Melly 1970). Duncan Fallowell sums up the often-evangelical glee with which proponents of the era frequently defend it: 'People sneer at the 60s, but I think it's one of the major watersheds in modern history, in terms of attitude. If there's any future for mankind it will be because certain ideas became popular in the 60s' (Fallowell quoted in Green 1970, p. 440). Any number of subsequently influential concepts and movements, ranging from second wave feminism to a concern for environmental issues or an interest in alternative religions and lifestyles, have been credited to the sixties. Nothing could be further from Booker's pessimism than the glow of nostalgia that sometimes permeates these accounts given by writers for whom the period is nothing less than a golden age of long overdue enlightenment in British society.

More balanced views are evident in the work of historians looking back with a little distance at the 'us or them' positioning of the period itself. Arthur Marwick's *The Sixties* (1998) provides an immensely detailed account of the period across Britain, Europe and the USA with an emphasis on economic and social change. Marwick does, however, come down clearly on the side of

those who endorse the era with his list of sixteen characteristics, the majority of which are framed as positive changes ranging from greater understanding between the generations to the development of multiculturalism. Andrew Marr's account in *A History of Modern Britain* (2007) is largely sympathetic and liberal in its positioning, whereas Dominic Sandbrook's *White Heat* (2009) adopts a more sceptical tone; Sandbrook's later pronouncements on the decade have veered into the territory of Christopher Booker with a particularly skewed character assassination of John Lennon written for the *Daily Mail* (2015). Ian MacDonald's essay 'Fabled Foursome, Disappearing Decade', an introduction to *Revolution in the Head*, his meticulous examination of the recordings of *The Beatles*, offers an often disenchanting view from the political left which nonetheless finds solace in the start of a populist environmental movement in the sixties (MacDonald 1994). The arguments rage on.

Similarly, debates surrounding masculinities in 1960s Britain mirror the previously discussed extreme, oppositional stances on the disruptive decade and its aftermath. Taking a closer critical look, one not only discovers a *multiplicity* of male identities (ranging from more traditionally virile to playfully androgynous), but also their respective complex and often contradictory core, which are also reflected in the individual chapter contributions. Even at first glance ruggedly virile types whose frustrations and alienation are primarily articulated (or suddenly erupt) physically (think Richard Harris's tough rugby player, Frank Machin in Lindsay Anderson's *This Sporting Life* [1963] who fails to connect and therefore communicate with others, enhancing his feeling of not belonging anywhere) are ultimately more multi-layered. Throughout the film adaptation, Machin is reduced to his immense corporeality, he is exploited by men and women alike, has moved on from his poor class background but cannot find another place in his local community. Whilst his shouting and at times domineering poses seem to overpower the cinematic frame, suggesting some form of hegemonic masculinity, this notion is quickly destabilised since the audience likewise witnesses his bloody, broken physique. We are presented with a *performance* of virile masculinity, which is then deconstructed during the film. Various chapters address both on- and off-screen performances of different masculinities (i.e., more flamboyant examples encompass polymath Anthony Newley, Peter Wyngarde, David Hockney and Peter Whitehead).

Shifting male identities are largely the result of a post-war society in constant flux that was confronted with gradual sociocultural, political, educational, economic, moral transformations and changing gender roles – requiring men and women to adjust to the inevitable turning of the tide. Whilst liberating British youth and women who had already efficiently rolled-up their sleeves during wartime, the post-war transformations by and large posed a bigger challenge for the older generations, particularly men who

had been instilled with hegemonic norms and patriarchal as well as imperial power structures. It was exactly these traditional, oppressive structures that the younger generations, women and other marginalised groups yearned to break down. Yet younger men likewise displayed macho attitudes in the 1960s (see Stephen Gaunson's chapter on Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones) whilst some older counterparts supported female colleagues (i.e., *The Avengers*' pairing of Patrick Macnee's John Steed and Honor Blackman's Dr Cathy Gale, Diana Rigg's Emma Peel and Linda Thorson's Tara King).

Andrew Spicer has observed different types of unstable, damaged onscreen masculinities in the 1940s, especially in the postwar era such as the traumatised, 'maladjusted war veteran whose war service had caused psychological damage and/or social dysfunction' (Spicer 2003, p. 261), the 'Damaged Everyman' (p. 163), or the 'Damaged Young Man' (p. 178) that echoed off-screen male experienced realities. In his chapter on 'Rebel Males' (pp. 145–160), Spicer further juxtaposes the 'Byronic Male' (i.e., Christopher Lee's portrayal of Dracula or Sean Connery's James Bond) with the 'Angry Young Man' – 'a new social group, the "unclassed"' who 'became Britain's "rebels without a cause"', a specifically postwar generation in revolt against a vaguely defined "Establishment"' (Spicer 2003, p. 150) and its next evolutionary stage, the 'Alienated Young Man' (repeatedly embodied by a young Oliver Reed). Notably, whilst the Angry Young Man generation was widely associated with northern, working-class grit, physicality and class-related social issues, the year 1956 witnessed the May premiere of John Osborne's seminal *Look Back in Anger* with its Angry Young Man prototype Jimmy Porter at London's Royal Court Theatre, the Suez Crisis, and the publication of Colin Wilson's existentialist musings in *The Outsider*. The latter's full-blown existentialist anguish and alienation represented the most overt British intellectual engagement with – and response to – continental existentialism and pre-existentialist philosophical thought dating back to Dostoevsky. Additionally, it struck a (transatlantic) nerve with postwar youth. It also became one of Marlon Brando's favourite books (see Mizruchi 2014, p. 114). Brando and his contemporaries James Dean and Montgomery Clift, who all embodied different types of postwar American masculinity (ranging from Brando's decidedly physical Byronic-existentialist aura to Dean's and Clift's comparatively more boyish-vulnerable features and homoerotic undertones), in turn, had a considerable impact on postwar British youth alongside American rock'n'roll. *The Wild One* (1953, dir. László Benedek) starring Brando in his now iconic role as biker gang rebel Johnny who nonchalantly, and ultimately aimlessly, rebels against anything that happens to be thrown in his way, was famously banned in the UK on the grounds of moral panics surrounding juvenile delinquency. In retrospect, however, as Anna Ariadne Knight states, it was Brando's unusually nuanced portrayal of male rebellion and his charismatic, visceral and sexual physical presence

that transcended one-dimensional brutish thuggery, which were considered a real risk at the time (see Knight 2021, p. 59). As Knight emphasises: ‘[t]hese alluring and confrontational representations of masculinity gave expression to the changing mood of a rising generation’ and it was the shifting tastes of the teenage audience that ‘redirected the economy to produce the consumables – and the film stars – young people most desired’ (Knight 2021, p. 1). The likes of Albert Finney, Michael Caine, Richard Harris and Terence Stamp were further likewise particularly inspired by both newly emerging as well as already established (albeit equally rebellious) American performers.

Geoffrey Macnab also noted an evident change in *tone* regarding gender (i.e., Susannah York and Albert Finney) that was marked by a defiant, unashamedly nonconformist attitude, emanating from post-war transformations, including access to education and the arts since hitherto marginalised voices from working-class and regional backgrounds were now permitted to participate in Britain’s cultural life: ‘The new pin-ups were not Rank Charm School starlets – they were pop stars’ (Macnab 2000, p. 204). Shail further stresses in this regard that ‘[t]he provinces, and particularly the working-class [...] can be the source of strength, vitality and integrity. The movement of working-class provincial characters towards London then becomes a kind of fruition of their talents, as they help to revitalise’ (Shail 2003, p. 22) the capital. People from different regional, class and training backgrounds came together and mingled. The temporary breakdown of hierarchical class structures, access to education and arts funding – England’s Arts Council was established in 1945 since culture was deemed ‘essential to the creation of a fair and civilised society’ (Todd 2021, p. 64.) – culminated in an unprecedented cross-fertilisation of the arts (visual, performative, musical) that broke the mould on multiple levels and in many different areas, which this edited collection seeks to address. It further accounts for the era’s eclectic aesthetic and thematic strands.

Revolt into Style’s fifteen chapters bring together established cultural academics, emerging scholars and independent writers covering a range of different types of masculinity across the arts, popular culture and politics who, however, all share a certain contradictory disposition resulting from pressures to adapt and readapt to a post-war society and culture in constant transition. The chapter contributions consider the nature (and extent of) cultural change – as well as a varying resistance to change (largely conservative values; partly conservative/yet progressive in other areas; overall rather progressive/liberal-leaning) – through the specific lens of masculinity, thus providing the first critical account of shifting masculine identities in 1960s Britain. Through close analysis that links individual biography with social context, cultural impact with gender politics, the collection makes a contribution to our understanding of a complex decade that continues to shape the dynamics of identity and change.

The chapters analyse shifting male identities that span several generations (from former Conservative Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, 1894–1986, to Paul McCartney, *1942, and Mick Jagger, *1943), emphasising the post-war era's often-discussed intergenerational tensions between rebellious post-war youth and their supposedly 'square' parent and grandparent generations (who supposedly represented the Establishment). Several chapters further discuss different English regional and class backgrounds (Hull-born Tom Courtenay; Bradford native David Hockney; Derby lad Alan Bates; Northumberland raised Bobby Charlton; Liverpoolians McCartney and Whitehead; Lancashire native Ossie Clark; Cockney Michael Caine and fellow Londoners Richard Hamilton and Michael 'Mr' Fish; Dartford/Kent: Jagger). Others instead take a closer look at culturally hybrid backgrounds in 1960s Britain: Wyngarde's enigmatic heritage that partly remains shrouded in myth; Scottish-English Patrick Macnee; Irish-American raised in Yorkshire, Patrick McGoochan.

In Chapter 2, Melissa Oliver-Powell scrutinises the continuation of masculinities associated with the Angry Young Man generation, the British New Wave and the somewhat loose Swinging London film cycle, examining how 'the anger of the "angry young men" [...] evolves into new forms in Swinging London, in which its underlying sexual concerns become increasingly prominent' (p. 13) in relation to their female counterparts. She further undertakes a textual close reading of John Schlesinger's *Billy Liar* (1963) as a 'transitional' film that represents 'an illuminating confluence of the cycles' shifting discourses on masculinity' (p. 13). Placing the focus on less toxic masculinities, Richard Hudson-Miles's chapter on 'The Peacock Revolution and the Politics of Male Dress in the 1960s' (especially Ossie Clark, Mr. Fish and Granny Takes a Trip) argues the case for (male) fashion transforming into a defiant, counter- and/or subculturally infused political statement against the status quo and societal norms. He underscores that the new 'menswear was marked by an aesthetic pluralism which freely and anarchically appropriated styles and symbols from all facets of British culture, past and present' (p. 31). Moreover, '[i]t was both irreverent and subversive towards accepted codes of fashion, decorum, and masculinity. Increasingly, it became a vehicle for expressing new relationships to history, gender, and the body' (p. 31). Matthew Bailey's and Melanie Williams's chapter, in turn, takes us back into the more traditional sartorial and moral realm of 1960s British politics. Bailey and Williams examine key developments and shifts, assessing more aristocratic patrician models of leadership associated with the incumbent Conservative Party (Harold Macmillan, Alec Douglas Home) to more protean and image-aware models of leadership exemplified by Labour leader and Prime Minister Harold Wilson.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 present 1960s British television-centred male case studies: Caroline Langhorst's Patrick Macnee case study chapter examines

the actor/producer/writer's Scottish-English cultural hybridity, his hitherto often neglected self-identification as a Scotsman and cosmopolitan attitude in the context of the transatlantic, long 1960s and how his paternal Scottish heritage impacted Macnee's iconic portrayal of Steed in comparison to his respective *Avengers* female counterparts who are given a notable degree of female agency and diegetic space. The chapter also interrogates why Steed – like James Bond – is often regarded as the epitome of English masculinity despite Sean Connery's own Scottishness and the literary Bond's Scottish ancestry (cf. p. 64; also see McMillan 2015, p. 198). Steven Gerrard's Peter Wyngarde case study, in turn, analyses Wyngarde's iconic portrayal of Jason King and related flamboyant masculinity through the dual lens of fashion/peacocking and nostalgia and in juxtaposition with other ITC males. Gerrard notes in this regard that '[m]ost males in these narratives were tough, strong and virile, showing little fallibility in their macho derring-do. However, Jason King provided an interesting adjunct to this approach: he is not macho in the traditional sense, and that becomes a focus of the case study' (pp. 79–80). Like Hudson-Miles, Gerrard emphasises the subversive power of self-expressive, flamboyant menswear that playfully deviates from heteronormative sartorial constraints (i.e., Wyngarde's/King's dandified and impeccably colour-matched suits, leisure and lounge wear). Staying in the ITC family, Langhorst's second actor case study investigates actor/writer/director/producer McGoohan's specific cultural hybridity and complex male identity as a New York-born Catholic Irishman in post-war Britain in comparison to other Irish, Scottish and Welsh performers alongside selected American counterparts. The chapter analyses McGoohan's nonconformist star image and his iconic performances as John Drake in *Danger Man* (1960–62; 1964–68) and Number Six in *The Prisoner* (1967–68) amidst imperial decline, gradual erosion of traditional hierarchical structures that clashed with progressive tendencies, the Cold War conflict and the transition from the mid- to the late 1960s.

Chapters 8 and 9 are dedicated to seminal 1960s musical icons: Matt Melia analyses and deconstructs the McCartney persona, its transition and reversal over the Beatles' career – from the outward perception of Paul as the more feminised member of the Lennon-McCartney songwriting partnership to an appraisal of the image of McCartney in Peter Jackson's *Get Back* documentary (2021). The chapter critically examines the McCartney persona within the changing context of notions of maleness in the 1960s. Stephen Gaunson's chapter on Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones analyses Jagger's performative androgyny and sexual fluidity whilst observing a contradictory co-existence of macho attitudes (especially towards female fans), polyvalent sexual desires and androgynous appearance (clothes and makeup). Gaunson notes how Jagger 'exploit[ed] and distort[ed] in his lyrics and onstage performance as his public image was being cemented' a provocative aura

of ‘sexual hedonistic machismo’ (p. 135). By the late 1960s, however, his ‘masculinity was positioned through conflicting images of violence and queerness’ (p. 142).

In Chapters Ten and Eleven, we return to two working-class cinematic icons, Michael Caine and Alan Bates. Andrew Spicer’s chapter examines ‘the concept of “ordinariness”, as a cultural type of masculinity’ (p. 146) and ‘its reconfiguration in the 1960s through a discussion of Len Deighton’s 1962 novel *The IPCRESS File*, which redefined the spy genre by presenting a young, ordinary, working-class meritocratic anti-hero, sceptical about his trade and deeply conscious of the power of the Establishment and the iniquities of the British class system’ (p. 146). Focusing on Michael Caine’s iconic performance as the bespectacled Harry Palmer, another key anti-Bond figure, Spicer assesses how ‘Caine’s performance served to crystallise the novel’s conception of ordinariness whose metropolitan chic was also subversive’ (p. 146). Robert Shail’s Alan Bates case study questions the northern actor’s position within the Angry Young Man/British New Wave canon, emphasising his less angry, and more decent, conduct. Shail’s analysis is therefore centred on Bates’s more complex and ‘nuanced male characterisation[s]’ (p. 167) in *Nothing But the Best* (Clive Donner, 1964), *Georgy Girl* (Silvio Narizzano, 1966), *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1967, John Schlesinger) and *Women in Love* (1969, Ken Russell), which correspond to the ‘the construction of a new masculinity in 1960s Britain’ (p. 167).

Chapters 12 and 13 take a closer look at two self-absorbed polymaths and 1960s working-class contrarians, Anthony Newley and Peter Whitehead. Philip Todd’s chapter on actor, comedian, director, singer, composer Newley dissects his persona, which deliberately juxtaposed both self-obsessed confidence and a depressive, reflexive self-critique via a close reading of the generically, aesthetically and thematically eclectic *Can Heironymus Merkin Ever Forget Mercy Humptpe and Find True Happiness* (1969). Todd argues that the film and the transgressive Newley persona need to be analysed in the context of the post-psychedelic era and Sixties liberation movements at the point of the dawn of second wave feminism and represent both a critique and a renegotiation of aspects of 1960s British masculinity. Robert Chilcott’s chapter on filmmaker, writer and falconer Peter Whitehead traces his restless performance(s) of masculinity across the 1960s, demonstrating how he resisted the label of ‘documentarian of Swinging London’ while simultaneously embodying it. As a working-class-lad-turned-scholarship boy from Liverpool who fashioned himself into a Cambridge aesthete who, in turn, longed to become Godard, Whitehead channelled a highly contradictory male persona – at once outsider and dandy, seducer and sceptic. His films and myriad self-myths expose masculinity as unstable, fractured and performative, caught between northern grit and European intellectualism,

public brilliance and private despair. The chapter situates Whitehead as both emblem and critique of the decade's shifting male identities.

Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen juxtapose football masculinities with those represented by the New Wave in British art. In her comparative analysis of the two iconic footballers Bobby Charlton (Manchester United) and Bobby Moore (West Ham and 1966 captain of the English national team), Joyce Woolridge interprets them as two different types of English masculinity: the gentleman (Charlton) vs. the working-class athlete-turned-confident entrepreneur (Moore). She critically interrogates how both Charlton's and Moore's 'standing and public images came to differ [...] revealing key markers of social continuity and change in the dominant forms of ideal masculinity in the 1960s' (p. 210). Shail, in turn, assesses the multiple ruptures that shook up the 1960s British art scene via a comparative analysis of David Hockney, Peter Blake and Richard Hamilton. Accordingly, all three artists developed self-fashioned distinctive personae and eclectic signature looks, 'herald[ing] an era where painters could attain the public profile of rock stars' (p. 225). Shail examines the three artists' public images alongside their artistic output, 'particularly in relation to how it embodied certain cultural themes of the sixties, but emphasis will also be placed on how they were covered by the press, and how they created an image of artistic masculinity' (p. 226).

At the time of going to press, the sixties have again been brought sharply to mind by the passing of actor Terence Stamp. Any notion that he might have become a rather forgotten figure was countered by wide press coverage and an outpouring of grief, and celebration of his life, on social media. Perhaps indicating the (comparatively) youthful age of current journalists, the initial press coverage focused on the star who had played a villain in the Superman movies of the 1970s and 1980s, but this was quickly rectified by coverage which remembered 'the face of the sixties' and which frequently revisited a quotation from Stamp where he mourned that 'when the 1960s ended, I ended with it' (Stamp quoted by Pulver 2015). Stamp's association with the period goes beyond his mere appearance in a handful of key films and extends to the way in which his life mapped the key changes of the decade. Marwick (1998) suggests three phases of change which sit almost perfectly on the map of Stamp's life in the sixties, beginning with the breakthrough of working-class young men of talent in the early years of the decade in defiance of the entrenched middle-class bias of British culture. In the middle phase, the height of swinging London, Stamp epitomised the spirit of adventure, playfulness and sheer pleasure associated with the male peacock of the times. By the final phase of the decade, something of that gloss had gone as he moved into a period of self-questioning that took him to India and into drugs and mysticism before reemerging in the 1970s. Throughout there was a fluidity in his public representation of masculinity

that seemed to encapsulate the most positive aspects of the sixties (Shail 2009). This book is dedicated to him.

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2

THE WAR IN AMBROSIA

Billy Liar (1963) and Angry Young Men Between the New Wave and Swinging London

Melissa Oliver-Powell

Introduction

The British New Wave and Swinging London have become two of the most influential and widely discussed cycles in UK cinema, seen as characteristic of British film and society throughout the 1960s. The New Wave was a distinctive cycle of films produced between 1959 and 1963, with roots in the radical theatre practice of the Royal Court (London) and the Free Cinema movement of the late 1950s. Adapted from contemporary working-class drama and fiction associated with ‘Angry Young Man’ literature, the films used social realist aesthetics and settings in the industrial North and Midlands, and were defined by a newly energetic focus on youth, the conflicts of the ‘affluent society’ and frank explorations of sexual mores. The Swinging London cycle, which took up the mantle of everyday, youth-focused cinema in the mid-sixties, is a looser but still recognisable collocation of films foregrounding fashionable young protagonists negotiating a metropolis that was swiftly becoming an international hub of pop culture. These films present an ambivalent view of the capital, oscillating between breathless excitement over its glamour and freedoms, and grim anxieties about the cynicism and vapidness that might lie beneath.

As a proportion of British film production in the decade, these cycles were less dominant than the preponderance of critical and cultural interest in them might suggest; these films, ‘pregnant with new truths about changing British society, were still a minority of total films produced’ (Marwick 1984, p. 148). Genre cinema, including crime, horror and more conservative comedies, were perennially popular, alongside commercial franchises including the Carry On and James Bond films (Farmer et al. 2019). Amongst this eclectic

output, however, these two cycles are seen as having their fingers especially on the pulse of social change in the 1960s. With their emphasis on youth, sex and social mobility, they offer uniquely direct reflections in their subject-matter and form on the shifting complexities of cultural attitudes, 'types' and anxieties in 1960s Britain. Their preoccupation with issues of sexuality also allows presentations of gender to act as a privileged index to how this change was imagined.

The explicit shift in setting that divides the cycles has been interpreted as not just a regional transition, but a gendered one. For some, this gendered realignment not only complements but displaces the geographic, as '[t]he North-South dichotomy became a masculine-feminine one' (Storey 1963, p. 161). The New Wave appears as a last gasp of the post-war Angry Young Man – tussling with his masculinity, but from a position of reasonable patriarchal security – before his cinematic younger brothers are absorbed into a London shaped by images of (superficially) liberated female sexuality. Whilst the position of women, who 'suffer interminably' (Murphy 1992, p. 33) in the earlier cycle, is recognised as important, there has been extensive critical discussion around the New Wave of class and sex as they particularly pertain to masculinity (Higson 1996; Hill 1986; Spicer 2003; Taylor 2006). Meanwhile, reflection on Swinging London has prioritised discourses on 'new' femininities, highlighting the films' treatments of consumerism, pop culture, sexuality and the myth of liberation (Bell 2012; Geraghty 1997; Landy 2010; Luckett 2000; Tarr 1985).

In fact, many Swinging London films revolve around male perspectives – including landmarks such as *The Knack ... And How to Get It* (1965, Richard Lester), *Alfie* (1966, Lewis Gilbert), *Blow-Up* (1966, Michelangelo Antonioni), *Morgan – A Suitable Case for Treatment* (1966, Karel Reisz) and *Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush* (1968, Clive Donner), not to mention the Beatles musicals – compared to the solitary New Wave female focaliser (*A Taste of Honey*, 1961, Tony Richardson).¹ Nonetheless, Swinging London films are often identified with the emergence of new, more financially and sexually liberated possibilities for female characters: 'London is represented as the seat of feminine power, while masculine rule is consigned to history' (Luckett 2000, p. 235) – at least ostensibly. Few accounts see the cycle's 'altered portraits of femininity' (Luckett 2000, p. 111) as unproblematic celebrations of women's autonomy. As important as the figure of the 'free girl' was to this era of British filmmaking, her ubiquity represented 'a victory of image over reality' (Bell 2012, p. 80), and 'a male fantasy of sexual availability rather than a female fantasy of control' (Geraghty 1997, p. 160). The films are structured by a gendered paradox, in which women who do end up rejecting marriage, motherhood and subservient styles of femininity are almost invariably punished by the narratives for the nonconformist expressions on which the pleasures of those narratives depend.