

Unpiecing the *Jigsaw*: Compulsive heterosexuality, sex crime, class and masculinity in early 1960s British cinema

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Abstract

This article explores the discursive intersections of masculinity, class and heterosexual desire in the still undervalued British police procedural film, *Jigsaw* (Val Guest, 1962). It considers the film both as an example of a new style of cinematic crime narrative and as a significant conjectural text in which ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ and marriage, especially in their post-war and mid-century forms, are re-articulated, here as *compulsive* heterosexuality: a masculine drive that can ultimately lead to sexual murder. The film’s low-key naturalistic style owes much to the newly realist television drama of the period, while its identification of middle-class masculinity as the locus of transgression carries cultural resonances well beyond the ostensible project of the film’s narrative. Released in 1962, *Jigsaw* was in effect squeezed between the British New Wave and the pop musicals and London-focused films that dominated cinema in the UK in the mid-1960s. However, the casting of dependable Jack Warner as the investigating detective and its Brighton setting mark it out as an important text situated on the cusp between older versions of the crime film and the new permissiveness. *Jigsaw*’s interrogation of the problematic sexual behaviour of two ostensibly middle-class, middle-aged men is therefore particularly interesting, especially when placed within the context of the cultural anxieties about marriage, the increasingly fluid class system of the early 1960s, and an emergent youth culture.

Keywords

Jigsaw, Compulsory heterosexuality, masculinity, class, 1960s crime films, sex murder, Val Guest, Jack Warner

Tautly scripted and with a credible focus on the daily hard grind and frustrations of solving a crime that is underpinned by its attention to naturalistic detail, the 1962 black and white crime thriller *Jigsaw* is relatively unusual in that it was made by a director with an established mainstream reputation, Val Guest, yet it deals with the kind of sensational subject matter normally reserved in the early 1960s for B movies: sex murder.ⁱ *Jigsaw* successfully establishes the grisly details of the crime without resorting to genre clichés and retains its power as a well-made and tightly-plotted thriller. Nonetheless, the film presents us with a difficulty. Its narrative effectiveness is grounded in its ideological commitment to patriarchal structures and the necessity of women's subordination within them. The film depicts both its male and female characters in binary terms, even if these are relatively nuanced, and in its sex killer plot it also presents male sexuality as inherently dangerous to any woman who operates outside patriarchal protective boundaries. To achieve this discursive balance between promoting patriarchal power while acknowledging its complicity in sexual exploitation in ways that naturalise the tensions involved, the film deploys a low-key style drawn from the British New Wave and documentary. Its plausibility thus partly rests on the truth claims made by naturalism in the early 1960s.

Jigsaw is mentioned a number of times by scholars working within the area of British crime films, and some critics have noticed it with interest. In 2006, Christopher Hawtree, writing Guest's obituary for *The Guardian*, even commended it as, 'one of the

finest postwar British crime movies and possibly the best depiction of [Brighton] on film,' yet it remains largely, and unjustly, a neglected text. Appearing as it did, squeezed between the waning of the British New Wave and the emergence of the pop musicals and London-focused films that dominated cinema in the UK as the 'youth explosion' became a key theme, and based on material that might otherwise have seemed suitable for television, the film has largely been relegated to secondary status. However, I see it as important both cinematically and culturally. Indeed, I will argue that it is a text that helps to mark a critical shift both in cultural attitudes and in the British crime thrillerⁱⁱ.

In this article I explore the discursive intersections of masculinity, class and heterosexual desire articulated in *Jigsaw*, considering it as both an exemplification of a new style of cinematic crime narrative and a significant conjectural text of the early 1960s. To do so, I will take as a starting point the concept of 'compulsory heterosexuality,' especially in its post-war and mid-century forms, but here re-articulated as *compulsive* heterosexuality; that is, an apparently unmanageable drive to sexual murder. Perhaps appropriately, given its title, *Jigsaw* presents us with a tessellated puzzle in which the pieces which make up the final picture carry cultural resonances well beyond the ostensible project of the narrative's investigation.

"One of those, but *not* 'one of those'": Compulsory heterosexuality and the social problem film

Adrienne Rich (2003: 11-48) first posited the notion of 'compulsory heterosexuality' which was later taken up and developed by Judith Butler within a critical framework drawing on Foucauldian discourse theory. For Rich, the concept involves the social

normalisation of the proposition that male sexual desire is an essential and therefore uncontrollable component of biology that it is the duty of women to satisfy and manage. Butler moves away from Rich's original socialisation model to argue that it is, rather, 'a hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility...hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality (1990:151).' For both writers, however, it is the rigorous policing, reinforcement and endorsement of heteronormativity through the regulatory frameworks of the state (marriage, the law, education) and through the discursive formations of knowledge and representation, including film, which render the concept so powerful. And the central tenet that desire is a driver of patriarchal masculinity, and that its power is discursively productive, shaping the way identities, cultural beliefs, practices, institutions and ideologies are structured is critical here.

Within modern patriarchal societies the 'solution' to male desire and its most effective management is marriage, ideally of a companionate nature in which affection, personal compatibility and a degree of equality between the couple is recognised. This discourse certainly shaped post-war and mid-century attitudes and led to a high degree of official cultural prescriptiveness about the necessity of marriage and procreation, especially to the rebuilding of Britain as a unified nation in the late 1940s and early 1950s. We can see the development of the hegemony of this companionate model in many film comedies of the 1950s, such as *Genevieve* (Henry Cornelius, 1953), in which the achievement of a stable heterosexual relationship is contingent on amicable compromise and mutual respect between the couple. Early entries in the *Doctor* series of hospital-based comedies about a group of medical students (1954-1970) also feature

parallels between career success for their male protagonists and an emotionally mature sexual relationship with a woman which is clearly supposed to lead to marriage, although here such relations are largely treated facetiously.

Yet facetiousness frequently works to endorse the ideal even as it appears to undermine it. Marriage is both a longed-for dream and an unavoidable destiny; the 'true career' which women are supposed to desire and the fate that men must both resist and ultimately succumb to, with a degree of hearty joshing about the loss of valued homosocial bonds in the case of the comedies. If much British cinema in the 1950s was indeed preoccupied with ambivalence and unease around male identities, as Marcia Landy suggests (1991: 240), it often dealt with this by loading such disquiet onto matrimonial expectations. By the mid-1960s, British cinema was in the throes of confusion over a 'swinging' lifestyle that entailed outright rejection of conventional marriage if not at this point heterosexual desire; facetiousness about the inevitability of marital ties and indeed the compulsive drives of male heterosexuality had turned into jaunty cynicism in films such as *The Knack...And How to Get It* (Richard Lester, 1965) and *Darling* (John Schlesinger, 1965). The period of the late 1950s and early 1960s thus marked an important turning point in which the social norms of the post-war years had become more fluid, yet retained much of their hegemonic power in the face of 'permissiveness' and a supposed sexual revolution.

As I have explored elsewhere (Tincknell, 2005; 2006), marriage was still deemed to be the bedrock of social and economic stability, however, and women's sexual availability to men the bedrock of stable masculinity. Such an axiom was also the basis for the fear (sometimes the justification) that male desire, if left unsatisfied, inexorably – even

compulsively - led to sexual crime. Indeed, this premise habitually informs the narrative logic of many crime thrillers of the period. And, as Martin Francis observes, 'a post-war world where family life was panegyricised was also one in which male homosexuality became increasingly visible (2017:167).' In this way, the official sanctioning of heteronormativity also opened it up for critical scrutiny and for refusals.

The productive nature of discourse thus meant that the prescription and proscription of sexual behaviours and their regulation into socially approved outlets inevitably led to the re-emergence and re-articulation of taboo subjects, but frequently in less socially sanctioned forms. Barry Forshaw points out that the crime genre became a key site for the representation and interrogation of themes such as homosexuality and sexual obsession during the 1950s, for example (2012: 123). The B movie was the primary outlet, especially the cheap thrillers which were churned out between the late 1940s and mid 1960s in which sex crime was a staple, such as *Double Confession* (Ken Annakin, 1950) or *Murder at 3am* (Francis Searle, 1953). Yet the figure of the sexually motivated killer and the transgressive character of such subject matter in these films were not regularly exposed to serious critical scrutiny due to the B movie's lowly status. In stark contrast, the scandal that surrounded the release of Michael Powell's psychological thriller, *Peeping Tom*, in 1959 is interesting. Here was a film whose sex killer plot and disturbing themes were widely reviled by critics at the time, perhaps because it so evidently makes the link between scopophilia, desire and misogyny.

However, unlike both the B movie versions, and indeed *Peeping Tom*, *Jigsaw* is distinctive for its relatively low-key tone, its atmosphere of prosaic naturalism and its lack of sensationalism. With the exception of the relatively melodramatic opening

sequences I discuss later, and perhaps the revelatory and unexpectedly swift denouement (a feature also characteristic of many B thrillers), the film is largely driven by a police procedural format in which the sifting of clues and the plodding of streets are the *modus operandi*. In this respect it is not unlike *Victim* (Basil Dearden, 1962), whose story of a homosexual barrister struggling to come to terms with his sexual identity is framed within a classic police procedural narrative.

Perhaps surprisingly, given its very British atmosphere, *Jigsaw* was based on an American hardboiled detective novel by Hillary Waugh, *Sleep Long, My Love* (1959), with the setting changed from a fictional small town in Connecticut, Stockford, to the real British city of Brighton and its surrounding area. This change of scene to a seaside town with an established reputation for a seedy underworld culture together with the naturalistic style adopted for the film contributes to *Jigsaw*'s credibility as a text grounded in British mid-century culture; although much of the original novel's plot is retained, there is very little in the film to suggest a transatlantic source. The film was produced and written as well as directed by Val Guest, who also cast his American-born wife, Yolande Donlan, in a major, if hardly flattering role that did nothing to exploit her non-British background or suggest that her presence was intended to secure a large US audienceⁱⁱⁱ.

Guest was already a well-established director with a significant and extremely varied body of work behind him by the early 1960s, including comedies featuring The Crazy Gang and musicals such as *Miss London Limited* (1943), as well as the ground-breaking *The Quatermass X-periment* (1955), the film that made Hammer's reputation as a horror studio. *Jigsaw* is very far from Hammer in style and, if nothing else,

demonstrates Guest's versatility as a filmmaker who moved with ease between genres whilst bringing a disciplined approach to storytelling. *Jigsaw*'s tight narrative structure and compelling performances reflect this economy. It was preceded in Guest's oeuvre by a film with the not dissimilar theme of murder, dismemberment and male psychosis, *The Full Treatment* (1960), but which also had a radically different setting in the French Riviera, and clearly aspired to be a Hitchcock-style psychological thriller about sexual obsession. What is interesting about *Jigsaw* is its relatively clinical treatment of desire and resistance to the glamorisation of male sexual violence.

Andy Medhurst rightly notes that in 1962 *Victim* was a significant 'point of intersection, a site of confluence between...fluxes... [including] the contemporary range of positions on sexuality taken up within British film culture' (1984: 28). For Medhurst, most serious British cinema of the period had been hampered by a reluctance to address questions of sexuality head-on until the emergence of the British New Wave in the late 1950s with its overt commitment to sexual frankness and emotional realism. *Victim* was an exception and an important conjunctural text in which shifting attitudes towards homosexuality were captured and framed at the moment of their transformation. I would argue that *Jigsaw* is equally interesting in terms of its appearance at the cusp of the growing importance of television drama, the height of the New Wave's success and, crucially, increasing tensions around the post-war settlement concerning the companionate marriage and the emergent discourse of permissiveness.

Indeed, while the New Wave's frank engagement with male desire and frustrations represented a significant move away from post-war conventions, it had in some ways been prefigured by the 1950s cycle of social problem films which were already

foregrounding the tensions between publicly sanctioned bourgeois models of masculinity and emergent and antagonistic versions. Films such as *Cosh Boy* (Lewis Gilbert, 1953) and *Violent Playground* (Basil Dearden, 1958) sought, in theoretical terms, to 'stage a problematic' (in this case the issue of post-war male juvenile delinquency), and thus to resolve it at narrative level and, by extension, to make that resolution a social act as well as an act of representation. *Victim* actually belongs in this cycle and it is noticeable that, like other social problem films of its period, it uses the conventions of the police procedural in order to present its investigative strategies within a convincing narrative framework. *Jigsaw* also carries elements of the social problem text in its sober tone and, indeed, its commitment to a realistic depiction of policing, which came courtesy of the Brighton force's close co-operation with the production.

By the mid-1950s, the social problem film had also already become the vehicle for the exploration of transgressive femininity, most notably in *Sapphire* (Basil Dearden, 1959) and *Yield to the Night* (J Lee Thompson, 1956), both of which make investigating and solving the 'problem' of a woman's sexuality (and in the former, fixing her racial identity) their narrative purpose in line with the dominant sexual discourses of the period. As John Hill points out with regard to the cycle's development,

[t]o this extent, the "social problems" so defined are not so much the problems of "society" as a whole as the "problems" of those who enjoy the ability to universalise their particular point of view as the point of view of all in society. As such, the successful definition of a "social problem" not only presupposes but also entails power (1995: 35).

One might add, then, that those with power are rarely adjudged to be the problem in such texts but are instead the problem-solvers. In particular, working-class women are sexual 'trouble' as Christine Geraghty (2000: 162) notes, while middle-class men especially are the locus of sexual containment and self-control. In contrast, for *Jigsaw*, while the film begins conventionally enough with another troublesome dead female body, and certainly operates through some very standard gender binaries concerning female transgression, it soon transpires that the real problem to be solved is that of middle class male heterosexual desire. In foregrounding the desire of those who, by virtue of their class and gender, are generally treated as unproblematic, the film breaks with the conventions of both the social problem film and the crime narrative and in so doing pinpoints the emergent shift from the still largely deferential representations of bourgeois masculinity found in much British cinema of the 1950s to the more cynical versions of the next decade.

"He's done something terrible, hasn't he?" Masculine frustrations, class and crime narratives

To recognise that *Jigsaw* presents an unusually critical staging of middle-class male desire is not to say that class tensions were not important to British crime films of the immediate pre- and post-war years. Robert Murphy (2019:88-9) identifies a number of examples of noir-ish thrillers whose plots revolve around the antagonisms produced by differences of class, such as *They Drive By Night* (Arthur B Woods, 1938), *On the Night of the Fire* (Brian Desmond Hurst, 1939) and *A Window in London* (Herbert Mason, 1940), for example. James Chapman also notes the extent to which class antagonism informs many of the 'spiv' films of the immediate post-war years (2008: 183-4).

Indeed, class differences and the specificity of class identity are of course omnipresent in British cinema more generally, but the crime thriller becomes the arena in which the *intersections* of class, masculinity, desire and the tensions of homo- and hetero-sociality are played out most fully.

Francis (2017: 167) usefully summarises the extent to which the cycle of post-war crime films, including *Dancing with Crime* (1947) and *They Made Me a Fugitive* (1947), centre on erstwhile middle-class male characters who drift into a life of criminality and corruption as a consequence of failing to readjust to post-war civilian life, and observes that they struggle especially with the presence of women in anything but the most marginal roles. For such characters, and those in later films that depict the curdling of war-time male camaraderie into crime, such as *The Ship That Died of Shame* (1955) and *The League of Gentlemen* (1960), the post-war world's officially sanctioned preoccupation with family life and repopulation fuels a deep-seated resentment of women and of domesticity that resurfaces in the films of the New Wave but is never entirely absent from the crime thrillers that preceded them.

Moreover, both film and television during the late 1950s and early 1960s seem to share a growing cultural preoccupation with the dissatisfactions of heterosexual commitment and monogamy. Melanie Bell-Williams cites the role played by the Morton Commission on Marriage and Divorce, published in 1956, in helping to open up debate about marital relations, although she also points out that it 'failed to instigate progressive reform' (2008: 268). The following year, the better known Wolfenden Report was published. Its remit was, as Bell-Williams clarifies, to make recommendations, in relation to criminal law regarding female prostitution and male homosexuality,

‘phenomena that stood as a challenge to the post-war hegemony of monogamous marriage’ (2008:269). In addition to the legal and formal interrogations of marital status, and indeed the sexology of the period, popular culture also demonstrated an increased fascination with sex, with the tabloid press playing its part in the salacious depiction of sexual ‘news’^{iv}.

Appropriately, then, *Jigsaw*’s story starts with a dispute over an extra-marital affair and the battle this incites between women’s emotional needs and men’s sexual desires. Indeed, drama across a range of mediums in the years between 1958 and 1963 seems positively fixated with the conflicts conventional marital relations pose. In theatre, plays such as Edward Albee’s sensation, *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (also 1962), and Harold Pinter’s *The Lover* (1963) both stage marriage as a form of sadistic game-playing amongst the intellectual classes, with increasing tolerance of extra-marital affairs, while resistance to domesticity is a *crie-de-coeur* in the male-centred texts that formed the nucleus of the New Wave, including the literary works from which many of the films derived. *Look Back in Anger* (Tony Richardson, 1959, originally a play) offers the most virulently misogynistic rejection of domestic life, but other films share its underlying assumption that marriage is little more than a trap for men. In *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (Karel Reisz, 1960), for example, Arthur Seaton (Albert Finney) ambivalently accepts ‘settling down’ as his fate, rather than embracing it joyously. And in *A Kind of Loving* (John Schlesinger, 1962) Vic Brown (Alan Bates) is forced to marry the pregnant Ingrid Rothwell (June Ritchie) in order to make a ‘respectable woman’ of her. In both cases, social norms around marriage are enforced by domineering older

women, while young men chafe against monogamy and end up with pretty yet insipidly materialistic brides.

Like a number of the films discussed here, *Jigsaw* was made at a moment which just predates the emergence of 'permissiveness' and the new hegemony of youth culture. Indeed, the world it depicts is one of stifling and largely middle-aged respectability and deference to patriarchal (and sometimes matriarchal) authority. There is little overt sense of youthful resistance to convention and no sign of a youth culture or even of teenagers (perhaps a surprising absence given that this is also the year of *The Young Ones* and a British cinema grappling with the incipient youth explosion)^v. Instead, the film's key characters, its milieu, and its values are notable for their apparent stolidity. And amidst this parade of ordinariness we find something disturbing: the efficient concealment of perverse criminality behind a smoothly civilised surface. More than this, it is middle-aged, middle-class masculinity that is the site of crime.

The film is framed as a police procedural as I have said, with dependable Jack Warner reprising his familiar role as the acceptable face of British policing, a role initially established in *The Blue Lamp* (Basil Dearden, 1950) and later repeated throughout his career, most memorably in the TV series *Dixon of Dock Green* (BBC, 1955-76). In *Jigsaw*, Warner's Detective Inspector Fred Fellows is at once patriarchal, stoical, sharp-witted, methodical in his approach, conventional in the attitudes he expresses concerning decency and ordinariness (his casually dismissive remark at one point about "continental cooking" sets the tone) yet utterly reliable because of this. Plain-clothes clad in the concealing grey suit and raincoat of 1950s masculinity, Warner's character is

the opposite of the man whose trail he is on: the mysterious 'John' whose charm enables him to seduce and then murder.

Although the initial crime investigated by the police is a break-in at a Brighton estate agent's seafront offices in which a number of leases are apparently stolen, this is simply the event which incites the investigation. As is conventional in the genre, the case soon hinges upon a dead female body and later a woman's sexual behaviour and reliability as a witness. Warner's Fred Fellows determines not only who the criminal is but what kind of crime has been committed. In this regard, his professional authority is clearly grounded in the cultural deference his age and gender accrue. Fellows is the oldest and most experienced of the police officers assigned to the case, and his familiarity with the sometimes debilitating nature of a routine investigation which frequently turns up red herrings and confusing aporia is essential not only to the film's realism but also to its ideological power. The fact that Fellows is depicted as world-weary yet not cynical is the crux to the success of this trope.

His sympathetic paternalism is carefully established in early scenes at Brighton Police Station where he chats teasingly but certainly not flirtatiously to a young WPC. This paternalism is further concretised in the easy homosociability of his relationship with the detective team and especially his younger detective sergeant, Jim Wilks (Ronald Lewis), who is also his nephew and who has clearly inherited Fellows's common-sense decency and application. The two joke about tickets Fellows has secured to see his local football team play, and which he will of course never use because of his commitment to the job. In what is in many ways the most powerful sequence in the film, and rendered so because of its complete lack of melodrama or even of much dialogue,

Fellows and Wilks slowly and methodically search the house where they believe a crime has been committed, but do not yet know what that crime is. It is Fellows's policeman's instincts which alert him to 'something not quite right' and his policeman's calm which enable the sifting through of drawers and bedding, the discernment of traces of face-powder and a woman's scent and, eventually, a dismembered body. Later, Fellows crisply sees off prurient members of the press and public eager to know if the dismembered female corpse he has just discovered was "pretty". Fellows's reliability is essential to *Jigsaw*'s careful balancing of different modes of masculinity and its ideological labour in the service of patriarchy. Without him the film's discursive trajectory is in danger of tipping over into the misogyny it ostensibly disavows.

"That's the Judy what got herself done": Brighton's seedy underbelly

By the early 1960s and with an ongoing decline in cinema-going, crime thrillers especially were increasingly dominated by formulaic plots and a pared-back aesthetic influenced by TV. These years were both the high point of film production in the UK, with one in three films produced being a crime thriller, usually a B movie, and the moment at which British cinema's cultural dominance was beginning to be seriously challenged by television (Chibnall, 1999: 101). Laura Mayne points out that Merton Park, one of the most prolific of the B companies, produced no less than 47 Edgar Wallace thrillers between 1960 and 1964, in which Bernard Lee regularly played a detective in each film (2016: 561). Indeed, Steve Chibnall and Brian McFarlane argue that during this period many B films 'catered to an audience now used to the rhythms of television programming' (2009: 55). *Jigsaw*'s minimalist style, its use of real locations, and its deglamorised subject matter were thus wholly in tune with the kind

of realist police dramas beginning to appear on television, such as *Z Cars*, which also first aired in 1962, with their low-key naturalism and newly gritty storylines.

The film begins with a long tracking shot of holiday caravans on a cliff-top viewed from a distance, and then closes in on the sole brick-built house within the purview. A dog barks. The sea roars. The wind whistles. We are at the British seaside (unmistakeably) and looking directly at a house that appears bleak, surrounded as it is by scrubby, wind-whipped grass, and showing signs of neglect. Already dimly lit, the starkness of this mise-en-scene establishes the film's atmosphere of sober, even clinical, investigation, and that while this is a seaside-set story it is not going to be a picnic. Indeed, it becomes immediately clear that despite the caravan park location there will be little in the way of carefree leisure. This is Brighton. But it is a Brighton whose pavilion, and seafront and pier, whose beaches and cafes, will play little part except as backdrops and as the discursive framing for a sordid tale. The pier is glimpsed briefly in a crane shot, the esplanade and main streets establish an urban setting, but there is little sign of Brighton's gaudier tourist attractions. Indeed, together with the opening credits' acknowledgment of the local constabulary's support, this approach underpins the film's evident commitment to documentary realism.

The lack of a conventional score is indicated in these opening sequences and also contributes to the film's documentary feel. In its place, diegetic sound is used to underline and cue meaning, and to create aural transitions between scenes, as in the use of a ship's siren to shift the action from Brighton to Greenwich halfway through the film and then to Lewes where ambient birdsong alone suggests the less urban setting. This eschewal of the standard underlining and unification of action and character

through non-diegetic music further enhances the film's apparent commitment to sober realism rather than sensation, and its emphasis on dogged application rather than sudden inspiration in successful detective work (although the swift ending seems to undercut this somewhat).

While the film's focus on the everyday, the seedy, the down-at-heel, the scruffiness of back streets, the bleakness of cheap caravan parks, the dowdiness of thin curtains and shabby furniture, position it firmly within the tradition of documentary realism and especially the British New Wave's concern with the ordinary, its Brighton setting actually adds a further dimension. Already associated with a tarnished glamour and the dubious attractions of illicit sex, Brighton on film is also directly connected with a criminal underworld inhabited by the spiv, the con-man and the gangster. Its liminal location beside the ocean has given it, like other British seaside resorts, the status of a licensed space where conventionally forbidden and often illegal activities can be indulged. More than this, however, the town's reputation as 'London by the sea' has leant Brighton an additional sheen of metropolitan sophistication and urban vice. Its image in the 1950s and early 1960s was of a community caught between respectability and disreputability, fur coats and cheap gin. The open, cheerful esplanade is almost literally a 'front' for more dubious activities. As Susan Sydney-Smith says, in popular discourse, 'an ambience of hysterical gaiety conceals a hidden evil: once more revealing an underside, the underside of "respectable", historic Brighton (2006:85).'

Frank Gray (2007) also notes that the dominant cinematic representations of Brighton are indeed of it as a 'crime town' of corruption and violence, and includes *Jigsaw* alongside *The Brighton Strangler* (1945), *Brighton Rock* (1948), *Mona Lisa* (1986) and

Circus (2000) in this limited but significant canon, to which we can add *Under Suspicion* (1991), set in 1959 and in which Liam Neeson plays a Brighton-based gumshoe. He also describes two sensational crimes of the inter-war years that helped to create the town's reputation as a site of 'villains and razor gangs': the kidnapping of Ernest Friend-Smith in 1928 and the discovery of a dismembered woman's body in a trunk at Brighton Station in 1934. Interestingly, Gray does not expressly link *Jigsaw* to these crimes, even though the method of disposal of the dead woman's body in the film is indeed a trunk, but does point out that, 'the "trunk murders", as they were called, [generated intense]media attention and public interest. In the popular imagination, Brighton had now transgressed from being the Queen of the Watering Places to the Queen of the Slaughtering Places (2007: 67-8).'

Films such as *Pink String and Sealing Wax* (Robert Hamer, 1945) and the later *Villain* (Michael Tuchner, 1971) also helped to cement the town's association with crime and with a violent underworld of corruption and murder especially. Yet *Jigsaw* does very little to suggest that criminality might be even problematically glamorous or indeed part of a shadowy underworld. Its murder scene is at the grimly prosaic 'One, Bungalow Road', a location whose name reflects the film's downbeat tone. Most importantly, Brighton is positioned as a place where illicit sex seems to be joyless, and where taboo desire is inexorably linked to the grimmest forms of violence.

"It's always been that way with me. When I'm in trouble I turn to a woman:"

Compulsive heterosexuality and problematic masculinity

This emphasis on the quotidian mundane is reflected in the film's naturalistic style.

Jigsaw's pared-back aesthetic and focus on 'ordinary' people as characters is typical of

its period, chiming with the television naturalism of *Coronation Street* and *Z Cars* noted above. The affably bantering relationship between the male detectives investigating the crime is reminiscent of *Z Cars*. So too is its initial narrative focus on marital discord and infidelity. The film's more tangential relationship to the kitchen sink style's theatrical origins (as in *Look Back In Anger*) can be seen in its second scene which is, effectively, a dramatic soliloquy performed by a woman whom we later discover to be Joan Simpson (Moira Redmond), in which she laments the emptiness of her life without a man. Clad only in a 'sexy' nightdress and shown waking from a post-coital sleep next to an unconscious male figure, 'Johnny', whose silence she increasingly noisily resents, she is presented in ways that prefigure the film's themes of illicit male desire and female transgression. As he wakes and she moves about the bedroom the woman becomes fearful and apologetic, begging him to talk to her as she nervously lights a cigarette for him, then demanding him to "choose me" over his betrayed wife. In return he first offers her money and then, in a rapid shift from a theatrical to a cinematic visual mode, is shown strangling her. The woman's face appears in close-up as she screams. Throughout this scene the man's face is concealed. We see only a pair of muscular arms and a chest.

This unusually lengthy sequence which, as noted above, initially resembles theatre rather than cinema in its use of monologue, also clearly establishes the gendered parameters of the text. The woman's emotional neediness, her petulance, her impetuosity in suddenly throwing an empty aspirin bottle across a bathroom floor, contrasts starkly with the man's impassivity. More than anything, her verbosity is an irritant. Veering between complaint and wheedling, as she urges the man to settle down

with her into compliant domesticity, her femininity is that of the noisy subordinate, confirmed by the lower-middle class intonation. What she clearly wants is emotional commitment. And, like the man, the audience wants the complaining to stop. In a brief, dangerous moment we not only know what 'Johnny's' silence will lead to, we will it.

Here, the exaggerated contrast is structured around activity and passivity, between the silent yet powerful man and the garrulous yet weak woman which not only sets the scene for a crime, it stages the over-determination of gender difference, including the naturalisation of woman as desired yet repulsive other. The frilly lingerie, the arranged hair, speak to a constructed and ultimately treacherous femininity whose main purpose is to trap men into marriage and whose artifice is rapidly revealed once lust is sated. We later see in flashback Joan seducing one of the men suspected of being 'Johnny', and in this sequence her culpability is further underlined as she stands in front of a mirror in her habitual dressing-gown and in a close-up is shown deliberately wiping off her lipstick in anticipation of the sexual congress to come. However, this moment is immediately replaced by another close-up, this time of the man accused of her murder feverishly wiping his face as he recounts his sexual encounter with her to his police interrogators. In this way Joan's sexual transgression is temporarily 'wiped out' by that of the man; his behaviour is re-established as the true locus of crime. What then do we make of the killer's compulsion, his urge to kill?

Here, it is the 'drive' to sex which leads directly to murder because it is not properly contained and managed within heterosexual marriage. *Jigsaw* then is a text for which compulsory heterosexuality is, for men, also *compulsive* heterosexuality, a desire for sex that cannot be overcome and which is closely aligned to violent impulses. The two men

the police sequentially believe to be Johnny are figured as capitulating to 'uncontrollable urges' which, while disgusting to 'normal' men, are also in part a component of that normality. While such urges are supposedly triggered by a woman's implicit invitation in the form of the dressing-gown or the willingness to be 'picked up' on a train, the film also makes it clear that they are not only potentially criminal but also socially unacceptable. Yet Johnny is able to 'pass' as respectable and self-controlled in his ordinary life until discovered, when he breaks down melodramatically.

The film sets up a number of potential perpetrators as it proceeds in the search for 'John Campbell' and the piecing together of the puzzle, including the grocer's deliveryman, Andy Roach(Norman Chappell), whose fascination with the crime (and with sensational murders in general) and proximity to the murder scene initially suggests he could have played a role. Later, the philandering vacuum-cleaner salesman Clyde Burchard (played with wild-eyed intensity by Michael Goodliffe) seems the perfect fit with his penchant for "going up to town" in search of female company. In both cases, the sexual tastes and behaviour of 'normal' masculinity are subject to exposure and scrutiny. Burchard's suggestive banter with Joan Simpson as he tries to sell her a new vacuum-cleaner, which is staged as a flashback once he confesses, and his cheaply flashy dress (the door-to-door salesman's pseudo-stylish camel coat and sharp suit) are of a piece with the voraciously sexual masculinity the film finds deeply distasteful.

The salesman is, of course, a familiar figure in the period's demonology of permissiveness and consumerism and this is not the first or only film to highlight cultural anxieties around his proximity to 'bored' and supposedly sexually available or neglected housewives. Indeed, the possibilities for dalliance with a door-to-door salesman are

played for laughs in *The Green Man* (Robert Day, Basil Dearden, 1956) and as a warning to gullible women in *Live Now, Pay Later* (Jay Lewis, 1962). It is perhaps even more significant within the contemporary context of growing affluence and social aspiration of the early 1960s, however, that the real murderer turns out to be an estate agent, the outwardly gentlemanly Ray Tenby (John Barron) whose faking of a break-in to conceal his more serious crime had instigated the enquiry.

Tenby is not all he seems in his sexual appetites, either. Ostensibly a respectably middle-class, well-spoken married man, the film's denouement is dependent on his exposure as a serial adulterer and, worse, a morally bankrupt figure whose lust is intensified as well as tempered by his crime and someone who can coolly pick up another girl to sleep with on a train while his murder victim is barely cold. "It's always been that way with me. When I'm in trouble I turn to a woman." Like Burchard, Tenby's salesman slickness is a component of his inadequate masculinity, and also of the precariousness of his class position, poised at it is between the appearance of bourgeois affluence and the reality of pecuniary instability. Indeed, it later transpires that before his arrival in Brighton he had temporarily taken a job as a car salesman, a figure as closely associated with moral turpitude as the door-to-door salesman. Both characters are inheritors of the threat associated with the spiv, with his disruption of the social and sexual order and unmanly dependence on women for economic success.

Jigsaw's interrogation of the problematic sexual behaviour and attitudes of two ostensibly middle-class, middle-aged men is therefore particularly interesting, especially when placed within the context of the cultural anxieties about marriage, the increasingly fluid class system of the early 1960s, and an emergent youth culture with its 'healthy'

age-appropriate interest in sex as noted above. Burchard and Tenby both display a degree of class condescension towards the police officers, apparently assuming that they can easily deceive them. This sense of social superiority is presented as directly linked to their excessive sexual appetites and from there to criminal behaviour incited by loss of control. Ultimately, for both, inappropriate hypersexuality is a component of their failure to perform the kind of middle-class masculinity that genuinely deserves respect and deference. Where respectable youthful desire is represented by the lower middle-class Wilks's willingness to put duty before pleasure and by the patience of his unseen but forbearing girlfriend, the ostensibly socially superior Burchard and Tenby allow themselves to become driven by lust.

Indeed, Jack Warner's reliable, steady copper is, in contrast, largely a desexualised figure. Domesticity is for him safely sited well away from the masculine realm of work and potential distraction from a policeman's proper duties. But his unspoken commitment to marriage is what sustains him. Reflecting on Burchard's sexual opportunism and his list of 'willing' housewives, Fellows memorably tells a junior officer: "I'm not a prude, but a man like that makes me want to take a bath." We are clearly meant to share the sentiment.

"Most women of your age have had too many affairs:" Negotiating heteronormative desire

This split between work and home is vital, however. Women who consent to and respond to patriarchal protection within a domestic setting are safe, while women who transgress and disrupt those binaries place themselves in danger. The film emphasises this in its doubling of the two victims, who share the initials 'JS' but who are portrayed

as moral opposites in their sexual behaviour. Jean Sherman (Donlan), the 'one who got away' by refusing the villain's propositioning despite being tempted, keeps house for her father and is a wistful 30-year old virgin, not a femme fatale. Although she is depicted as being initially attracted by the sexually transgressive prospect of an affair with the handsome and dashing 'John' whom she meets by accident on a train journey to Brighton, she is saved by her moral sense and, perhaps ironically, by the double standards that permit a degree of male sexual freedom while proscribing such licence for women. It is her sexual innocence that finally lures Jean to the murder house, but which also enables her to leave it. Indeed, John shows his approval of her resistance by telling her that she is unlike "most women of her age" who have not only had plenty of affairs but are also incapable of love.

This blandly misogynist assertion is made during a further flashback sequence in which Jean recounts her brief fling with the mysterious stranger to Fellows, who has at this point traced her to her home in Greenwich, and its sentiments are never challenged, not even by Jean herself. The film takes for granted that defining, judging and explaining women's sexuality (including or perhaps especially to women themselves) is the preserve of patriarchy, even when it is seeking to solicit empathy from the audience. Jean is presented as the classic frustrated and therefore sexually vulnerable spinster; her neediness is depicted as the natural consequence of her unmarried status. Once she learns that she has narrowly escaped being murdered, she bursts into hysterics and (in an untypically melodramatic scene) has to be restrained by Fellows and a police constable. Here, Jean's emotional volatility is starkly contrasted with Fellows's stoical yet sharply violent response: "Take it easy, miss" he says reassuringly while simultaneously

holding her down on a bed and flinging a glass of water over her to calm her down. This sequence of actions is especially striking, not only because it is presented as a reasonable and logical masculine response to feminine emotion, but also because Fellows is depicted as having the legal and perhaps natural right in effect to assault her, although this is not what the film believes it is showing. To defend her from a 'worse' crime (the illicit use of her body for sex and perhaps murder), he is permitted to take control of her body himself as the rightful defender of patriarchal jurisdiction.

Once the real identity of the victim, Joan, has been established, Fellows visits her parents to break the news and is met with an equally violent display of emotion as Joan's father (John Le Mesurier) breaks down, first denouncing his daughter's promiscuity as the inevitable precursor to her murder, but then collapsing in grief at his "Joanie's" death. The father's emotional collapse is especially powerful, contrasted as it is with the stoical restraint of his wife at the news. As Fellows calmly explains the discovery of the young woman's body, the camera focuses on the father's head and shoulders as he stands in front of the sitting room fireplace. His face breaks into a grimace of grief, his lips quivering uncontrollably. As his wife explains after he has rushed from the room, despite his denunciation of his daughter's sexual behaviour, "he really loved her very much." Here the film neatly, if inadvertently, pinpoints the tensions at the heart of its narrative: the control of women's sexuality is central to patriarchy both in its literal and symbolic functions, yet that control and the criminal actions that result from its taxonomies of 'good' and 'bad' women carry an emotional and psychological cost for both men and women. As Fellows leaves, Joan's father returns to the sitting room and falls to his knees, burying his head in his wife's lap.

Here, while the film's dominant discourse retains the thread of patriarchal Puritanism found earlier in its tendency to victim-blaming, it also acknowledges the complexities produced by a rapidly changing society in which traditional forms of courtship are disappearing. Joan is ambitious for a materially better life and sees men as her route. In this regard she resembles her almost-peers, Ingrid and Doreen (Shirley Anne Field) in *A Kind of Loving* and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, both of whom see marriage as a way of improving their material status – as the cultural norms of the period approved. Where Joan fails of course, is in seeking greater agency as a lower middle-class woman by conducting an affair with her married boss whom she believes will divorce and marry her. Indeed, it is at this point that the film's endorsement not only of ideological norms around marriage but also especially of women's sexual and emotional subordination within patriarchal and class-based structures reaches its logical conclusion. Having witnessed Joan's excessive emotional demands at the beginning of the film, the demands that trigger her murder, we are now presented with the signs of narrative closure: here is where it started, a young woman who asks for too much.

The emotional breakdown of Joan's father is also echoed at the end of the film when Tenby, still insisting Joan's death was an accident, falls into a desperate rage, slamming his head and hands on the table when the steady coppers resolutely refuse to believe in his innocence. Ultimately, Tenby's excessive masculinity spills over into a form of hysteria that confirms his inability to negotiate the intersections of class, desire and patriarchal privilege; he must therefore be subjected to the jurisdiction of the law.

Of course, *Jigsaw* ultimately resolves these uncomfortable scenes of masculine transgression through an ending which restores both narrative and ideological order. In

fact, it does this with remarkable economy and in a way that can continue to surprise the viewer. Having taken us along the tortuous path of the gradual unravelling of the case and of Tenby's eventual unmasking, the penultimate minutes seem about to suggest that the police's careful work will come to nothing. And then, in a final twist, Fellows and Wilks put the last piece of the jigsaw into place, and the temporary instabilities of gender, class and desire that have been unleashed are stabilised, patriarchal order is restored and the two coppers – about to take some well-earned time off – return to the police station to finish the job. In this way, the role of the police as the legitimate enactors of jurisprudence is underlined by their commitment to the re-establishment of social order.

Conclusion

Appearing at a moment in British film and television history when the cinematic crime thriller had begun to imitate some of the aesthetic and discursive tropes of television naturalism as well as the gritty subject matter of the New Wave, *Jigsaw* can be understood as an important conjunctural text. The film's narrative logic and its closures around the way middle-class masculinity, male desire and gendered power are understood are interesting because of the difficulties the film has in balancing its commitment to the structural subordination of women with the problem of sexual murder. *Jigsaw's* relationship to the sustenance of mid-century heteronormativity and patriarchal power is, on the surface, one in which the disruptions presented by transgressive figures are rooted out and punished; not only those of the men who kill but also, implicitly, those of the women whose behaviour invites murderous desires.

And yet the film's careful negotiations through the intersections of class, masculinity, desire and the tensions of homo- and hetero-sociality are the elements which point towards a more nuanced reading and, ultimately, the revelation of the tessellated power structures that the film seeks to hold together. The fact that *Jigsaw* just precedes the development of both the British pop musical which, despite its surface commitment to the joyful celebration of heterosexual desire, is also deeply uncomfortable with female sexual agency, and the slightly later Swinging London films with their amoral and reckless dolly birds and bohemians, is crucial. The amiably reliable coppers of *Jigsaw*, with their hobbies and stolid commitment to upholding the law would, within six years, be displaced by the corrupt police officers of *The Strange Affair* (David Greene, 1968). And by 1972, sex murder and transgressive masculinity would be treated much less soberly in Alfred Hitchcock's last British-made film, *Frenzy*.

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ⁱ Although it should be noted that Guest had plenty of experience of directing crime films and thrillers in his long working life, including *Murder at the Windmill* (1949), *The Full Treatment* (1960) and the excellent *Hell Is a City* (1960). Sadly, his oeuvre includes two examples of British smut, *Au Pair Girls* (1972) and *Confessions of a Window Cleaner* (1974), films which admittedly came at perhaps the low point of British cinema, when it is likely that few directorial opportunities were forthcoming.

ⁱⁱ *Hell is a City*, made by Guest two years before *Jigsaw* in 1960 is an equally interesting crime film focused on the Manchester underworld, and has been the subject of recent renewed critical interest. See Andrew Spicer, 'The emergence of the British tough guy: Stanley Baker, masculinity and the crime thriller,' in S. Chibnall and R. Murphy (1999) (eds.), *British Crime Cinema*, London: Routledge, pp. 83-94.

ⁱⁱⁱ The film was made by Guest's production company, which had already made a number of vehicles for Donlan's talents, including the nuclear power satire, *Mr Drake's Duck* (1951), about a plutonium-egg laying duck, and a musical comedy, *Penny Princess* (1952).

^{iv} Arguably, this tendency culminated in the coverage of the Profumo scandal, which broke in 1963 and which brought sex and politics together in ways that enabled the popular press in the UK to simultaneously express shock at the venality of the ruling class while gleefully offering titillating stories about 'call girls' and 'vice rings'.

^v This is also surprising given that Guest had made *Expresso Bongo* just three years earlier in 1959, a film that gently satirises the emergent British rock and roll scene as well as Soho's seedier aspects, and which featured Cliff Richard in his first film role as aspiring bongo-playing pop star, Bongo Herbert.