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of Glasgow

*Scousers on Screen: Perceptions of Liverpool's identity as
presented through locations in films*

Phebe Antonia Della Corte

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College of Arts and Humanities

University of Glasgow

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Abstract

This dissertation details the multidisciplinary approach taken to understand the role of locations in films in influencing audience perceptions of Liverpool. A sample of 21 films, set in Liverpool, were mapped onto Geographic Information System Google Maps. The map displays two layers: one containing pinpoints of the films' filming locations; the other pinpointing the films' settings. Data extrapolated from the map is considered alongside textual analysis of the films which draws on literature from the field of Urban Studies with reference to Jullia Hallam and Les Roberts' 'Mapping the City in Film' project. Geocriticism of the films' locations encompasses how they affect audiences' cognitive mapping of place, nuanced by their positionality as an insider or outsider to Liverpool. This geocriticism is enhanced by contextualising the locations and setting by placing them within the wider socio-economic history of the city. This includes the role of Liverpool Film Office in growing the city's presence in the film industry. Comparing the films and their geovisual data establishes a relationship between space and narrative. This relationship varies depending on the film, and analysis considers its effect on audiences' cognitive mapping. Locations featured in the films have the ability to orientate and disorientate depending on how they are presented coupled with the audience's insider/outsider knowledge. There is particular focus on filming 'hot-spots', which includes the use of Liverpool's landmarks as a signposting tool. Overall, Liverpool is found to be presented in many ways on film. This suggests that the city is multifaceted, although no single film depicts it as such.

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Introduction

“A city on the edge, a city more Celtic than English, a city of intense passion, of humour, music, poets and football clubs, a city disliked by Tory politicians and their ilk for its ‘bolshy’ attitude to authority and subversive determination to do things its own way.” - Hallam, 2013, p.6

Liverpool needs no introduction. Its reputation precedes it - both good and bad. For a large part, its reputation has been moulded by its portrayal found in all forms of media. This has influenced perceptions of the city: as a Scouser, I have experienced the many misconceptions often outsiders assume of Liverpool. These are mostly disguised as ‘jokes’ with impressions of Harry Enfield’s “calm down” skit delivered to attempt to defuse any ill feelings I may have towards their remarks about my hometown. These situations sparked my curiosity to understand ways in which the city is presented and how this may affect people's perceptions of it. However, this project focuses on how Liverpool’s locations and their portrayal in films conveys the identity of the city and resulting perceptions audiences may form. In examining mise-en-scène from my sample of films, I have undertaken a multidisciplinary approach using urban studies to inform my analysis of the bricks and mortar of the city, and history to contextualise their feature in the films. The following four sections introduce the stages of my research:

Films

My sample of 21 films were set in Liverpool entirely or had Liverpool as a primary setting whereby a significant portion of the film was set there. *Educating Rita* (Gilbert, 1983) is an anomaly as the stage play is set in Liverpool, however, the film’s setting is vague. Where Rita’s Scouse accent implies the setting, there lacks ‘distinctly Liverpool’ locations. Conversely, I consciously excluded films which were centred around Liverpool’s football teams, Liverpool and Everton, or The Beatles to avoid both connotations of their wider popular culture contexts and oversaturating the geovisual research with typically associated locations of football stadiums and the Cavern Club. *Nowhere Boy* (Taylor, 2009), although a biopic of John Lennon’s teen years, does not reference The Beatles, and is included in my sample. Overall, the films are of a range of release dates, spanning

six decades from 1958-2017. The majority were produced and released in the 1990s and 2000s, indicative of the 'boom' in filming in Liverpool in the 90s - a result of the inception of the Liverpool Film Office (LFO) at the start of the decade.

Geovisualisation

After analysing the films, noting locations I recognised while watching and subsequently researching the locations used for filming, I turned to geovisualising this information by mapping the films onto geographic information system (GIS) Google Maps.¹ To do so, I created two layers: one depicting the films' settings within the Merseyside region; the other indicating actual filming locations used within the region. The two layers applied to the map simultaneously displayed disparities between where filming a setting took place at its actual location, when filming used elsewhere in Liverpool as a double, and when filming took place outside of Liverpool or in studios. Additionally, the filming locations layer, exposed areas of 'filming hot-spots'. These are locations where a high volume of filming took place there. Primarily these are locations considered to be the city's landmarks: the Three Graces on the waterfront of the River Mersey (The Royal Liver building, Cunard building, and Port of Liverpool building) and St George's Hall. The significance of their use will be discussed in the following section. In a similar way, both layers, though particularly the settings layer, allowed analysis of the relationship between space and narrative.

Analysis of Geovisualisation

'Cognitive mapping' is a central tenet of this project. This term refers to an individual's ability to recall place and navigate space, mentally, based on their experiences and 'emotional links' to such places (Lask, 2011, p.48). Therefore, each person's cognitive map will be different and is ever-changing: we develop it every time we learn or experience somewhere new and can update it over time as the landscape changes. My cognitive map of Liverpool was a tool to aid my understanding of locations and orientation of the city presented in films, and vice versa. After plotting locations and settings onto the GIS I compared my cognitive map to it which highlighted where I may have experienced disorientation during a

¹ My map can be found at <https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1gjsAl5xEVvM5UAlFdFnI6D0ficDskvw&usp=sharing>

film, or when a location was used as a double and I was unaware. A key feature analysed within this project is the use of ‘landmark signposting’. Audiences are orientated by the visual aid of a landmark as they are typically associated with a place², becoming synonymous symbols. In Liverpool’s case, the River Mersey waterfront boasts iconic landmarks symbolising home for Scousers (Platt, 2011, p.37). Featuring them in films indicates to Scousers and outsiders alike that the action is taking place in Liverpool.

Geocriticism

According to Stadler, Mitchell and Carleton, geocriticism is the analysis of how place is represented within a text, reflection of how this is different or similar to the actual place and can encompass consideration of what this representation suggests of the writers’, directors’ and characters’ mapping of that place (2015, p.16). My objective was to produce geocriticism of films set in Liverpool to indicate how this affects the city’s perceived identity. In doing so I draw on Wladimir Fischer-Nebmaier’s notions of narrative theory, establishing that space and narrative have a relationship although not necessarily linear. The presentation of a space within the context of the narrative may portray Liverpool in one way in one film, but it is not singular: the same location in the context of another film presents the city in another way. It is worth noting that spatial narratives, where the narrative is driven or influenced by the space it takes place in, do not necessarily apply to all films within the sample, as with *Educating Rita* discussed in section 5(c). Ultimately, Liverpool has many faces - a multifaceted identity - but a single film alone does not encapsulate this.

Positionality

My reference to ‘audience’ throughout refers solely to viewers of the films discussed, inclusive of all types of members, including ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, unless specifically stated otherwise. To consider how audiences perceive the city in film, I acknowledge two categories of viewer depending on their relationship and experience of the literal city. Outsiders are those of whom have little experience of being in Liverpool. They are unfamiliar with the Merseyside region as a whole and likely recognise the city based on information and images from

² reinforced through branding strategies such as that of Liverpool’s ‘Liverpool 08’ campaign discussed in section 5(a).

various forms of media. Insiders, category of which I belong, have lived experience of the city, consisting of people who have spent some time within the region and are generally familiar with the areas inside and outside of the city centre, and Scousers. Scousers are those who have spent significant time in Liverpool, most but not all born there, and typically speak the local dialect (Crowley, 2012, p.51-52). Evidently, 'insiders' and 'outsiders' are nuanced by individual experiences. Nonetheless, the distinction is necessary as their experiences will influence their readings of locations displayed in films.

Key Literature

From the field of urban studies, the work of Julia Hallam and Les Roberts served as foundations to which I could build on their notions of how cities, particularly Liverpool, are presented in films and how audiences digest information about the city through the display of its landscape. Their *Mapping the City in Film* project includes several works which underpin my geocriticism: adapting the examination and mapping of how Liverpool is presented in archival and amateur films to that of feature films. Their use of GIS to map amateur films' locations and former cinemas across the Merseyside region inspired me to create the map for this project. However, not all literature consulted directly addressed the use of locations in films and how they express ideas of a city. Instead, personal identity-based research provided relevant notions on the expression and perception of identity which I have applied to the presentation of place via its locations. Construction of identity, be it Scouseness or Northernness, is rooted in perceptions of an embodiment: what has become to be expected of someone from a particular place. I argue that the same construction process, and reinforcement of it, occurs through locations featured in films to mark place.

Liverpool's Backstory

My geocriticism is supported by the context of Liverpool: how the city's past and current state affects audience comprehension of its presentation in the city-text. I will refer to the history of Liverpool as a port city, a defining characteristic, and its role for the city, markedly during the transatlantic slave trade and the Irish emigration. Where Liverpool had once attracted the wealth of merchants utilising the port for business, the city's recent history is that of hardship and poverty as in 2010 it was "ranked as the most deprived local authority in England" (Platt,

2014, p.70). Prior, the city suffered economically during the UK's Thatcher government. This coincides with the inception of the LFO which I believe was a strategy “linked to the fundamental economic restructuring since the early 1990s [relying on] the promise that creativity holds for bolstering economic development” (Edensor *et al*, 2009, p.1). After commercial success with *Letter to Brezhnev* (Bernard, 1985), where Liverpool was “uncharacteristically (and unflinchingly) ‘playing itself’”, the city grew its involvement with the film industry, producing a filmmaking ‘boom’ during the 1990s (Roberts, 2010a, p.192). Liverpool was then awarded European Capital of Culture (ECoC) 2008 in 2003, resulting in regeneration help from the EU. The sample of films exemplify how Liverpool was an industry city, reliant on its docks, and in its decline the city has shifted and invested more in its creative industry.

Liverpool Film Office

Head of LFO, Lynn Saunders, describes how LFO is structured “in the style of the New York Film Office and it was the very first of its kind” in Europe, driven by wanting to boost the local economy (liminoid1. 2023a, 01:23-01:30). This objective is due to LFO being a department of Liverpool City Council. In interview, locations manager Richard Knight praises LFO for its ability to organise filming on location in the Liverpool City region and the level of assistance provided for film crews before and during shoots. This attractive structure of an almost ‘one-stop-shop’, where location managers only need liaise with LFO, benefits the local economy and provides opportunities for local crew (Richard Knight interview). Saunders acknowledges two aspects of Liverpool’s filming industry: first, LFO does not censor film content. It is not concerned about films portraying the city negatively as “it's purely an economic initiative” (*ibid*, 01:40-02:10).³ Secondly, there is “less indigenous production going on” which likely reflects the city’s predominant role as a double for elsewhere (*ibid*, 04:10-04:17). I explore this aspect throughout my geocriticism and specifically address Scouse filmmakers in section 5(f), highlighting Terrence Davies.

Structure

The literature review examines relevant works surrounding identity, mapping, and cities in film. I connect concepts pertaining to the formation and

³ The concept of ‘selling Liverpool’ is discussed in section 5(a).

perception of identity relevant to Liverpool. Also, comparisons between Liverpool and Glasgow in films and how they are discussed in literature gives insight into the gap in this field of geocriticism of Liverpool. My methodology outlines my approaches to this project, justifying interviewing location managers, and further assesses my positionality. The mapping chapter specifically analyses my geovisual mapping of my sample of films on the GIS. Highlighted are patterns identified on individual layers and simultaneous, indicating ‘hot-spots’. This precedes my geocriticism chapter, broken down into six sections which discuss the varied aspects of Liverpool’s identity.

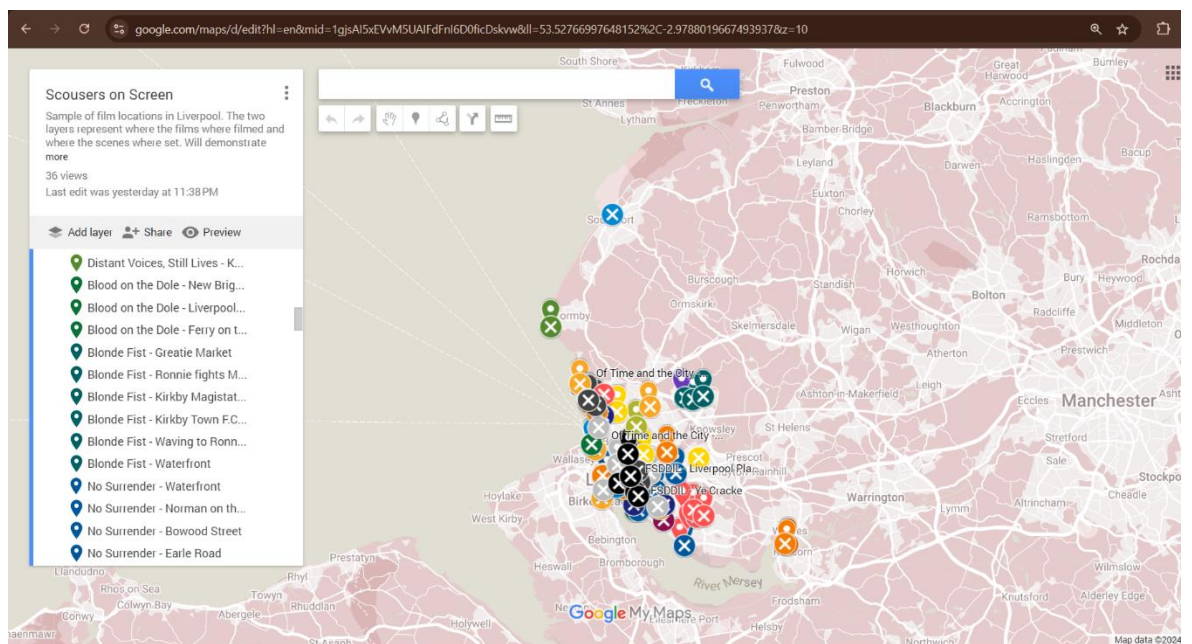


Figure 1 - Overall GIS Map (both layers)

Literature Review

During the initial stages of research, it became evident that there are limited academic sources explicitly focused on Liverpool's representation in films. Therefore, the materials reviewed here are related to this dissertation's topic but perhaps would be best described as providing a multidisciplinary extrapolation of which to relate and compare to the various films set in Liverpool. There are three areas of significance: identity and representation; architectural signposting in film; and "who tells these stories?" These topics are explored both as individual single matters, but also as interwoven themes which are discussed when examining a city and its relationship with film. Recurring concepts of identity are evident throughout this literature review. I begin by examining elements of Liverpool's identity: firstly, in how it has been shaped over time with close reference to the work of Louise Platt who builds on Judith Butler and Luis Althusser's notions of performativity and interpellation. This is then compared to the study of brow-grooming and appearance in Liverpool by Catherine and Samantha Wilkinson and Holly Saron. Their research also focuses on the idea of performative identity and concepts of identity construction. Where they find that Liverpool's identity is that which is constructed by Scousers in a way that is unique to the city and its people, therefore, 'performed' as a 'badge of honour', Platt suggests that Liverpool's identity has been affected by negative media surrounding the city resulting in negative stereotypes often being harnessed by the people of Liverpool in order to make light of them. This is supported by Kate Fox's work on the "Northerness effect" in relation to stand-up comedy, but certainly applicable to the representation of a Northern city. Here, Fox suggests that the use of negative stereotypes by the subject of the stereotype is done so as a subconscious defence mechanism.

This work contextualises the discussion which follows about cities in films: how they are portrayed; how locations affect the representation of the city; and what impact can these two elements have on a city's perceived identity. For this section, I consult the *World Film Locations (WFL)* book series, focusing on Liverpool and Glasgow editions to compare how the cities are analysed. Given the similarities of the two port cities, from their history to their social and political

challenges, I believe these two locations are suitable for comparison. The books contain short essays on various films which feature the respective cities, either playing itself or as a stand in for elsewhere, and occasionally where somewhere else has stood in to play Glasgow or Liverpool. The inclusion of specific architecture to signpost locations is considered here. This analysis is then compared to David Martin-Jones's *Scotland Global Cinema: Genres, Modes and Identity* to identify how his approach may differ in reviewing cinema in the national context as opposed to a city. Further discussion of identity of place follows, with reference to how stereotypes of a place are used or challenged through film, as well as suggesting key filmmakers and how these compare to those highlighted in the *WFL* books - a consideration of 'who tells these stories'.

How Identity is (Per)Formed

To begin with identity, I look to the work of Platt and "dealing with the myths" (2014, p.69) of Liverpool from a tourism background, and Fox's "'Northerness effect'" (2018, p.19) from the focus of stand-up comedy. Starting with Platt, she explores how perceptions of Liverpool are rooted in myths and their reinforcement through "popular culture, in particular on a national level" (Platt, 2014, p.69). Platt's use of the word 'myth' throughout suggests that interpretations or assumptions made about Liverpool are based off falsehoods. These myths are then perpetuated by the media, affecting the public's understanding of the people and the city. However, Platt suggests that the people of Liverpool also contribute to this perpetuation by harnessing some of the myths and somewhat reclaiming them as part of Liverpool's identity. In doing so, Platt's discussion of myth develops into stereotype, of which the two are mutually exclusive⁴. Through analysis of Butler's work on performative identity, Platt considers theories on interpellation, inferring that Liverpool's identity has been greatly affected by negative interpellation which is why the city, and the people, of Liverpool continue to peddle existing stereotypes in popular culture.

Although Butler's work largely focuses on gender performativity, their theories apply to identity as a whole. Platt, therefore, bridges the aspect of our identity pertaining to our birthplace, hometown, or city we live in, to Butler's

⁴ Relevant discourse can be found in Richard Dyer's *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representations* (2002), specifically his chapter on the roles of stereotypes. Additionally, and as referenced by both Platt and Wilkinson *et al*, Philip Boland's article details how Liverpool has a history of stereotyped portrayal in the media (2008, p.355-369).

notions on performativity. Within Vicki Kirby's analysis of Butler's work, Kirby observes that within *Gender Trouble* Butler, "illustrates the fluid nature of identity formation through the trope of theatrical performance, the sense that identity is a staged artifice" (2006, p.86). Butler's theory that identity can be performed is rooted in the idea that identity is formed rather than innate. Therefore, identity can be influenced and manipulated through factors such as environment and situation by the person of whom is performing the identity (*ibid*). This implies that we both consciously and unconsciously 'perform' our identity. In Platt's case, she suggests that actions which signify where we are from are carried out for this purpose. Her discussion is developed through the introduction of Althusser's theories of interpellation, in which the example is used of a boy responding to police shouting, "You there!" (Platt, 2014, p.73). Althusser implies that when we respond to interpellation, we confirm that we are the subject. However, Butler rejects this based off the example Althusser provides, drawing on Michel Foucault's notions on ideology and power. When Althusser implies that the response to interpellation is an outward confirmation of an internal ideology of the self, Butler, and by extension Foucault, instead argues that the response is a natural reaction in our search for establishing identity because interpellation suggests rather than confirms (*ibid*). Butler agrees with Foucault in that 'we depend on identity for existence' (*ibid*). This stresses the importance of our identity and accounts for interpellation, "even negative interpellation", in its influence on identity (*ibid*, p.73-74). Ultimately, interpellation affects the ways in which we perform our identity. Platt goes on to suggest that interpellation can be affected by how we encounter our culture. Described as "iterative" by Platt, the negative interpellation of Liverpool can be attributed to the UK media's negative depictions of the city as well as cultural products from the city itself which are based off myths (*ibid*, p.74). The focus of Platt's research here is on the branding of Liverpool during the late 2000s when Liverpool was awarded the ECoC 2008. After discussion on Liverpool's socio-political history and how this affected, and in many ways shaped, its interpellation, she selects *The Liverpool Nativity* (Kershaw & Valentine, 2007), a live televised production of a Scouse, contemporary retelling of the nativity, for close analysis of its branding of Liverpool, including the use of stereotypes.

Platt's analysis of Liverpool's identity is "based on an ethnographic study of the city" (Andrews, 2014, p.7). While it is not clear from her writing if she is

from Liverpool, or her relationship to the city, we can see she spent between 2008 and 2009 interacting with the city and its culture, including weeks of attendance at “a reading group in an over 55s housing complex” (Platt, 2014, p.79). However, this is not discussed in detail. This contrasts greatly to the work of Wilkinson *et al* in their research on how eyebrow appearances project the identity of Liverpool (2021, p.395). Since the late 2000s the ‘Scousebrow’ has become synonymous with Liverpool: a set of bold, dark, thick eyebrows which garnered public attention after the scripted-reality show *Desperate Scousewives* (Massey & Young, 2011-2012) aired (*ibid*, p.396). The authors conducted interviews with eyebrow artists and clients, as well as the public who attended their “*Brews and Brows*” events in Liverpool where participants could talk candidly about their eyebrows, identity, and how the two relate. The ethnographic study of eyebrow grooming in Liverpool draws on the same notions as Platt, using Butler’s theories on performative identity and linking this to Emily Grabham’s thinking on “corporeal flagging” and how this can be presented through people’s physical appearance (*ibid*, p.404). Within their paper, Wilkinson *et al* explicitly detail their methodology, including relevant background information about themselves pertaining to their relationships to the city and each of their personal eyebrow grooming routines. This positions the three authors closer to their participants and may indicate that they felt somewhat included in their findings’ reflection on performative identity and Liverpool. That is not to suggest that the study is autoethnographical: the authors utilise qualitative data collected from participants to draw conclusions, rather than from their own experiences.

Platt differs from Wilkinson *et al* in that she offers less direct input from the participants she encountered. Platt is more reliant on secondary data in her analysis of Liverpool’s identity, whereas Wilkinson *et al* consult their primary data frequently throughout their findings, providing direct quotes to analyse and apply to their theories on performative identity. In their transcriptions, the authors emulate the participants’ Scouse accents by reproducing the same grammatical and lexical choices. No more is this evident than in the paper’s title: “*Wearing Me Place on Me Face*” (Wilkinson *et al*, 2021), a direct quote from *Brews and Brows* participant, Marie (*ibid*, p.404). Quoting participants in this way to reflect their accent and dialect was a conscious choice to adhere to Bob Blauner’s description of a “preservationist” approach (*ibid*, p.403). This is necessary as Wilkinson *et al* include Boland’s discussion on accent because it is “a significant, if not defining,

aspect of identity construction” (ibid, p.411). Their preservationist approach in relaying their primary data foregrounds Scouse identity and the sense in which it is performative. Furthermore, it contributes to the authors’ closer positioning to the participants and gives the sense of emersion compared to Platt’s interaction: her style of writing positions her more at a distance from the city. Moreover, the inclusion of a variety of participant’s quotes in Wilkinson *et al* paper suggests, even emphasises, that, ultimately, Liverpool’s identity is a collective of individual contributions. The observations Platt analyses are, instead, focused on Liverpool as a whole, representing its people with singularity. This creates a universality among the ways in which the people of Liverpool identify: because the branding of Liverpool generally depicts itself as representing ‘one and all’ Scousers, the analysis of this reiterates that same generalisation.

Though different in their styles of analysis, both texts construct arguments about the way the people of Liverpool signify that they are from the city, based in Butler’s theories on performativity. The premise of Butler’s work here focuses on the debate of gender and how it is a socio-political and cultural construct. Therefore, as it is constructed, we ‘perform’ our gender in order to conform to the culturally accepted notion of how that gender is supposed to be expressed. Gender is then a repeatedly performed act to meet these cultural criteria through which we can form our identities. Both texts use Butler’s theory on performative identity to apply to place: we are able to outwardly present ourselves in ways which signify where we are from based off the socio-political and cultural associations to that place. In Platt’s case, she identifies that the performance of identity may not always be positive, a result of the perpetuation of myths and stereotypes of the city and negative interpellation. Additionally, both texts look to “*Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*” (Butler, 1996) to analyse how language is used to contribute to the construction of identity. The two texts spotlight the notion of ‘force’ behind speech. They identify that intent is a crucial factor both in the delivery and reception of speech, with Platt developing this point and labelling it as ‘injurious speech’. Where Platt discusses injurious speech as coming both from outside of Liverpool directed to the city and from within, Wilkinson *et al* only discuss the injurious speech within Liverpool and question how the same injurious speech would be received if delivered by an outsider. Platt goes further with her analysis of injurious speech, essentially expanding on the points

raised in both texts by discussing interpellation and how the iteration of injurious speech from within Liverpool is likely the result of negative interpellation.

As discussed, Platt's exploration into Liverpool's identity is rooted in the influence of myth which is the basis of stereotypes surrounding the city and its people. Another text relevant in this discussion of perpetuating stereotypes is *How Stand-Ups construct and are constructed by the 'Northerness Effect'* by Fox (2018). Here, Fox looks more broadly at 'Northerness' in comedy but features some of the same views as Platt, and Wilkinson *et al.* Fox, too, identifies accent as significantly indicating place. Accent is a predominant factor of Northerness and triggers prejudice or stigmas attached to that place where the accent originates. Fox's argument is structured around prejudice and connotations of being Northern: this being the 'Northerness effect'. She defines this term as being "a socio-cultural bias that affects how Northern performers are received, promoted and rewarded" (Fox, 2018, p.19-20). This concept can be applied to Northern people generally as the work of Platt and Wilkinson *et al* have shown that, in Liverpool's case at least, everyday people play into stereotypes aimed at themselves, much like stand-up performers do. Fox's approach was to analyse a wide range of stand-up routines from Northern and Southern comics to assess the degree to which their geographical background was referenced. Furthermore, she utilises empirical research, providing quantitative data on the reviews of such comics, demonstrating that proportionally Northern comics are significantly reviewed with reference to the fact that they are Northern, compared to Southern comics. Fox also carried out semi-structured interviews with 27 Northern stand-up performers, but much like Platt, excludes direct quotation from participants. Instead, Fox gives a thematic analysis of her findings.

One such finding is the notion that the stereotypes played into by Northern comics are somewhat historically engrained in British society. As with the other two texts, Fox gives context for her analysis by describing the socio-political history of the North of England, commenting on the disparate poverty caused by disproportionate economic distribution between the North and South. Using theories in sociology and psychology, namely those of Mikhail Bakhtin, Katie Wales, and Valerie Walkerdine, Fox suggests that we internalise the ways we are treated by society, even if the treatment is historic as Walkerdine explains that "trauma is transmitted inter-generationally in an embodied way" (*ibid*, p.20). Fox suggests

this embodiment can be through comedy. To relate this back to Platt, this would support elements from her analysis of *The Liverpool Nativity*, in particular the scene where a baby Jesus is placed in a shopping trolley, rather than a crib. Platt describes this representation of poverty as the “misappropriating that Butler talks of as [Liverpool ‘restages’] the negative images of the city in a creative manner” (Platt, 2014, p.78). This would, therefore, imply that the misappropriation through humour is an inter-generational trauma response to the treatment the city has received from beyond its borders which has caused negative interpellation. By framing her argument with sociological and psychological thinking, Fox may be implying that where Platt and Wilkinson *et al*, through Butler’s performative identity, suggest there is an element of conscious choice in our reinforcement of stereotypes, it may rather be more of an ingrained defence mechanism.

The Study of Cities in Films

The limited scope of academic analysis of this topic appeared to be a hurdle shared by many, including Fischer-Nebmaier in his introduction in *Narrating the City: Histories, Space and the Everyday* (Fischer-Nebmaier, Berg & Christou, 2015), and Ewa Mazierska and Laura Rascaroli in their book, *From Moscow to Madrid: Postmodern cities, European cinema*, who acknowledge the limited research and theoretical exploration into cinema and the city (2003, p.2). They refer to David B. Clarke who questions the lack of research into cities in films given their influence on each other (Clarke, 2005, p.1). Therefore, they explore the “cinematic representations of a city” in its three forms: the literal city “described by its map”; the city-text, the ways in which the city is portrayed and represented in text; and the lived-city, which inhabitants and visitors experience (Mazierska & Rascaroli, 2003, p.2). This approach is inclusive of the various lenses through which to view place and, therefore, offers a compounded analysis of the cities in films selected for their book.

Moreover, Mazierska and Rascaroli base their analysis on theories of postmodernism, as later does Barbara Mennel in her book *Cities and Cinema* (2008). Modernity and postmodernism are discussed in both texts, emphasising the two concepts’ influences on the portrayal of cities in films. Mennel draws on the work of Fredric Jameson who parallels cinema and postmodernism as both are “very much tied up with representation” (2008, p.12-13). Akin to Mazierska and

Rascaroli, Mennel, through Jameson, has formed links between postmodernism, cinema, cities, and representation - which is not discussed as 'cause and effect', but rather as co-existing ideas. Mazierska and Rascaroli's most relevant example to this concept, and this thesis, is of Blackpool, proposing that "cities in films look postmodern" because of how they are portrayed or because the city itself is (2003, p.214). They discuss how Blackpool, a sea-side town in the North-West of England, includes postmodern architecture within its landscape as well as generally postmodern attitudes of the inhabitants (*ibid*, p.216). Therefore, existing postmodern aspects of place are reinforced through its representation in cinema. In short, there is a correlation between the portrayal of place in films and how it is presented as it exists. Mennel supports this, stating that "films reflect [...] urban patterns in how they code neighbourhoods as rich or poor or landscapes as urban or rural" (2008, p.15). This, therefore, suggests that there is accuracy in a city's portrayal in films.

In contrast, Fischer-Nebmaier applies narrative theory to his analysis of cities in films, observing its strong link to various methodologies (Fischer-Nebmaier, Berg & Christou, 2015, p.12). He defines narrative theory as describing "what is being narrated on the one hand, and how it is being narrated on the other" (*ibid*, p.25). Applied to the rest of the book, Fischer-Nebmaier, Berg, and Christou investigate what statements are conveyed through a city's portrayal, and to what extent does it apply to wider aspects of a city, beyond its infrastructure. The definition implies that point-of-view is a central aspect of the theory, not only of the delivery of the narrative, but also in its reception. This may suggest that Mazierska and Rascaroli, and Mennel are valid in their readings of cities in films regarding postmodernism, but these cities and films are open to analysis beyond that. Therefore, this may negate the implication that films contain accurate depictions of cities, as, by applying Fischer-Nebmaier's principles of narrative theory, we can isolate that they may only accurately reflect the postmodernity of the city. Furthermore, Fischer-Nebmaier names their methodologies as relying "heavily on narratives" (*ibid*, p.12). It is evident that narrative theory is intrinsically linked to analysis of representations, even without acknowledgment of its presence. To further illustrate narrative theory's relevance to cities in films, Fischer-Nebmaier asserts that, "spaces are produced by narrating them. The city is a space where hegemony is produced and challenged on an everyday basis, but that is structured by rituals and dominant narratives" (*ibid*, p.33). By portraying

a city in film, one is reinforcing or dismantling these narratives. Although beyond the scope of this literature review, this statement suggests that cities and, therefore, narratives, are politically charged. The first part of this quote is especially significant as it proposes that place is greatly affected by narratives and is somewhat reliant on them. It could be implied that narratives influence the identity of place.

That said, Fischer-Nebmaier makes his case for the advantages of applying this theory in future academia, including that the theory allows an opportunity to self-reflect (*ibid*, p.25). Although not discussed in their work, Wilkinson *et al* may have self-reflected on their own brow-grooming and its significance to them and where they are from. The details signposted about themselves indicate that there may be personal interest in their investigation. Also, their ethnographical approach, particularly through the interviews conducted, examines what is the everyday brow-grooming attitudes of their subjects. Fischer-Nebmaier states that “narrative theory can apply not only to fictional, but also to factual narration” (*ibid*, p.24). This would, therefore, apply to the responses given at interview. Broadly, Wilkinson *et al*’s investigation could be labelled as narrative theory by Fischer-Nebmaier’s definition: to analyse brow-grooming in Liverpool to understand what it represents. They are seeking out ‘what is being narrated’ with the brows being ‘how it is being narrated’. As with the previous example, it appears that narrative theory can be present within an analysis without its acknowledgement.

The City in Film

While there is a lack of literature exploring Liverpool’s presence in films, the series of books, *World Film Locations (WFL)*, features one dedicated to the city. Edited by Jez Conolly and Caroline Whelan, *World Film Locations: Liverpool* (2013) includes short essays by various academics, each discussing a different aspect of Liverpool’s involvement in films and film industry. The book, overall, could be likened to an exhibition: the essays offer the reader a flavour of Liverpool in films in its varying capacities, but each is too brief in its analysis to construct a developed argument. One example of this is with Julia Hallam’s *Liverpool: City of the Imagination* (2013, p.6-7), the first essay of the book. Here, Hallam notes the locations of Liverpool used to represent the city as itself, landmark signposting, as well as the many areas and buildings used to represent somewhere else (*ibid*).

The text is useful as an overview or introduction to Liverpool's architectural versatility, but in comparison to Hallam's many previous works on Liverpool as a city in film, this essay lacks depth in its analysis. The same can be said of Les Roberts's addition, *The Last of Liverpool: Liminal Journeys Around the Port City* (2013, p.88). The pair worked closely together on the *Mapping the City in Film* project with the University of Liverpool between 2008 and 2010. The numerous texts from the project offer succinct analysis of Liverpool's involvement in films with particular focus on amateur filmmaking and how the city is displayed in those films. It is possible that because the *WFL* series focuses on commercial films Hallam and Roberts's previous work is less applicable to the films mentioned in the respective essays. However, as this thesis demonstrates, the *Mapping the City in Film* project offers valuable perspectives in which to consider Liverpool on screen, both in its presentation and its construction.

This is not to devalue this *WFL* book. It is useful in spotlighting films made in the city, to play itself and to act as a double, as well as films set in Liverpool but shot elsewhere. This analysis occurs not only within the essays, but also in the periodic intervals between, whereby a map of Merseyside is displayed, pinpointing locations used for films. In chronological order, many films are highlighted and then briefly discussed in terms of plot and the relevance of the pinpointed location in relation to the scene and plot. Similarly to the essays previously mentioned, descriptions of the films from the map make no reference to the map itself, failing to provide any geographical insight. Because there lacks analysis of the mapping, the reader falls short of understanding what it means to have these locations feature. The reader is made aware that locations are used which, without further explanation or argument, suggests that its purpose may sway more towards film tourism. If viewed in this way, the book convincingly advertises Liverpool as a film tourism destination bursting at the seams with locations to visit from a wide range of films. With this in mind, Nicola Balkind, the editor of *World Film Locations: Glasgow* (2013), introduces not only the book but the series as not "[seeking] to be encyclopaedic, but aims to tease out the interested spaces captured on film and place them in a new context, exploring how the location relates to the film at hand and how it looks stripped bare in its natural habitat" (p.5). In 'placing the films in a new context' the reader could expect a deeper analysis than that provided, or an alternative view on how the locations had impacted filming, or the filming subsequently affected the location. Instead, *WFL: Liverpool* offers a

scattering of interesting takes on film locations in Liverpool, such as Jacqui Millers discussion of *Violent Playground* (Dearden, 1958) and the idea that the locations used make Liverpool appear oppressive and restrictive (2013, p.68-69), or Roger Shannon's discourse on the workings of Liverpool's Moving Image Developing Agency (MIDA) and its impact on the film industry for Liverpool (2013, p.8-9). But, beyond this, it offers little more than promotion of the city's film locations.

Naturally, the same format applies to *WFL: Glasgow*, however, in contrast to the Liverpool version, this book includes essays which are more inquisitive about how Glasgow is represented through locations in films and offers analysis for why these representations occur. The opening essay, *Glasgow: City of the Imagination* by Paul Gallagher, begins by describing films in which Glasgow is presented as bleak and miserable, but the themes or plot of them are more uplifting (2013, p.8-9). They are positive stories set in a place where they do not often set them (Gallagher, 2013, p.8). Gallagher also highlights filmmaker Ken Loach, particularly in partnership with writer Paul Laverty, as having done "great work in holding a mirror up to the reality of broken lives in Glasgow, not just in the city of the imagination" (*ibid*, p.9). This praise is echoed in a later essay in the book by David Archibald. These two examples discuss locations but do so in a way that contextualises the analysis and considers the location itself as a complex entity with history and life rather than just a film set. By spotlighting filmmakers, common themes or motivations are exposed and this stands out as contradictory to other films for showing sides of Glasgow rarely shown in films. Archibald, in relation to locations, notes that directors Loach and Peter Mullan use a variety of settings within Glasgow for films such as *Riff-Raff* (Loach, 1991) and *Neds* (Mullan, 2010), both urban and green spaces, which showcase the versatility of the city, beyond the landmarks (Archibald, 2013, p.62-63). A similar tone is set by Wendy Everett in her essay *I Know A Place... Terence Davies's Liverpool* in *WFL: Liverpool*, here spotlighting the Liverpool-born film director and screenwriter Terence Davies (2013, p.48-49). Everett offers comparable sentiment to Gallagher and Archibald in acknowledging how Liverpool affected Davies's filmmaking when portraying the city, particularly in what he chose to film in comparison to other films of the city. Given that Davies is a Liverpool native, she claims that for Davies, "Liverpool's heart, the city's identity, is not architectural and spatial but social: the indomitable spirit and ready wit of its inhabitants" (*ibid*, p.49) - an example of one of the aforementioned 'interesting takes' which are found sparsely throughout

the book. Glasgow too, in its respective book, is discussed for its social landscape depicted on screen, though contrarily is suggested to have been a laboured point in regard to violence and deprivation, which is not acknowledged by Everett in Liverpool's case. However, the humour, for Glasgow; dark, and Liverpool; quick, is highlighted in both books to be an asset to their respective cities. Moreover, *WFL: Glasgow* discusses the ways in which the city's portrayal in films has changed over time. Evidenced in the various topics explored in each essay but recognised explicitly by Keir Hind in their essay *Glaswegian Comedy: A Distinct Sense of Humour* (2013, p.28-29). Hind addresses the city's long-time stereotype: the 'hard-man'. The depiction in films of the hard-man has been synonymous with the city for decades and Hind notes this image "was difficult to pass over, but now even films that examine harsh social realities tend to show that humour is still present" (*ibid*, p.29). The portrayal, evolution, and apparent reclamation of a Glaswegian stereotype is acknowledged, which is a missing feature of *WFL: Liverpool*.

In a broader examination of national cinema, David Martin-Jones looks at the period between the 1990s and late 2000s in Scotland's representation on screen in his book, *Scotland Global Cinema: Genres, Modes and Identity* (2009). Martin-Jones also detects Scottish stereotypes within films depicting the country. Although, where Hind and Gallagher argue that humour is deployed as a way of softening or challenging certain stereotypes in more recent films, Martin-Jones identifies that, from the 1990s, films in Scotland began showing the diverse make-up of the country's identity. On one hand, Martin-Jones notes that "Scotland has a long history of cashing in on stereotypical notions of Scottishness" (2009, p.17). This would perhaps refer to the hard-man image, somewhat reclaimed by the Scots through comedy. On the other hand, he examines the actors, Scottish and international, who feature in films shot in Scotland because their inclusion foregrounds the mix of backgrounds of audiences today (*ibid*, p.4). The plurality of identity suggested implies that Scottish films during this period began reflecting more accurately the diverse communities which form a holistic view of Scotland's identity. Here, and throughout his book, Martin-Jones recognises where filmmaking has brought attention to part of Scotland's identity which was previously rarely explored. His chapter on Bollywood can be understood as an observation of the ethnically inclusive element of Scotland's identity (*ibid*, p.67-88), as well as his considerations of gangster films as enabling "a discussion of

immigrant, diasporic and otherwise globally dispersed identities in contemporary Scotland” (*ibid*, p.153). This analysis creates a discourse which is rooted in authentic representation of place and its people without ignoring existing stereotypes but instead presenting ways in which filmmakers move with or around those stereotypes to produce work that is recognisable and identifiable to the people of Scotland in the present. The same approach for a city as diverse as Liverpool, as briefly implied by Miller when discussing *The Magnet* (Frend, 1950) in her essay in *WFL: Liverpool* (2013, p.68), would allow for new readings of the city’s identity and a review of how films interact with the different elements of it.

A text more geographically distant, though still comparable to the aims and structure of this thesis, is that of the British Film Institute’s (BFI) book, *Paris in the Cinema: Beyond the Flâneur: Locations, Characters, History*; edited by Alastir Phillips and Ginette Vincendeau (2018). The book comprises various essays exploring elements of the city’s inclusion in cinema across time. Vincendeau and Phillips begin with how character archetypes are identified to have become synonymous with Paris because of their historically frequent inclusion in films set in the city, namely the ‘flâneur’ and, later discussed, the ‘Parisian lover’ (2018, p.1-13). Recurring imagery of specific types of characters in specific locations over time creates an expectation for audiences of who to see and where. Overall, the book establishes that people and place are linked, both influencing one another and can be read as mutually inclusive by audiences. Furthermore, the book’s structure supports this coupling of elements as it is broken down into four sections: locations; characters; history; and an interview with French film director Jean-Pierre Jeunet. By doing so, the authors create somewhat of a criterion for the analysis of Paris in film. Beginning with locations, the essays explore the city itself, its architecture and layout, and what it symbolises. For the reader, this comes across as a ‘bird’s eye-view’, a broad perspective of the French capital. This is fitting before zooming in on characters who walk the streets and essentially give life to the city. By defining its sections, it is implied that Parisian identity can be expressed through locations and characters.

Within the section on locations Thomas Pillard’s essay *Working-Class Paris and Post-War Noir: Les Portes de la Nuit* (2018) explores how the connotations of places differs depending on your relationship, experience, or perceptions of said

place. In discussing the film *Les Portes de la Nuit* (Carné, 1946), Pillard compares past to present, and France to the USA to analyse how Parisian identity is portrayed and why it is expressed as such. He describes the function of the film's opening as a proclamation of a "specifically French identity and to do so in several ways" (Pillard, 2018, p.27). One of which is through the camera's movement and framing of shots. In Pillard's example, by panning over a specific area of the city, the audience understands the tone of the film from the connotations of that area. However, for outsiders, this may be different to inhabitants' view of the area. This highlights the importance of point of view in the reception of represented identities. Therefore, in order to clearly and quickly provide the audience recognition of place, a film may be set against the backdrop or include images of landmarks. These landmarks signpost locations along with connotations of the type of place, people, and situations that occur there. Pillard describes this process of highlighting recognisable locations in films as if the film itself "seems to hold on to an album of representations long imprinted in the national collective memory" (2018, p.31). The images of the locations are significant in that they represent the city's identity. The connotations of this, good or bad, also form part of this identity. So, according to Pillard, perhaps cultural, social, and political identity of place is formed and is then reinforced by film.

Pillard echoes Vincendeau and Phillips, who initially state that "landmarks play a key role in visual representations of the city" (2018, p.9). As aforementioned, locations play a vital role in establishing identity on screen, which is more easily registered through the inclusion of landmarks. This is because, as discussed by Vincendeau and Phillips "the built fabric and the topography of the city and its environs are not simply envisaged as social décor but as 'actors', determining themes, genres, situations, social milieux and characters" (2018, p.10). Therefore, not only does this highlight the importance of locations in films, but it also implies that locations must be distinguishable so as to fulfil its role. Landmarks allow for this to happen. This notion is supported by various works by Hallam who investigates how cities, particularly Liverpool, are represented in films. Her work consists of an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of cities through media and architecture. As part of the '*Mapping the City in Film*' project, Hallam examines the use of landmarks as a signposting tool. Through analysis of signposting over time, she explains that "an iconography of Liverpool on film was established that focused on building, streets and the

waterfront as the hallmark of the city's identity" (Hallam, 2008, p.275). Therefore, based on the notions of Pillard, Vincendeau and Phillips, and Hallam, one could infer that these landmarks have become synonymous with Scouse identity. In Pillard's case of Paris in *Les Portes de la Nuit*, the film "faithfully reproduces the architecture of a Parisian working-class neighbourhood without ever showing its inhabitants" (2018, p.32). Simply, the location speaks for itself and represents its inhabitants. This reinforces Hallam's example of Liverpool's architecture and landmarks representing Scouse identity.

Methodology

To establish the presentation of Liverpool, I undertake three approaches: both mapping and textual analysis forming my geovisualisation of the city; and semi-structured interviews with location managers to contextualise Liverpool's locations used for filming. These methods contribute to my geocriticism of Liverpool, critically utilising visual data obtained from the geovisualisation to identify trends and hot-spots. In using these various methods, I aim to provide an overview of Liverpool's representations and how they are achieved, primarily through location with consideration of narrative. Although providing individual insight, I propose that these three methods collectively offer succinct perspectives on Liverpool's locations in films influencing perceptions of the city's identity.

Mapping

I am influenced by the work of Les Roberts, Julia Hallam, Robert Kronenburg, and Richard Koeck and their contributions to the *Mapping the City in Film* project. Focused primarily on amateur films set in Liverpool, the project's findings feature an interactive map of Merseyside which highlights the locations included in their sample of films, as well as local cinemas of the past and present. This mapping works hand-in-hand with the many articles and book chapters produced by the academics which further explore the locations, particularly landmarks, and the amateur filmmakers' desires to capture the events and daily life which occurred there. The aforementioned map of the region displays what Hallam describes as "a mosaic of overlapping representations of the city's urban landscape", suggesting that every time Liverpool appears in films it adds new meanings, even if only to reinforce existing ones (2012, p.43). I recognise that within this dissertation Hallam's terminology pertaining to layering is confusing. To mitigate this, I refer to high-frequency filming locations as 'hot-spots.' To expose any hot-spots, I created two layers for my map: one indicating filming locations, the other depicting the settings within the film, as not all settings were shot in their actual locations. Where Hallam indicates that the hot-spots of amateur filmmaking collectively paint a picture of life in Liverpool between 1900 and 1960 (*ibid*), my mapping of these feature films will highlight sites of significance in the way the city is presented. I discuss the mapping process in detail in the following chapter which begins to connect my geovisualisation with

my geocriticism of Liverpool in film. With that, I consider areas which are less frequently featured. In line with the work of Cláudia S Gonçalves Lima, I deem it necessary when examining the city to weigh up the effect of not representing the totality of the city's landscape on an individual's cognitive map, particularly for outsiders (2008, p.142-148).

Textual Analysis

The purpose of my textual analysis of the sample of films coincides with Lima's idea that films encapsulate a time both of which the film is set and when it was made (2008, p144). The depiction of cities in film become almost like 'artefacts' as it represents place, time, and culture (*ibid*). This stands out to me as more than 85% of my sample of films are set in Liverpool before the late 2000s which is before I began to form my cognitive map of the city. If I consider Lima's notion with Hallam's about films capturing life in the city, the Liverpool displayed in those films seems, at times, unfamiliar to me. The process of watching the films, making notes on locations and settings I recognised or did not, led to discussions with my mum who grew up in Liverpool in the 1970s and 80s. In doing so, I was consulting her cognitive map of Liverpool to work out locations to map on my GIS, particularly when there lacked geographical information for specific locations. Gerard Gardens, the housing estate in *Violent Playground* (Dearden, 1958), was especially difficult to map as the site was demolished in the late 1980s and there is little information about its precise location online. To me, this highlighted the value of our cognitive maps, both as insiders to the city. However, her cognitive map is nuanced by her lived experience before my cognitive map. I will go into detail of the limitations of this research later, however, it is relevant here to note that I acknowledge that my textual analysis is largely my own: qualitative, albeit subjective, data. Although, one would be hard-pressed to produce research of this nature objectively. Lima echoes this sentiment stating that, "because views and perceptions of the city are as subjective as the ones who create them, film is never objective" (2008, p.146). As a result, it is necessary to discuss my own positionality as it influences how I perceive the films' presentations of Liverpool. I will do so at a later point in this chapter.

Textual analysis will be underpinned by context. I consider the film industry's relationship with Liverpool, especially given the Liverpool Film Office's role in co-ordinating and expanding the city's use as a filming destination since

1989 (Liverpool Film Office, n.d). This is necessary because how a place is portrayed can be influenced from the production stage and a city's reality may become conflated with myths, stereotypes, or fiction (Lima, 2004, p.143). Lima highlights Josh Stenger (2001) who "argued that when film industry begins to play an important role in the production and distribution of the city's cultural mythology it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish the city's cultural geography from that of its cinematic counterpart" (2008, p143). Therefore, if my textual analysis reveals commonalities among the films set in Liverpool, this may indicate the significance of films in influencing not only audiences' perceptions of the city, but also the film industry within the city itself, potentially creating a cyclical dynamic and poses questions around autonomy and authenticity.

Interviews

The purpose of carrying out my interviews is to understand how those within the film industry in Liverpool view the city's use as a location playing itself and standing in for elsewhere. My aim was to interview location scouts or managers. I secured interviews with location managers Claire Newton, who runs Liverpool Locations with sister Faye, and Richard Knight, now member of Screen Yorkshire, as they have experience scouting and managing locations in Liverpool. Both interviews were semi-structured via Zoom using open questions to allow for a more relaxed conversation, and the opportunity for further questions expanding on the answers given. This opens the focus of the interview. While some may view this negatively, I see that this may point me in directions I may not have considered prior to the interview, leaving my research open and under constant review. Because I had, initially, very broad ideas about which aspects of Liverpool in films I wanted to analyse, the revision and refinement process has been a central, albeit challenging, focal point. These interviews, therefore, are part of this process, as well as to support current research or uncover aspects of Liverpool's use in films which has been less frequently considered in the literature. My questions reflected this by covering where is used most frequently in their experience, and which locations they would select if having to represent Liverpool to audiences. Their responses aligned with my geovisual data. Prior to interview, all participants received an information sheet explaining the purpose of my research and their role in it, and information around their data protection in compliance with GDPR. In addition, participants signed 'participant agreement forms', reiterating the

information in the information sheet, ensuring their full understanding and satisfaction with participation before the interviews commenced⁵. Furthermore, during transcription I took a preservationist approach, like that of Wilkinson *et al*, to accurately reflect mine and the interviewees speech, encompassing grammar and accent (2021, p.403)

Positionality

A central aspect of my research is my positionality. As discussed by Hanin Bukamal, researchers influence what they research, how they do it, and their interpretations of their findings (2022, p.329). This influence stems from the researcher's identity, background, and previous experiences. I acknowledge that my identity as a Liverpool native will influence my readings of the films in my sample, as well as my interpretation of my findings from both my primary and secondary data collected. This aligns with Sarah Moser who states that "if researchers are subjective and carry with them unique individual biographies, the knowledges they produce are necessarily affected" (2008, p.384). However, I view that this influence extends into my interest in this area of study, and had Liverpool not been my hometown, my interest in this study may not be as great as it is. While this appears to be negative, I believe this is part of what Hannah Mason-Bish describes, "related closely to issues of positionality is the consideration of insider/outsider status" (2019, p.265). This is supported by Bukamal (2022). Being an 'insider' is identifying with or having previous experience or knowledge of something, from nationality, education, to participation or presence in a group or event. This has potential benefits such as access to people, resources, and knowledge, and rapport, but 'outsiders' - those who do not identify or have experience - can be privileged by an alternative perspective which insiders may not consider (Mason-Bish, 2019, p.265). I would be considered an insider in terms of my identity as a Scouser, and by extension have lived experiences of being the subject of biases and prejudice based on being from Liverpool - my accent being a signifier - but, I am an outsider to the film industry, particularly the area of locations. This is something to be conscious of in order to utilise my insider/outsider status to gather qualitative data in my interviews, as well as in assessing my interpretation of my findings.

⁵ Full transcription of interviews available upon request.

In acknowledging my positionality, I am able to assess my reflexivity defined by Moser using Kim England's (1994) phrasing as "a technique developed that is 'self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher'" (2008, p.389). As I embark on my journey towards 'becoming' a researcher, particularly on a topic significant to me, I have to develop my sympathy upon introspection as well as constructive scrutiny of myself and my research. Whilst undertaking this research, I have grown considerably in my confidence and self-awareness as a researcher. This relates to concepts discussed by Victoria Reyes, drawing on Ann Swindler's (1986) 'cultural toolkit' arguing "that researchers have their own *ethnographic toolkit* [consisting] of researchers' social capital and background [which] shapes field access, field dynamics and data analysis" (2020, p.221). While this builds on aforementioned insider/outsider dynamics, Reyes implies that researchers have visible and invisible 'tools', and we can decide when to use the invisible ones to our advantage. However, these tools are not always successful as Reyes highlights, particularly her invisible tools, which did not always guarantee her access to participants or materials (*ibid*, p.231). This was not my experience. I was able to secure interviews with Newton by asserting myself as a fellow insider as we are both Liverpool natives. Conversely, both Newton and Knight are involved in widening access and training for those early in their careers in film and television, so my outsider position to the industry felt welcomed. In this sense, "interviews, access, and the ability to use tools in my ethnographic toolkit are relational; they depend on the interviewees themselves and their own reasons for being interviewed" (*ibid*, p.233). There is a variety of reasons for the participants to, or to not, participate in interviews, not least because of time, but also because of their own positionality. Finally, I acknowledge that the presentations of Liverpool in films are influenced by the filmmakers' subjectivity. Their preconceived notions of the city as outsiders, the locations they believe represent Liverpool, must also be considered. How they have understood Liverpool to look will likely be a reflection of the city's image witnessed through the media. For insider filmmakers, they will be influenced by their own cognitive map. As I previously stated that insider/outsider audiences are nuanced by individual experiences, I extend this notion to the filmmakers with their personal version of Liverpool communication through their film. This is considered on section 5(f).

Chapter One: Geovisualisation

The creativity of location managers and scouts, art and design departments, directors, editors, and visual effects artists can sometimes make identifying the locations within the film difficult to pinpoint with certainty. My method of watching the films⁶ was to make notes of the locations as I saw them for what or where I perceived them to be. In doing so, I was mapping each film against my own cognitive map of Liverpool. Compared to the GIS map, my cognitive map is more detailed in areas I have experienced first-hand. Lask explains that each person's cognitive map of a place will be unique and individual to them (2011, p.48). My cognitive map encapsulates Liverpool from the late 2000s to the present day, which includes some of the regeneration projects which have taken place. However, 85% of the films from my sample were set before my own time there and therefore precedes the formations of my own cognitive map. This often resulted in either a jigsaw-like piecing together of where the locations are around Liverpool, or I treated scenes as leaving breadcrumbs for which I used to research beyond the film to reveal the location either used for filming, its setting, or both. Identifying locations often included using the Google Maps feature 'Street View' which enabled me to then select the year I wished to view the location in. This was particularly the case with mapping *Going Off Big Time* (Doyle, 2000) as the locations were not recognisable to me. Instead, I identified a 'structural signifier' - a structure within the landscape used for orientation, other than a landmark - to use as a reference point to map the surrounding area.

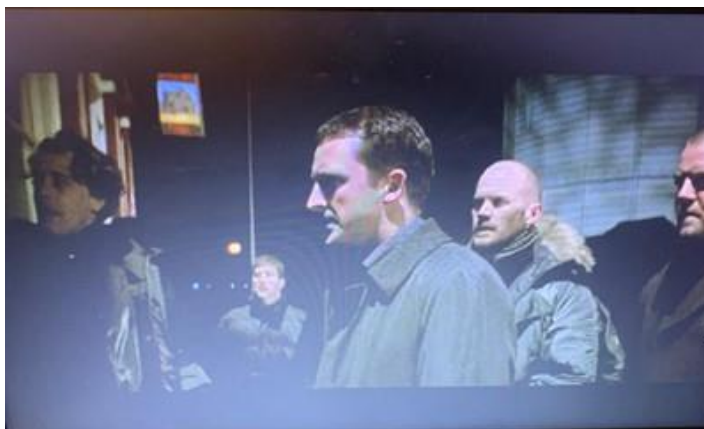


Figure 2 - Screenshot of Crazy Barn pub and gasometer opening scene of *Going Off Big Time* (Amazon Prime, 2024, 00:04:01)

⁶ Apart from *Nowhere Boy* (Taylor, 2009) and *Educating Rita* (Gilbert, 1983), all films in the sample were watched for the first time for the purpose of this project.

Liverpool as it is, and as it is not

This ‘structural signifier’ is the old gasometer on Bewey Close, off Grafton Street, in the Brunswick/Dingle area of Liverpool, just south of the city centre. The gasometer features in the background of several locations, including “The Crazy Barn” a fictional pub and the “Blue Moon Diner” on Sefton Street in *Going Off Big Time* which burnt down in 2002, and the “Blacktree Road Allotments” purpose-built for *Grow Your Own* (Laxton, 2007). Using Street View in Google Maps from previous years allowed me to pinpoint certain film locations in the area relatively accurately. A limitation to this feature is that the earliest images available to view are from 2008. I can deduce from this that the gasometer was demolished sometime between August 2008 and September 2009. Nevertheless, it proved useful during my mapping process and although I had never seen the gasometer until this research, it has become part of my cognitive mapping of Liverpool for the time period it was standing. When analysing and mapping *Shirley Valentine* (Gilbert, 1989) it was striking to see a scene featuring Shirley walking home, shopping bags in hand, in what looked to be a dock area: industrial, with gasometers in the immediate background. This was unfamiliar to me, although, the similar architecture of the stone walls and cobblestone street bore a resemblance to the dock area I had mapped for *Going Off Big Time*. While watching the scene, I became confused by the disjunction between my own knowledge of Liverpool, and how Liverpool was being presented on screen. Ultimately, my intuition was correct as most of the Liverpool-set locations for *Shirley Valentine* were filmed in London (ReelStreets, n.d). However, this exemplifies the architectural make-up associated with Liverpool allowing the scene to portray the south Liverpool area. Had I not watched and researched *Going Off Big Time* prior, I doubt I would have picked up on this location not existing in Liverpool which may have misled my cognitive mapping as a result.



Figure 3 - Screenshot of Blue Moon Diner from *Going Off Big Time*. (Amazon Prime, 2024, 00:58:53)

Overall, the GIS mapping proved fruitful in displaying ‘hot-spot’ locations which mainly feature in films as the locations themselves, as well as outliers which are often locations specifically relevant to a film’s narrative. I geocriticise these locations in the following chapter. First, I want to make clear that the map I produced of my sample of films is by no means exhaustive. I acknowledge that there were locations and settings excluded from the map as there is insufficient information either in the scene itself or online to accurately geographically locate where they were set and/or filmed. This was particularly the case with shopping centres and homes of characters, see *Blood on the Dole* (Broughton, 1994) and *Shirley Valentine*, as well as pubs, see *Swing* (Mead, 1999), *The Virgin of Liverpool* (Donaldson, 2003), and *No Trams to Lime Street* (Haggard, 1970). These locations have settings which are likely to be recognisable to British audiences so specific details which geographically place the setting somewhere in Liverpool are not necessary, especially if, like many of the films I examined, there are other scenes or ‘B-roll’ establishing shots of the city. These scenes may have been shot in a studio. This was the case for *Nowhere Boy* and both of Davies’s *The Long Day Closes* (1992) and *Distant Voices, Still Lives* (1998). In contrast, these films include places which are central to the narrative and have a somewhat historical significance, making them possible to map. Subsequently, *Nowhere Boy*’s depiction of ‘Mendip’, Aunt Mimi’s house, is now a National Trust site so filming could not take place there where the exterior required dressing (Movie-Locations, n.d). Instead, exterior was filmed at a house in London, and interiors were filmed in Ealing Studio, London. Davies’s depiction of his childhood home in Kensington had a similar filming set-up to *Nowhere Boy* as the houses were demolished during a period of regeneration.

That said, several examples from my sample present Liverpool locations as they are. Landmarks feature significantly in the majority of the films. They establish the setting and recur throughout to remind audiences that we are in Liverpool. The reinforcement of these landmark signpostings shore up the audience’s connotation between the landmarks and the identity of Liverpool. Recurring landmarks feature in the sample, namely the Three Graces (the Liver building, Cunard building, and Port of Liverpool building) on the waterfront of the River Mersey and St George’s Hall. In doing this, they become synonymous with people’s thoughts and mapping of Liverpool. *Educating Rita* both supports and contradicts this idea as the film adaptation of the Willy Russell play of the same

title is set in an unnamed northern port city. The play is set in Liverpool, whereas the film includes characters with scouse accents but does not feature a single frame of a landmark from the city. The film was shot entirely in Ireland and while I was able to equate some settings to Liverpool equivalents, no locations distinctly depict Liverpool, therefore keeping the setting vague. Films achieve the opposite by using distinct Liverpool locations frequently. My GIS map reveals a concentration of film settings and locations in the city centre region, including Cavern Quarter, St Georges Quarter, Knowledge Quarter, Georgian Quarter, Baltic Triangle, and the Waterfront. 80% of the sample includes at least one shot of a location within this area. The repeated use of the same landmarks and concentration on the city centre rather than the surrounding landscape makes for a recognisable but generalised portrayal of Liverpool.

Comparing the layers

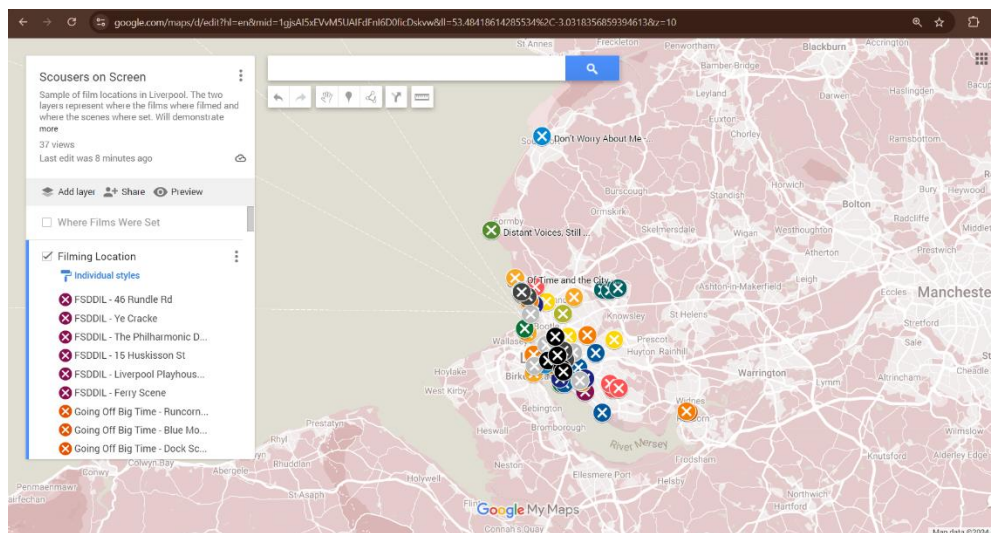


Figure 4 - Overall GIS Map (Filming Locations layer)

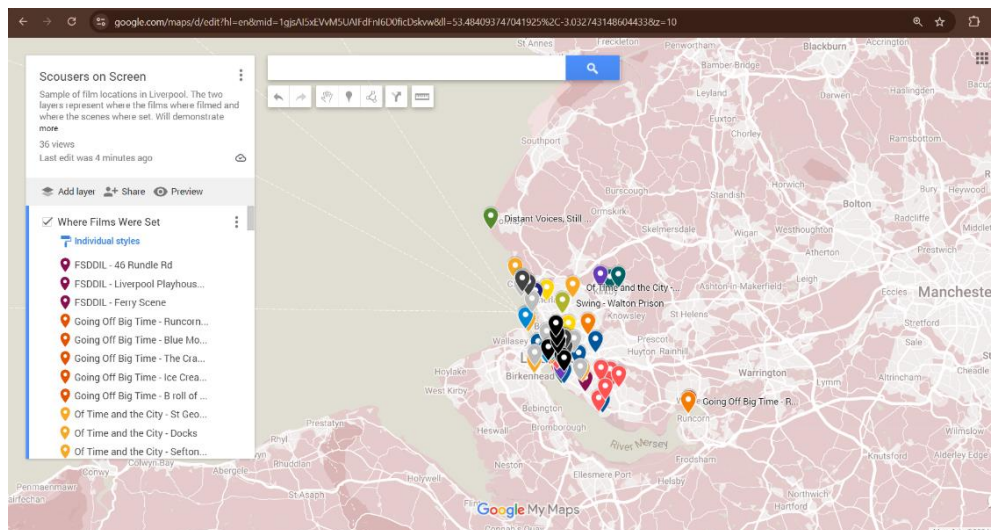


Figure 5 - Overall GIS Map (Film Settings layer)

Generally, most plotted points on the GIS map align when both layers are displayed synchronously, indicating that many of the films' settings were shot on location. Having said this, two things must be considered: firstly, the mapping indicates that a considerable proportion of locations feature in the films as establishing shots. Because of this, actual locations were used for filming and, again, they consisted mainly of landmarks. This relates to Hallam's discussion of landmarks within films as she refers to Kevin Lynch's notion that they create a "legible sign system' of the city through which residents and visitors alike navigate cityscapes and urban spaces" (2012, p.44). Therefore, these shots orientate outside audiences that the setting is Liverpool, but for most insiders they will either be read as symbolic of the city as a whole or places us directly in the city centre, referred to locally as 'Town'. Hallam further states that landmarks are a key feature of British films especially, functioning as "a marker of easy recognition and identification that 'bands' British films, making them readily identifiable to international audiences in the global mediascape" (2010, p.290). However, this may affect outsiders' cognitive mapping of Liverpool, limiting their understanding to just the parameters of the city centre as Murphy and Rees-Jones suggest that audiences are easily influenced by what is transmitted through television and film, affecting their perceptions of Liverpool (2013, p.4). With that said, the second consideration refers to the scope of my mapping. The GIS map being non-exhaustive allows for gaps of some locations. These may be additional locations outside the city centre with low frequency of filming. Even so, it is positive to see the plotted points which evidence the city's contribution to the film industry, and the film industry's interest in putting Liverpool on the big screen.

Furthermore, the map's layers display locations used for filming which stand in for other settings in Liverpool. While the average audience member may never recognise or learn that some of the films' settings were not the actual locations for shooting, I think this will impact both insiders' and outsiders' cognitive mapping. Lima explains that "film is an invaluable instrument for the quasi-perceptual experience of the city - it enables us with an almost first-person contact with the city" (2008, p.144). Therefore, I question what effect is had on audiences when technically the setting on screen exists in Liverpool, just not in the location we may come to cognitively map it. The strategy of using existing locations to stand in as elsewhere in the city could be due to several reasons, one

being regeneration. LFO specifically notes that the building of Liverpool One shopping district makes it difficult to set films in Town before this period of regeneration (liminoid1, 2023a, 13:45-14:09). Clearly, regeneration calls for more creative approaches to location scouting for settings which existed previously in one place but exist today similarly elsewhere. An example of this instance from my GIS map would be the ‘*Don’t Worry About Me Indoor Fair*’ plotted points. Set in what appears to be the Indoor Fair on the Wirral, the same one featured in *Blood on the Dole*, the scene was filmed at Southport Pier’s Funland on the outskirts of Liverpool into Lancashire. Although audiences can cognitively map that there was an Indoor Fair on the Wirral, this skews audiences’ understanding of present-day Liverpool.

Moreover, Liverpool features predominantly as a stand-in for elsewhere in the world. Hallam quotes Tim Brown who, in 1995, regarded Liverpool as the “body-double” rather than the star (2010, p.291). In an interview in 2009, Lynn Saunders from LFO confirmed it was still the case that “a lot of the time the productions aren’t necessarily set in Liverpool but are shot here. A big one that springs to mind was the sort of Bradford riots [...] and they shot Garston as Bradford” (liminoid1, 2023a, 05:20-05:41). My interviews with location managers Claire Newton and Richard Knight found that Liverpool’s primary use is as other places and time periods. They praised the city’s variety in architecture and landscape and its ability to mask as elsewhere. This can be seen in the ‘Filming Location’ layer of my map. *Film Stars Don’t Die in Liverpool (FSDDIL)* (McGuigan, 2017), for example, uses Huskisson Street in the Georgian Quarter to shoot exteriors at Gloria and Peter’s flats in London. More strikingly though, was the use of the Philharmonic Dining Rooms, a pub known locally as ‘The Phill’, used as a stand-in for a London pub. When watching *FSDDIL* for the first time I was shocked to suddenly see Peter and Gloria having a drink there when they were supposed to be in London. With Peter being from Liverpool, signposted by his Scouse accent, and ‘Liverpool’ being within the title of the film, using The Phill, for me, caused confusion in the storyline. It was difficult to accept that the scene was set in London. While I acknowledge that I am an insider because I am a Liverpool native, I have only ever been inside The Phill once and believe that the décor is distinctive enough to be recognised by many other insiders and even outsiders who may have visited - Paul McCartney played there when he was younger and went back during his appearance on the Carpool Karaoke segment of *The Late Late Show with James*

Corden (2018, June 22). Therefore, I suggest that there are times when locations are not universally read in the context of the film's setting because the location is easily recognised by insiders.



Figure 6 - Screenshot of Gloria and Peter inside *The Phill* – doubling as a London pub – in *FSDIL*. (BBC2 England, 2021, 0:22:29)

In a similar vein, other places are used to film settings in Liverpool. *Nowhere Boy*, for example, included some filming of 'Liverpool' in London. Originally, the shoot was going to predominantly take place in London with shooting in Liverpool only taking place over one weekend (liminoid1, 2023a). LFO explain: "You could not make a film about the city's favourite son and only film here for a weekend. [...] It's not authentic and what we were able to demonstrate [...] is that the locations in Liverpool, you can cheat them, but it's not gonna resonate as much as it will do on the screen by filming here [...] They ended up shooting here three weeks..." (*ibid*, 06:20-07:18). Here, LFO demonstrates how they can influence productions by showcasing the city's history and, to an extent, its reputation. It could be read that LFO is suggesting that while Liverpool can stand in for elsewhere, nowhere else can authentically stand in for Liverpool. My mapped locations show that apart from locations used for *Nowhere Boy*, *Distant Voices*, *Still Lives*, and *The Long Day Closes*, films using locations outside of Liverpool to film scenes set in the city were produced before the 1990s. This coincides with LFO commencing operation in 1989 as well as several other organisations around that time with the purpose of boosting Liverpool's involvement in the film and television industry (Roberts, 2010a, p.191-192).

These films prior to LFO's existence include *Shirley Valentine* which predominantly features London locations as a stand in for Liverpool, most notably using London St Pancras Station as Liverpool Lime Street. As previously discussed, *Educating Rita* was filmed in and around Dublin. *No Surrender* (Smith, 1985) films some scenes in Liverpool, but the main setting for the film, 'The Charleston Club' on Stanley Road in Bootle, was filmed in nearby Warrington. There is no evidence of The Charleston Club existing. In filming outside of Liverpool, these films demonstrate how Liverpool is viewed and the associated urban imagery with the city. Where Shirley is depicted as living in a nice area with a comfortably sized house, her son lives in a derelict flat as a squatter in Kirkby. Rita lives in a small end-of-terrace house on a cobblestone street and, in *No Surrender*, Mike, too, lives in a terrace house with views of the Mersey in the distance, who goes to work in what looks like a working man's pub in the middle of waste ground. Connotations of not only the working-class but also poverty and deprivation are clear in these settings - though not filmed on location. Therefore, as Roberts puts it, "in addition to the obvious economic benefits, it was also felt that Liverpool's increased screen presence [bolstered by the LFO] would have a positive psychological impact on the city" (2010a, p.192). This implies that seeing where you live on screen is a big deal, particularly during difficult times as it can give communities a positive emotional boost. This can be seen as a turning point for films and filming in Liverpool which may too have mutually influenced the rebranding and regeneration of the city which took place starting in the 1990s and were fully underway during the 2000s. When Liverpool plays itself on screen, it is an act of "recultivation of an urban habitus: the symbolic structures that bind people and place" (*ibid*, p.193).



Figure 7 - Screenshot of Mike's street from *No Surrender* (Video Archive, 2024, 0:06:00).

Another observation from my sample and mapping is that there is not an overwhelming majority in terms of the genres of the films. I found that half of the films from my sample were labelled as 'drama' by IMDB, second most common was comedies. However, of the 21 films, nine include criminal activity, five of which involve drugs. For *Going Off Big Time*, *The 51st State* (Yu, 2002), and *Kelly + Victor* (Evans, 2012), the drugs are either dealt or taken at nightclubs in the city. Given the popularity of Liverpool's nightlife, particularly for students, and stag and hen dos, the repeated narrative of accessible drugs in Liverpool nightclubs could influence perceptions and negative connotations. More generally, Roberts suggests that "while the commodification and consumption of its cinematic geographies brings in much needed investment to the city, the downside is that this can further promote the *disembedding* of place, identity and cultural memory" (2010a, p.201). With that, while I acknowledge that three films out of 20 is quantifiably small, I argue, as Liverpool disproportionately plays itself less than it plays elsewhere, these few examples of Liverpool's nightlife on screen may stand out to audiences when they have little other depictions of the nightlife to compare it to. This narrative can still be found today with award-winning BBC series *The Responder* (Bowen, Carey, & Freeman, 2022-present) having narratives include dealing and taking drugs in clubs in Town.



Figure 8 - Screenshot of Elmo preparing to throw his drugs into the crowd in a nightclub from *The 51st State*. (Amazon Prime, 2024, 01:01:56)

Chapter Two: Geocriticism

5(a): Selling Liverpool

Popular landmarks feature among most films in my sample as a way of orientating audiences. Frequently used landmarks include the Three Graces and St. George's Hall. Their consistent inclusion in films set in Liverpool make them synonymous with the city. Audiences are immediately orientated by these landmarks specifically compared to others, such as Radio City Tower which may be considered as a local landmark - easy for insiders to recognise and orientate, less so for outsider audiences. The image of the Tower is not in the wider public's consciousness because it features less in media of the city. This notion refers to "the 'legibility' of the cityscape, the apparent ease by which we are able to recognise and organise the cityscape into a coherent perceptual environment" (Hallam, 2010, p.289). I suggest that landmarks are featured in my examined films for the purpose of legibility both in terms of narratives, but also as a rebranding and 'advertising' technique for the city. In relation to the former, Kevin Lynch describes having a clear understanding and orientation of one's environment positively influences emotions towards said environment (1960, p.4-5). Landmarks assist in this orientation process. However, the same can be said for the opposite: unclear orientation can lead to uncertainty towards the location (*ibid*). Therefore, if outsiders have limited or confused cognitive mapping of Liverpool, they may feel negatively towards the city. In turn, this may affect their perception of a film's narrative. While the landmark's function may be to signpost, the tendency to focus on a small number of select locations means outsider audiences are less aware of regeneration which has taken place in the city. By extension, narratives are either solely set in the city centre or are miscommunicating the proximity of the films' other locations to these landmarks, particularly suburban locations.

Regarding my latter suggestion that landmarks aid the promotion of Liverpool through films, the city has experienced periods of regeneration since the early 1990s, coinciding with the inception of the Liverpool Film Office (LFO). Prior to this, organisations were set up to target tourism and leisure opportunities the city could capitalise on (Platt, 2014, p.72). This strategy aligns with Edensor *et al* who, quoting Florida (2002), state that "for local policy makers, a key to the economic recovery rests upon the successful development of creativity and a creative class" (2009, p.1). Therefore, LFO was created as a department of

Liverpool City Council (LCC). Following the subsequent filming ‘boom’ during the 1990s, Liverpool was announced as European Capital of Culture (ECoC) 2008 in 2003. Platt discusses how “the ECoC title, since Glasgow held the award in 1990, has become strongly associated with regeneration” (2014, p.71). The city received funding from the European Union to address infrastructural and social issues while working towards boosting the local economy through tourism and leisure. During this period of regeneration, promotional film, ‘*Liverpool: World in One City*’, was created to entice businesses to capitalise on Liverpool’s ‘up and coming’ status - discussed by Les Roberts in 2010 and 2012. Roberts acknowledges the appeal of the film’s message of openness, inclusion, and innovation, while highlighting that “despite large scale regeneration of the city centre, many areas of Liverpool have seen little in the way of material improvement” (2010b, p.203). There is a stark contrast between these areas and the Liverpool displayed in the advertisement (*ibid*). Based on images screenshot from the video in Roberts’ articles, ‘iconically Liverpool’ landmarks feature. On one hand, in doing so, the video promotes a smaller version of the real Liverpool; implying that areas beyond the city centre either do not exist or are not worthy of time or investment. On the other, it may have successfully enticed outsiders, particularly from the film industry, to utilise Liverpool’s landscapes. Both Claire Newton and Richard Knight agree that, more often than not, Liverpool stands in for elsewhere on screen because it can imitate different locations and time periods: truly producing the world in one city.

To achieve this successfully, landmarks must be avoided (Knight, Personal Communications, May 15, 2024). Use of recognisable Liverpool landmarks in visual media often provides quick recognition for insiders and outsiders as part of the identity of Liverpool. Featuring a landmark from the city in a film which is not set in Liverpool could be risky. In doing so, for insiders particularly, cognitive mapping of the city-text can be compromised. I experienced this when watching *The Batman* (Reeves, 2022) during scenes where Batman watches over Gotham City from the top of the Liver building, as well as the use of exterior shots of St George’s Hall. I may have perceived these scenes differently compared to outsiders because I recognised it as my hometown in disguise. While its recognition did not impact on my understanding of the narrative, unlike *Film Stars Don’t Die in Liverpool (FSDDIL)* (McGuigan, 2017), it was notable on my cognitive map. Akin to the layers I produced on the GIS map, I began to layer my cognitive map of Liverpool, which depicts where the film’s scenes were set versus the filming

location. Because landmarks orientate, their use as settings other than Liverpool can conflate one's cognitive map of the city-text with that of their lived-city⁷, as well as potentially affecting suspension of disbelief following the narrative. Rather, it may be that using more generic locations, not landmarks, would impose less on our city-text cognitive maps.

It is likely that outsiders are less affected in this way by landmarks featuring as an alternative location, especially those who are watching as part of an international audience, as they may be less familiar with Liverpool and its landscape. Instead, I propose this can skew their cognitive map of Liverpool in that their mapping will potentially be less developed because landmarks, and locations generally, do not feature as themselves often. This is plausible given Liverpool's popularity as a filming destination capable of portraying elsewhere. There may be several locations in Liverpool which are used so frequently as elsewhere that they may be falsely cognitively mapped by outsiders. The Georgian Quarter is a district on the edge of Town known for its 18th century, Georgian architecture. The area's cobblestone roads and distinctive townhouses make for an attractive filming site. So popular is the Quarter that LFO and LCC have implemented filming "restrictions" to support residents (Newton, Personal Communication, May 15, 2024). In viewing the Georgian Quarter as elsewhere, and it rarely featuring in films as Liverpool, the area may not feature on an outsider's cognitive map of the city. This diminishes understandings of Liverpool's landscape, producing reductive, inaccurate cognitive mapping.

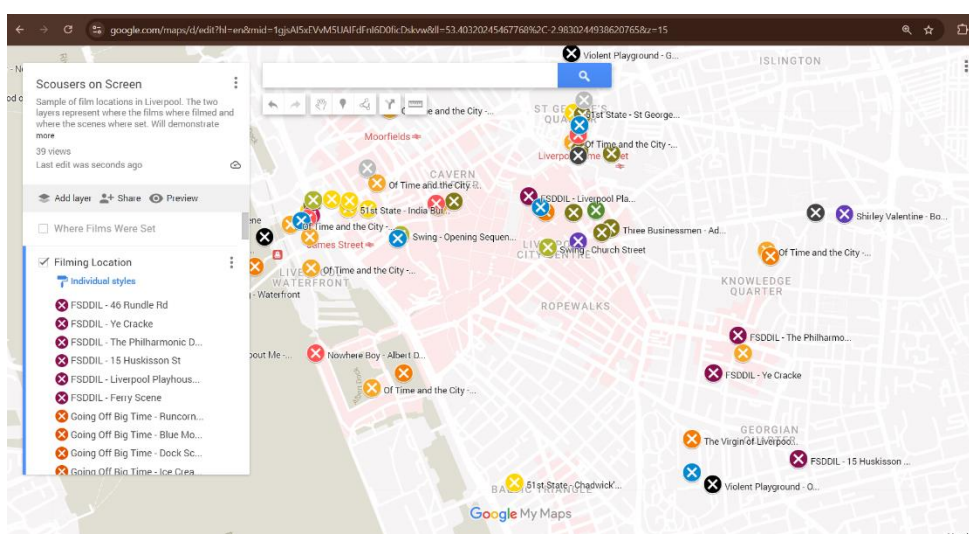


Figure 9 - City Centre GIS Map (Filming Locations layer)

⁷ Definitions of these terms can be found within the Literature Review, page 18.

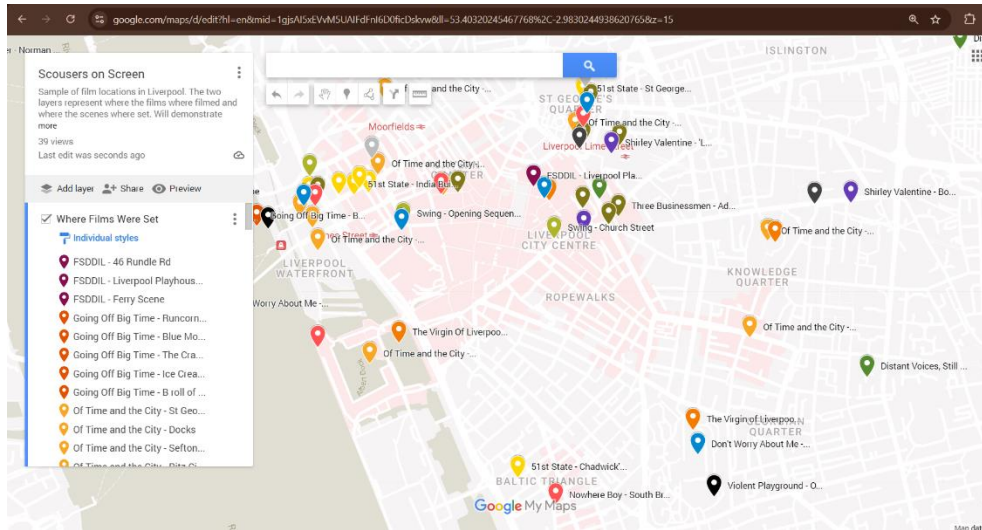


Figure 10 - City Centre GIS Map (Film Settings layer)

Furthermore, as the city has gone through periods of regeneration, the city centre is a selling point with the concentration of filming locations taking place there. There are a few examples within my mapping which depict locations outside the city centre which are not domestic settings or pubs. Besides the Indoor Fair on the Wirral and the beaches, Liverpool is presented with the city centre as a nucleus, surrounded by little else other than the River Mersey and suburbs. There is repeated imagery of suburbs, often terraced houses. Notably, several films feature protagonists living within view of the Mersey⁸. It is as though the film locations reflect Liverpool's reality with regeneration not reaching suburban areas of the city (Roberts, 2010b, p.203). *Blonde Fist* (Clarke, 1991) exemplifies this. Protagonist, Ronnie, lives on an estate in Kirkby, and after being sent to prison, decides she wants to start a new life by finding her father in New York. Kirkby is considered locally as a 'rough' part of Liverpool, dealing with high levels of deprivation (University of Liverpool, 2024). Interestingly, Liverpool landmarks do not feature in the beginning of *Blonde Fist* while the narrative is set in Kirkby. There is signposting for Kirkby, such as Kirkby Magistrates and Kirkby Town F.C club room. For outsiders, however, there is little other than the characters' Scouse accents to indicate Liverpool as the setting. The absence of landmark signposting distances Kirkby from Liverpool city centre - not just geographically, but also in opportunity to share in the rebranding and regeneration. Ronnie returns to Liverpool at the end of the film with her son and father via ship. Approaching the waterfront, the scene cuts away using various shots of the Three Graces. This is a

⁸ See *Don't Worry About Me* (Morrissey, 2009), *No Surrender* (Smith, 1985), and *The 51st State* (Yu, 2002).

stark contrast to the Liverpool Ronnie left at the beginning of the film. Now, Liverpool is presented as welcoming, where opportunities await, and where Ronnie and her reunited family can make a fresh start. This coincides with the rebranding and regeneration which took place in the city centre in the years following the film's release.



Figure 11 - Screenshots of the boat Ronnie and her family return to Liverpool on at the end of *Blonde Fist* (Retro Central, 2024, 1:39:34-1:39:40).

5(b): It all starts at the Waterfront

In contrast to the waterfront featuring in *Blonde Fist's* ending, nine films within my sample open with establishing shots of the waterfront. By featuring arguably Liverpool's most iconic landmark within the first few minutes, audiences have a clear understanding of where the proceeding narrative will take place. Liverpool's waterfront has a long and complex history which contributes to its distinctiveness and, to some degree, national significance. The port played a key role in importing and trading goods for the UK, making it a high-value target during World War II (Jones, 2003, p.5). In centuries prior to this, the port was the arrival destination for emigrants seeking a new life and could be likened to an important cog in the Transatlantic slave trade machine (Earle, 2015, p.20-21). Such history has impacted the make-up and character of the city today. For many, the waterfront will have been their first sight of Liverpool. Therefore, this section will draw on the parallels between the waterfront as the first sight of the city for audiences and those who arrived throughout periods of its history. I identify that space and narrative are relative, connected through contextualisation and, therefore, is non-linear in comparison to sections to come.



Figure 12 - Screenshot of "Liverpool Welcomes You" sign on the Dock Road from the opening credits scene of *Going Off Big Time*. (Amazon Prime, 2024, 00:01:56)

Beginning with focus on the docks, these feature in *Going Off Big Time* (Doyle, 2000) and *Kelly + Victor* (Evans, 2012). In *Going Off Big Time* we encounter the docks at night where a group of men break into a pub holding a lock-in so protagonist, Mark, can threaten a rival gang leader's son to 'back off'. Their journey to the Crazy Barn pub includes shots of industrial warehouses on the docks, with their distinctive brickwork. In contrast *Kelly + Victor* opens with shots of the docks and wind turbines under blue skies. Opening with the docks implies

its significance to the narrative, suggesting it may be a recurring location. Additionally, it emphasises the importance of the location itself within the wider context - the docks being an integral part of Liverpool's history and local economy. I assert this based on Lynch's notion that "nothing is experienced by itself, but always in relation to its surroundings, the sequences of events leading up to it, the memory of past experiences" (1960, p.1). Liverpool has long been a city of deprivation in recent history. The docks have provided consistent employment for a city where during the 20th century unemployment rates were twice the national average (Marren, 2016, p.2-3). *Going Off Big Time*, therefore, may suggest that industry at the docks is insufficient, with inhabitants turning to crime to make a living. Where *Kelly + Victor* highlights employment with Victor working on the docks, he is consistently unhappy and unfulfilled by it. Shots looking out to the wind turbines sandwich the scenes on the docks suggesting Victor yearns for more beyond working there, a motif addressed in section 5(d). However, the opening sequence of the film introduces Kelly, sat in a cafe with a large picture of the waterfront behind her. The initial shot is framed as if she is really there before panning out to reveal her actual location. Positioning Kelly in this way establishes a connection between Kelly and the waterfront, a place where we later learn Victor feels entrapped, reflecting his inescapable need to be with Kelly which is ultimately fatal. Opening with the docks for these two films may be a way of foreshadowing the narrative through its connotations.

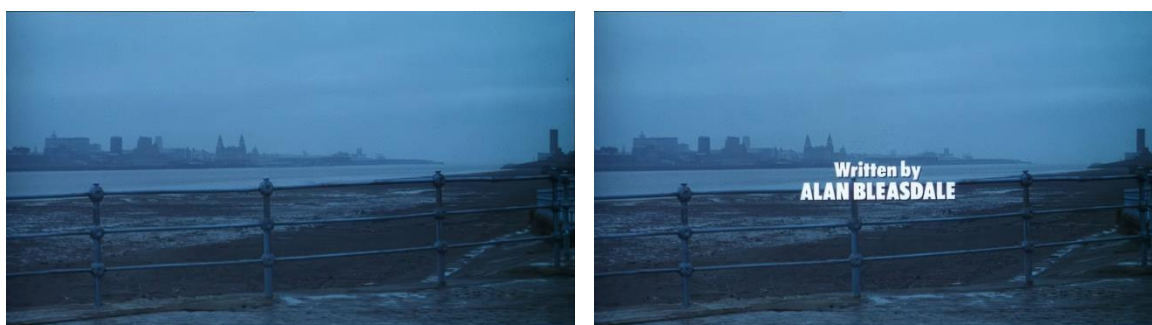


Figure 13 - Screenshots of opening credit sequence from *No Surrender* (Video Archive, 2024, 0:00:34)

Rather than being on the waterfront, films *Blood on the Dole* (Broughton, 1994) and *No Surrender* look out to it from the other side of the River Mersey in their opening scenes. Establishing shots immediately orientate audiences. Initial images of the waterfront are shot with the camera positioned on the Wirral. The audience may read this as observing an objective - characters are longing to be there, with sights set on the city. For the teens in *Blood on the Dole*, the city is a

beacon of opportunity while they come to grips with leaving school and finding jobs. Opening the film with the waterfront conveys the sense that the city and all it offers is 'so close yet so far.' Shots of the waterfront recur throughout, reinforcing this. *No Surrender*, in contrast, opens looking out to the waterfront before panning over to on-the-run loyalist, Norman, drinking on a sheltered bench. The film depicts sectarianism present in 1980s Liverpool. Because of the city's history of sectarianism, it has often been likened to Glasgow and Belfast rather than other cities in England (Marren, 2016, p.3). This is a result of historic Irish emigration and settlement in Liverpool where "between 1847 and 1853, so as to escape famine in Ireland, one and a half million Irish had landed on these docks, of whom half a million were designated as paupers" (Cullen, 2017, p.179). This history is referenced by character Billy during the opening dialogue between him and Norman. Billy talks of his father emigrating to Liverpool but still died a pauper. The conversation is nuanced by the backdrop of the waterfront behind Billy. Camera positioning for this scene offers our first glimpse of Liverpool, seeing the waterfront; a reflection of what the Irish emigrants would have seen upon their arrival in the city.



Figure 14 - Screenshot of opening scene from *No Surrender* (Video Archive, 2024, 0:05:21)

I suggest that Liverpool, specifically the imagery of the waterfront and the Mersey, symbolises a place of refuge. *Grow Your Own* (Laxton, 2007) depicts a community allotment adapting and, ultimately, accepting a group of refugees from different parts of the world. The allotment, as seen when the camera pans

out at the end of the opening sequence, is located in south Liverpool alongside the river. With Liverpool's history of welcoming outsiders arriving via the Mersey, positioning the allotment beside it can be read as foreshadowing the refugees' arrival. As well as its history as a destination for Irish emigrants during the famine, Liverpool's waterfront was the first encounter of new land for many during the Transatlantic slave trade. Peter Earle discusses how integral Liverpool was during this period as "Liverpool had already overtaken Bristol and London as a slave-trading port by 1750 and was completely to eclipse them later in the century" (2015, p.21). Earle supposes by 1800, there may have been as many as a few thousand Black people living in Liverpool, albeit not all of their own volition (*ibid*, p.20). This diversified the make-up of the city and bore ethnically diverse, particularly Black, communities in Liverpool - seldom reflected on screen. While I have made the case that Liverpool is a welcoming place, I wish not to ignore that the role Liverpool played in the transportation of people as commodities is a dark and shameful part of its history. I suggest that positioning the allotment next to the Mersey, and featuring it in the opening of the film, draws parallels between characters in the film and people of Liverpool's history. They likely will have experienced the same scared, uncertain feelings upon arrival. Furthermore, the character of Kung Sang, an Asian refugee, is later revealed to have travelled over to the UK by hiding with his family in a shipping container. Therefore, the Mersey and shipping containers near the allotment are a constant reminder for Kung of the difficult journey in which he lost his wife and the mother of his two children. The inclusion of the widening shot over the allotment to take in the surrounding area reflects that the film is beginning at the start of this next stage for the new refugees following their arrival in Liverpool.

Finally, films *Swing* and *Virgin of Liverpool* (Donaldson, 2003) open, too, with shots of the waterfront. *Swing* begins with a tracking shot facing down on the water before panning up to the Three Graces, and *Virgin of Liverpool* similarly opens with sweeping shots across and around the waterfront. Doing so immediately orientates audiences in Liverpool. In addition, the sweeping camera motion and aerial shots of the landmarks appear similar to what you would expect of establishing shots of London or New York and their iconic landmarks. Introducing Liverpool in this way gives audiences a sense of grandeur - it is a major city with the aesthetic expected of such a place. I suggest that these shots make for a prideful statement. They show off arguably the best and most impressive parts of

Liverpool and I believe it is an interesting parallel that both outsiders arriving in the city throughout history and audiences watching these films experience the same initial sighting of Liverpool. The city could be considered a symbolic destination of new beginnings and in opening by transporting the audience up the Mersey and around the waterfront, we can understand that we, too, are witnessing a new story from the city.

5(c): With Hope in Your Heart

Liverpool is often portrayed as a city where opportunity awaits. Images of locations in the city centre are displayed when the motif of hope and opportunities features, thus reinforcing each other. I argue in this instance space and narrative are closely aligned. It could be negated that any city could stand in for Liverpool in these films. However, I suggest that not only do the connotations of the skyline from aerial shots denote similar aesthetic tones as filmed metropolises around the world, but the additional layer of context concerning the city around the time the films are set highlight the appeal of Liverpool - the city centre at least. In considering these two elements, my analysis of *The 51st State* and *Blood on the Dole* will draw on Butler's Performance theory to suggest that the way in which Liverpool's city centre locations are captured on screen positions the city as 'playing the part' of 'land of opportunity'. My examination of these films exposes that, while opportunities may be presented differently based on narrative, the presentation of recurring locations are closely linked, reinforcing the same motif.

Beginning with *The 51st State*, Samuel L. Jackson's character, Elmo McElroy, crosses American drug lord "the Lizard" and travels to the UK in pursuit of a deal to sell his self-concocted drug. Elmo intends to supply the drug to a Liverpool crime boss, 'Durant' played by Liverpool legend Ricky Tomlinson, before he winds up dead, leaving Elmo to manufacture and distribute his drugs independently. Essentially, Elmo leaves the States in search of opportunity, of which he finds in Liverpool. While there are Liverpool locations featured throughout the film which are situated outside of the city centre, they are sporadic and disproportionate to those located inside. We see Elmo's journey to Liverpool city centre, during which, little footage features any other parts of Liverpool⁹. This places an importance on the city centre. The narrative directs us there immediately once Elmo is in the

⁹ Although the 'Manchester pub' Felix, working for Durant, goes into en-route to the airport is what was the Yew Tree Pub in Knotty Ash, Liverpool.

UK. Landmark signposting is evident through shots of St. George's Hall and, particularly, the Liver building throughout. When we encounter Elmo outside of the city centre, the pace of action slows. A scene of Elmo and Felix on a scrap-barge follows an intense car-chase sequence around parts of the city centre. The two have a heart-to-heart as Liverpool's waterfront and skyline can be seen in the background. The pace of the film slows when distance from the city centre increases. I suggest that in frequently displaying Town, including when characters are no longer situated there, centres the spatial narrative there. It could be read that there is a figurative magnetic pull towards the city centre throughout. We see particular success for Elmo when he tests out his drug by having it rain down onto enthusiastic partygoers at a nightclub - Liverpool is known for its nightlife. These scenes exemplify how space and narrative are enmeshed and, as well as making for visually pleasing backdrops, the shots of the city are interwoven within action scenes as if it is an additional character weighing up whether Elmo is worthy of the success it can provide.



Figure 15 - Screenshot of Dakota on the docks with cityscape in background, including the Liver building from *The 51st State*. (Amazon Prime, 2024, 00:48:17)

A similar relationship between space and narrative can also be seen in *Blood on the Dole*. The four young people we follow live on the Wirral, looking over to Liverpool's city centre while struggling to find work in their area. Unlike Elmo in *The 51st State* who is in hot pursuit of the opportunities afforded to him in Liverpool, Ricky, Joey, Jean, and Cathy spend years struggling to find employment on their side of the river. Liverpool's skyline features as the backdrop for scenes where Joey, in particular, talks about how unemployment and the lack of opportunities for them affects him. The context of locations supports the narrative as, since the 1960s, Liverpool had been in an economic decline which contributed

to a cycle of social decline (Platt, 2014, p.71). *Blood on the Dole* presents the effects of this decline on the young adults of the Merseyside region. At one point, the four friends secure employment in the Post Office Centre in Dingle, just outside of the city centre. Initially, it appears as though their luck had turned. They all had jobs with security in a respected institution. However, this is short lived after Joey's behaviour leads to them all getting sacked. They return to job hunting before Ricky and Joey try their hand at roofing. The inexperienced pair are shown to be roofing with Liverpool's skyline as the backdrop. I suggest that this film displays space and narrative as directly related and, to an extent, the space informs the narrative. With the setting predominantly on the Wirral, most locations are not landmarks and could be described as universally recognisable, such as the shopping centre and 'OJs' bar. However, in featuring Liverpool's skyline and waterfront, landmark signposting orientates audiences without the protagonists ever being there in person. The distance between them and the city centre is displayed throughout as though opportunities there are always in sight yet always out of reach. The film concludes some several years after we are first introduced to the four protagonists, their lives now very different after Ricky dies while deployed in Ireland during the Troubles. The closing shot is of the Horizon ferry travelling across the Mersey, panning out to include Liverpool's skyline at night. Not only is this cyclical imagery as we end with the same location as the beginning, but the repetition reiterates the idea that there must be more, especially for Joey and his new ambition to design clothes, outside of the Wirral. Liverpool and its urban city landscape, I assert, performs as a symbol of opportunity where one can expect a growing economy and cultural stimulation, all of which were on the horizon in years to come for the city.

In contrast to these two films, I suggest that *Educating Rita* (Gilbert, 1983), by not specifying explicitly which northern port city it is depicting, distances space and narrative. By extension, although the narrative is driven by the motif of opportunity it is not portrayed as being found or offered by the space. Geographical location plays a less significant role here, comparatively, with only the play's context and Rita's accent hinting that the film could be set in Liverpool. Devoid of any landmark signposting, the film adaptation generalises the North, and to an extent the working-class, with Rita living in an end-of-terrace house on a cobbled street. For an audience to orientate itself within the film, it cannot do so based on locations, therefore, relying on Rita's accent whereby Fox claims "it

is primarily via voice that myths and chronotypes of Northerness are embodied in people” (2018, p.22). We can assume by Rita's accent that she is from Liverpool, which for different audience members will conjure different assumptions, but because there lacks specification of geographical locations in the film's entirety, the motif of opportunity is employed through the narrative, derived from Rita herself, rather than seeking it from a location. I argue that the vagueness of the university campus Rita attends diminishes the importance of the university itself, instead foregrounding the value of education and self-improvement. Where *Educating Rita* sets space apart from narrative, *The 51st State* and *Blood on the Dole* demonstrate a closer relationship between the two, allowing Liverpool city centre to figuratively take part in the narrative. In displaying impressive infrastructure linked to the city's history of prosperous industry as well as high rise offices and hotels making up the skyline denoting a thriving local economy, Liverpool performs as a place of success, hope, and opportunity.

5(d): In the Concrete Jungle filled with Misery

This section expands on the previous, supporting the notion that some films position space and narrative closely. Contrastingly, my analysis of *Kelly + Victor*, *Shirley Valentine*, and *Violent Playground* (Dearden, 1958) concerns how the interplay between space and narrative portrays Liverpool as oppressive. I argue that Liverpool ‘performs’ as a claustrophobic space through prominent shots of areas of dense urban population and industrial sites, juxtaposed by shots of nature-focused settings situated outside of Liverpool. Unlike locations discussed in the previous section, there is less concentration in the city centre. The locations depicted vary, while maintaining an urban or industrial aesthetic typical of northern, working-class areas. Drawing on the context of these locations and linking this to Platt's discussion of Butler's performative theory, “Liverpool has been negatively interpellated so that the image of poverty and urban decay has become part of the UK's national consciousness” (2014, p.80). These three films exemplify this statement, spanning over 54 years and yet reiterating similar images and ideals of Liverpool found between them and in wider media. In terms of GIS mapped space, settings are sporadic though commonly use the dock area. These films position the narrative in a location where not only water, but connotations of freedom are present. As I will consider, this may reflect

protagonists' feelings, connecting space and narrative. I discuss how the two construct an identity of Liverpool, putting forward another side of the city.

Starting with *Kelly + Victor*, as aforementioned in Section 5(b), Victor is struggling with the precarity of his employment, often taking work on the docks despite how negatively he feels about doing so. Feelings of unfulfillment and despair are exacerbated whenever Victor is located in urban space. This is juxtaposed by nature-focused locations, such as Sefton Park, where Victor's manner is calmer and less on-edge. Throughout, there are cut-away scenes of Victor in a countryside location, appearing content. These scenes frequently occur when Victor is with Kelly, a girl he meets in a nightclub, particularly during sex in which Kelly introduces him to rougher, dangerous acts. The toll working on the docks has on Victor, as well as him living in an abandoned school, indicates little escape from urban settings where he feels uncomfortable. Even the small flower garden he tends to begin to wilt. The only escape and release from this environment is through Kelly and their sex together, even if that means putting himself in harm. Images of the landscape are integral to the narrative of *Kelly + Victor* as they directly correlate to how Victor feels. While recurring images of nature indicate peace, recurring images of the docks and turbines suggest he is unhappy and longs to be closer to nature. The turbines at sea connect wind with water to symbolise freedom. These are interjected by the cityscape with landmark signposting using Liverpool's skyline. As audience, this is a more recognisable image of Liverpool. The infrastructurally denser population of the city centre denotes pressure and claustrophobia, particularly when spliced between scenes of Victor not coping well. Overall, as Victor struggles with his emotions, often masking and hiding how he is really feeling, the narrative relies on the presentation of space for support. The film uses varied terrain to depict Liverpool - departing from the high frequency use of only the city centre, refreshingly showing a side of Liverpool my sample of films rarely displays while essentially commenting on the detrimental affect the city's urban landscape can have.



Figure 16 - Screenshots of scrapheap and wind turbine on docks in *Kelly + Victor* (FilmFour, 2016, 1:06:50-1:07:45)

Additionally, *Violent Playground* depicts urban areas of Liverpool negatively. After the opening credits, we see the aftermath of a fire at the Liver Storage Warehouse. This is the first of several arson attacks throughout the film which we learn teenager Johnnie Murphy is responsible for. Two detectives discuss the crime at the scene with cranes in the background, indicating that this

warehouse is close to the docks. For insider audience members, recognising this setting aids orientation as well as giving context that this is a working-class area of the city. Additional use of landmark signposting, using the waterfront and docks, is relatively sparse. Therefore, I disagree with Jaqui Miller who suggests that they are featured to “hammer home its message that the city is a breeding ground of crime for deprived youngsters” (2008, p.69). Instead, I assert that as the film depicts locations outside of Town which are generically recognisable and understood, such as housing estates, these locations and their architectural aesthetic support the narrative to suggest that youths are a product of their environment. By initiating the narrative in this space, audiences may immediately associate Liverpool with dereliction and destruction. This imagery of poverty is further reinforced by shots of children playing on waste ground throughout, including during the opening sequence alongside densely populated terraced houses on streets which stretch the length of our screens. Gerard Gardens, the housing estate the Murphy family live on, is a primary location. It consists of flats, three storeys tall, constructed closely with walkways to the flats all facing inwards over a courtyard often filled with youths. Houses and flats are featured frequently which I suggest denotes community and family. In this symbolic sense, space and narrative reinforce each other as Lima similarly observes that “film and architecture are intrinsically related not only for their spatial and temporal structures, but also because they articulate lived space, creating “comprehensive images of life”” (2008, p.142). I deduce from this that place is affected by people, and places on film represent the people who are associated with that place. Gerard Gardens is identifiable, even if not directly relatable. The children playing in the densely populated courtyard, for instance, can be associated with community. However, Johnnie comes from a broken home, with absent parents. Without any authority figures at home, and with him being ringleader of his group of friends, we see Johnnie crack under pressure, using the fires he starts as a cry for attention. The confined space of the courtyard where Johnnie spends lots of his time, as well as external locations featuring tall railings and walls and many interior scenes all denote feelings of entrapment (Miller, 2013, p.69). This suggests Liverpool is a pressure-cooker environment. The locations selected for the film enhance this notion. Through the locations, the narrative of the youths in the city turning to delinquency is suggested to derive from the urban decay in which they live.



Figure 17 - Screenshot of Gerard Gardens in *Violent Playground* (Talking Pictures TV, 2022, 29:52)

Finally, *Shirley Valentine* similarly includes locations which support the narrative. The film depicts Shirley, a housewife from Liverpool, struggling to accept what her life has become, resorting to talking to the wall in her kitchen for company. She longs to see the world and regain the vibrancy of her youth, but instead tends to her husband who wants his ‘tea’ (evening meal) on the table ready for when he returns home from work. The scene of Shirley walking home in the dock area, by the gasometers, is one of few exterior scenes with Shirley in Liverpool. Along with her situated at home in the kitchen, this exterior shot implies that Shirley feels entrapped in Liverpool; the three gasometers in the background seem to loom over her, paired with the brick walls on both sides of the shot. This creates a visual metaphor reflecting Shirley's emotions and the landscape shrinks her within the city. Furthermore, applicable to all three films of this section, use of the dock area in particular is pertinent to the narrative because it contradicts the characters’ feelings. It offers the freedom they do not have. Hallam discusses this notion in relation to *Letter to Brezhnev* (Bernard, 1985), *Shirley Valentine*, and *Liam* (Frears, 2000), and how “the dynamic movement of ships, trains, lorries and factory fumes contrasts with the overwhelming sense of entrapment and stasis experienced by the characters” which I assert to also be applicable to *Kelly + Victor* and *Violent Playground* (2010, p.288). The type of space used within these films, the urban landscape of Liverpool, has a linear relationship to the narrative. Considering this section and

the one previous, Liverpool portrays two identities: one hopeful, and the other oppressive. With this, I suggest that Liverpool is a multi-narrative location site.



Figure 18 - Screenshot of Shirley walking home in Shirley Valentine (Channel5, 2024, 39:24)

5(e): Orientation + Disorientation

One's cognitive map of a place is deployed when watching a film. It is used to orientate us in the city-text and aid our understanding of what is going on within the context of the narrative and the space both individually and together. Some films orientate audiences through locations more than others. This refers to the frequency of which landmark signposting is deployed. I consider how this orientation relates to the narrative of the film and what it represents, focusing on *Swing*, *FSDDIL*, and *Three Businessmen* (Cox, 1998). Moreover, I give thought to ways in which disorientation can occur, especially when specific locations in Liverpool appear on film which disproportionately represent the city. Referring to Koeck, omitting or not including all architectural aspects of a city in a film, creates incoherency which suggests that of the city itself (2008, p.138). Not only would this affect audience's cognitive mapping of the place but may impact on their perception of the narrative where there is a linear correlation between narrative and space.

Of the three films, *Swing* orientates audiences the most using noticeably more B-roll footage of the cityscape throughout. From the film's opening, aerial

shots of the city centre, more often than not, feature at least one of Liverpool's landmarks. These buildings identified throughout this dissertation make up, as Hallam describes, "the iconic epicentre of the city's public image today" (2013, p.6). The narrative begins with Marty being released from Walton prison with a newfound passion for swing music and aspirations of starting a band. In line with my thoughts in section 5(c), focus on the city centre, paired with the movement of the camera to capture the city, could be read as symbolic of Marty's freedom and his intention to turn his life around by pursuing music. There is attention on the city centre with little indication as to where other, less obvious, locations are in Liverpool; including the high-rise block of flats Marty lives in and the Irish pub where the band practices. Because of this, it would be easy to assume that they are located in, or closely around, Town. The scene where Marty sits with his brother on Everton Brow, overlooking the city's skyline at night may indicate that the flats are situated in Everton Hights, but it is unlikely that an outsider would make this association. Instead, in-keeping with connotations of urban landscapes, outsiders may assume that the surrounding area of the city centre comprises predominantly of high-rise housing, which is not the reality.



Figure 19 - Image of Gloria and Peter on a ferry on the Mersey from Film *Stars Don't Die in Liverpool* (Parker, 2018)

In contrast, *FSDDIL* shows very little of Liverpool to allow for orientation. American protagonist, Gloria, sees Liverpool as a place of safety, comfort and refuge. However, unlike *Swing*, space and narrative have a more distant relationship as I assert that, Scouser, Peter, Gloria's lover, may symbolise and embody the qualities of Liverpool. To her, Peter is Liverpool. Therefore, orientation through frequent B-roll is unnecessary. Having said this, not only do certain locations cause disorientation for insiders, as aforementioned in the mapping chapter, but subsequently, outsiders' perceptions of Liverpool and their

cognitive mapping can become skewed. In comparing the streets of Boston to a 'House of Mirrors', Lynch suggests that in order to be successfully understood and navigated, "the confusions must be small regions in a visible whole" (1960, p.5-6). In this sense, as long as the city as a whole is legible, some confusion - potentially caused by omissions or inaccuracies - will not detrimentally affect audiences' cognitive mapping of both city-texts and literal city. As an insider, I accept this to an extent. *The Batman* as well as the car chase scene in *The 51st State*¹⁰, while not ideal, the locations impact less on my understanding of the narrative. Rather than disorienting me, my cognitive map notes that the locations were featured in these scenes. However, outsiders who are not privy to Liverpool's geography and landscape may never pick up on these, and, in the case of *The 51st State* car chase, may lead to cognitively mapping Liverpool incorrectly. Furthermore, *FSDDIL* uses Liverpool locations as a double for London, especially using The Phill. This is obvious to me as an insider, and I have to consciously overlook impediments on my suspension of disbelief for the narrative's sake as it conflicts with my cognitive mapping of Liverpool. For outsiders, this iconic Liverpool pub may become confused or altogether left unmapped if outsiders only perceive it to be located elsewhere.

Uniquely, *Three Businessmen* could be considered as blending orientation and disorientation together. An anomaly of my sample, this film uses locations as the central focus from which the narrative pivots around. Roberts describes how "taking form of a Buñuelian travelogue or odyssey, the film narrates an uncertain space of flânerie marked by disorientation, ellipses and thwarted desires of consumption" (2012, p.165). The narrative is rooted at once in orientating and disorientating the characters which creates the same experience for audiences. The meandering that Bennie and Frank embark on around Liverpool takes place predominantly in the city centre. The opening consists of a white screen and bold, red lettering 'Liverpool' before a panning shot of the Empire Theatre, Liverpool Library, and St George's Hall. While the layout of the road and general aesthetic of the area is different to how I know this area to look, the landmarks are unmistakable. Audiences, insider and outsider, are immediately orientated. After Frank and Bennie meet in the dining room of the Adelphi Hotel, a local landmark, 'flânerie' begins. As they look for somewhere to eat, their difficulty navigating

¹⁰ the route of the chase across the city centre was geographically inaccurate, entering a street in Town and exiting on the docks.

around the city begins. At first, as an insider, I follow along - their locations already exist on my cognitive map. Sequencing of locations is disjointed as scene locations proceed as if only brief walking distance from one another, when in reality the length and breadth of the city is being depicted. Not only this, but the lack of landmark signposting contributes to this disorientation. For example, the pair are walking by Mathew Street. The Grapes pub indicates to me and insider audiences that this is correct, however, it would have been orientating for outsiders had The Cavern Club been featured. The omission of the landmark may disorientate outsiders. However, as Frank and Bennie take a bus to a location even they do not know, I, too, am disoriented without any recognisable place features. Therefore, my cognitive map, at this point in the film, becomes redundant. Insiders and outsiders may find confusion in cognitively mapping the city-text and, separately, cognitively mapping Liverpool based on the locations depicted.

5(f): Terence Davies' Love Letters to Liverpool

Screenwriter and director, Terence Davies, was born and raised in the Kensington area of Liverpool following the Second World War. Several of his films are deeply connected to his hometown and influenced by his experiences there. My analysis of his three films, *The Long Day Closes* (Davies, 1992), *Distant Voices, Still Lives* (Davies, 1998), and *Of Time and the City* (Davies, 2008), explores his positionality as auteur whose relationship with Liverpool is reflected on screen. I consider how this affects the relationship between space and narrative. *Of Time and the City* is an anomaly within my sample as it is composed using predominantly archival footage of Liverpool to depict its history as well as Davies providing his commentary on the essence of the city. This stylised documentary contrasts with the other two of his films which are works of drama with autobiographical influence. Davies has made clear through these films, and in interviews, that memories inspire him and is a theme identified in all three films. I address how this is expressed through narrative and space in a way which is cyclical, rather than linear as with other films. Also, I compare Davies' work to that of other insiders to examine how they portray the city relative to their personal connection.

In conversation with Roberts and Hallam at the University of Liverpool, Davies reveals that memory is unconsciously part of his works as it comes naturally to him to remember even seemingly small or insignificant details throughout his

life (liminoid1, 2023b, 05:50-06:25). These memorable details, to Davies, encapsulate all the senses. They are beyond the narrative (*ibid*, 06:25-06:35). His memory of his street, where he grew up in L5, is depicted in both *Distant Voices, Still Lives* and *The Long Day Closes*. This relates to Davies' notion that memory is cyclical, not linear, which transpires into his display of locations in his films (*ibid*, 08:00-08:12). His recurrent use of specific locations, especially the home, which is a primary setting for both films, immediately orientates audiences within the city-text but also within the world of Liverpool Davies has created. Whilst not a landmark, this house in Kensington, which was demolished in the 1960s long before these films were made, becomes recognisable to audiences. My experience of watching them exemplifies this: the interior of the house and the shot from the exterior of the front door in the beginning of both films was instantly recognisable when watching *The Long Day Closes* two months after watching *Distant Voices, Still Lives*. This relates to Lynch's suggestion that "there may be little in the real object that is ordered or remarkable, and yet its mental picture has gained identity and organisation through long familiarity" (1960, p.6). That which could be described as 'unremarkable' being the house, which gains significance through its repeated use: its significance to Davies personally is reflected through this visual representation. We, as audience, are able to identify this familiarity amongst Davies' work because, although the films are stand-alone narratives, the thread which connects them is through the locations.



Figure 20 - Screenshots of opening scene exterior of house from *Distant Voices, Still Lives* (Dark Matter TV, 2022, 0:00:41-0:00:55)

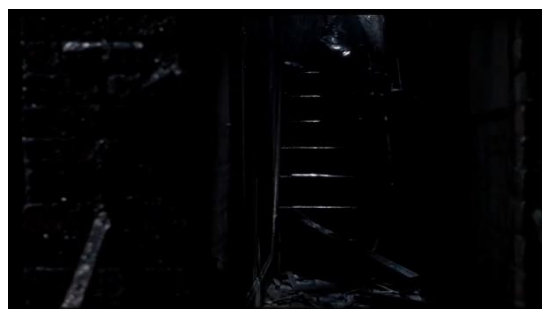


Figure 21 - Screenshot of house in opening scene of *The Long Day Closes* (FilmFour, 2023, 06:04)

It could be said that these films are products of Davies living in the past, of which he acknowledges (liminoid1, 2023b, 09:55-10:00). *Of Time and the City* also conveys Davies notion of cyclical memories, however presented in a different way. The film's predominant use of archival footage, and not Davies' own, creates the sense that the film displays a collective memory from the people of Liverpool. The spanning of time and breadth of the region included in the clips throughout promotes a shared memory in which insiders can identify, if only with one piece of footage. I argue that Davies' memories of Liverpool can be understood by his collection and piecing together of others'. This positions Davies in amongst his insider audience, creating a sense of unity. Furthermore, his closeness to the city is represented through his narration over the footage. The end of the opening sequence features a shot of Davies sat cinema-style watching some of the footage on a screen. This is the only time we see him. Beyond this, we only hear him. I assert that this auditory positioning foregrounds the city through its imagery and symbolises Davies as one with Liverpool. This reflects his present relationship with the city in which he no longer resides. While not physically there, part of him will always belong in Liverpool (Barrett, 2009, 32:23-32-40). Therefore, space and narrative are interwoven by their context.



Figure 22 - Screenshots of archival footage of the Liver Building from *Of Time and the City* (BBC2 England, 2014, 0:20:04/1:07:25)

Comparatively, I argue Cox displays a less intimate relationship with Liverpool in *Three Businessmen* by showcasing the city and essentially taking the audience on a tour. However, ambiguities and disorientation distance Cox's position to the city. The protagonists' surreal journey around Liverpool's city centre conflates Liverpool with various locations around the world, evoking the idea that the world is within Liverpool, though produced before the city's promotional video discussed in section 5(a) (Roberts, 2012, p.167). In using relatively fewer Liverpool landmarks in comparison to insider David Morrissey's *Don't Worry About Me*, for example, Cox may be suggesting that there is more to

Liverpool to be discovered beyond the imagery we have come to expect. Cox distorts concepts of time and space by conflicting narrative and space. He ultimately portrays Liverpool as a liminal space in which Frank and Bennie are unable to navigate. This could reflect Cox's own positionality to the city, as an insider from the Wirral looking out to Liverpool. The presentation of Liverpool as a liminal space perhaps symbolises inescapability, especially as Cox plays Frank, placing himself within this symbol. *Three Businessmen* speaks out to the outsider by playing on the disorientation it creates. Davies' films, on the other hand, look inwards, speaking to the insider by depicting life in locations used rarely in films, such as L5, and through the vast and varied locations displayed through the archival footage. Overall, Davies' Liverpool is Davies' Liverpool, particularly in *The Long Day Closes* and *Distant Voices, Still Lives*. Neither include landmarks. Kensington street sign featured at the beginning of both sufficiently symbolise Liverpool because it symbolises home to Davies. Other films showcase Liverpool as if selling it to audiences, focusing on the city centre in particular. Therefore, narrative and space, as discussed in previous sections, are linear whereas, in Davies' work the two are relative and the personal context bolsters the narrative and foregrounds it.



Figure 23 - Black and white image of children playing in a cobblestone street of an estate area with terraced flats – part of the archival footage from *Of Time and the City* (BFI Player, n.d).

Conclusion

To investigate how Liverpool's locations convey the identity of the city through films, I carried out a multidisciplinary textual analysis of 21 films which use Liverpool as a main setting. This analysis included the GIS mapping of both the filming locations and the location settings. In doing so I identified key locations which feature in films to ensure audience orientation, predominantly filming the waterfront and St George's Hall. Locations in the city centre disproportionately outnumber those within the wider region in terms of frequency of filming. Drawing on my interviews with location managers Claire Newton and Richard Knight, this is likely because of the versatility of the landscape to play somewhere else, as well as the area containing landmarks. Landmarks are used in films set in Liverpool to orientate audiences - landmark signposting. I found most films used establishing shots of landmarks in Liverpool to signpost, with several films doing so within their opening sequences. This affirms the Three Graces at the foot of the River Mersey are iconic imagery associated with the identity of Liverpool. However, comparing the presentation of locations featured in the films to the GIS map's layers, I found that there is disparity between the real Liverpool and the one we see on screen. I used the GIS map to identify filming hot-spots which occur in the city centre, specifically around the waterfront. This can affect perceptions of the size of Liverpool, narrowing it by concentrating its portrayal mostly as the city centre. The map also displays when elsewhere had been used to double as another location. When Liverpool locations were not used, and when they were used to represent somewhere else, including a different location in Liverpool, I assert that this can negatively affect audiences' perceptions of Liverpool as the city is being misrepresented.

I drew closely on the work of Hallam and Roberts in their exploration into how the city in film can be understood, with their '*Mapping the City in Film*' project serving as a central resource which ultimately underpins the geographical and architectural elements of this study. Nonetheless, I also found that sources pertaining to identity and stereotype were relevant to my discussion of perceptions of place. I assert that, although beyond the scope of this study, there are parallels between the presentation of characters and locations. Where Platt argues that "cultural products of the city have played a role in the development

of stereotypes that people associate with Liverpool, and have contributed to the iterative process of negative interpellation”, a cycle of perpetuating Scouse stereotypes has been established (2014, p.74). Films as culture influence people’s perceptions of Liverpool, therefore contributing to the iterative process of stereotypical Scouse characters featuring in films. In line with this project, I suggest that this notion applies to locations which audiences have become accustomed to seeing - such as landmarks we automatically associate with the city. Although, this occurs less so with other areas such as the beaches or Georgian Quarter which mostly double as elsewhere or period locations rather than Liverpool today. However, both play a role in misrepresenting the city.

Furthermore, perceptions of Liverpool are influenced by the context of the audience and whether they are an insider or an outsider, nuanced by individual circumstances and contexts. Our cognitive maps are affected by our lived-experiences and our visual experiences. I have demonstrated the influence of films on altering our cognitive maps, and the influence of the map on our understanding of the relationship between space and narrative. Relating to Fischer-Nebmaier’s notions on narrative theory, point of view is a crucial element to consider, not only from the perspective of the storyteller, as discussed in relation to Scouse filmmaker Terence Davies, but also the impact of the audience’s perspective of the city-text and the narrative depicted within it. Reception of the city-text is influenced by audience members’ pre-existing ideas about the city. This means, overall, audiences’ perceptions of the city will be an amalgamation of their existing version of the lived-city, including their dynamic cognitive map, and what they learn or perceive from the city-text. This can include how the city looks, feels, and operates within the world of the text, details which also develop an audience member’s cognitive map. The subjectivity of this project, I argue, is valuable. My introspection into my own relationship with the city while considering that of the filmmakers’ and audiences’, both insider and outsider, addresses perceptions of Liverpool’s identity displayed through the depiction of its locations in films. This project could be developed to include audience analysis to advance our understanding of how films affect perceptions of Liverpool. It may be possible to measure differences between insider and outsider perceptions, including a comparison of their cognitive mapping of Liverpool before and after watching the films to see how the city-text may influence them. Consequently, I do not fully support Mennel (2003) or Mazierska and Rascaroli’s (2008) claims that

the city's portrayal in film is accurate because the portrayal and our perceptions of it are nuanced.

Moreover, the literal city is too nuanced and complex itself for a single film to encapsulate a holistically accurate depiction. The filming locations used can suggest different ideals about Liverpool, largely based off the narrative of each film. Landmarks are used to aid orientation and, somewhat, promote Liverpool, thus featuring more frequently across most of the films in my sample. However, framing and narrative context of locations, to an extent including landmark locations, diversifies the portrayals of them, as discussed with the waterfront. The narrative of the film plays a role in how the locations can be interpreted. In tandem with this, the socio-economic and historical context of locations can affect perceptions of them when featured within the city-text. As discussed in 'It all Starts at the Waterfront', the same locations can provoke differing historical associations when viewed within the context of the films' narratives. In this sense, there is not one definitive way for Liverpool to be portrayed, or indeed perceived. To build on my work in this dissertation, it would be relevant to expand the parameters of the texts analysed. A study of the same breadth as that examined by Stadler, Mitchell and Carleton (2015) of Australia across a range of narrative forms would be a valuable development in this area of study. They, too, highlight that mapping place based on literature has scarcely been examined alongside films, and theirs was the first project to map works of theatre (Stadler, Mitchell & Carleton, 2015, p.21-22). As Liverpool features in theatre, particularly of the works by Scouse playwrights Willy Russell and Alan Bleasdale, this would be a fruitful direction for the future of this geovisual exploration. However, here I have demonstrated that the multifaceted complexities of the city are not portrayed totally within a single film. Therefore, I assert that one film does not wholly depict the identity of Liverpool.

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Figures

Figure 2 - Amazon Prime. (2024). *Going off big time*, 00:04:01. [Screenshot].
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Figure 3 - Amazon Prime. (2024). *Going off big time*, 00:58:53. [Screenshot].
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Figure 6 - BBC2 England. (2021). *Film stars don't die in Liverpool (2020)*, 0:22:29. [Screenshot]. Box of Broadcasts
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Figure 7 - Video Archive. (2024). *No Surrender (1985) [1080p Remaster] Alan Bleasdale, Michael Angelis, Bernard Hill, 0:06:00*. [Screenshot]. YouTube. [No Surrender \(1985\) \[1080p Remaster\] Alan Bleasdale, Michael Angelis, Bernard Hill \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=No+Surrender+(1985)+[1080p+Remaster]+Alan+Bleasdale,+Michael+Angelis,+Bernard+Hill)

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Figure 11 - Retro Central. (2024). *Blonde Fist | Full Classic Action Movie | 90's Action | HD Movie | English Movie | Retro Central, 1:39:34-1:39:40*. [Screenshots]. YouTube. [Blonde Fist | Full Classic Action Movie | 90's Action | HD Movie | English Movie | Retro Central \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Blonde+Fist+|+Full+Classic+Action+Movie+|+90's+Action+|+HD+Movie+|+English+Movie+|+Retro+Central)

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Figure 16 - FilmFour. (2016). *Kelly + Victor (2012), 1:06:50-1:07:45*. [Screenshots]. Box of Broadcasts
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Figure 17 - Talking Pictures TV. (2022). *Violent playground (1958), 29:52*. [Screenshot]. Box of Broadcasts
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Figure 18 - Channel5. (2024). *Shirley Valentine (1989), 39:24*. [Screenshot]. Box of Broadcasts
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Figure 20 - Dark Matter TV. (2022). *Distant Voices, Still Lives (1998) Full Movie* | Pete Postlethwaite, Freda Dowie, Angela Walsh, 0:00:41- 0:00:55. [Screenshot]. YouTube. [Distant Voices, Still Lives \(1998\) Full Movie | Pete Postlethwaite, Freda Dowie, Angela Walsh \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

Figure 21 - FilmFour. (2023). *The long day closes (1992)*, 06:04. [Screenshot] Box of Broadcasts
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Filmography

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- Bernard, C. (Director). (1985). *Letter to brezhnev* [Film]. Channel Four Films; Palace Pictures; Yeardream
- Bowen, L., Carey, C. & Freeman, M. (Executive Producers). (2022-present). *The responder* [TV Series]. Dancing Ledge Productions
- Carné, M. (Director). (1946). *Les portes de la nuit* [Film]. Société Nouvelle Pathé Cinéma
- Frears, S. (Director). (2001). *Liam* [Film]. BBC Film; Liam Films; Road Movies Filmproduktion
- Frend, C. (Director). (1950). *The magnet* [Film]. J. Arthur Rank Organisation; Ealing Studios
- Kershaw, N. & Valentine, R. (Directors). (2007). *The Liverpool nativity* [TV Film]. BBC.
- Loach, K. (Director). (1991). *Riff-Raff* [Film]. Parallax Pictures; Channel Four Films
- Massey, M. & Young, M. (Executive Producers). (2011-2012). *Desperate Scousewives* [TV Series]. E4
- Mullan, P. (Director). (2010). *Neds* [Film]. Film4; UK Film Council; Scottish Screen
- Reeves, M. (Director). (2022). *The batman* [Film]. Warner Bros.; DC Entertainment; 6th & Idaho Productions

Sample of Films

Bird, A. (Director). (1994). *Priest* [Film]. BBC Films; Miramax; PolyGram Filmed Entertainment

Broughton, P. (Director). (1994). *Blood on the dole* [Film]. Jab Films

Clarke, F. (Director). (1991). *Blonde fist* [Film]. Blue Dolphin Film Distribution; Film Four International

Cox, A. (Director). (1998). *Three businessmen* [Film]. Bandai Visual Company; Exterminating Angel Production; PSC

Davies, T. (Director). (1992). *The long day closes* [Film]. BFI; Channel Four Films; Film Four International

Davies, T. (Director). (1998). *Distant voices, still lives* [Film]. BFI; Channel Four Films; ZDF

Davies, T. (Director). (2008). *Of time and the city* [Film]. Hurricane Films; Northwest Vision and Media; Digital Departures

Dearden, B. (Director). (1958). *Violent playground* [Film]. The Rank Organisation

Donaldson, L. (Director). (2003). *The virgin of Liverpool* [Film]. Senator International; The Mob Film Company; Senator Film Produktion

Doyle, J. (Director). (2000). *Going off big time* [Film]. Enterprise Films

Evans, K. (Director). (2012). *Kelly + Victor* [Film]. Hot Property Films; Venom Films

Gilbert, L. (Director). (1983). *Educating Rita* [Film]. Acorn Pictures

Gilbert, L. (Director). (1989). *Shirley valentine* [Film]. Paramount Pictures

Haggard, P. (Director). (1970) *No trams to lime street* [Film]. BBC

Laxton, R. (Director). (2007). *Grow your own* [Film]. Warp Films; Art in Action; BBC Film

McGuigan, P. (Director) (2017). *Film stars don't die in Liverpool* [Film]. Eon Pictures; Synchronistic Pictures

Mead, N. (Director). (1999). *Swing* [Film]. Tapestry Films; The Kushner-Locke Company

Morrissey, D. (Director). (2009). *Don't worry about me* [Film]. Tubedale Films

Smith, P. (Director). (1985). *No surrender* [Film]. Channel Four Films; Dumbarton Films; Lauron International

Taylor, S. (Director). (2009). *Nowhere boy* [Film]. Ecosse Films; Film4; UK Film Council

Yu, R. (Director). (2002). *The 51st state* [Film]. Alliance Atlantis Communications; Focus Films; Fifty First Films

Figure 24 - Sample of 21 Films list