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### Citation for published version

Brydon, Lavinia (2015) Shelagh Delaney (1938-2011). In: Nelmes, Jill and Selbo, Jule, eds. Women Screenwriters: An International Guide. Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 650-658. ISBN 978-1-137-31237-7

### DOI

<https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137312372>

### Link to record in KAR

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/55841/>

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**Title: The Place of Shelagh Delaney in the British New Wave and Beyond**

**Abstract:** This essay concerns Shelagh Delaney who began her career writing for theatre but worked across various media, including film, until her death in 2011. Its primary intention is to highlight Delaney's contribution to the British New Wave of the late 1950s and early 1960s, detailing how her writing served to tell the stories of Northern England in both visual and verbal terms. Focusing on Delaney's first screenplay, *A Taste of Honey* (1961), but taking into account the more experimental work of the late 1960s, the discussion examines how her writing considered the possibilities afforded by the medium of film and, in particular, location shoots. It is especially concerned with how Delaney made use of nomadic figures, expressive language and named locations to convey her understanding of her home-city, Salford, and the neighbouring Manchester.

**Keywords:** Shelagh Delaney, British New Wave, Salford, *A Taste of Honey*, *The White Bus*, *Charlie Bubbles*

## **The Place of Shelagh Delaney in the British New Wave and Beyond**

The phrasing of this essay's title and, in particular, the choice of the word 'place' signals the multiple, interweaving strands of my discussion on Shelagh Delaney. It primarily speaks to the essay's key aim, namely to investigate and (re)consider the place or, rather, status that this female writer has traditionally held within the male-dominated environment of British film culture and, in particular, the British New Wave. However, it also indicates how this (re)consideration takes into account Delaney's sensitivity towards cinema's spatial dimensions and dynamics as evidenced by narratives alert to geographical locations and centred upon journeys, as well as the overlooked character and camera movements detailed in her screenplays. This is especially important given that Delaney worked across different media during her career including theatre, television, radio and literature via the short story format but is often discussed in rather exclusive terms as a playwright. Finally, the wording of my title is an attempt to draw attention to how Delaney incorporated a very personal experience of place – namely Salford, Lancashire – into her work. Indeed, as the discussion reveals, Salford never merely served as the setting for Delaney's stories but, rather, inspired their trajectories, shaped the characters and was fundamental to the creation of a distinctly uneasy atmosphere. For though Delaney had a great affection for her home-city – its industrial splendour and the warmth of its people – she was also deeply anxious about Salford's rapid decline, its crumbling physical structures and disintegrating social fabric.

The lack of consideration given to Delaney's place within British film culture is neatly evidenced by the fact that, on her death in 2011, the seventy-one-year-old was still best known for her stage

work, in particular her first play *A Taste of Honey* which premiered in 1958 at the Theatre Royal, Stratford, East London. As the numerous obituaries detailed, Delaney had cemented her position within British theatre history with the rebellious content of this two-act play. In sympathetically charting the challenges facing a pregnant, working-class teenager named Jo who lives amongst the canals and gasworks of Salford, Delaney was quickly and permanently labelled an ‘angry young woman’ to rival the likes of John Osborne and Alan Sillitoe. Thus, writing for *The Guardian* Dennis Barker began his obituary by calling Delaney a ‘feisty playwright’ (2011) while, closer to her native Salford, *The Manchester Evening News* emphasized Delaney’s contribution to Britain’s post-war theatrical revival by defining her as a ‘kitchen sink playwright’ (Anon 2011). Typical of the articles that appeared in the wake of her death, there was little or, in the case of *The Manchester Evening News*, no mention of Delaney’s contributions to British film. Some effort, admittedly, was made by *The Independent*’s Chris Maume to recognize that Delaney’s talents extended beyond her stage work in that he used the more inclusive term of ‘writer’ in his piece which, notably, was the term also chosen by Delaney’s only daughter, Charlotte, to announce her mother’s death (quoted in Anon 2011). Across the Atlantic Ocean *The New York Times* was more explicit in its view of Delaney’s cinematic achievements, discussing her as both a ‘British playwright and screenwriter’ (Weber 2011). However, these exceptions aside, the persistent need to foreground Delaney’s debut work remains, revealing the extent to which the writer’s achievements beyond her teenage years and, therefore, beyond the theatre have been grossly neglected. This includes Delaney’s contribution to the film adaptation of *A Taste of Honey*, a key work within the British New Wave.

Within film scholarship the inclination to overlook this aspect of Delaney's talent continues, though typically her shared credit – with the director Tony Richardson – for the adaptation of *A Taste of Honey* is acknowledged. As with the original play, interest in the film primarily stems from its position within a broader movement rather than an examination of its stand-alone merits. This is understandable given that its working-class content, industrial city setting and realist aesthetic, as discussed by John Hill (1986: 127-144), connects well with other films of the period: for example, *Room at the Top* (1959), *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960) and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1962). Yet, as Terry Lovell observes, recognition of the film's value has not always led to vigorous analysis (1996: 169). Lovell, along with Hill, Andrew Higson (1996) and, most recently, Robert Murphy (2014) have gone some way to addressing this issue, but there is no denying that their thoughtful studies still largely side-line Delaney's major contribution to the film. There are several explanations for this, including the lack of critical and commercial success for Delaney's subsequent 1960s screenplays: *Charlie Bubbles* (1967) and *The White Bus* (1968). However, one prominent reason lies with the elevated status given to *A Taste of Honey*'s other key contributors, namely Richardson and the cinematographer, Walter Lassally. It seems that Richardson's screenwriting credit for *A Taste of Honey* combined with his directorial duties makes it irresistible for most scholars to consider the film as anything other than the creation of its male director. When it is discussed in other terms, the conversation moves towards Lassally's photography given the film's interest in location shooting and, in particular, those shots that function beyond the construction of narrative space (see Higson 1996). In this way, film scholarship reflects and extends a bias that has been apparent since the film's release. As the words of Paul Dehn make clear, early reviews were quick to promote *A Taste of Honey*'s male contributors above Delaney: 'The film's real heroes

are Mr Richardson and his masterly cameraman, Walter Lassally, who between them have caught Manchester's canal threaded hinterland to a misty, moisty, smoky nicety' (quoted in Higson 1996: 142).

Though Dehn's comment is used above to indicate Delaney's unfair exclusion from discussions on *A Taste of Honey* in broad terms, it is especially troubling in that it denies her contribution to the film's atmospheric sense of place. It overlooks how Delaney's story, which remains fundamentally intact in its transposition from stage to screen, originates and develops from personal observations about *her* home-city, Salford, and the larger neighbouring city of Manchester. As she stated on the eve of her play's premiere in an interview for ITN, *A Taste of Honey* was inspired and informed by her experience of Salford, 'it had to be [...] I'd never been anywhere else' (1959). Indeed, the sharp insights and rich detail regarding the smog-filled city and its struggling but spirited inhabitants very much on local knowledge. Consider, for example, the refreshingly blunt lines pertaining to the inescapable dirt of Salford, many of which make it into the film albeit in a revised form and order. A line originally spoken on-stage by Jo's boyfriend whereby he calls Salford 'just the dirtiest place' (1959: 36) thus finds an on-screen equivalent in Geoff's words, 'You can't help but get dirty round here' (Delaney and Richardson 1961: 66) whereas Jo's highly expressive comments in the play about the 'filthy children' playing outside (off-stage) and one particular boy whose 'hair, honestly, it's walking away' (1959: 54) undergo just the smallest of cuts during the adaptation process (see Delaney and Richardson 1961: 69).

However, examining the screenplay also makes clear the pre-production decision to explore and expand Delaney's understanding of Salford in visual terms. To take the example of Jo's lines above, the screenplay is careful to detail the accompanying camera's movements and focus, in particular a lingering close-up of a 'strange vacant, slightly mongoloid child, very neglected' before a pan to Jo's 'staring face' (Delaney and Richardson 1961: 69). The combination of this visual and verbal honesty regarding Salford living undoubtedly results in one of the film's most striking sequences, effectively ensuring that the audience begins to share Delaney's concerns for her home-city as seen and voiced by Jo. In this way, it does not matter that the screenplay was co-authored or that Richardson's previous film work presumably had a greater influence on any written camera directions, the visual details read here and carried through to the released film are very much inspired by the candid remarks that Delaney first assigned to Jo in the play. As *The Times* reviewer noted on the film's release: 'The background is always alive and always changing but the visual image is in keeping with the spoken word' (quoted in Harding 2014: 122).

Of course, it is easier to recognize Delaney's contribution to the film's powerful images when the play's original descriptive dialogue accompanies them in some shape or form. However, a comparative analysis of the various texts that relate to the film adaptation of *A Taste of Honey* show that Delaney's influence remains strong even when the source material is significantly cut and her words go unspoken. Indeed, in many ways the omitted dialogue is as crucial to the film's visual content as the lines that remain, providing a template from which Richardson and Lassally clearly worked. Jo's observation that the sun sets early (1959: 22), for example, finds its way into the film via a darkly lit *mise-en-scène* replete with overcast skies and shadowy streets.

Likewise, comments about the city's cool temperature and unpleasant smell (1959: 7, 8, 11, 37) have visual referents in the wet pavements, muddy canal waters and littered streets that are rarely absent from the screen. There are also the omitted lines regarding the gasworks (1959: 7, 47) to consider. Although the characters no longer refer directly to this particular marker of England's industrial North, Delaney's original observations remain silently present in those impressive shots of vast steel frames and smoking chimneys that stand as omniscient structures while the action unfolds.

Moreover, further study of the written texts alongside the film's images reveals that Delaney influenced *A Taste of Honey*'s visual composition as much its content. In the play an early line from Jo's mother, Helen, helps to elucidate the point. As a response to Jo's worries about their new accommodation, Helen states: 'Everything in it's falling apart, it's true, and we've no heating - but there's a lovely view of the gasworks [...] What more do you want?' (1959: 7). Admittedly spoken with the dry irony that characterizes much of the play's dialogue, the line still hints at the often-ignored picturesque quality of the industrialized landscape. In doing so it prompts some consideration of the gasworks' aesthetic appeal; how their hulking forms create a dynamic vista that can be celebrated rather than criticized. The importance of this idea was clearly reflected upon during the adaptation process and, then, later as filming began. The original line is maintained in the final screenplay (Delaney and Richardson 1961: 6) and Rita Davidson's continuity reports from 7 April 1961 (n.p.) prove it progressed onto celluloid. Its absence from the final film can thus be seen as the result of Lassally's thoughtfully framed images. Taking his cue from Delaney's oblique praise of the Northern landscape's visual pleasures, Lassally frequently allows Salford's steel structures and brick buildings to take



priority in his compositions thereby rendering the original line redundant. As Higson has discussed in detail, *A Taste of Honey* is full of shots that can be read ‘as *spectacle*, as a visually pleasurable lure to the spectator’s eye’ (1996: 134).

Although the beauty of Salford’s squalor is best communicated in the film via a ‘self-conscious aestheticization of the landscape’ (Higson 1996: 143), another of the city’s key qualities is made manifest in the thoughts, actions and, even, jobs of Delaney’s carefully drawn characters. Carried through from the play to the film, these character details pertain to Salford’s uneasy restlessness, as described by the Delaney in Ken Russell’s short documentary for the BBC art series, *Monitor*: ‘Salford isn’t only alive, its restless with all the coming and the goings of the markets and the docks, so at the same time, somehow or another, it seems to be dying’ (1960). Certainly Jo and Helen’s nomadic lifestyle resonates with Delaney’s comment. Portrayed by Rita Tushingham and Dora Bryan in the film, their movements across the city are haphazard, determined by irate landlords pursuing overdue rent and an unplanned pregnancy rather than their own clearly defined goals. Indeed, this mother and daughter partnership serves to illuminate the two strands of Salford’s working-class population that Delaney identifies in Russell’s documentary. As she observes, the city is composed of figures in the ‘chaos of middle-age, when it is too late to start again and it’s too early to give up’ and, also, a frustrated younger generation who don’t always know where they want to go but they ‘want to go somewhere [...] they are all like tethered, like a horse on a tether, jerking about, waiting for somebody to cut the tether’ (ibid.).

Interestingly, Helen and Jo’s romantic interests fall somewhere in between these two types but can still be considered key components of Salford’s instability. The brash, cigar smoking Peter

(Robert Stephens) does not share Helen's resignation about life's possibilities, continuing to favour the pleasurable over the practical as illustrated by his pursuit and, later, abandonment of the older 'semi-whore' (Delaney 1959: 7). However, his desires do not extend into daydreams as they do for the teenage Jo and, accordingly, he does not exhibit her level of rebelliousness. Peter thus inhabits a curious space of limited freedom, which is marked by curtailed movements and anxious activity. Trips away, for example, do not stretch beyond nearby seaside resorts and, in one of the later scenes, he impatiently paces Jo's flat. Moreover, Peter's success as a used car salesman serves to suggest that many of Salford's residents are equally unsettled, supporting and strengthening Delaney's view of the city as a 'terrible drug' which people want to leave but find they cannot 'for lots of different reasons' (Russell 1960). Notably, the car as a symbol of modern movement, exuding speed but often lacking purpose, is taken through to Jo's boyfriend. Jimmy (Paul Danquah), as he is named in the film, is a naval rating who keeps a toy car in his pocket. Given that this toy car fascinates Jo in a way that Jimmy's recently proffered engagement ring does not serve to suggest that the teenager is rightly sceptical about the proposal. To her, the toy car better represents the fleeting pleasure of the liaison. 'I'll probably never see you again. I know it' (Delaney and Richardson 1961: 38 amended) she says just before they consummate their relationship.

That Jimmy's departure is constantly anticipated in the film with lines such as 'I'll be gone soon' (Delaney and Richardson 1961: 37 amended) and 'You can lie in bed and hear me ship passing down the old canal' (ibid.) serves to further underscore Delaney's notion of the city's restless state. While similar words are spoken in the original play, the film undoubtedly reinforces the sentiment in its replacement of the play's *fixed* stage set – 'a comfortless flat' (Delaney 1959: 7)

– for an *unfixed* location shoot that incorporates the Manchester-Salford bus route, day trips to Blackpool pleasure beach and Treak Cavern in Derbyshire as well as depicting the various arrivals and departures of Manchester’s waterways. The lines regarding Jimmy’s transient state certainly gain potency in the film from being spoken outdoors, as he and Jo wander down the side of the canal beside boats that chug and bellow. Delaney’s reduced involvement once filming began does not negate the importance of her work in such scenes. Even when reshaped or removed in the adaptation process Delaney’s original dialogue regarding the waterways – their stench (1959: 11) and dark colour (1959: 54) – can be seen to inform the film’s exterior shots. There is also her awareness of the waterways’ sounds to consider. Original notes for the play’s sound designer, for example, ‘[*Tugboat heard.*.]’ (1959: 11) are developed in the screenplay: ‘A ship’s hooter is heard very plainly in the distance (Richardson and Delaney 1961: 37), serving to provide Richardson with further detail on how to present Salford on screen.

While thus far this essay has chiefly focused on how the directions and dialogue found in Delaney’s original play shaped the later film’s depiction of Salford and Manchester, it needs noting that her and Richardson’s screenplay contains numerous original scenes that significantly flesh out the settings and even specify particular sites of the two cities. The film begins, for example, in the grounds of Jo’s school described in the screenplay as ‘a large Victorian building whose aspect is more impressive than its amenities’ (Delaney and Richardson 1961: 1). In the next scene, the film introduces Jo and Helen’s soon-to-be-abandoned living quarters, the basement of a small house that ‘stands in a terrace on top of a hill with some waste ground in front of it [...] around the hill panorama are smoking chimneys’ (ibid.: 2). On leaving this subterranean Manchester home for the ‘bleak, sparsely furnished’ (ibid.: 6) rooms of a Salford

flat, however, the film produces a sequence that must be solely (or mostly) attributed to Delaney given its dependence on local knowledge. As detailed in the screenplay:

We see the centre of Manchester, Piccadilly – a very crowded place with plenty of lights and plenty going on. Then as the bus leaves the city centre behind everything is much quieter as it travels down through Chapel Street, Salford – past Salford Royal Hospital and the River Irwell – seeing silent housetops and church spires and chimneys, and great black granite monuments and statues erected to the great men of the past – Oliver Cromwell, Robert Peel.’ (1961: 3)

Importantly these details not only evidence Delaney’s local knowledge but also relay a very personal experience of growing up in Salford, confirmed by examining Russell’s documentary once more. During the film, entitled *Shelagh Delaney’s Salford*, the writer escorts Russell through her home-city acknowledging its decay and dirt but also drawing attention to its inherent drama, made manifest by the bustling market and striking statues. Thus, at one point, when the camera pans across crumbling buildings and litter-strewn streets Delaney says, ‘It’s a dirty place too I suppose but at the same time it’s dramatic’, and when the camera rests on the stone figure of a war veteran, she adds ‘even he’s dramatic in his own way’ (Russell 1960).

In Delaney’s desire to convey Salford’s dirt and drama early on via *A Taste of Honey*’s extended bus sequence, the writer also demonstrates a sharp awareness of the unique possibilities of film. Released from the physical limitations of the staged drama and the audience’s singular point of view, Delaney not only offers a variety of outdoor structures and statues for the camera to pick out, she also notes that these must be presented as fragmented and fleeting images consistent with Jo’s eye line: ‘JO cleans a patch in the steamed window with her gloved hand. She gazes at

the passing city' (Delaney and Richardson 1961: 3). Character and camera movements remain prominent throughout the screenplay even when the story is not so centred on travel, from Jo and Jimmy's movements described as 'dance-like' (ibid.: 37) in one sequence to the subtle pans that accompany Jo on her afternoon off work, granting access to the Derbyshire countryside, 'the whole sweep of the valley' (ibid.: 61). To me, these instructions regarding movements are fundamental to final film's appeal, adding a certain dynamism that is absent in the earlier Richardson-directed New Wave film *Look Back in Anger* (1959). To agree with Sue Harper, they help confirm that the film 'owes as much Delaney's reorientation of the play as it does to Richardson's direction' (2000: 112).

Without doubt the presence of Delaney within the final film resonates more strongly once the consistencies between this work and her later Northern-set screenplays, *About the White Bus* and *Charlie Bubbles*, are noted. Jo's interest in the Manchester cityscape, including its many statues, at the beginning of *A Taste of Honey*, for example, connects to The Girl's (Patricia Healey) actions near the start of *The White Bus*, as she arrives in the Northern city from London. As detailed in the third, incomplete draft the unnamed girl 'walks across the deserted square. She observes the grimy statue at its centre. She puts on her glasses to see more closely' (Delaney [1965b?]: 5). In a sequence significantly developed from the snippets offered in Delaney's original short story (1963: 165-186) the girl's subsequent meandering stroll across the city also recalls Jo's extended walk home from school, when she encounters Jimmy for the second time. In both, the young women seem somewhat lost as they aimlessly wander the city, observing the strange (and, as regards *The White Bus*, surreal) stillness of normally bustling roads and rivers. The two sequences are also comparable in that their mutual interest in place and atmosphere

prompt their respective directors, Lindsay Anderson and the aforementioned Tony Richardson, to create some of the most technically interesting sections in each film. Following the instructions of the screenplay, Richardson thus takes a break from *A Taste of Honey*'s snappy, dialogue-driven scenes to offer a 'number of mute shots with music [...] something of the feeling of montage' (Delaney and Richardson 1961: 16) while Anderson injects colour into the hitherto black and white film, a poetically expressive manoeuvre in keeping with the experimental writing style of Delaney's source material.

In a recent article that examines Richardson's contribution to British film, Robert Murphy notes how the director and Delaney's shared North of England upbringing and, connectedly, their status as outsiders helped their collaboration on *A Taste of Honey*. He is particularly keen to emphasize how their personal experiences ensured a sympathetic portrayal of the film's young characters: 'Richardson and Delaney [...] were both misfits themselves, so they identify with rather than patronise Jo and Geoff' (2014: 384). This is certainly evidenced in the sequence outlined above where Jo's solitary walk, beginning with an awkward stumble down school steps, never prompts feelings of pity from the audience but, rather, a peculiar sense of admiration. With the dissolves emphasizing Jo's lengthy navigation of towpaths, locks and bridges but the reprised musical motif of *The Big Ship Sails* nursery rhyme lending it a certain playfulness, Richardson's montage respects and develops Delaney's early desire to present the Salford teenager as 'extraordinary', 'unique' (1959: 50) or, indeed, 'bloody marvellous' (ibid.: 51). It is harder, however, to tell whether Anderson felt similarly compelled to relate Delaney's understanding and admiration of Northerners while working on *The White Bus*. In his own words, he felt that the film adaptation 'derived closely from the original story, but [...] went a good way beyond it'

(1979: n.p.), most notably in the development of the satirical element. That said, Anderson makes clear in John Fletcher's documentary, *About The White Bus*, that the crew were not simply 'out to take a rise out of Salford [...] the ambition of the film must be larger than that' (1968), perhaps explaining his decision to maintain Delaney's lines regarding the 'warmth' and 'friendliness' ([1965a?]: 12) of the people despite the subsequent cuts and changes to this section of the screenplay.

As it is well known Anderson was a difficult director, who often refused to accept and integrate others' artistic visions into his work, but his appreciation for Delaney's writing talent was apparent early on in the film's production history. Although he initially 'floundered' (Fletcher 1968) when producer Oscar Lewenstein suggested using one of Delaney's short stories for his contribution to the originally intended (but ultimately shelved) three-film project *Red, White and Zero*, he soon warmed to the idea and selected Delaney's subjective and rather surreal story, *The White Bus*, for adaptation. A subsequent meeting with the like-minded Delaney offered further reassurance: 'we met and decided we got on, and saw eye to eye about the kind of thing that the story represented, the kind of material it represented' (Fletcher 1968). This shared critical understanding no doubt secured Delaney's presence for script revisions once filming began, though Anderson later noted that during the shoot 'she didn't say much. She was there, but didn't really participate' (2004 [1994]: 106). His comments certainly tally with Delaney's infrequent appearances in *About the White Bus* and the gentle way in which she instructs the director on script changes when, at one point, her contribution does become the focus of the documentary. However, Delaney's quiet demeanour during the shoot does not diminish her importance to the final film, not least because *The White Bus* constantly returns to the writer's knowledge of

Salford for suitable filming locations. In using many of Delaney's old haunts, including Pendleton High School for Girls and Buile Hill Park, the film adaptation thus maintains a strong connection to its original material and 'maker' even as Anderson's authorial control and his other collaborators ensured 'it is not the film of the scenario' but, rather, 'uniquely *The White Bus*' (Fletcher 1968).

In *The White Bus* The Girl views the Salford locations as a detached but not disinterested local, made manifest by her tendency to sit or stand on the fringe of the tour group. Her attitude sharply contrasts to the young female character, Eliza, in Delaney's next Northern-set screenplay, *Charlie Bubbles*. Played by Liza Minnelli, the American Eliza eagerly visits the various sites around Salford and Manchester with her successful Northern-born employer, the eponymous writer Charlie Bubbles (Albert Finney). From an early draft of the screenplay, it is clear that Delaney developed Eliza as a foil to the disenchanted Charlie, especially as regards their attitudes towards his home-city. A note for one key sequence, where Charlie and Eliza (or, rather, Elizabeth as she is called in the earlier draft) take an early morning city tour thus reads:

Throughout the whole of this sequence [...] the comments made by ELIZABETH are directly commented upon by CHARLIE, who is, in this case, the camera – ELIZA sees the narrow streets and the railway and so on and so forth as charming and characterful – CHARLIE/CAMERA sees these places as they are and whatever that is it certainly isn't charming and romantic (Delaney: 1966a)

While in a later draft, the note is omitted the contrast in outlooks between employer and employee remains strong. Eliza, for example, is described as having 'wings on her feet' when she leaps up a slagheap to survey the industrial landscape and considers the unfolding view



‘marvellous’ whereas Charlie has ‘no wings on his feet’ but, rather, ‘stumbles on the loosely packed slag – his feet sink into the rubbish – he scrambles over the random tipplings of rag and bone men’ (Delaney 1966b: 61). In presenting the landscape through these two perspectives, Delaney makes clear that her ambivalence towards Salford and its surrounds not only persists but has also grown more complicated since the early success of *A Taste of Honey*. For all the area’s faults, as first outlined in that work, Delaney could still understand its appeal: ‘For me, it’s always a question of coming back’ (Russell 1960).

On its release, many reviews commented on how Charlie’s uneasy return to the North resonated with the film’s director and lead actor, the Salford-born Albert Finney. In an interview with *The New York Times*, Finney admitted that ‘the resemblances are there, but Charlie’s dilemma – about success and its meaning or lack of it – is not mine. I think I’m more “digested” than Charlie’ (Watts 1966: n.p.). It is fair to say that Delaney was not so ‘digested’, and it was her unease regarding the consequences of career success that served to shape Charlie’s story. This included her decision to spend a significant amount of time in London once *A Taste of Honey* went into production with Joan Littlewood’s Theatre Workshop. There can be no doubt that England’s capital city offered greater opportunities for the young writer but it also introduced Delaney to a ‘theatrical’ environment clearly at odds with her modest Northern upbringing. Delaney’s conflicted stance regarding her geographical base is best sensed in *Charlie Bubbles* through the words of Gerry (John Ronane), an old friend of Charlie’s. Having bumped into each other at football match the two discuss work, prompting Gerry to reveal that he is reluctant to move to London despite job offers: ‘I don’t want to leave this place. [...] It’s not a beauty spot

exactly, but it's home and I don't like it down south very much – it seems to me that you can get bogged down with a lot of false values living in London' (Delaney 1966b: 86).

In the same way that Jo in *A Taste of Honey* and The Girl in *The White Bus* can be considered surrogates for Delaney, Gerry thus also serves to reflect some of the considerations and concerns held by the film's writer. Along with Charlie's open-eyed view of his home-city and the contrasting enthused attitude of Eliza, he helps convey Delaney's complicated relationship with the North of England. It is this vivid and layered imag(in)ing of place in all three films that surely makes Delaney a 'heroine' of the British New Wave and the later period, easily matching the contributions of her male colleagues. She proved a driving force in capturing a particular moment in the North's history, first conveying the physical and social decline of Salford in *A Taste of Honey* and then, in the later 1960s works, the unsettled spaces of change and construction. As described in the *Charlie Bubbles* screenplay, the 'old streets of terraced are dominated by new flats and building in progress, etc.' and Eliza laments, 'it's a shame in a way to pull all these lovely old places down – they have so much character' (Delaney 1966b: 62). Indeed, it can be said that there is a certain urgency to Delaney's work at this time, a pressing desire to put *her* Salford on screen before it was lost entirely. A similar comment might be made of this essay. Taking into account that, in the three years since Delaney's death, her debut play *A Taste of Honey* still dominates discussions on the writer (aided by the National Theatre's recent revival of the work), it has felt increasingly necessary to promote her work for film least it too be forgotten. I hope this essay goes some way to protecting Delaney from this fate and is the start of a new conversation.

## **Films**

*A Taste of Honey* (1961) Wr: Shelagh Delaney and Tony Richardson, Dr: Tony Richardson. UK, 100 mins.

*Charlie Bubbles* (1967), Wr: Shelagh Delaney Dr: Albert Finney. UK, 89 mins.

*Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner, The* (1962), Wr: Alan Sillitoe Dr: Tony Richardson. UK, 104 mins.

*Look Back in Anger* (1959), Wr: Nigel Kneale and John Osborne Dr: Tony Richardson. UK, 101 mins.

*Room at the Top* (1959), Wr: Neil Paterson, Dr: Jack Clayton UK, 115 mins.

*White Bus, The* (1968), Wr: Shelagh Delaney, Dr: Lindsay Anderson. UK, 46 mins.

*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960), Wr: Alan Sillitoe, Dr: Karel Reisz. UK, 89 mins.

## **Documentaries**

*About the White Bus* (1968), Dr: John Fletcher. UK, 60 mins.

*Shelagh Delaney's Salford* (BBC, 1960), Dr: Ken Russell. UK, 15 mins.

'ITN interview with Shelagh Delaney' (ITN, 1959), UK, 1.5 mins.

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