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Education, Society and Coming of Age in Ken Loach's "Kes"

Eliška Čapková

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Zásady pro vypracování

Bakalářská práce se zaměří na téma dospívání ve filmu „Kes“ (1970) britského režiséra Kena Loache. Věnovat se bude podobám a vývoji anglického vzdělávacího systému a společenským poměrům 60. let. Zaměří se především na komplikovaný region anglického severu. Mimo jiné se pokusí odpovědět na otázku, zda je úděl mladého protagonisty pouze regionálním fenoménem, nebo zda je metaforickým zobrazením stavu celé společnosti.

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Vedoucí bakalářské práce: **Mgr. Michal Kleprlík, Ph.D.**
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doc. Mgr. Jiří Kubeš, Ph.D.
děkan

Mgr. Olga Roebuck, Ph.D.
vedoucí katedry

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ANNOTATION

This bachelor thesis focuses on Ken Loach's view on the state of education and society in 1960s England and its effect on coming of age depicted in his film *Kes*. The theoretical part defines social realism in British cinema and provides more information about Ken Loach. Furthermore, it deals with the social and historical background of the film and also with the school system in 1960s England. The practical part has its base in the theoretical part. It analyses the message of *Kes* by focusing on Loach's depiction of the challenges of coming of age and the impacts of social class. The last chapter compares Loach's *Kes* with Barry Hines' novel *A Kestrel for a Knave*, which served as a basis for this film.

KEYWORDS

Ken Loach, British cinema, education, society, Northern England, 1960s, working-class

NÁZEV

Škola, společnost a dospívání ve filmu "Kes" Kena Loache

ANOTACE

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na pohled Kena Loache na stav školství a společnosti v šedesátých letech v Anglii a jejich vliv na dospívání v jeho filmu *Kes*. Teoretická část definuje sociální realismus v britské kinematografii a poskytuje více informací o Kenu Loachovi. Dále se věnuje sociálnímu a historickému kontextu tohoto filmu a také vzdělávacímu systému v Anglii. Praktická část vychází z teoretické části této práce. Analyzuje poselství filmu *Kes* a to zaměřením se na Loachova zobrazení útrap dospívání a následků třídní příslušnosti. Poslední kapitola porovnává Loachův film *Kes* s románem Barryho Hinese *A Kestrel for a Knave*, na jehož námět byl *Kes* natočen.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Ken Loach, britská kinematografie, školství, společnost, severní Anglie, 60. léta, dělnická třída

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INTRODUCTION

Ken Loach, in full Kenneth Charles Loach, is an English filmmaker who became well-known for his condemnation of social injustice and for using his work for speaking out about various social issues. This bachelor thesis focuses on those portrayed in his film *Kes*, which are mainly the social conditions of the 1960s and the state of the English education system during that time. The film captures few weeks in a life of a working-class 15-year-old schoolboy from Northern England, a schoolboy who was not gifted with the privilege of leading a joyful and fulfilling life. The question of whether his grim fate could be a metaphorical depiction of the condition of society as a whole is one of the questions that is answered in this bachelor thesis.

The theoretical part provides a theoretical background for this thesis. The first chapter introduces and provides some basic information on social realism in British cinema and also focuses on the director of the film *Kes*, Ken Loach, who is very often referred to as a social realist, or socially realistic, filmmaker. Besides *Kes*, Loach's few other works, such as *Cathy Come Home* or *I, Daniel Blake*, are introduced as well, and a short discussion is led in order to comment on their mutual interconnection. That is to provide a more comprehensive description of Loach's filmmaking style. As for the social and historical background, the second chapter deals with the issue of capitalism in Great Britain and its consequences, while primarily focusing on its effect on society. The topic of capitalism has been always stirring up controversy. It has its pros and cons, and while this chapter touches upon the pros as well, for the sake of the topic, the centre of the attention is the cons. Furthermore, this chapter is also dedicated to describing the life of working-class members in 1960s Northern England. The last subchapter focuses on giving insight into the British education system. Following that, it discusses the education in 1960s Great Britain as well as the changes it went through towards the end of the decade.

The practical part has its base in the theoretical part. It focuses on the message of *Kes* and deals with analysing how Ken Loach portrayed the environmental factors, the social issues, that affect the young protagonist. Moreover, it focuses on the hardship Billy has to endure on an everyday basis and it aims to answer the question of what is the source of this hardship, or more precisely, what does Ken Loach think is the source. Does the education system play the role? And what about the value system of society? Could it be the root of the problem? Additionally, the practical part deals with the character of the kestrel Kes and comments on its significance for the whole story, and also comments in more detail on how Billy's social class affects his opportunities in life. Finally, since *Kes* is based on a novel by Barry Hines, *A Kestrel for a Knave*, and since introducing this novel might be beneficial for

a deeper understanding of the whole issue portrayed in *Kes*, the last subchapter compares these two works of art and discusses their differences and similarities.

1 SOCIAL REALISM IN BRITISH CINEMA

The aim of the first chapter is to introduce and briefly talk about social realism in British cinema. The two subchapters then deal with introducing Ken Loach, the filmmaker on whose film this whole thesis focuses, and his work.

Two things need to be said at the beginning of this chapter. Firstly, the reason why this chapter does not deal with realism itself is the fact that there is simply not enough space in this thesis for a topic of this extent. A much longer text than this chapter would be needed in order to provide a comprehensive description and definition of what really is realism. Moreover, as Morris suggests, "there is not one unified form of realism but many".[1] This chapter, therefore, deals with only one of these 'realisms' – social realism. After all, even this term is going to be only shortly introduced, since, although being rather important, there are other topics of even bigger importance in this bachelor thesis.

Secondly, another important thing that needs to be mentioned before the actual introduction of social realism is the frequent confusion of the terms 'social realism' and 'socialist realism', which is a name for an art form established in the Soviet Union. Although sounding alike, these two terms should not be used interchangeably, as they do not have the same meaning.

Finally, and as already mentioned, before starting to focus on Ken Loach and his filmography, it is essential to introduce the term 'social realism'. As the name suggests, it is a term used for a work that aims to call attention to real social conditions of people, usually the working-class members. This includes not only films but also prose and poetry or visual arts such as paintings or photography. Similarly to realism or naturalism, which can be, among other things, characterized by truthful depictions of the subject matter, social realism is also supposed to capture the lives of poor, or in any other way disadvantaged, individuals realistically.

But what about social realism in cinema? In their study of realism, Hallam and Marshment describe it as "a discursive term used by film critics and reviewers to describe films that aim to show the effects of environmental factors on the development of character through depictions that emphasize the relationship between location and identity."[2] What they also say about social realist films is that they

[1] Pam Morris, *Realism* (London: Routledge, 2011), 47.
[2] Julia Hallam and Margaret Marshment, *Realism and Popular Cinema* (Manchester, New York: Manchester Univ. Press, 2000), 184.

present a problem as a problem created *by* society, rather than *for* society, which is something that distinguishes them from other social issue dramas.[3]

In the UK then, they claim it is "commonly associated with 'kitchen sink' drama and soap opera, televisual forms that foreground family relationships and everyday life".[4] Supposedly, social realism in British cinema has its roots for instance in Italian neorealism. Hallam and Marshment argue that in social realist films there are clear correspondences with this Italian film movement.[5] But when did it emerge in Great Britain? As Phillips states, the roots of British social realism go back to the formation of the welfare state in post-war England in the mid-1940s.[6] The reason for that, according to him, was the unmet expectations of the working classes who were promised free education and equality of opportunity.[7] Their dissatisfaction then began to be echoed in works such as *Look Back in Anger* by John Osborne.

Phillips also claims that although this social realist trend in film making did not last very long as a distinct movement in Britain, it managed to have a lasting impact on it nevertheless. [8] He argues that British social realism:

> … has done two things for British cinema. First, in extending the area of interest for British films beyond London and its environs, it brought the filmmaker out of the insulated atmosphere of the studio and into contact with story material dealing with people of the provinces, who now became subjects for cinema. Second, the language of ordinary people began to replace the inbred theatrical dialogue previously common on the British screen.[9]

On a final note, there are even other interesting views on social realism worth mentioning. By many, including Forrest, it has been suggested that the public seems to be so interested in the message of social realist films that they forget to pay attention to the way in which they are shot. Yet, according to him, social realism is "not merely a cinema of mimesis, nor is it one of leftist propaganda, or of reportage. Rather it is the default position of a national film culture that seeks to challenge both our perceptions of the socio-political sphere, and of cinema itself."[10] That is why this bachelor thesis does not pay attention only to *what* is said by Loach in his films but also to *the way* in which it is said.

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[3] Julia Hallam and Margaret Marshment, *Realism and Popular Cinema* (Manchester, New York: Manchester Univ. Press, 2000), 195.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid. 216.
[6] Gene D. Phillips, *Major Film Directors of the American and British Cinema* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 1990), 209.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] David Forrest, *Social Realism: Art, Nationhood and Politics* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), 3.

1.1 Ken Loach as a social realist filmmaker

The previous chapter briefly examined the term social realism. The purpose of this subchapter is to comment on whether Ken Loach can be considered a social realist filmmaker. Furthermore, it discusses some of the social issues that Ken Loach frequently depicts in his films and also the diversity of his work.

At the beginning of this subchapter, it is very important to mention that Ken Loach prefers not to apply terms such as 'social realistic', 'realistic', or 'naturalistic' to his work. In his interview for The Guardian, a British online newspaper, he stated that he "does not think terms are useful because he wants an audience to go in with an open mind".[11] Furthermore, when discussing a similar topic in another one of his earlier interviews, he was asked about how he feels about being called a 'realist' director. He answered by saying: "I don't know. I don't think about it, and it doesn't enter into my process of working. You just start with trying to find a good story and how you're going to tell it. I suppose I'm not an 'un-realist'."[12] On the other hand, in the same interview, he admitted to being impressed by the Italian neorealist films, saying that "they were very important for me. Not so much at the time, but thinking back, I realize that they made an impression on me.[13]

So here arises the question – is dedicating this chapter, even if only partially, to social realism and referring to Ken Loach as a social realist filmmaker, a good idea? It might not be an ideal one, however, there are very few, if any, fitter descriptions for his filmmaking style – thus the usage of the term in this thesis. Even Hallam and Marshment mention that "Loach's film style has become synonymous with what is commonly understood as social realism".[14] However, as the introduction of this subchapter suggests, this subchapter aims to comment on exactly that and to answer whether it is possible to use the term 'social realism' in connection with Ken Loach. In order to do that, it is necessary to go through the typical attributes of social realist filmmakers in more detail than in the previous chapter.

It is obviously very hard to generalize it in this way, but two things that could be said about social realist filmmakers is that firstly, they try to realistically depict the lives of ordinary people in their films, and secondly, their goal, their motive, is also to depict how these people are affected by their

[11] Mark Kermode, *"Ken Loach: 'What I've Always Tried to Do Is Capture the Truth of the Moment',"* The Guardian, May 11, 2014.
[12] Susan Ryan, Richard Porton, and Ken Loach. *"The Politics of Everyday Life: An Interview with Ken Loach,"* Cinéaste 24, no. 1 (1998): 22-27. Accessed March 31, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41689103.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Julia Hallam and Margaret Marshment, *Realism and Popular Cinema* (Manchester, New York: Manchester Univ. Press, 2000), 184.

surroundings, the environment, and society they live in. Both these claims could be applied to Loach's work. Moreover, in the previous chapter, it was said that social realist filmmakers present a problem not as a problem created *for* society but rather as a problem created *by* society. Again, this is something that can be applied to Loach's films and is seen even in *Kes*. Lastly, another thing that social realist filmmakers do, and that applies partially to Ken Loach as well, is not presenting a solution to the problems depicted in their movies. That is something in which they differ from the artists of socialist realism (mentioned in the previous chapter), who, as the name of the movement suggests, offered revolutionary socialism as a solution. Actually, in Loach's films such as Kes, what can be seen at the end is almost the exact opposite of the happy-ending and of providing a solution. It is almost as if it went from bad to worse. Even when he offers possible solutions, which occurs mainly in his more political films, such as *I, Daniel Blake*, they eventually end in failure. In *I, Daniel Blake,* for example, it is apparent he provides a solution in a form of letting go of the preposterous rules and fees and creating a more caring welfare system. However, at the end of the film, nothing changes, and the system remains the same. To summarize, because of the reasons stated in this paragraph, Ken Loach can be considered a social realist filmmaker.

The next step now is to focus on introducing some of the social issues that Ken Loach tries to draw attention to in his films. As apparent, he deals mainly with the problems of the working-classes. Those issues that appear in his films include, for example, unemployment and poverty, but the list is actually far longer and diverse. To be more specific, his film *Family Life* (which was previously a television drama called *In Two Minds*), as Shail says:

> … deals in an understanding manner with the plight of a mentally ill young woman, indicting an indifferent medical profession and the pressures of contemporary life as contributing to her condition. Loach is always drawn to the downtrodden and outcast, seeing them as victims of a materialistic society.[15]

In *Days of Hope*, a four-episode television drama serial, Loach depicted the events before the unsuccessful nine-day General Strike of 1926. This strike, which was called in an attempt to bring attention to the poor working conditions of coal miners, was, as Heck suggests, "one of the largest strikes Britain has ever experienced and, simultaneously, perhaps the least successful."[16] In *Fatherland*, he focused on the differences between life in East and West Germany. *Looks and Smiles*, which is a drama film set in the industrial midlands during the premiership of Margaret Thatcher, is

[15] Robert Shail, *British Film Directors: A Critical Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 138.
[16] Matthew Heck, "*British Workers General Strike to Support Mine Workers, 1926*," British workers general strike to support mine workers, 1926. Global Nonviolent Action Database, September 26, 2010, https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/british-workers-general-strike-support-mine-workers-1926.

a film about the already mentioned unemployment. In this case, the unemployment of the youngsters. In Leigh's opinion:

> *Looks and Smiles* reveals the depression that people felt in the industrial North of England during the early 1980s; […] The film records what people were doing, how they were speaking, and what they were wearing in the early 1980s in Sheffield: watched twenty years later, Loach's characteristic attention to detail renders the film a period piece. Loach and Hines wanted to make a companion film to *Kes*, in that it would focus on a school leaver;…[17]

In *My Name Is Joe*, *Sweet Sixteen*, *Ae Fond Kiss…*, and *The Angels Share* Loach, together with Scottish screenwriter and his long-time collaborator, Paul Laverty, focuses on the lives and struggles of Scottish people. In *My Name is Joe* the social issue being mainly drug abuse and alcoholism and in *Sweet Sixteen* drug addiction of the youth. Another example of his collaboration with Paul Laverty is a rather famous and award-winning film *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, which is set during the Irish War of Independence, a guerrilla war between the Irish Republican Party and the British forces, which was fought in Ireland between the years of 1919 and 1921, and the conflict that followed, the Irish Civil War, which lasted from 1922 to 1923. Based on Cotrell's opinion, the Irish Civil War was to a great degree the endgame of The Anglo-Irish War.[18] Loach's so-far last film, *Sorry We Missed You*, was released two years ago in 2019 and it deals with the issue of labour exploitation.

Lastly, it comes as no surprise that Loach is noted for his political commitment, which also reflects in his work. He, as Shail claims, made a number of documentaries in the past that are directly political, and which address for example the crisis facing the Labour movement in the 1980s.[19] Those being the documentaries *Questions of Leadership* and *The Red and the Blue*. Shail also mentions that "these controversial projects faced an unprecedented degree of attempted censorship."[20] However, censorship, or at least the threat of it, seems to be something Ken Loach has always had to deal with. After all, as Shail argues, "given Loach's open political stance it is hardly a shock that his films attract a good deal of criticism."[21] Another example of that can be seen even in his earlier work in a documentary called *The Save the Children Fund Film*. This documentary, although made in 1969 (just like *Kes*), was, because of censorship, viewed publicly for the first time about ten years ago, which means over forty years after it was shot. The reason for this censorship was quite simple. The Save the Children Fund, a British charity, who wanted to commission a film as a celebration of their

[17] Jacob Leigh and Ken Loach, *The Cinema of Ken Loach: Art in the Service of the People* (London: Wallflower Press, 2002), 131.
[18] Peter Cottrell, *The Irish Civil War: 1922-23* (Oxford: Osprey, 2009), 15.
[19] Robert Shail, *British Film Directors: A Critical Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 138.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid. 139.

fiftieth anniversary, made, as Hilton argues, "a surprising decision to approach the avowedly left-wing, social realist filmmaker Ken Loach, who at that time was arguably reaching his creative peak."[22] He continues by explaining that the Save the Children Fund:

> … did not want a film that simply celebrated the achievements of the organization over the years. It wanted a controversial documentary to be shown on national television that would highlight the problems of poverty in both Britain and the developing world and that would go on to showcase the work of SCF in alleviating suffering. Ideally, it sought to stamp on the public consciousness an association between film and charity like the one created when Loach's Cathy Come Home […] was followed by the launch of the homelessness organization Shelter two weeks later.[23]

The Save the Children Fund granted Loach free rein and he visited Kenya in order to record their activities. Unfortunately, they were not happy with the outcome. Their expectations definitely were not met, because not only the film did not celebrate their achievements, it also suggested that their activity, and the whole charitable sector, is actually not a solution at all but rather, as Hilton suggests, a "problem as any of the other causes of the global inequalities in the distribution of wealth."[24] To put it simply, the whole documentary was a fiasco and it is thus not surprising that after that, Loach, in Hilton's words, "largely avoided making documentaries again, at least until The Spirit of '45 in 2013."[25]

To conclude everything that has been stated, even though Ken Loach can be considered a social realist filmmaker, judging from the topics of his work and the manner in which his films are shot, the most important thing is not the label, but Loach's work itself. This subchapter focused on social realism. Its purpose was nevertheless to examine it thoroughly but rather only to present it in hope that it might help for a better understanding of Loach's work. After all, the work, its intent, and the message that it tries to convey will always be more important than the label it is given.

1.2 Ken Loach's films and their shared features

This subchapter focuses on introducing and commenting on Loach's filmmaking style and some of the characteristic, typical features of his films. Additionally, it aims to talk about other Loach's films besides *Kes*, to compare them, and to comment on their mutual interconnection, some of their shared

[22] Matthew Hilton, "*Ken Loach and the Save the Children Film: Humanitarianism, Imperialism, and the Changing Role of Charity in Postwar Britain*," The Journal of Modern History 87, no. 2 (2015): 357-94. Accessed March 25, 2021. doi:10.1086/681133.357.
[23] Ibid. 357.
[24] Ibid. 359.
[25] Ibid.

features, and also the consistencies in Loach's work. The works chosen for brief commentary are, for instance, the television drama *Cathy Come Home* and the film *Looks and Smiles*.

At the beginning of this subchapter, it is important to focus on what can be said about Loach's movies in general. Many features have been already mentioned in the previous subchapter, such as his interest in exposing the truth about the living conditions of the underprivileged. However, this chapter does not deal only with what Loach tries to depict in his films, but also with what style of filmmaking he applies. It does not deal only with the topics of his movies, although that is something that is obviously covered as well, but more importantly with all the typical features and all the little details that one can notice about his work. Simply, it tries to find out what is it that makes Loach's films Loach's films and what makes them stand out from the other ones.

One of the first things that one can notice about Loach's films and plays is that the family almost always plays an important role in them. Loach explains and justifies this by claiming that:

> … it's where most drama happens in our lives, isn't it? That's where we learn everything. All of the tension, drama, and comedy that is contained in those relationships is incredible. A lot of classic dramas center on families. It's the raw material for drama quite often, isn't it? Even though families are the springboard for everything we do, we could be glib and say that families are political entities with a small p. Of course, they're not exact mirrors of the world outside, but they launch you into the world and form you, so you can't imagine a character without a family.[26]

Another thing that cannot be left unnoticed is the fact that Loach's films are about ordinary people leading their ordinary lives and dealing with ordinary problems. However, Loach's films are not only *about* ordinary people. They are also *for* ordinary people and what is even more interesting, in many cases the actors themselves are ordinary people. The former was explained by Loach in an interview that he gave together with a producer Tony Garnett, whom he collaborated with for over ten years:

> Our films are not made for people who are politically sophisticated, but for ordinary working people. One reason we have done much of our work for television is that we can reach a large, working-class audience. Television may trivialize and be ephemeral, but there are twelve million people who watch our films when they are put on the air.[27]

The latter is done in order to maximize authenticity. Loach used non-actors even in *Kes* and as Street suggests, this has made it "a seminal film in its demonstration of observational drama and the use of untrained actors for the creation of a realist aesthetic."[28] To be more exact, what Loach does is that

[26] Susan Ryan, Richard Porton, and Ken Loach. *"The Politics of Everyday Life: An Interview with Ken Loach,"* Cinéaste 24, no. 1 (1998): 22-27. Accessed March 31, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41689103.
[27] Ken Loach, Tony Garnett, and Leonard Quart, *"A Fidelity to the Real: An Interview with Ken Loach and Tony Garnett,"* Cinéaste 10, no. 4 (1980): 26-29. Accessed March 31, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41685989.
[28] Sarah Street, *British National Cinema*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2009).

although he sometimes uses real actors as well, a big number of the cast are usually amateur actors and locals. Even the actor that played Billy, David Bradley, had never starred in a film prior to shooting *Kes*. He was in fact just a regular working-class boy, who simply caught Ken Loach's attention, which then led to him winning the film casting and getting the part.

Another very interesting and unusual strategy that Loach applies while filmmaking is described by Shail as:

> … supplying each actor with their own lines so that they react with genuine spontaneity or providing just that day's dialogue so actors are unsure how the drama will unfold. The results are raw and convincing, although for his critics this approach is a sleight-of-hand intended to deceive the viewer into believing they are actually watching a documentary rather than a fictional drama.[29]

That is probably one of the things that make the viewer of Loach's films feel as if they were watching a real conversation of two real people. Loach himself explains this in an interview for Cineaste by saying that he thinks it is important for the actors to play for the moment and that a scene should be played in a way so that the cast does not anticipate what is going to happen next.[30]

But to continue with listing the things that make Loach films so real, persuasive, and relatable, the language that is used in his films is also something that needs to be mentioned. From the extracts of the film *Kes* in the practical part, it is apparent that the actors speak with a strong Barnsley dialect. In fact, the dialect is so strong that it is hard to understand even for a native speaker. *Kes*, however, is not the only Loach's film in which this can be seen, as Loach never wants to iron out the regional accents. Many of his films had to be even subtitled because of that reason. In the same interview for Cineaste, which was already cited above, he said that he would rather use subtitles than to ask the actors to speak differently. In his opinion, when people speak differently, they lose more than a voice, and therefore everything about them changes.[31]

When it comes to the actual way in which Loach shoots his film, he clearly has a very observational, documentary, realistic, naturalistic, and, one could say even raw style. Also, he often shoots on location rather than in a studio, which adds to that realistic feel that his films have as well.

Furthermore, something that is also definitely worth mentioning is the fact that, according to his own words, Loach loves and has been inspired even by the Czech cinema, or more precisely, the Czechoslovak New Wave cinema of the 1960s. Together with the Italian films of neorealism and also

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[29] Robert Shail, *British Film Directors: A Critical Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007),
[30] Susan Ryan, Richard Porton, and Ken Loach. *"The Politics of Everyday Life: An Interview with Ken Loach,"* Cinéaste 24, no. 1 (1998): 22-27. Accessed March 31, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41689103.
[31] Ibid.

the French New Wave, he has found them very influential. He professes especially his love for films by director Miloš Forman and screenwriter Ivan Passer, who have worked together for example on the film *Loves of a Blonde*, as well as Jiří Menzel and his films such as *Closely Observed Trains*. He explains this by saying that he found them humanistic as well as very fervent.[32] He also enjoys their simplicity. During a KWIFF (Karlovy Vary International Film Festival) Talk in 2017, he said that "it is thanks to films such as *Loves of a Blonde* that I learned how to tell true stories in a simple manner."[33] After finding out about this influence by Czechoslovak cinema, it is not that hard, especially for a Czech viewer, to see the resemblance.

As for the particular films mentioned in the introduction of this subchapter and their comparison to *Kes*, *Kes* is a movie that was made in 1969. As Street mentions, it appeared ten years after the first films of the New Wave.[34] In her opinion, "*Kes* is similar in its regional locale and working-class characters to the New Wave films of the early 1960s."[35] The television drama *Cathy Come Home* aired three years before *Kes*, in 1966, as one of the nine episodes that Loach made for a series called The Wednesday Play, which was a series of plays made by BBC television. The film *Looks and Smiles* was then made in 1981 and *I, Daniel Blake* in 2016, which makes it one of the most recent Loach's films. None of the films that Loach made in the 1970s, 1990s, and 2000s is discussed in this subchapter. That does not make them any less important though. Some of Loach's work from the 1970s include for example films such as *Family Life*, a heart-breaking drama film made in the early 1970s, and *Black Jack*, an adventure film which was shot in the late 1970s, is set in the eighteenth century and what is interesting, inspired Wes Anderson's *Moonrise Kingdom*. *The Safe the Children Fund Film*, which has already been discussed, was also made in the 1970s. In the 1990s, Loach made films such as *Riff-Raff, Raining Stones, Ladybird Ladybird*, and *My Name is Joe*. Among his more recent work from the 2000s, one can find films such as *The Navigators* and *Sweet Sixteen*.

The television drama *Cathy Come Home* remains one of Loach's best-known works till today. As indicated previously, it is one of the plays that Loach directed for the series The Wednesday Play. Filmed in a documentary style and with the character of Cathy being the storyteller, or in other words, doing a voiceover, it deals predominantly with the issue of homelessness. With its criticism of the lack of care on the side of the government, it is similar for example to the film *I, Daniel Blake*. In both films, the viewer can see people who have worked for whole their lives and thus participated in

[32] Gavin Smith, *Hlas v temnotách: Ken Loach. Interpressfilm*, 15(10), October 1, 1988, doi:ISSN 0862-4720, 83.
[33] *"Loach and Laverty on Films and Politics,"* KVIFF, July 4, 2017, https://www.kviff.com/en/news/2101-loach-and-laverty-on-films-and-politics.
[34] Sarah Street, *British National Cinema*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2009), 102.
[35] Ibid.

the economy of the state. However, once they are injured and cannot provide for themselves anymore, they do not receive adequate help from the government. An interesting fact about *Cathy Come Home* is that it was filmed mostly on the film, with only a few certain scenes being recorded electronically. Also, despite being shot in the mid-1960s, it is not a studio-based drama, which was quite usual in the 1950s and early 1960s. As already implied earlier, Loach shoots mainly on location and *Cathy Come Home* is no exception. Thanks to that he is able to show the film characters simply walking on the streets among real people. The ability to show characters in this way was described by Hill as a significant feature of many of his productions.[36] He also argues that these scenes "possess a sociological dimension involving a clearer 'documentation' of the places (or physical environments) in which people live."[37]

The black-and-white film named *Looks and Smiles* is, as previously implied, about the unemployment of the youth. It needs to be mentioned because apparently, it was supposed to serve as a companion to the film *Kes*, even though the situation with job searching in the 1980s differed from the one in the 1960s. In Leigh's words:

> Loach and Hines wanted to make a companion film to Kes, in that it would focus on a school leaver; but unemployment in the early 1980s differed from that of the late 1960s: unlike Billy, Mick passes a few examinations, but he cannot find a job with an apprenticeship attached, despite his interest in mechanics.[38]

There are even other features that connect *Looks and Smiles* to *Kes* though. To name one, the actors in leading roles in both of the films were amateurs and what is even more interesting, were very similar to their characters. As Leigh states:

> Graham Green, who plays Mick, was an apprentice fitter in a colliery when Loach hired him for six weeks in the autumn of 1980; Tony Pitts was an apprentice mechanic; Carolyn Nicholson was contemplating her A-levels at school in Newcastle. None of the three leads were professional performers, let alone actors.[39]

However, this seems to be something that many of his films share. Leigh argues that:

> For Loach, the most important consideration in casting was that the people in the film be as close as possible to the characters. he did not want to direct his actors, he wanted the people in the films to do and to say things; he would then film them as unobtrusively as possible, keeping the camera away from them.[40]

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[36] John Hill, *Ken Loach: The Politics of Film and Television* (London: BFI Publishing, 2011).
[37] Ibid.
[38] Jacob Leigh and Ken Loach, *The Cinema of Ken Loach: Art in the Service of the People* (London: Wallflower Press, 2002), 131.
[39] Jacob Leigh and Ken Loach, *The Cinema of Ken Loach: Art in the Service of the People* (London: Wallflower Press, 2002), 131.
[40] Ibid.

To summarize, even though Loach's films focus on various social issues, there are many consistencies and shared features in each of them. Either concerning their themes or the style in which they are shot. Furthermore, what can be said about his films, in general, is that although they are shot on a low budget and there are no special camera angles or grand set decorations in them, they are still interesting to watch regardless of that. After all, the aim of his work is not to astound the public with great special effects, but rather to communicate certain messages in a pretty straight-forward way. As Loach himself says, he wants to move the audience to new conclusions and insights about the society they live in as well as their lives."[41] Moreover, he states that he wants to "make films which are clear and true and correspond to the experience of the audience."[42] That is perhaps why modesty and simplicity suit his work the best.

[41] Ken Loach, Tony Garnett, and Leonard Quart, *"A Fidelity to the Real: An Interview with Ken Loach and Tony Garnett,"* Cinéaste 10, no. 4 (1980): 26-29. Accessed March 31, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41685989.
[42] Ken Loach, Tony Garnett, and Leonard Quart, *"A Fidelity to the Real: An Interview with Ken Loach and Tony Garnett,"* Cinéaste 10, no. 4 (1980): 26-29. Accessed March 31, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41685989.

2 SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF KEN LOACH'S KES

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a closer insight into the social and historical background of the film *Kes*. The two subchapters deal with the life of the working-classes in the 1960s Northern England and with the issue of capitalism in Great Britain. However, before discussing the sixties in the North of England, it is essential to briefly introduce the decade as a whole, widely known as 'the swinging sixties'. A discussion is led in this chapter in order to answer the following question: were the sixties in Northern England really 'swinging'?

Cohen states that "the popular image of 1960s Britain is of the 'Swinging Sixties', a golden age in which the whole nation was enjoying a wonderful party"[43] and although she admits that "the decade was certainly characterised by enormous social, economic, cultural and political change, much of it accompanied or even driven by a new optimism"[44], she does not forget to mention the fact that "the relentless pace of change was uneven."[45] The centre of pretty much everything in the 1960s was London – the so-called 'Swinging London'. But what about other parts of Great Britain? Just as Cohen, Sandbrook also suggests that "far from the bright lights of Swinging London, life seemed to go on much as before"[46] and that:

> In many parts of the country, change came only slowly or subtly. Across Scotland, Wales, and Northern England, and perhaps even more in Northern Ireland, entire communities were still terrified of unemployment, and among the traditional manual working classes, cultural change was often less marked than in other sections of society.[47]

2.1 Working-class life in 1960s Northern England

This subchapter deals with discussing the life of working-class members in 1960s Northern England.

However, before proceeding to do that, one has to ask: who really are the working-classes? This question is unexpectedly hard to answer. Even Hoggart in his famous, and as Lacey suggests, "enormously influential"[48], book from the late 1950s, *The Uses of Literacy*, acknowledges the difficulties of defining the member of a working class, because humans simply vary from each other. One working-class family does not necessarily have to lead the same life as the second one. In his opinion, "to isolate the working-classes in this rough way is not to forget the great number of

[43] Susan Cohen, *1960s Britain* (Oxford, UK: Shire Publications Ltd, 2014).
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat: Britain in the Sixties*, 2nd ed. (London: Abacus, 2007).
[47] Ibid.
[48] Stephen Lacey, *British Realist Theatre: The New Wave in Its Context 1956-1965* (London: Routledge, 2010), 75.

differences, the subtle shades, the class distinctions, within the working-classes themselves."[49] For the sake of this thesis though, and because there are only so many pages that can be dedicated to the topic of the working-classes in the 1960s, a simplified and generalized definition of who really are the working-class members must be provided. Furthermore, the last thing that needs to be brought up is the fact that members of the working class obviously did not and do not live only in the North. However, this subchapter focuses on the problematic region of the North, and thus only the lives of those members that inhabited this region are going to be discussed.

Although people in the UK currently fit into seven social classes[50], as a major study conducted by the BBC in 2013 suggests, there were originally only three classes – the so-called traditional classes. That being the upper class, something also called 'elite', middle class, and, finally, the working class, on which this subchapter focuses. According to the BBC survey though, "these traditional categories of working, middle, and upper class are outdated, fitting 39% of people."[51] Moreover, as Sacks suggests "the study's authors argued that 'class', as twentieth-century writers tended to define it, was 'too simplistic'."[52] That is why the new divisions, new social classes, have arisen. However, the situation in the 1960s, the decade in which *Kes* was made, was obviously very different. As Merwick argues, "Britain, at the beginning of the sixties, was very evidently still divided into an upper class, various subdivisions of the middle classes, and a distinctive working class."[53] That is why this subchapter relies on this out-dated, traditional system of class division.

The Cambridge dictionary defines the working class as a "social group that consists of people who usually do physical work, and usually do not have much money or a very high level of education."[54] Even though one could say it fits quite adequately to the topic of this subchapter, it is only a rough and simplified definition (after all, it is nothing more than a dictionary entry). One needs to, therefore, dig a little deeper.

When attempting to provide a rough definition of the working-classes living in Northern cities such as Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield, and Hull, Hoggart states that they "have their own recognizable

[49] Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments* (Harmondsworth, Middx.: Penguin Books in association with Chatto & Windus, 1992), 10.
[50] "Huge Survey Reveals Seven Social Classes in UK," BBC News (BBC, April 3, 2013), https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-22007058.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Benjamin Sacks, "Mapping Class," Geography Directions, April 11, 2013, https://blog.geographydirections.com/2013/04/08/mapping-class.
[53] Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, C.1958-C.1974* (London: Bloomsbury Reader, 2012).
[54] "The Working Class, Noun," Cambridge Dictionary, accessed March 25, 2021, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/working-class.

parts of the town; they have, almost city by city, their own recognizable styles of housing – backs-to-backs here or tunnels-backs there."[55] He continues by saying they "their houses are usually rented, not owned."[56] As for their work pay, he claims that "most of the employed inhabitant of these areas work for a wage, not a salary, and the wage is paid weekly"[57] and that some are self-employed and keep, for instance, a small shop or offer services to other members of their group.[58] Furthermore, he reveals that the average wage was around nine or ten pounds a week, but highlights that there are "enormous variations in wages among working-class people" and gives an example of steel-workers who "are plainly working-class though some earn more than many teachers who are not."[59] He also does not omit to point out that most of these people do not have other sources of income.[60] Concerning their education and occupation, he explains that "most of them were educated at what ought now to be called a secondary modern school, but is still popularly known as 'elementary school'"[61] and that "they are usually labourers, skilled or unskilled, or craftsman and perhaps apprentice-trained."[62] He mentions even the clothing, by saying that "cheap mass-produced clothing has reduced the immediately recognizable differences between classes, but not as greatly as many think."[63] This means that the differences between the clothing of a working-class member and the one of a middle-class could be still visible. As for the less tangible characteristics of working-class members, he mentions speech. Especially then the manners of speaking, the use of urban dialects, accents, and intonations which, in his opinion, can indicate even more.[64]

As it was already implied, the lives of these working-class members in the North did not change that rapidly during the 1960s, especially compared to the other parts of England. There were some changes, obviously, but the North still had to deal with many problems. Some of which were not experienced by inhabitants of other parts of England (or at least not in the same way and to the same extent).

According to Marwick, "high levels of employment, improving material conditions, and social services and amenities had given members of the working class a confidence and sense of self-worth

[55] Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments* (Harmondsworth, Middx.: Penguin Books in association with Chatto & Windus, 1992), 8.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid. 9.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.

they had not possessed before the war."[65] This is, however, something that could not be applied to Great Britain as a whole. Indeed, some major differences between north and south have been created during the premiership of Margaret Thatcher. However, the gap, which the government failed to erase, had started to widen even before that. Already after the second world war, when the South East region, West Midlands, and other regions started to recover and the employment started to grow, the situation in other regions, such as Northern England, did not seem that great. According to Martin, the growth that took place in these regions was not sufficient to restore manufacturing employment back to its pre-1930 levels.[66]

This issue of unemployment still existed even in the 1960s. Although, as Cohen states, "the popular view of the early 1960s is of a buoyant economy, high levels of employment, low inflation and rising wages"[67] and with that connected "improvement in living standards and the growth of a consumer society,"[68] this was not the case in all parts of the country. Cohen argues that especially in the north and north-east of the country, there were areas of high unemployment and deprivation.[69] She continues by giving examples:

> Even educated girls with a General Certificate of Education could only aspire to working as a shop assistant, and many young people went straight from school via the employment exchange to the dole queue. Between 1960 and 1962 some 3,000 people migrated south from the north-east, with another 10,000 following in 1963, all seeking work. When, in 1964, the national average for unemployment was 1.9 percent, the rate in Falmouth had reached 10.8 percent, a tenth of the community's workers.[70]

One of the main reasons for such high rates of unemployment was the closures of traditional industries. Other industries, such as the petrochemical industry, were on the rise while traditional industries, such as coalmines and railways, were closing across the region. This, of course, had fatal consequences for the people who worked there and their families. As Cohen states:

> Traditional industries, like mining and fisheries in Cornwall, were rapidly disappearing, and cotton mills in Lancashire were closing at the rate of one a week in the 1960s and 1970s. The riverside industry was also in decline, and work, which was never permanent, became harder to obtain. The men moved from wharf to wharf depending on how many were needed for a shipment, and it was up to the dock master to choose employees, causing a lot of competitiveness between workers.[71]

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[65] Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, C.1958-C.1974* (London: Bloomsbury Reader, 2012).
[66] Ron Martin. *The Political Economy of Britain's North-South Divide*. 395.
[67] Susan Cohen, *1960s Britain* (Oxford, UK: Shire Publications Ltd, 2014).
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.

The coalmining, for example, has been always an extremely exhausting and dangerous job. Still, hundreds and hundreds of miners relied on it, on the money they were making thanks to working 'down the pit'. The thing that was needed was an improvement of the working conditions, not the closures of collieries.

On a less serious note, even though the 1960s are also famous and praised for being an age of fashion innovation, the trends such as mini-skirts also seemed to arrive with quite a delay to Northern England. This caused that many teenagers in Northern England, as Sandbrook suggests, "felt themselves 'backward' or 'behind the times', precisely because change seemed so elusive."[72] Even the contraceptive pill, which was introduced at the beginning of the decade, reached this region far later than it did other parts of the country.

Taking everything into account, it can be said that even though some of the changes that were brought by the decade of 1960s were experienced by people even in Northern England, the sixties were definitely far more enjoyable and 'swinging' for people who lived in the regions more in the south and closer to the 'swinging' centre – London.

2.2 Capitalism in Great Britain

The aim of this short subchapter is to briefly introduce the term capitalism, to comment on its possible effects on society, and to discuss whether capitalism in Great Britain could have been and perhaps is, even nowadays, the root of some of the problems for many people.

The reason why the topic of capitalism should be brought up in this thesis is the fact that even Ken Loach himself tries to show its effects on society in some of his films. Forrest supports this claim by saying that "Loach has maintained an uncompromising thematic interest in the socially and economically marginalised, and in doing so, has consistently sought to reveal the mechanisms by which capitalist societies victimise their weakest constituents."[73] Even in *Kes*, the capitalist society seems to be one of the culprits of Billy's hardships. That will be, however, briefly discussed in the practical part of this thesis. This subchapter is only meant to provide the necessary factual background.

Capitalism is a very controversial economic system that originated several centuries ago. It is also quite hard to define. However, probably two of the first things that come to everyone's mind when

[72] Dominic Sandbrook, *White Heat: Britain in the Sixties*, 2nd ed. (London: Abacus, 2007).
[73] David Forrest, *Social Realism: Art, Nationhood and Politics* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), 81.

hearing the word 'capitalism' are 'private ownership' and 'making profit'. That is actually not far from the truth. Britannica defines capitalism as an economic system that is dominant in the Western world and in which most means of production are privately owned[74] and, according to Jahan and Mahmud, its essential feature is the motive to make a profit.[75] Similarly, Fulcher also says that "it is typical of a capitalist society that virtually all economic activities that go on within it are driven by the opportunity to make profit out of capital invested in them."[76] What is also interesting is that according to Fulcher "Britain was the first society in which production in general became capitalist."[77]

It is, of course, up to everyone to choose where they stand on the issue of capitalism and whether they view it as bad or as good. When capitalism is praised, it is mainly because by many it is considered far better than its opposite – socialism. Furthermore, a better quality of products, an increase of GDP (gross domestic product), and the possibility to accumulate wealth are very often also considered to be its pros. Yet, there are many cons that need to be mentioned as well. These cons are, for instance, a negative impact on the environment, high rents, consumerism, exploitation of workers, and higher rates of unemployment during an economic downturn.

So how does capitalism cohere to the topic of this thesis? The issue of capitalist society was existent even during 1960s Britain. The problem was, and still is, that although private companies (smaller coal mines were, too, in private ownership) needed workers in order to produce goods, it worked even the other way around. Workers too relied on private companies, on wages from private companies. These wages could, however, be quite low sometimes, as mentioned in the previous paragraph. Yet, quitting was not always an option, as the fear of unemployment was still very real. As Fulcher explains, the freedom of these workers is "somewhat illusory, since in a capitalist society it is difficult to survive without paid work and little choice of work or employer may be available."[78]

To summarize everything that has been stated, capitalism has both its cons and pros. However, the purpose of this subchapter was not to decide which outweighs which. Rather, it aimed only to provide necessary information on this controversial topic. The relation of it to *Kes* will be explained in more detail in the practical part.

[74] "Capitalism," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed March 25, 2021, https://www.britannica.com/topic/capitalism.
[75] What Is Capitalism? - Back to Basics - Finance & Development, June 2015. Accessed March 25, 2021. https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2015/06/basics.htm.
[76] James Fulcher, *Capitalism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.

3 EDUCATION IN ENGLAND

This whole chapter aims to give insight into the education system in England. The focus of the two subchapters is the state of the education system in 1960s England.

As already implied, in order to be able to fully dive into the topic of England's school system in the 1960s, some information on England's education, in general, should be provided as well. Although there are no surviving records of that, it is very probable that the existence of schools in Great Britain falls to as far as the Roman occupation. However, the very earliest schools of which there are surviving records are the ones established by St. Augustine who arrived in England in 597. According to Gillard, not only did St. Augustine founded two churches in Canterbury, but also established two types of schools. That being the grammar schools, where Latin was taught to English priests, and the song schools, where the singing in cathedral choirs was trained.[79]

Of course, hundreds and hundreds of years have passed since then, and England's education has undergone lots of changes. This bachelor thesis cannot provide information on all of them. It can, however, provide more information on some that happened during the 1960s. Furthermore, although England's school system has many interesting and unique features that distinguish it from the ones of other countries, such as school prefects, this chapter briefly examines only those features that are important for the topic of this thesis.

3.1 England's school system in the 1960s

Since *Kes* is a film that was, according to Stead, "critical of the methods of schooling at a time when the nation was fiercely debating the way in which secondary education was to be organized"[80], the purpose of this subchapter is to comment on the state of England's school system, mainly, in the early 1960s.

Besides the physical punishments, overcrowded schools, and inadequate school buildings, one of the things that were very problematic about England's education in the early 1960s was the bipartite system of grammar and secondary modern schools and with that related intelligence testing and the so-called eleven-plus exam.

[79] Derek Gillard, *"The History of Education in England,"* The History of Education in England - Introduction, Contents, Preface, accessed March 31, 2021, http://www.educationengland.org.uk/history/index.html.
[80] Peter Stead, *Film and the working class: the feature film in British and American society* (London: Routledge, 1991), 205.

The bipartite system was, however, originally tripartite and was established in The Education Act of 1944. As Laing explains, "The 1944 Act, as implemented by the Labour government, established 'secondary education for all', the abolition of all tuition fees at state-maintained schools, the raising of the school-leaving age to 15 (in 1947) and the tripartite system of secondary schools (grammar, modern and technical), this becoming by the 1950s effectively bipartite (grammar via the 11-plus, or secondary modern)."[81]

Although some of these changes, such as the abolition of tuition fees, are something that was perceived mainly positively, the same cannot be said about the system of streaming, nor the eleven-plus exam.

This system of examination and streaming was separating children around the age of eleven into two groups. Those who scored well on the exam were to attend grammar schools, where they were provided with, as Kerckhoff explains, „a demanding academic program viewed as preparation for higher education".[82] On the other hand, children, who were not that lucky and did not achieve good results on their exam, mainly children with a working-class background, were to attend secondary modern schools, where they, for instance, as Cohen suggests, spent their days doing metalwork and woodwork and smoking Players No. 6 behind the bike sheds.[83] They were, according to Kerckhoff, provided with only "a basic life skills curriculum."[84] He also adds that "the majority of students left secondary school at the minimum leaving age, and only a small minority entered full-time higher education."[85] Cohen states that "middle-class parents in particular considered the secondary modern inferior and the route to nowhere, especially not university."[86] She also mentions that even though grammar schools offered bright working-class children the opportunity of social mobility, it was considered very elitist and therefore children who passed the exam and went there were very often scorn at and hurled at by others.[87]

However, for the children, the streaming system began even earlier, around the age of six or seven. It was then when they were, based on intelligence test results, separated into A, B, C streams. Children from middle-class families were mostly allocated to A streams, while those from working-class

[81] Stuart Laing, *Representations of Working-Class Life 1957-64* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 24-25.
[82] Alan C. Kerckhoff, *Getting Started: Transition to Adulthood in Great Britain* (S.l.: Routledge, 2020), 7.
[83] Susan Cohen, *1960s Britain* (Oxford, UK: Shire Publications Ltd, 2014).
[84] Alan C. Kerckhoff, *Getting Started: Transition to Adulthood in Great Britain* (S.l.: Routledge, 2020), 7.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Susan Cohen, *1960s Britain* (Oxford, UK: Shire Publications Ltd, 2014).
[87] Ibid.

families to B or C streams. One of the biggest advantages of being in the A stream was that the preparation for the eleven-plus exam was far better there.

This intelligence testing, which was executed by The National Foundation for Educational Research, was stimulating considerable controversy. There were a lot of doubts about as to whether the tests are even legitimate. Gillard states that:

> … these tests depended for their validity on the notion of fixed or 'innate' intelligence, which had been promoted by Cyril Burt during the inter-war years. But it was becoming clear that intelligence quotients could be affected by coaching and were related to previous social and educational experience.[88]

Furthermore, he also claims that it caused the talent of many children to be wasted.[89] That is because many pupils were, due to this testing, placed in the wrong type of school. To put it simply, the idea of this examination was that pupils are not to acquire intelligence and knowledge at school, but rather that there are pupils whose intelligence is already above the intelligence of others and therefore that those, smarter ones, are to receive more attention and better quality education. As Gillard states, in most areas, the exam comprised 'objective' tests in 'intelligence', English, and arithmetic.[90]

According to Gillard, the doubts about the liability of the intelligence testing and the eleven-plus exam even increased when in 1953 the GCE (General Certificate of Education) results indicated that those children who failed the eleven-plus exam sometimes achieved remarkably good results five years later and many of those who did not fail the eleven-plus exam and had been selected for grammar schools performed less well.[91]

To summarize the above, even though many changes were made before the 1960s, there were still certain aspects of England's school system that needed to improve. However, that will be discussed in the next subchapter.

3.2 Changes in England's school system made during the 1960s

Following the previous one, in this short subchapter, the transformation of the English education system in the 1960s is discussed. The aim is to introduce changes such as the Elementary Education Act of 1970.

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[88] Derek Gillard, *"The History of Education in England,"* The History of Education in England - Introduction, Contents, Preface, accessed March 31, 2021, http://www.educationengland.org.uk/history/index.html.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.

The pressure for change and reform of the education system was very strong before and at the beginning of the 1960s. Not only parents were calling for change. And the changes came. As Cohen states, "education underwent great changes in the 1960s, especially towards the end of the decade."[92]

To give examples, as Gillard states, "there were important developments in each of the three levels of education – primary, secondary, and higher."[93] Perhaps the most positive change included the abolition of the eleven-plus exams in certain areas and the replacement of the streaming system with mixed-ability classes in many schools. There were also new teaching methods developed and schools were experimenting with new forms of curriculum organisation. Gillard also claims that:

> … the areas where the eleven-plus was abolished, primary teachers felt that a great weight had been lifted from their shoulders. They suddenly found, not only that they had enormous freedom to experiment with progressive styles of teaching, child-centred learning, open-plan schools, discovery methods, creativity, and spontaneity, but they were actively encouraged to do so.[94]

Furthermore, the newly established comprehensive schools were on the rise, and together with them even, as Gillard puts it, "the real possibility of a leaving age of sixteen and a single examination for all" was growing.[95]

The last very positive change that happened at the very end of the 1960s and that needs to be mentioned is the 1970 Education Act, or more concretely, the 1970 Education Handicapped Children Act. Gillard explains that this act "transferred the provision of training for mentally handicapped children from the health authorities to the LEAs"[96] (local education authorities) and continues by saying that thanks to it many handicapped children "ceased to be treated as 'mentally deficient' and became entitled to special education."[97]

Taking everything that was stated in this short subchapter into consideration, it can be said that although England's education before and at the beginning of the 1960s was not in the best state, the end of the decade brought many positive changes. That is perhaps why many people tend to describe education in 1960s England with the word 'optimism'. However, it needs to be said that despite these changes and positive outlook, there was still a long way to go, and many other improvements needed to be done.

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[92] Susan Cohen, *1960s Britain* (Oxford, UK: Shire Publications Ltd, 2014).
[93] Derek Gillard, *"The History of Education in England,"* The History of Education in England - Introduction, Contents, Preface, accessed March 31, 2021, http://www.educationengland.org.uk/history/index.html.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.

4 THE MESSAGE OF *KES*

The first chapter of the theoretical part of this thesis focuses mostly on social realism in British cinema and on Ken Loach as a British social realist director. It was mentioned that social realist films aim to show the effects of environmental factors on the characters. This chapter, and also the only chapter of the practical part of this thesis, deals with the environmental factors that affected Billy, the protagonist in *Kes*. It introduces the challenges he had to face because of the two factors that go hand in hand with each other: his age and the class he was born into. It also focuses on explaining the significance of the kestrel's role in Billy's life, and thus its significance for the whole film. Finally, it compares Ken Loach's *Kes* with the novel *A Kestrel for a Knave* that was written by Barry Hines and that served as a basis for this film.

4.1 Bullying, conflict, apartness, and other challenges of coming of age

This subchapter deals with the challenges of coming of age that are portrayed in Ken Loach's *Kes*: the bullying Billy had to face, the conflict (not only) between him and his brother, and, last but not least, the feeling of apartness that he must have been experiencing. It focuses mainly on Loach's interpretation of these challenges in *Kes* and on the way that Billy, the protagonist, was impacted by them. Furthermore, a discussion is led in order to answer the question of what all these challenges, these problems, stem from.

In *Kes*, Loach tried to accurately capture the life of a working-class fifteen-year-old boy in the 1960s. He did not sugar-coat it at all, he simply told everyone how it really was. Judging from the feedback of people on the internet, who were growing-up in the 1960s and had similar experiences to Billy's, he managed to do it quite well. Thanks to that the film *Kes* perfectly embodies what it means to be not only to be an adolescent boy, which is already very complicated as it is, but also an adolescent boy who has to go through things that nobody should ever go through. There are many children, who dream of and look forward to growing up and standing up on their own feet. That can be, for example, because in their eyes, the world of grown-ups is much better and seems to be the ticket to freedom and independence. But what happens when a child is afraid that freedom is one of the last things he (or she) can expect from adulthood?

As already mentioned in the previous paragraph, coming of age is very rarely easy. For many, the adolescent years can be full of ups and downs, social and emotional changes, problems in school, conflicts with friends, broken hearts, and many other problems. However, the problems that Billy,

the main character in *Kes*, has to deal with are rather wicked. Although only a young boy, he has already many reasons for distress. He and his family, his mother and older brother, live in a region of low socioeconomic status, in an industrial and poor South Yorkshire. The only parent that Billy has is his mother, who, although probably being fond of her children, is not an ideal parent. She is not very present in her sons' lives and is not rather good at showing her love either. She also does not seem to give too much importance to Billy's education, nor his overall well-being. Maybe even because of that, she is not given a lot of screen time. The audience cannot even see her for the first twenty minutes of the film and when they do, she is just about to leave. What does it say about her as a mother? It can be argued that the purpose of that is to depict and emphasize her lack of presence in her children's lives.

However, her character deserves more attention. In the theoretical part of this thesis, it was implied that the 1960s were a decade of many changes. These changes included even the relaxation of social constraints and boundaries and also the loosening of attitudes towards sexuality and traditional gender roles. Women started to demand equality and began to protest against the roles that they were assigned by society, the roles of mothers and housewives, and instead worked just as hard as men. Moreover, the 1960s were also a time of youth, great music, and partying. Many who have experienced it could say it was simply a wild time. While for many of the changes, mainly the political ones, it took a long time to arrive in Northern England, the parties, as apparent in *Kes*, were not one of them. Billy's mother also goes out for drinks quite often. In the first scene where she appears, she is seen to be leaving to one of the parties and although there is nothing wrong with having a little fun every night and then, the problem here is that because of all the preparation for the night out, she does not even have time to make him a standard dinner, which would be definitely of good use judging from his scrawny physique. Instead, she gives him some money and tells him to get himself some pop and some crisps.[98] As bad as it sounds, there might be good reasons for her going out every weekend. It cannot be said for sure, because there are not many scenes in which she opens up, but firstly, she has to work every day and thus going out on Saturday night might be an activity that helps her to unwind. Secondly, she might be going to a pub that often because she hopes she will find herself a man there and thus be able to settle and work less. As she says, "yer can have a good time up to a point, but there comes a time when you want to settle down. I'm getting' a bit fed up of workin' all t'time."[99] Also, she might feel like at her age and with two children, it is expected for her to be married. Sadly, she has not been successful yet and therefore she has to both work very hard, so she could support

[98] Kes, directed by Ken Loach (Kestrel Films, Woodfall Film Productions, 1969). 24:20-24-25.
[99] Ibid. 25:33-25:41.

the family, and look for a decent man whom she could marry and get a nice house with. Both these activities are obviously very time-consuming and, as previously stated, that causes her to not be very present in Billy's life.

On the other hand, when compared to the character of the mother, Billy's brother, Jud, seems to be a little too present in Billy's life, or at least a little more than Billy would probably prefer. Instead of being a father figure for Billy and substituting for his father, who left them, Jud harasses Billy, makes fun of him, and clearly looks down on him. He, just as many other men from the Yorkshire community, works at the local mine and it seems Billy is destined for the same future, or at least that is what Jud never forgets to remind him. The audience can witness this already in the first scene of the film. Jud wakes up Billy, as he is getting ready to go to work in a mine, which leaves Billy quite upset and he eventually complains about Jud not letting him sleep only because has to get up to get to work. Jud ensures him that it will not be too long before Billy has to get up with him and work as a miner as well. It is clear that Billy refuses to accept this future, as seen in the following dialogue:

> Billy: „You rotten sad! Just because you've to get up!"
> Jud: „Another few weeks lad, you'll be getting up with me."
> Billy: „I'll not."
> Jud: „Won't yer?"
> Billy: „No, cos I'm not gonna work down the pit."
> Jud: „Where are yer gonna work then?"
> Billy: „I dunno, but I'm not gonna work down the pit."[100]

Besides the family problems, Billy struggles at school and has almost no chance of continuing his education. Moreover, he is being picked at and bullied not only by his classmates but also by the school's staff – especially the PE teacher, Mr. Sugden, and the school's headmaster. They simply abuse their authority and sometimes even use physical punishments. An example of that can be seen for example in the brutal scene in which Billy and his classmates get caned or in the infamous soccer scene.

To some, the football scene may actually seem hilarious. According to Stead, for example, it is "a brilliantly funny scene in which a fussy and bossy sportsmaster fully reveals his bombastic and frustrated personality."[101] And really, certain parts, just as many other scenes of the film, could be really considered rather humorous. Ken Loach has definitely done a good job at bringing out the humour in a movie with a rather sad theme.

[100] *Kes*, directed by Ken Loach (Kestrel Films, Woodfall Film Productions, 1969).
[101] Peter Stead, *Film and the working class: the feature film in British and American society* (London: Routledge, 1991), 205. 1:55-2:10.

But there is more to the soccer scene than just the humour. The thing that the viewer can witness is that Mr. Sugden is rude to all the boys in the class, but it seems Billy is the one who he despises the most. Before the match, in the locker room, the viewer can witness him humiliating Billy and eventually even hitting him on the head with a ball. The fact that the teacher himself makes fun of Billy obviously feeds the desire of his classmates to bully him as well. Why could not they, if the teacher can? Then, before the very beginning of the soccer match, when the captains (Mr. Sugden being one of them) choose their teams. It comes as no surprise that Billy is the last one to be picked. No one wants him on his team. It might be a tiny detail and the whole scene might seem insignificant at first glance, but probably everyone, who has ever experienced the same thing, knows how it feels – the apartness, the feeling of shame for not being chosen, for not being good enough.

As the class goes on, the viewer can see that Mr. Sugden behaves rather childishly, meanly, and competitively, pushing the boys on the ground as he tries to keep the ball for himself and score. That is the funny part. The thing that is especially distressing though is his reaction to Billy not stopping the ball from entering the goal. Although Billy tries his best, he does not manage to do it. This leaves Mr. Sugden furious, which then causes him to yell at Billy, saying that he has "never seen such a slack work in his life."[102] After that, to everyone's shock, he uses all his force to throw a ball at Billy and knock him down. In addition, the shower scene is also very unsettling. Mr. Sugden proceeds to humiliate Billy in front of all the boys. He forces him to shower after the match and to punish him for the fact that he, in his opinion, "let in the goal deliberately"[103] he turns the water cold. There is not even a sign of respect or concern on his part, as if he even could not get himself to care. It is rather excruciating to watch.

As apparent from the previous paragraphs, Billy simply finds himself in a desperate situation. But perhaps it would not seem that abysmal if there were a solution to his problems, the light at the end of the tunnel, and the hope that everything will eventually get better. Ken Loach made the audience believe that there is, as described in the next subchapter, but it did not last for too long. But what is the cause of Billy's troubles? How can it be that a child is at the beginning of his life and yet feels like it is already over and nothing is waiting for him?

It could be said that the conflict between the two brothers, which is one of the crucial elements of this film, was caused by the fact that Jud has already gotten through what Billy fears. It might be partially caused by the fact that he is a cruel and grumpy young man, but it should also not be omitted that he

[102] Kes, directed by Ken Loach (Kestrel Films, Woodfall Film Productions, 1969). 42:22-42:25
[103] Ibid. 50:15-50:18.

had already had his entire world shattered. One could look at Jud as the future that awaits Billy. He probably also had dreams of his own and these dreams were crushed by the cruel reality. He is now a member of the mining community, another member of the working class who can do nothing but accept their lot in life. This leads to him being highly frustrated and angry and taking out the anger on his brother Billy, and then later on, at the end of the whole film, even on the innocent kestrel.

The bullying, that Billy is a victim of, might stem from this frustration as well. At the end of the day, there are still many people who, when unhappy and unfulfilled, tend to take out their frustration on others. Even the teachers that did not treat Billy right, that were condescending and, in some cases, even violent, could have felt frustrated and brought down by the system that does not care about people's needs and feelings. This, however, by no means, justifies their actions.

When looking further into the previously mentioned actions of the staff at Billy's school, another possible reason for their, as Stead argues, "vindictive, insensitive, petty, and perhaps a little pathetic"[104] behaviour might be the fact that they simply did not consider it important to care about Billy, nor about his classmates. They perceived them as hopeless cases, rebels, and outcasts unable of good academic results and thus not worthy of their time and effort. In one dialogue with his English teacher, Mr. Farthing, and also probably the only teacher that shows at least a slight interest in him and recognizes his talent, Billy opens up to him, saying: "… and teachers, sir. They're not bothered about us, sir. If we're 4C, they think we're numbskulls, owt like that, sir. They're always lookin' at their watches, to see how long there's left of t'lesson."[105] In this scene, Loach's disapproval of the educational system in the 1960s is very apparent. It is quite clear that he does not agree with the system of streaming and with the absence of an individual, caring, and respectful approach to students.

To summarize, what Loach perhaps tried to imply in Kes was not only that society should value people's needs and goals a little bit more, but also that giving up on a child just because of one failed exam is not the right thing to do. Moreover, he might have also tried to say that although education in the 1960s was free and available to the masses, the quality of it was still something that needed to be worked on and improved.

[104] Peter Stead, *Film and the working class: the feature film in British and American society* (London: Routledge, 1991), 205.
[105] Kes, directed by Ken Loach (Kestrel Films, Woodfall Film Productions, 1969). 1:16:00-1:16:10.

4.2 Kestrel as a symbol of freedom

Following the previous subchapter that mentioned the fact that Ken Loach let the viewers believe for a while that there is still some hope left for Billy, it might be beneficial to further elaborate on it was depicted in *Kes*. In other words, to further elaborate on what exactly was supposed to symbolize this hope and in what way. This short subchapter begins with a brief description of symbolism as a whole but focuses mainly on the symbolism used in Ken Loach's *Kes*.

As described in Webster's dictionary, „symbolism is the art or practice of using symbols especially by investing things with a symbolic meaning or by expressing the invisible or intangible by means of visible or sensuous representations."[106] Symbols simply serve as a representation of qualities, ideas, and many more. Edward Bakony, who was an associate professor of Fine Arts at York University in Ontario, states in his study of symbolism in feature films from 1974 that „a symbol arises when an image is surrounded by a complex of conscious and unconscious associations".[107] There are several symbols that have been already popularized and are generally understood by the majority of people. Owl, for example, is a symbol for intelligence and wisdom, lion represents leadership, fox represents slyness, and perhaps the best-known symbol of all is the heart representing love and compassion. However, none of those, or any other symbols, have a definitive meaning. The meanings of symbols can vary from culture to culture and they can also differ according to context.

The symbols mentioned in the previous paragraph, and many more, are used by filmmakers and other artists all over the world. It allows them to depict what otherwise could not be visible to a human's eye. Ken Loach uses symbolism in *Kes* as well. Perhaps the most important symbol, and also the symbol this chapter focuses on, is one of the most important characters in *Kes* – the kestrel. The kestrel did not speak a word, obviously, and yet it was able to convey an important message. The previous subchapter dealt with the challenges Billy has to face. From the way his life is portrayed in the film, one could say that he is a hopeless case. After all, that is even how his mother describes him and his chances in life, "a hopeless case".[108] However, the audience is given, at least for a while, a shred of hope that it might not be the case. A hope that Billy could actually be happy, achieve something, and lead a happy life. The emblem of this hope, of the silver lining of Billy's whole situation, is the kestrel. People often see birds, or generally winged creatures, as a symbol of freedom.

[106] "Symbolism," Merriam-Webster (Merriam-Webster), accessed February 9, 2021, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/symbolism.
[107] 36. Bakony, Edward. "Symbolism in the Feature Film." Paper presented at the University Film Association Conference (Windsor, Ontario, August 1974). Accessed February 9, 2021. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED096715
[108] Kes, directed by Ken Loach (Kestrel Films, Woodfall Film Productions, 1969). 26:28-26:30.

The kestrel in *Kes* represents just that. It represents freedom, the chance to escape from the dull, dreary present and even drearier future, and the chance of better life for Billy.

When showing the kestrel to Mr. Farthing, Billy himself describes *Kes* as follows:

> "When I take her for walks, somebody says: 'Look, it's Billy Casper and his pet hawk.' I could shout at 'em, sir. It in't a pet. Or if somebody comes up to me and says: 'Is it tame?' Is it heck tame! Hawks can't be tamed. They're manned. It's wild and it's free and it's not bothered about anybody. Not bothered about me, right. That's what makes it great."[109]

It could be said that he admires the kestrel exactly for the things he wishes to be and do but knows he cannot. He is aware that he is not free and cannot do as he pleases. Some could argue that people are the masters of their own fate and that even Billy could have overturned his own. This might be partially true. However, how easily someone can achieve something in life can be, among other things, affected even by the background one comes from as well as the people that surround him (or her). To put it another way, Billy could have overturned his fate, but it would take him much more work than it would take someone coming from another part of England, another social class, and another school. Unfortunately, he was just a working-class boy coming from Northern England and attending a 4C class. He could have tried as much as he wanted, but at the end of the day, there is only so much that a single fifteen-year-old child can do when it seems the whole world has plotted against him.

To summarize, what can be seen in Kes when the kestrel dies is the end to Billy's dreams, because it is not just the kestrel that dies, it is also his hopes for a better future. That is what makes the whole ending even sadder.

4.3 When social class determines one's life chances

Ken Loach is well-known for trying to show the life of the British working class in his films. Following the previous two subchapters, which already touched upon Billy's class-related disadvantagement, this subchapter briefly illustrates how exactly does social class affect one's life chances, or, more precisely, how exactly does Billy's social class affect his life.

The second chapter of this thesis focused mainly on education in 1960s England and one of the things that were implied was the fact that pupils coming from working-class families were less likely to go to a good school. Furthermore, the aim of one of the subchapters of the third chapter was to briefly

[109] Kes, directed by Ken Loach (Kestrel Films, Woodfall Film Productions, 1969). 1:23:18-1:23:43.

introduce capitalism in Great Britain and its possible effects on society. And, although it might not seem like it, the issue of capitalism is something that needs to be mentioned even in this subchapter. The reason for that is that there could be a certain connection between the capitalist system and the unfair system of streaming, which has set Billy up for a life of systematic failure. But why is that? Why would anybody want a child to fail like that and not even give him an option to get a better education?

There have been many kinds of research conducted on whether a child's background can have an impact on their academic results. This thesis is not supposed to answer this question. However, it can try to comment on one of the possible reasons for Billy, and other working-class children, not scoring well on his eleven-plus exam and therefore having little to zero chances of continuing his education.

It cannot be said for sure, but the reason for that could be that, as a working-class woman and a single parent, Billy's mother did not have time to study with Billy and to do his homework with him, as she had to work really hard to provide for her family. Even Billy himself had to get a part-time job in order to add some money to the family budget. This perhaps caused him to fail both the intelligence testing at the age of 6 or 7 and then also his eleven-plus exam. As implied before, what followed was him having to attend a 4C class at a secondary modern school where he was not being prepared for further education at all. Nobody even expected him to continue with his studies.

However, one could still ask, what role does capitalism play in all of this? Again, nothing is certain, but it could be said the reason why the capitalist system could be at fault is that in a way it relied on those young working-class students to fail their exams. Their parents and grandparents all probably had low-status, low-pay jobs. What would happen to those companies if many of the young students did not follow in their parents' footsteps and continued with their education instead? And if every year there was not a steady stream of students, who failed their eleven-plus exams, looking for jobs? As it was already mentioned in the theoretical part, those companies needed workers in order to produce goods and if suddenly, many of the working-class children, who would otherwise start to work for them, decided to go to universities instead, it would negatively impact their production.

To summarize, in a way one could say that Billy's future had been already decided to him even before he started to go to school. That so only because he was born to a working-class family. Even though it saddens him, in certain scenes the viewer can see that he has already accepted his faith:

> Mr: Farthing: What sort of job do you want?
> Billy: I'm not bothered, sir. Anything'll do me.
> Mr. Farthing: But you want something that you're interested in, don't you?
> Billy: I've not much choice, sir. I'll take what I've got.

Mr. Farthing: I thought you wanted to leave school.
Billy: Not bothered.
Mr. Farthing: Thought you didn't like school.
Billy: I don't, but it dun't mean to say I'll like work. Still, I'll get paid for not likin' it. That's one thing.
Mr. Farthing: Yea, I suppose it is.[110]

4.4 Ken Loach's film *Kes* versus Barry Hines' novel *A Kestrel for a Knave*

In this subchapter, Ken Loach's film *Kes*, on which this thesis focuses, is compared with the novel *A Kestrel for a Knave* that was written by Barry Hines and that served as a basis for the film. For this comparison, snippets of the novel and the script, or eventually certain scenes, will be used. Additionally, particular similarities and differences of these two art forms, that could be considered to be the most important, will be described. One of the aims of this subchapter is to answer the question of to what extent is the film adaptation faithful to Hines' novel.

Born in Northern England, coming from a working-class family and having experienced it all himself, it is only understandable that is what Barry Hines's novels are about – the life and struggles of the working-classes. As Turnbull claims, "the uniqueness of Barry Hines's part in British contemporary literature stems from his position as both inside the working-class and outside looking in".[111]

A Kestrel for a Knave is not the only Hines' novel which Loach adapted into a film. Other Hines' novels that Loach adapted are *The Price of Coal*, *The Gamekeeper*, and *Looks and Smiles*. This means that Barry Hines can be considered, alongside with, for instance, Tony Barnett and Paul Laverty, Loach's long-time collaborator.

Perhaps even because Hines himself helped with the adaptation, the film *Kes* is mostly true to the original novel. However, some cuts, extensions, and changes had to be made. Two of the differences that one can notice can be found in the scene that has been already brought up in this thesis. It is the scene in which Billy complains to Mr. Farthing about the behaviour of most of the teachers. While in the film he says that they think he and his classmates are numbskills, [112] in the novel not only he implies that the teachers think very little of them, but he also says that they actually call them names such as idiots and cretins,[113] which is undeniably even worse. Furthermore, another difference in this

[110] Kes, directed by Ken Loach (Kestrel Films, Woodfall Film Productions, 1969). 1:16:53-1:17:12
[111] Simone Turnbull, "The portrayal of the working-class and working-class culture in Barry Hines's novels" (Doctoral, Sheffield Hallam University, 2014).
[112] Kes, directed by Ken Loach (Kestrel Films, Woodfall Film Productions, 1969). 1:16:03-1:16:05.
[113] Barry Hines, A Kestrel for A Knave, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1999).

scene is that in the film Mr. Farthing does not react to that, but in the novel, he asks Billy whether all teachers are like that.[114] To which Billy answers by saying that "most of 'em, sir. An', anyway… I can talk to you better than most folks."[115]

Another difference can be found in the first part of the book when Billy's mother is getting ready to go out. While the film follows her to the pub, the novel does not, since it focuses on Billy and his story (even if written in the third-person point of view).

The last difference that will be mentioned in this subchapter is in the endings of these two works of art. The ending is extremely heart-breaking, both in the novel and in the film. However, the one in Loach's film differs from the one in Hines' novel. Hines himself explained the reason for this change in the afterword of the novel:

> Another important change was the ending. In the novel, following the fight in the house after Jud has killed the hawk, Billy runs off and breaks into a derelict cinema which he used to visit with his father in happier times. He sits on a broken seat and projects onto the screen an imaginary scene of Kes attacking a fleeing Jud up on the moors. This wouldn't have worked because it was pure fantasy taking place inside Billy's head, and the style would have been out of context with everything that had happened previously. In the film, the downbeat ending of Billy burying the hawk after his emotional confrontation with Jud was much more appropriate.[116]

Finally, the last scene that deserves to be mentioned at almost the end of this thesis is the one in which Billy talks about Kes in front of his class. During this scene, his eyes light up and his words run into each other, as he beams with pride. David Bradley delivered an extremely great performance throughout the whole film, but this scene especially stands out from the other ones. It almost seems as if he was not acting at all. Both in the novel and the film, the atmosphere of this scene is very similar, and it is then when the reader, or the viewer, can clearly see Billy's passion, excitement, and love for falconry and his kestrel Kes. It is then when it becomes clearly apparent that he has just found something he loves and as happy as it seems, the scene gets sadder and sadder the more times one reads it or watches it. Knowing the end of the film and the novel, one cannot help but wonder: why could not he remain this happy forever?

[114] Barry Hines, A Kestrel for A Knave, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1999).
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.

5 CONCLUSION

The purpose of the theoretical part of this bachelor thesis was mainly to introduce the filmmaker Ken Loach and his work as well as the social and historical background of one of his films – *Kes*. Moreover, the aim of the practical part was to analyse the film *Kes* and to focus on the way in which Loach portrayed the state of education and society in 1960s England in this film. Or in other words, to focus on and determine whether he might have perceived the society and education system during that time as flawed and thus decided to adapt the novel *A Kestrel for a Knave* by Barry Hines into *Kes* in order to vocalize his concerns. Additionally, this thesis also aimed to comment on how exactly the state of society and education affects the life of the young protagonist, Billy, and his coming of age. One main question arose at the very beginning of this thesis: could Billy's grim fate be a metaphorical depiction of the state of society as a whole?

The answer to this question is 'yes'. There are no doubts that Ken Loach used *Kes* to spoke up about his concerns about the state of society and education in the 1960s and, as already suggested in the practical part, Billy's fate in *Kes* really is a metaphorical depiction of the state of society as a whole. In *Kes*, the audience can witness Billy's hardship. However, during that time there were hundreds and hundreds of other children, not only in Northern England, who, just like him, were failed by society and by the educational system. It might not even be an exaggeration to say that many children in the 1960s and the preceding decades were not only robbed of their precious childhood years but also a promising future. Those pupils, who did not score well on their intelligence testing and their eleven-plus exam, could do nothing but enter the labour market after leaving school. With the school leaving age being so low, that meant that many children had to start working already at the age of 15 and what is perhaps even worse, in a field that did not even interest them. Furthermore, as seen even in *Kes* in Billy's case, a lot of pupils' talents went unnoticed and it is always sad when a talent gets wasted.

In Billy's case, the viewer can see that despite his petty crimes, he is a talented and bright kid. Yet, because he was not lucky and did not score well on his eleven-plus exam, almost everybody has given up on him and written him off as a lost cause. His enthusiasm (apparent mainly in the scene where he talks about *Kes* in front of his class) and the way in which he was able to memorize and learn all the facts about falconry is admirable. Additionally, the fact that he was able to train a kestrel, all on his own, is also worthy of recognition. One could say he could have even pursued a career in this field and work with animals, or perhaps studied biology if it were not for the rigid system of education and the values of society.

In 1960s, and especially in Northern England, freedom, being one's true self, and coming after one's dreams was sadly something that was not valued and easy to achieve and while Billy was able to obtain his freedom for a while, in the form of a stolen kestrel Kes, he could not keep it. No matter how tight he held onto it, it was taken away from him.

6 RESUMÉ

Anglický režisér Ken Loach, celým jménem Kenneth Charles Loach, se proslavil především tím, že ve svých filmech poukazuje na různé společenské problémy, jako je například nezaměstnanost, chudoba a závislost na návykových látkách. Především se pak zaměřuje na osudy lidí z dělnické třídy. Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na ty problémy, které se Loach snažil vyobrazit v jeho filmu *Kes* z roku 1969. Těmito problémy se rozumí především stav anglické společnosti v 60. letech a také stav vzdělávacího systému v Anglii v téže době. Film Kes pojednává o osudu 15 letého školáka Billyho, který v životě neměl příliš velké štěstí a nečeká ho veselá budoucnost. Jedním z cílů této bakalářské práce je odpovědět na otázku, zda je osud Billyho metaforickým zobrazení stavu celé společnosti.

Teoretická část této práce poskytuje teoretické informace potřebné k zodpovězení této otázky. První kapitola se věnuje představení sociálního realismu a to z toho důvodu, že Ken Loach je mnohdy považován za sociálně-realistického režiséra. První podkapitola kapitoly první pak plynuje navazuje na všechny informace uvedené v kapitole první. Jejím cílem je odpovědět na otázku, zda je skutečně Možné Kena Loache považovat za sociálně-realistického režiséra a pokud ano, tak z jakého důvodu. Dále jsou v ní zmíněny některé společenské problémy, na které se Loach ve svém díle snaží upozornit. Zmíněny jsou například filmy My Name Is Joe a The Wind That Shakes the Barley. Další podkapitola se pak snaží popsat styl, jakým Ken Loach točí své filmy. Uvádí také, čím jsou jeho filmy typické. Pod tímto se rozumí například užití amatérských herců, čímž je Loach proslulý. I v této podkapitole jsou pak představeny Loachovi další filmy, včetně Cathy Come Home a I, Daniel Blake.

Kapitola druhá se snaží film Kes uvést do historických a kulturních souvislostí. Jsou v ní stručně představena 60. léta tohoto století. Tím nejdůležitějším v ní je ale představení toho, jak vypadal život lidí z dělnické třídy v této době. Obzvlášť velká pozornost je pak věnována problematickému regionu severu. Život zde totiž v 60. létech nebyl zdaleka tak idylický, jako například v Londýně. Faktem je, že lidé na severu se i v 60. letech stále báli nezaměstnanosti a to i přesto, že jsou 60. léta obecně považována za dekádu rozkvětu. Poslední podkapitola druhé kapitoly je věnována tématu kapitalismu a především pak jeho negativními důsledky na společnost.

Kapitola třetí se věnuje anglickému vzdělávacímu systému v 60. letech, jeho podobě a také změnám, kterými si, především ke konci dekády, prošel. Věnuje se především takzvané zkoušce 11-plus, která na začátku 60. vyvolávala vlny kritiky.

Praktická část čas vychází z části teoretické této bakalářské práce. Zaměřuje se na to, co chtěl Ken Loach prostřednictvím filmu Kes sdělit. Věnuje se tomu, jak Loach vylíčil sociální problémy ovlivňující protagonistu filmu Kes a jak zobrazil například svou kritiku vzdělávacího systému. Jedna

kapitola se také zaměří na to, co má vlastně pro Billyho symbolizovat poštolka Kes. Tato část této bakalářské práce umožnila odpovědět na otázku uvedenou na začátku této práce. Odpovědí je, že Billyho osud je skutečně metaforickým zobrazením stavu celé společnosti.

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