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978-0-521-48043-7 - The Filllls of Mike Leigh: Embracing the World

Ray Carney

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The Films of Mike Leigh

The Films of Mike Leigh is the first critical study of one of the most important and iconoclastic directors of British independent filmmaking. Although active since 1971, Leigh has come to the attention of an international audience only in the 1990s through films such as *Secrets and Lies*, *Career Girls*, and *Topsy Turvy*. Like Robert Altman, John Cassavetes, and Tom Noonan, Leigh works with a small group of actors, building his films during months of private rehearsal. The script is written during this process. In this volume, Ray Carney examines Leigh's working method and films in the intellectual and social contexts in which they were created. He also argues that Leigh cannot be considered simply within the British realist tradition of Osborne and Loach. All of Leigh's major works, from *Bleak Moments* and *Abigail's Party* to *Meantime*, *High Hopes*, *Life Is Sweet*, and *Naked* are treated, and shown to be among the greatest and most original works in all of cinema.

Ray Carney is Professor of Film and American Studies and Director of Film Studies at Boston University. He is the author of ten books, including *The Films of John Cassavetes: Pragmatism, Modernism, and the Movies*; *The Films of John Cassavetes: The Adventure of Insecurity*; *American Vision: The Films of Frank Capra*; *Speaking the Language of Desire: The Films of Carl Dreyer*; the BFI monograph on *Shadows*; and *Cassavetes on Cassavetes: A Life in Art*. General editor of Cambridge Film Classics, he is regarded as one of the world's experts on independent film. He has a Web site at: <<http://people.bu.edu/rcarney>>.

Leonard Quart is Professor of Cinema Studies at the College of Staten Island and the CUNY Graduate Center. He is an editor of *Cineaste*, author of the revised and expanded edition of *American Film and Society Since 1945*, and coauthor of *How the War Was Remembered: Hollywood and Vietnam*.

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General Editor: Ray Carney, Boston University

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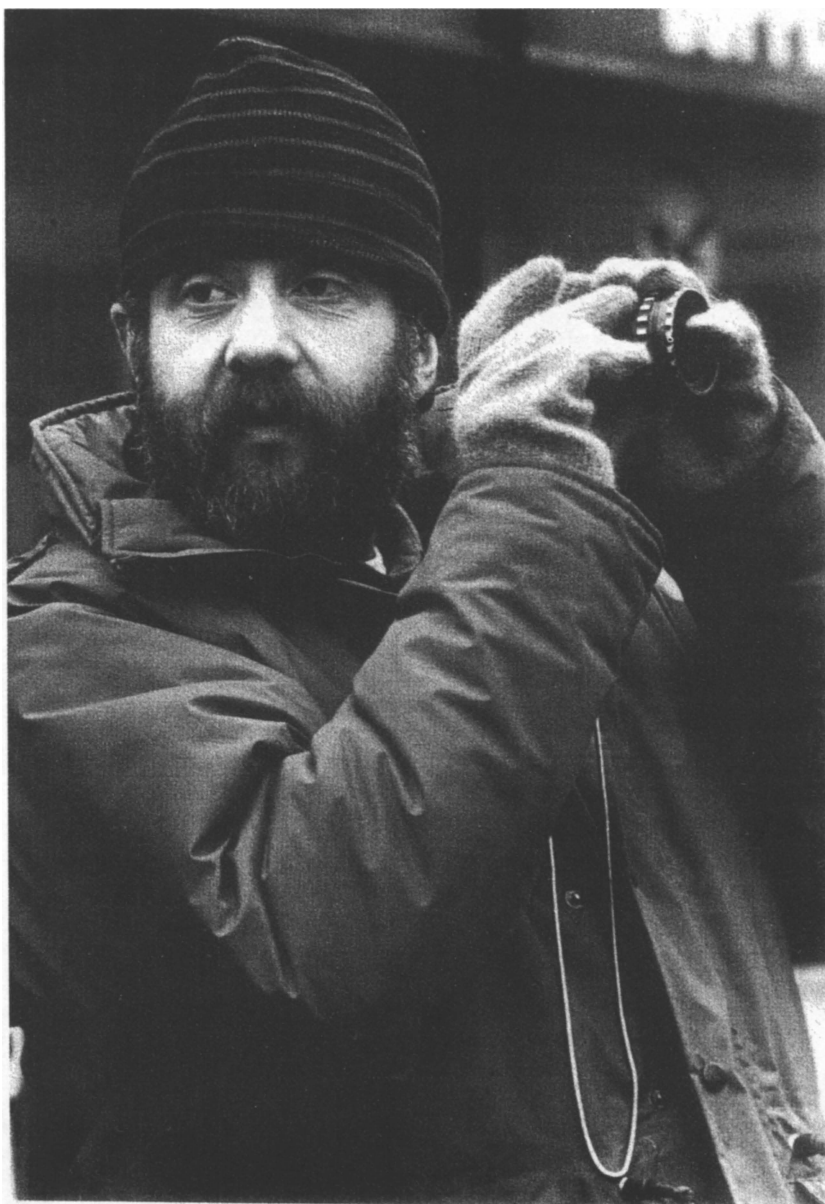
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Mike Leigh working on *High Hopes*

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with contributions by

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College of Staten Island



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The trouble is on screen everyone is perfect. They're a perfect heavy.
They're a perfect good guy. That's boring. I encourage the actors not
to be better than they are.

– John Cassavetes

Truth is what is. Not what should be. Truth is what is.

– Lenny Bruce

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Editorial Note

Leonard Quart contributed the “Biographical and Cultural Introduction” and Chapter 13, “Desperate Lives: *Naked*.” Ray Carney wrote the rest of the text, chose the photographs, and wrote the captions.

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Grateful acknowledgment is made to Mike Leigh for providing viewing copies of several unreleased or otherwise unavailable films and plays, including his *Five-Minute Films*, *The Short and Curlies*, *A Sense of History*, and *The Permissive Society*.

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Ray Carney
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