

# **Sourcelessness**

How has softlight affected naturalism in early european cinema?

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Screen Studies

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“An endless struggle with great benefits of satisfaction when you get to the end” (Broomfield, 2017)

*this is a inline test to see if it works*

## Introduction

In this essay i will be looking at how the evolution of soft light and how it plays a major a part of creating a natural looking image. i will look at the main contibutors in the evolution of soft light from 1940's till the 1970's.

Saying one cinematic movement is responsible for the the entirety of softer lighting in film wouldnt be right. However in film there have been Film Movements that have created noticable change to how we light today. in this essay i will be looking at 4 Major movements. Saring with Italian Neo Realism then moving onto the avantgard movement in france from 1950 till 1960 going on to the polish film school movement in the same time frame lastly going on to the british new wave from 1960 till the 1970's.

set up the question in the introduction

look into how soft light affects naturalism

make the introduction transfrom f to the history of softlight and the people who have used

Define terms of soft light

give a time frame for early european cinema

define naturalism

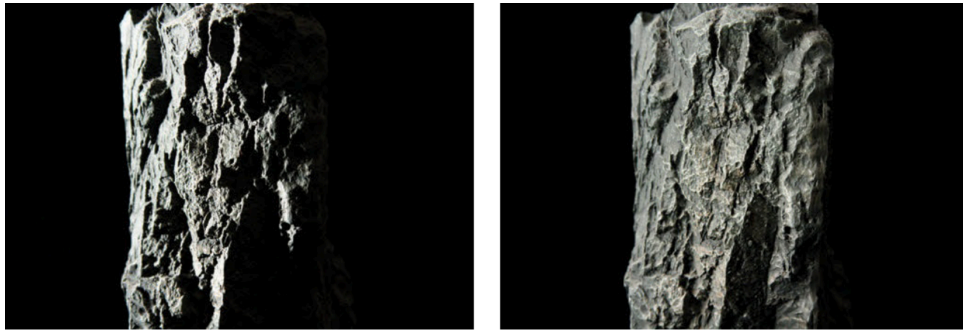
when looking at the people who used soft light look at how they used naturalism

## What is soft light?

To be able to understand the history of soft lighting i will look at the ways soft light is created and the effect it produces Jay Holben discribes this process will in two issues of the American Cinematographer entitled Shot Craft: Light Quality 101 (Holben, 2020)

“The closer the source is to your subject, the softer the light will be. As light becomes softer, the shadow transition becomes longer and more gradual. Soft light is, by its nature, very low in contrast\_. It can be non-directional and even feel”sourceless,” meaning that it’s hard to determine what direction

the light is coming from. It can hide the texture of an object, even at extreme angles. Extremely soft light can create a nearly shadowless environment.” Holben (2020)



Examples of hard light and soft light from the same raking side angle on a stone with a heavily textured face. Note that the hard light accentuates the appearance of the texture while the soft light greatly reduces it.

Figure 1: *Light Quality 101* (2020)

When using softer lighting in a film there are some inherent benefits and drawbacks. — in his essay puts it best

one of the major drawbacks to using softer lighting from a non artistic point is that it requires a lot more light to get a good exposure.

## **The Benefits**

faster turnaround as a scene would not have to be relit for every shot

## **The Drawbacks**

greater power requirements as

would this work if this doesn't work just one more test

## **Pre Realism**

looking at the soft 1930's and lens filters

“Earliest silent movies were shot in studios under glass roofs with muslin cloth stretched across, so were under soft light. One of the most popular lights in the silent era were Cooper-Hewitts, which were gas-discharge fixtures in tubes, a cross between a mercury vapor streetlamp and a fluorescent tube, and produced a soft light. Cinematographers like Charles Rosher did lovely lighting effects

by mixing hard carbon arc lamps with soft Cooper-Hewitt lamps. So soft lighting is not a modern phenomenon.” (Mullen, 2012)

“Sound killed the use of the noisy Cooper-Hewitts (as did color). But many 1930’s movies still created soft lighting using tungsten lamps through spun glass or silks. By like all styles, people became tired of it and the sharper, crisper look using harder lights become the norm by the 1940’s” (Mullen, 2012)

## **Italian Neo Realism**

During an interview in *Masters of Light*, Néstor Almendros discussed the look of Italian films during the neorealist movement talking about the use of Softer and more natural lighting, mentioning G.R. Aldo (born Aldo Graziati) as one of the most influential people during this time because of his revolutionary work on *Umberto D.*, (1952) and *La terra trema*, (1949)

Néstor Almendros also discussed where this softer lighting style might have originated “Films of the period like *Open City* and *Shoeshine* made by other cinematographers had an interesting look, not because the director of photography wanted it that way; it was due to lack of money.” (Schaefer and Salvato, 2013:5)

## **Ubaldo Arata**

### **Rome Open City (1945)**

Roberto Rossellini

“Roma città aperta was shot in the same way that conventional feature films were shot at the time, mostly in a studio. However, the production was ‘poor’ for purely historical reasons: electrical power and production funding were scarce and unreliable. The ‘look’ of a film is largely the product of the lighting. For the interiors, mostly shot in a studio, the filmmakers had no alternative but to use large amounts of artificial light, and one problem they faced was that of getting power for the lighting units. They had a generator, but fuel was hard to obtain. Once they had solved the problem by purloining current from a nearby American forces newspaper office, there was no reason why the DP should not light his sets in the normal way (except that Arata found himself short of bulbs for the lighting units).” (Wagstaff, 2007)

## **Anchise Brizzi**

### **Shoeshine (1946)**

Vittorio De Sica

## **G.R. Aldo**

### **La Terra Trema**

Luchino Visconti

### **Umberto D. (1952)**

Vittorio De Sica

“It might be hard to understand now but these films had a profound affect on European cinema. They inspired the French ‘New Wave’ of Goddard and Truffaut; the ‘Kitchen Sink’ realism of the 60’s in the UK; the students of the Polish Film School” (Deakins, 2017)

## **French Cinema and its New Wave**

**Overall, the influence of Italian neorealism on the French New Wave was significant, and it helped to shape the movement’s focus on realism and its rejection of traditional cinematic forms and conventions. This influence can be seen in the work of French New Wave filmmakers such as François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard, who were heavily influenced by Italian neorealism and its techniques and approaches.**

From 1950 to 1960, France was rife with artistic experimentation, including one of the most influential film movements. The Nouvelle Vague brought upon us the birth of auteur theory. In the age of experimental auteurs, there were also experimental cinematographers, most notably the likes of Raoul Coutard, Henri Decae and Léonce-Henri Burel.

## **Léonce-Henri Burel**

**Robert Bresson was a French filmmaker who was active during the 20th century. He is best known for his austere and minimalist approach to filmmaking, and he is widely regarded as one of the most important and influential figures in the history of French cinema. Bresson is**

often associated with the French New Wave, which was a movement in French cinema that emerged in the 1950s and became prominent in the 1960s. This movement was characterized by a focus on realism and experimentation, and was associated with a group of young filmmakers who sought to break with traditional cinematic conventions and create a new kind of cinema. However, Bresson's work was distinctive and did not necessarily conform to the conventions of the French New Wave, so he is not always considered to be a part of this movement. Instead, he is often considered to be a filmmaker who worked outside of traditional film movements and developed his own unique style and approach to cinema.

Although Robert Bresson's work is not thought to be part of the French New Wave, However it still was none the less highly influential in a multiple of ways, his way of lighting being one of them. The lighting in Bresson's films had evolved through multiple films and Cinematographers, two of the most notably being Philippe Agostini and Léonce-Henri Burel. Agostini's films with Bresson had softer elements with elements of softer lighting using the standard techniques of to achieve soft lighting. However, this change with Bresson's collaboration with Léonce-Henri Burel where this technique was used to a far greater extent, most notably on the films *Diary of a Country Priest* (1951), *A Man Escaped* (1956) and *Pickpocket* (1959).

look at the catch light used in *A Man Escaped* and how it gave life to the image

the inefficiency of lights and how they aren't very light efficient so they need strong lights to power

(soft light was used since the beginning of cinema how)

## **Henri Deca**

Look at Henri Deca's work with Jean-Pierre Melville and François Truffaut on *400 Blows* Henri Deca also worked with Jacques Dupont

## **Raoul Coutard**

Coutard was known for his ability to work quickly and efficiently, and his use of natural light allowed him to shoot in a variety of locations without the need for heavy and expensive lighting equipment. His use of soft light was instrumental in the development of the French New Wave style of filmmaking,

Raoul Coutard's more notable work with soft light was in *(Le petit soldat, 1963)*



Figure 2: *Le petit soldat*. (1963)

(Le petit soldat, 1963)

(Le petit soldat, 1963)

“It might be hard to understand now but these films had a profound affect on European cinema. They inspired the French ‘New Wave’ of Goddard and Truffaut; the ‘Kitchen Sink’ realism of the 60’s in the UK; the students of the Polish Film” (rogerdeakinsWhenDidSoft2017a?)

**how not all of French cinema from 1950 to 1960 is the new wave**

## Polish Film School Movement

Looking at how they also took influence from italian neo realism

**The Polish Film School was a film movement that emerged in Poland during the 1950s. It was characterized by a focus on realism and social commentary in its storytelling, as well as a distinct visual style. The movement was influenced by Italian neorealism and the French New Wave, and its leading figures included filmmakers such as Andrzej Wajda and Krzysztof Zanussi. The Polish Film School movement was highly regarded and had a significant impact on the development of world cinema.**

**Some notable cinematographers who worked during the Polish Film School movement include Jerzy Wójcik, Edward Kłosiński, and Witold Sobociński. Wójcik is best known for his work on Andrzej Wajda’s “Ashes and Diamonds,” while Kłosiński is known for his collaborations with Krzysztof Zanussi, including on the film “Illumination.” Sobociński, meanwhile, is known for his work on Wajda’s “The Promised Land” and Zanussi’s “The Constant Fac-**



tor.” These cinematographers were known for their innovative use of camera techniques and their ability to capture the realism and social commentary that were central to the Polish Film School movement.

## **Jerzy Wójcik**

**Ashes and Diamonds**

## **Edward Kłosiński**

**Illumination**

## **Witold Sobociński**

Witold Sobociński was a Polish cinematographer known for his use of soft light in his work. Sobociński often used diffused light sources to create a warm, atmospheric look in his films. This approach helped to create a sense of intimacy and emotional depth in his scenes. Sobociński’s use of soft light was particularly notable in his collaborations with director Krzysztof Zanussi, including in the films “The Constant Factor” and “From a Far Country.”

**The Promised Land**

**The Constant Factor**

## **The British cinema and its New Wave**

The British kitchen sink drama movement emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, and was characterized by a focus on working-class characters and the harsh realities of life in industrial cities such as London and Manchester. Like Italian neorealism, the British kitchen sink drama movement sought to depict the world as it really was, without the glamorization or escapism of traditional British cinema. This movement was led by filmmakers such as Tony Richardson and Ken Loach, who were interested in using cinema to tell stories about the lives of ordinary people and to explore social and political issues of the time. Overall, while the direct influence of Italian neorealism on the British kitchen sink drama movement is difficult to determine, it is likely that the two movements shared some common influences and aesthetic approaches.

## John Alcott

John Alcott's use of soft light was a key element of his approach to cinematography. In many of his films, Alcott used large, diffused light sources to create a soft and even lighting effect. This helped to create a more natural and realistic look in his films, and it allowed him to capture subtle details and textures in the actors' faces and costumes. Alcott was also known for his use of low-key lighting, which involved using relatively low levels of light to create a moody and atmospheric effect. This approach was particularly effective in *The Shining*, where Alcott used low-key lighting to create a sense of unease and tension. Overall, Alcott's use of soft light was an important part of his distinctive visual style, and it helped to make his films both visually striking and emotionally powerful.

Alcott used reflected light in many of his films with Kubrick, including *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *A Clockwork Orange*. In these films, he used large softboxes and bounced light off of the walls and ceilings of the sets in order to create a soft and even lighting effect. This helped to create a more natural and realistic look in the films, and it allowed Alcott to capture subtle details and textures in the actors' faces and costumes. Overall, Alcott's use of reflected light was an important part of his approach to cinematography, and it helped to make his films both visually striking and emotionally powerful.

how technology is used to

looking at John Alcott and creating even more reflectors Much later new varieties of reflector materials were developed for Kubrick and cinematographer John Alcott.

"HMIs were invented because there was a demand for ever larger sources of light that could be softened down or bounced to appear more naturalistic. Much later new varieties of reflector materials were developed for Kubrick and cinematographer John Alcott." (Deakins, 2017)

## Ozzie Morris

Ozzie Morris' use of space lights and

*"It's interesting to look at the work of Geoffrey Unsworth and Ozzie Morris because they came out of the British studio system and their lighting styles was always a mix of old-school hard light and more modern soft-light techniques – and then compare them with someone like David Watkin who came out of shooting industrials, documentaries, and commercials."*

*Also, look at Unsworth's work on "2001" (1968), which is mostly soft-lit" (Mullen, 2017)*

**Ozzie Morris** was a **British cinematographer** who was known for his use of soft light in his films. He began his career in the 1950s and worked on a number of films during this time, but it was his collaboration with director Carol Reed on the film **Oliver!** (1968) that brought him to prominence. Morris's use of soft light in this film helped to create a more natural and realistic look, and his lighting techniques were instrumental in defining the visual style of the film

## **Geoffrey Unsworth**

2001: A Space Odyssey

"It was the demands of such cinematographers for a softer look, especially in the shooting of commercials, that influenced what the film equipment manufacturers made rather than the other way around. The development of Space Lights made economical sense when film directors and cinematographers demanded their large interior stage sets looked real. HMIs were invented because there was a demand for ever larger sources of light that could be softened down or bounced to appear more naturalistic. Much later new varieties of reflector materials were developed for Kubrick and cinematographer John Alcott." (Deakins, 2017)

## **Conclusion**

## List of Figures

Figure 1. Holben, J. (2020) *Light Quality 101*.

Figure 2. *Le petit soldat*. (1963).

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