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**Social Art Cinema of the 1990s:  
Commodifying the Concept of British National Cinema**

By Jeongmee Kim

Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, September 2003.



**To my parents**

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## Abstract

This study explores the ways in which "social art cinema" has been constructed as a form of national cinema in the context of the 1990s. It discusses how particular institutional issues of the period affected signification revolving around the genre and, consequently, how that affected the concept of national cinema. This research draws upon a range of agendas relating to financial and distribution structures, promotional activities and multi-media consumption that were involved in encouraging the proliferation of social art cinema. This study contends that the success of social art cinema as a generic style was a key factor in constructing an idea of British cinema as a cultural entity. By examining how the institutional elements created this idea, I discuss how social art cinema was positioned as a national cinema in the market place through such elements. The primary objective of this study is therefore to make a contribution towards the growing body of scholarly work that considers the role played by the *idea* of national cinema in the very commercial environment of the contemporary film business where expressions of national specificity can often be seen indistinct. The study also presents evidence for the need to consider contextual aspects when discussing the idea of national cinema. Thus, by examining the commercial aspects of national cinema, I demonstrate that national cinema should not only be defined by accounts of socio-political engagement, but should encompass institutional agendas as well.

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## Introduction

### British Cinema and the Idea of National Cinema

In his article 'Critical Theory and 'British Cinema', Andrew Higson argues that to understand the history of British cinema,<sup>1</sup> "the relationship between film and *ideas* (my italics) of a national cinema" should be taken into account.<sup>2</sup> This indicates how the debates about the meaning of national cinema are significant factors in the history and development of British cinema. In this article, Higson discusses "ideas of a *national* culture." What he means by a national culture is a film culture which has been shaped by realist film debates. Higson argues that because of a critical preference for realist films, many anti-realist or fantasy films have been dismissed in British film history. Bearing this in mind, in this research, I utilise the concept of the construction of ideas of a national culture in relation to the position of anti-realist film as well as realist film debates. As I discuss in the following chapter, I believe that the anti-realist position has also contributed towards institutionalising a certain type of national culture. In addition, I argue that even though both critical approaches have chosen different types of film in order to examine British national cinema, this national film culture has formed a singular concept of national cinema and a singular definition of British cinema. Therefore, I would like to emphasise the importance of examining "ideas of *national cinema*."

What the notion of "*ideas* of a national cinema" suggests is that there is a need to understand the concept of national cinema as the articulation of *an imagined text*. In his study of nationalism, Benedict Anderson proposes that the nation is an imagined political community bound by a false consciousness conveyed through the perception of



the people themselves.<sup>3</sup> If I apply Anderson's theory to national cinema then it becomes clear that national cinema itself is an idea which is more an institutionalised construct than it is a true reflection of national identity.

In other words, national cinema is a contingent and replaceable concept that typifies the way in which cinema has been historically contrived. As a nation is bound through the idea of community,<sup>4</sup> national cinema is imagined to represent that community. What this means is that the idea of national cinema is subject to a specific cultural discourse in the reception of British cinema at a given time. The reception of a film can be seen as being institutionalised through academic and social contexts both of which contribute to the meaning of a film. These contextual factors are intertwined with each other and need to be examined together in order to understand the meanings that become attributed to a specific film and how that in turn affects discourses of national cinema.

Yet, debates about national cinema have often treated the relationship between text and context as a single rather than as a multiple discourse. Consequently, the term "British cinema" has been institutionalised through a particular concept of national cinema. As Higson notes:

Each perspective will inevitably offer a different way of thinking through what it is that makes cinema 'British'. ... Ideological criticism might explore the role that cinema has played in shaping and maintaining the idea of the British nation, imagining its inhabitants as members of a national community with a shared identity. A cultural historical perspective might explore the ways in which British films are rooted in national traditions. A reception studies approach might look at the ways in which promotional

discourse, reviewing practices and audiences have worked with particular ideas of national identity and nationhood.<sup>5</sup>

What all these approaches have in common is their consideration of how British films reflect the nation and national culture and, as a result, it has often been the case that the idea of national cinema conceptualises a certain "national" theme or style. For example, British cinema has been characterised as a particular type of narration with a "distanced and objective point of view" and a "pictorial and pastoral space" that differs from classical Hollywood style.<sup>6</sup> In addition, national cinema debates have also prioritised the issue of projecting a particular kind of national identity, often with an emphasis on the everyday life of Britain. From this point of view, Gainsborough costume drama, for instance, reconceptualised ideas of national identity in post-war Britain through its flamboyant use of mise-en-scene.<sup>7</sup> This type of approach that searches for signs of national identity results from a belief that British films are always constructed around a projection of something national.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, rather than examining the historical contour of national cinema and how the notion of British cinema has been configured, national cinema debates have constructed a cultural outline of British cinema that relates to national identity.

These views fail to recognise that national cinema is actually an imagined text. The construction of national cinema relates not only to its textual features, but also aligns itself with any number of socio-historical contexts. As Steve McIntyre argues, national cinema:

[d]oes not [need to] open onto a search for a historically validated particular style or form. Although it is possible that [the] construction of a national film culture would issue in specific formal directions, this would be

contingently, out of certain substantive ambitions which determine what is 'spoken', as well as how to 'speak.'<sup>9</sup>

However, dominant British critical trends have helped to define a national cinema in light of the artistic value of particular films and film movements, thus ignoring the commercial possibilities of national cinema. In other words, debates have sought to configure a national cinema, leaving the complicated institutional factors involved in the circulation of films uninvestigated. This is not to say that an academic approach to a construction of national cinema is any less important, nor that there has not been any discussion of institutional agendas in national cinema debates. For instance, Sarah Street has provided a historical examination of the British film industry and its social contexts in relation to state involvement with the notion of British national cinema.<sup>10</sup> As her work demonstrates, there is a need to examine *the dynamics* between institutional contexts in the construction of national cinema.

Barbara Klinger's historical materialist approach to reception studies, discussed in her book *Melodrama and Meaning*, is particularly useful here. Klinger notes that this approach "reveals the social conditions and institutions that help constitute contingent meanings for texts as they circulate publicly."<sup>11</sup> While Klinger discusses the historical implications of the reception of Douglas Sirk's film in terms of melodrama, she does not take into account the fact that Sirk is a German director and, consequently, subject to the influence of German national cinema. This research similarly utilises historical materialist approaches, mapped onto the concept of national cinema. In doing so, as discussed earlier, national cinema can be referred to as a changeable concept, which interacts with social and cultural forces, as an idea rather than a determined text. In this sense, unlike contemporary debates in British film studies, national cinema does not fix

a meaning of a text and thus does not determine the reception of British cinema. Rather, national cinema as an idea reverberates through British cinema and produces and integrates meanings with socio-historical contexts.

Bearing this in mind, I suggest that a study of national cinema should consider the multiple discourses involved between text and context. In his study of film noir, James Naremore points out the simplistic academic use and the plurality of the term:

If we want to understand it, or to make sense of genres or art-historical categories in general, we need to recognize that film noir belongs to the history of ideas as much as to the history of cinema; in other words, it has less to do with a group of artifacts than with a discourse - a loose, evolving system of arguments and readings that help to shape commercial strategies and aesthetic ideologies.<sup>12</sup>

Applying this tenet to the idea of national cinema, what has evolved out of previous debates is a specific perspective of British cinema and selective textual engagement with the films that (seem to) fit into that category. Subsequently, intellectuals have largely neglected to examine how the term national cinema has been used.

In his discussion of 1980s British cinema, Thomas Elsaesser notes that "the national cinema question is more than a figment of critic's imagination"<sup>13</sup> and that British cinema has been institutionalised "to create a coherent image for different kinds of films at their point of reception and consumption" with the projection of "the national imaginary" to be sold in the international as well as home markets.<sup>14</sup> Elsaesser's observation enables us to take account of the ways in which the concept of national cinema is used in the market place. In the 1980s, such films as *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Stephen Frears, 1985) and *The Last of England* (Derek Jarman, 1988) were regarded as

national cinema because of their nonconformist attitude towards the Thatcher government.<sup>15</sup> These tendencies can also be understood in the sense that these films were produced and promoted as political films and, with this in mind, were actually received as politically oriented commodities.

National cinema of the 1980s is explored by John Hill who views it in terms of social art cinema, suggesting that the social and political engagement of national cinema can be articulated through the incorporation of the different institutional agendas of the time.<sup>16</sup> The prominent contribution of Hill's notion of social art cinema is its significant relationship with stylistic hybridity and its impact as a national cinema. Taking into account ideas put forward by Christopher Williams,<sup>17</sup> Hill discusses the ways in which 1980s social art cinema has engaged with the concept of national cinema and assesses institutional agendas that existed constructing national cinema at the time.

### **Contextualising National Cinema**

John Hill's approach to social art cinema gives us an insight into the single discourse approach and how that is contextualised within a national cinema. Hill points out that social art cinema became a new form of British national cinema during the 1980s due to the financial involvement of Channel 4. What Hill's argument suggests is a historical understanding of the style of British cinema in relation to institutional modes and this clearly articulates national cinema in terms of cultural changes within the film industry. Thus, in response to institutional needs social art cinema of the 1980s suggests that national cinema is conveyed in historical terms.

In his discussion of social art cinema during the 1980s, Hill re-examines what has been the predominantly aesthetic criterion applied to British cinema. Rather than trying

to define what stylistic mode characterises British national cinema, Hill discusses the limitation of aesthetic categorisation and accepts the diversity of stylistic modes. Thus, Hill positions himself against David Bordwell's notion of "art cinema as a mode of film practice."<sup>18</sup> Bordwell refers to art cinema as a stylistic mode which does not fit into the norm of the classical Hollywood style and thus conveys authorial creativity and narrative ambiguity through its aesthetics. As Bordwell's notion is based on the idea of narrative cinema as a systematic whole, art cinema is understood as a non-systematic aspect of filmic modes placing in opposition to classical narrative cinema.<sup>19</sup> The problem that remains with this notion of art cinema is that this simple binary approach does not explain the complex plurality of contemporary films and approaches within art cinema.<sup>20</sup> Thus, Hill suggests that to understand art cinema in the context of Britain, Steve Neale's notion that art cinema is an inclusive format dependent on institutional needs rather than a determined mode should also be taken into account.<sup>21</sup> Hill, then, regards art cinema as something which has always been apparent but critically ignored in national cinema debates. As Hill notes:

Art cinema is the prime example of national cinema avoiding direct competition with Hollywood by targeting a distinct market sector. ... In this respect, the adoption of aesthetic strategies and cultural referents different from Hollywood also involves a certain foregrounding of 'national' credentials. The oft-noted irony of this, however, is that art cinema then achieves much of its status as national cinema by circulating internationally rather than nationally. ... this means that art cinema ... may be as economically viable as ostensibly more commercial projects aimed at the 'popular' audiences.<sup>22</sup>

From this point of view, British cinema had not just marked itself as art cinema but also established the commercial distinctiveness of national cinema.<sup>23</sup> Hill understands British art cinema as encompassing "the stylistic concerns of European art cinema" with "diversity and hybridity" aiding social art cinema's commercial status on the international circuit.<sup>24</sup>

The most significant influence on social art cinema of the 1980s was Channel 4's involvement in UK film production. In addition to the company's financial input into British films, Channel 4 also expanded the exhibition window for British cinema into television with the company's association with the film industry ensuring the strongest ever link between British cinema and television. This new form of social art cinema, with its style concerns and projection of national subject matters became, as Hill discusses, highly compatible with the channel's public and commercial cultural remit.<sup>25</sup> Thus, Hill argues:

[W]hile films were no longer watched in the same numbers as they once were in the cinemas, they were watched in increasing numbers on television and video ... Thus, while television is often blamed for the demise of cinema, it may in fact have encouraged many contemporary British films, which are not regarded as especially 'popular', to be seen by as many, and indeed more, people as 'popular' British films of the past.<sup>26</sup>

In this respect, social art cinema gained a national viewing audience not in terms of numbers of actual viewers, but in terms of its viewer potential through television screenings.

Despite examining changes in production and exhibition in his discussion of national cinema, Hill moves on to an aesthetic evaluation of social art cinema in order

to arrive at an ideological conclusion. With its various challenges to visual style and its employment of popular genre conventions and European art cinema, Hill discusses social art cinema of the 80s as encouraging discourses around the nation. Hill considers the style of social art cinema as being a means of "projecting a much more fluid, hybrid and plural sense" of national identity.<sup>27</sup> This view implies that national cinema is (and was) centred to the establishment of a national film culture and indeed national culture while simultaneously "articulating progressive notions of national identity."<sup>28</sup>

According to Hill, national cinema

[w]orks with or addresses nationally specific materials, which is none the less critical of inherited notions of national identity, which does not assume the existence of a unique or unchanging 'national culture', and which is quite capable of dealing with social divisions and differences.<sup>29</sup>

Alan Lovell argues that this notion of national cinema is dependent "heavily on the unacknowledged acceptance of the old view of the cinema as having magical powers of expression."<sup>30</sup> Andrew Higson, meanwhile, contends that Hill's view is strongly based on an ahistorical textual determinism in which every element in a text acts to mean something and in which the text automatically connotes a true meaning.<sup>31</sup>

This approach is therefore close to the thematic evaluation of previous national cinema debates, despite Hill's emphasis on the diversity of subject matters and filmic style and the idea that, unlike in previous debates, there is no obligation to conform to certain forms of aesthetics. More importantly, while noting the historical transformation of national cinema (and the exclusiveness of national cinema debates), Hill still engages with the idea that a film's narrative text itself is the primary factor in constructing national cinema. Thus, there is still a need to take a more expanded intertextual



approach when discussing the components of diverse institutional elements.

### **Multi-dimensional Approach to the 1990s Social Art Cinema**

This research, therefore, will examine the development of social art cinema in the context of the 1990s, focusing on institutional issues at the level of production, marketing and consumption. I argue that in the context of the 1990s the generic classification of social art cinema is still valid in the sense that its characteristics of formal hybridity and British issues were prevalent factors in its development. More specifically, I want to look at the political significance of social art cinema in the post-Thatcher era and how it differed from the previous decade. While this research does not restrict itself to a thematic evaluation of social art cinema, I would argue that the political significance of the 1990s should not be dismissed. To a large extent, this period can be seen to lack a clear nationalist identity when compared with the political influences of the Thatcher era,<sup>32</sup> enabling this research to dislocate any concept of a national cinema informed predominantly by a particular socio-political agenda. I would argue that this period can be seen in terms of a new cultural paradigm, especially after the election of a Labour government in 1997. With New Labour's project to create a "Cool Britannia" image of Britain, it helped to distance itself from the social and economic upheavals associated with Thatcherism and the Conservative government of the 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, the cultural industries have produced a diverse but not yet established sense of Britishness that tries to reflect the nation's multiculturalism.<sup>34</sup> With this configuration of national image imposing itself on the cultural industries and its products, the uncertainty surrounding national and cultural identity affected the ways in which the concept of national cinema was constructed and

used.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, this thesis aims to assess the institutional issues which positioned social art cinema as a national cinema in the context of the 1990s and examine the ways in which the concept of national cinema is used as a vehicle to promote British cinema as a marketable product. From the 1950s onwards, modernisation has dramatically influenced media environments as well as changing the way visual products are produced and consumed. In this respect, I would contend that the idea of national cinema should be understood in terms of consumer culture. As Don Slater asserts, in a modern society:

[e]verything has been deprived of its proper reality by being turned into signs and images on the basis of their commodification. Because everything can be commodified and objectified - including all forms of opposition (the very idea of 'revolution' can be packaged as a subcultural style, an advertising slogan, an urban guerrilla clothing fashion) - everything can be absorbed into the spectacle.<sup>36</sup>

What this suggests is that national cinema as an idea that has been used in commercial environments as well as in academic debates.<sup>37</sup> Figure 1 (see Appendix) illustrates how British film as national cinema was publicly perceived during the 1990s.<sup>38</sup> Thus, in order to discuss the very idea of national cinema, there is a need to explore the ways in which diverse institutional factors interact to produce it.

Before moving on to the 1990s, chapter 1 will discuss the ways in which national cinema has been historically constructed through academic debates. As Andrew Higson and Steve Neale note, it is necessary to look at "what has been institutionalised as British cinema"<sup>39</sup> over time in order to understand the relationship between British

cinema itself and ideas of national cinema. I would suggest that, as a consequence, ideas about British cinema have circulated mainly within the realm of academic circles and that debates around it have failed to acknowledge the importance of institutional agendas in constructing national cinema. As mentioned earlier, John Hill's work on social art cinema provides a contextual framework for assessing the notion of national cinema. In chapter 2, I explore how in the 1980s issues of finance and distribution stimulated social art cinema's engagement with its aesthetic possibilities. This enables me to discuss the institutional factors which determined the textual and exhibitional elements of British national cinema.

In order to discuss social art cinema in the context of 1990s, and the ways in which this specific genre was defined as a national cinema, the second section of the thesis will look at the institutional shifts in the film industry's financial and distribution structures, promotional activities, and the changing patterns of film consumption. This section will examine the institutional agendas of the 1990s film industry and how these agendas engaged with the specific genre of social art cinema. In chapter 3, I discuss how the British film industry has been shaped by public and private investment and how it has positioned its industrial stability in the context of international co-production and transnational markets. To secure the exhibition of British cinema in the globalised market, funding sources intended to encourage localised filmmaking. Taking the arguments of David Morley and Kevin Robins into account,<sup>40</sup> I will suggest that defining national cinema has driven British cinema towards a global audience. This localisation is also emphasised through a discussion of particular forms of promotion.

Thus, chapter 4 examines the marketing strategies of social art cinema in the 1990s and explores the ways in which social art cinema was initiated with various

"images" at different points of promotion. I suggest that through promotional activities social art cinema became an identifiable entity by creating a discernible "brand" image of "British" cinema. In order to expand its commercial viability, the marketing of social art cinema appeared to reposition British cinema between the two notions of national and popular cinema. Chapter 5 then deals with multi-media contributions to film consumption. Rather than empirically approaching how audiences perceived social art cinema of the 1990s, I discuss the ways in which technology-led consumption constructed public perceptions about aesthetic values and signaled a different meaning for film viewing. I suggest that in contrast to the packaging of social art cinema in the 1980s which was emphasising the political aspects, the advent of techno-culture led the genre to be marketed as both chic and stylish.

In part III, I further discuss these three institutional aspects in more detail with case studies of four social art films: *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (Guy Ritchie, 1998), *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1996), *Billy Elliot* (Steve Daldry, 2000) and *Elizabeth* (Shekhar Kapur, 1998). While I allude to several other movies, I have chosen these particular films because I believe their generic elements evoke 1990s social art cinema and that this, I argue, was a key factor in their commercial success. These films are also closely examined in terms of their relationship to institutional issues and concerns. In chapter 6, I examine the diverse critical reception of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* and discuss the critical preconceptions of, and audience response to, the film. I suggest that in the 1990s, while film production explored ways to combine the national and popular, critics employed a more empirical method of aesthetic judgement when discussing these notions. Taking into account Julia Hallam's "flexible specialisation,"<sup>41</sup> I propose in chapter 7 that *Trainspotting* exemplifies a certain

approach to localised filmmaking and that its stylisation indicates the desire of localities to market and project their films to a global audience. Through an examination of marketing strategies around the film, chapter 8 explores the way in which *Billy Elliot* oscillated between national cinema in the UK and art cinema in the US markets. Finally, chapter 9 discusses how a very conventional British genre, the heritage film, has transformed its "authenticity" in order to adapt to changing patterns of cinemagoing. The heritage film in the 1990s has re-formulated itself to meet the newly emergent aesthetic value by employing a fresh agenda, that is, the authenticity of reconstructing a history that detaches itself from historical fact.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For a historical overview of British cinema, see Roy Armes, *A Critical History of the British Cinema* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1978); Ernest Betts, *The Film Business: A History of British Cinema 1896-1972* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973); James Curran, and Vincent Porter, eds., *British Cinema History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983). Also, see Rachael Low, and Roger Manvell, *The History of the British Film 1896-1906* (1948; London: Allen and Unwin, 1973); Rachael Low, *The History of the British Film 1906-1914* (1948; London: Allen and Unwin, 1973); Rachael Low, *The History of the British Film 1914-1918* (1948; London: Allen and Unwin, 1973); Rachael Low, and Roger Manvell, *The History of the British Film 1918-1929* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971); Rachael Low, *History of the British Film 1929-1930: Films of Comment and Persuasion of the 1930s* (1948; London: Allen and Unwin, 1973); Rachael Low, *The History of the British Film 1929-1939: Documentary and Educational Films of the 1930's* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1979); Charles Allen Oakley, *Where We Came In: Seventy Years of the British Film Industry* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1964); George Perry, *The Great British Picture Show* (London: Hart-Davis, 1974); Patricia Warren, *British Cinema in Pictures: The British Film Collection* (London: Batsford, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Higson, "Critical Theory and 'British Cinema'," *Screen* 24.4-5 (1983): 93.

<sup>3</sup> Benedict Anderson, introduction, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991) 6; Thus, as Anderson argues, imagined communities are "to be distinguishable, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined." (6).

<sup>4</sup> Anderson 7.

<sup>5</sup> Andrew Higson, "The Instability of the National," *British Cinema, Past and Present*, ed. Justine Ashby and Andrew Higson (London: Routledge, 2000) 35.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Higson, *Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995) 276-77. Higson has acknowledged more recently that this outlining is too simplistic, noting that "I was perhaps at times rather too ready to find British films presenting an image of a coherent, unified, consensual nation." (Higson, "The Instability of the National" 35).

<sup>7</sup> Pam Cook, "Another Time, Another Place: National Identity in Gainsborough Costume Dramas," *Research Papers in Media and Cultural Studies: British Cinema and National Identity*, ed. James Donald and Stephanie Donald (Brighton: U of Sussex, 1995) 16-17.

<sup>8</sup> Alan Lovell, "The British Cinema: The Known Cinema?" *The British Cinema Book*, ed. Robert Murphy (London: BFI, 1997) 241.

<sup>9</sup> Steve McIntyre, "National Film Cultures: Politics and Peripheries," *Screen* 26.1(1985): 76.

<sup>10</sup> See Sarah Street, *British National Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1997); *British Cinema in Documents* (London: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Barbara Klinger, introduction, *Melodrama and Meaning: History, Culture, and the Films of Douglas Sirk* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994) xvi.

<sup>12</sup> James Naremore, *More than Night: Film Noir in Its Contexts* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1998) 11.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Elsaesser, "Image for Sale: The 'New' British Cinema," *British Cinema and Thatcherism: Fires Were Started*, ed. Lester Friedman (London: UCL, 1993) 61.

<sup>14</sup> Elsaesser 63.

<sup>15</sup> For detailed textual analysis of Stephen Frears and Derek Jarman's work in relation to the Thatcher government, see Susan Torrey Barber, "Insurmountable Difficulties and Moments of Ecstasy: Crossing Class, Ethnic, and Sexual Barriers in the Films of Stephen Frears," Friedman 221-36; Chris Lippard, and Guy Johnson, "Private Practice, Public Health: The Politics of Sickness and the Films of Derek Jarman," Friedman 278-93.

<sup>16</sup> See John Hill's chapter, "Film and Television: A New Relationship," *British Cinema in the 1980s: Issues and Themes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999) 53-70.

<sup>17</sup> Christopher Williams, "The Social Art Cinema: A Moment in the History of British Film and Television Culture," *Cinema: The Beginnings and the Future*, ed. Williams (London: U of Westminster P, 1996) 190-200.

<sup>18</sup> See David Bordwell, "The Art Cinema as Mode of Film Practice," *Film Criticism* 4.1 (1979): 56-64; his chapter, "Art-Cinema Narration," *Narration in Fiction Film* (London: Routledge, 1985) 205-33.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of classical narrative film, see David Bordwell, and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 5th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997); David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985).

In response to this simplistic dichotomy towards art cinema, Kristin Thompson employs the term "excess." Excess is defined by Thompson as being all elements in a text which cannot systematically be placed into a cause-effect frame of narrative but actually effect narrative meaning. Despite Thompson's intention to define the logic of excess, these formalist approaches to art cinema eventually substitute cinematic form for narrative. Thus, they fall into the trap of privileging textual analysis and ignore extra-textual factors. (See Kristin Thompson, "The Concept of Cinematic Excess," *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia UP, 1986) 130-42; Kristin Thompson, *Eisenstein's Ivan The Terrible* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981); Kristin Thompson, *Breaking the Glass Amour* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988)).

In relation to the limits of Thompson's notion, excess should be understood, as Mark Jancovich argues, "as a quality of the text which 'provides freedom' by requiring 'a fresh slightly defamiliarized perspective.'" Thus, Jancovich goes on to assert that "excess prevents illusionism and foregrounds the formal features of the text." ("Cult Fiction: Cult Movies, Subcultural Capitals and the Production of Cultural Distinctions," *Cultural Studies* 16.2 (2002): 310).

<sup>20</sup> Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "Art Cinema," *The Oxford History of World Cinema: The Definitive History of Cinema Worldwide*, ed. Nowell-Smith (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996) 567-75.

<sup>21</sup> Steve Neale, "Art Cinema as Institution," *Screen* 22.1 (1981): 11-40.

See, for related discussion, Jill Forbes and Sarah Street's chapter, "Ideology, Aesthetics and Style," *European Cinema: An Introduction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000) 26-50.

<sup>22</sup> John Hill, "British Cinema as National Cinema: Production, Audience and Representation," *The British Cinema Book*, ed. Robert Murphy (London: BFI, 1997) 247.

<sup>23</sup> From Hill's point of view, considering their mode of circulation, the British New Wave of the 60s and the heritage film also should be understood as art cinema as well as those films which heavily deploy an art cinema style, such as those directed by Derek Jarman.

<sup>24</sup> John Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s: Issues and Themes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999) 66.

<sup>25</sup> Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s* 66-67.

<sup>26</sup> Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s* 69.

<sup>27</sup> Hill, "British Cinema as National Cinema," 251.

<sup>28</sup> McIntyre 67.

<sup>29</sup> John Hill, "The Issue of National Cinema and British Film Production," *New Questions of British Cinema*, ed. Duncan Petrie (London: BFI, 1992) 16.

<sup>30</sup> Lovell 241.

<sup>31</sup> In response to Hill's notion of national cinema, Andrew Higson suggests the alternative term "post-national cinema." Higson argues that the cultural diversity of contemporary British films can be found in *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *Bhaji on the Beach*, with the term national cinema not fully engaging with this heterogeneity. In addition to textual elements, Higson also claims that "post-national cinema" stems from concerns about transnational film production and multifaceted film consumption. Higson appears to believe that the term national cinema is no longer significant, even within a national understanding. It is generally accepted that clarifying a national cinema is not as straightforward as it used to be, due to reasons which Higson states. (Higson, "The Instability of the National" 35-47).

However, I would argue that Higson's concept of "post-national" cinema is still engaged with an attempt to define British cinema in terms of its economic structure in production, which Hill argues against, and thus neglects the fact that the idea of national cinema can be used in the commercial environment as a means to heighten the marketability of films. Therefore, pointing out the complexity of national identity in contemporary British cinema does not mean that national cinema is an outdated concept. Moreover, if post-national cinema is a necessary term to use then national cinema can become problematic.

<sup>32</sup> The relationship between the Thatcher government and British film culture is well discussed in Friedman.

<sup>33</sup> For a discussion about the labour government and its attempt to create a new image of Britain, see Steven Driver, and Luke Martell, "Blair and 'Britishness'," *British Cultural Studies: Geography, Nationality and Identity*, ed. David Morley and Kevin Robins (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001) 461-72.

For a discussion of the Labour government's cultural policies, see Chris Smith, *Creative Britain* (London: Faber, 1998). For the Labour government's policies towards the film industry, see Tom Ryall, "New

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Labour and the Cinema: Culture, Politics and Economics," *Journal of Popular British Cinema* 5 (2002): 5-20.

<sup>34</sup> Moya Luckett, "Image and Nation in 1990s British Cinema," *British Cinema of the 90s*, ed. Robert Murphy (London: BFI, 2000) 88.

<sup>35</sup> George K. Behlmer, and Fred M. Leventhal, "Singular Continuities: Tradition, Nostalgia, and Identity," introduction, *Modern British Culture*, ed. Behlmer and Leventhal (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000) 2-3.

<sup>36</sup> Don Slater, *Consumer Culture and Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 1997) 127.

Slater also points out that objects carry "social relations and identities" in consumerism that dilute exchange value. (26-27).

<sup>37</sup> Michael Balcon's attitude to British cinema and the American market is an example. In his study of Michael Balcon, Laurence Kardish asserted that Balcon's policy toward national cinema was "a tool for the market, a reasonable, spontaneous and efficacious weapon against restrictive business practices, including the tendency to play it safe by showing American films." ("Michael Balcon and the Idea of a National Cinema," *Michael Balcon: The Pursuit of British Cinema*, ed. Jane Fluegel (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 198) 443).

<sup>38</sup> Cover, *Voyager* May 2002.

<sup>39</sup> Andrew Higson, and Steve Neale, "Introduction: Components of the National Film Culture," *Screen* 26.1(1985): 3.

<sup>40</sup> David Morley, and Kevin Robins, *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries* (London: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>41</sup> Julia Hallam, "Film, Class and National Identity: Re-mapping Communities in the Age of Devolution," Ashby and Higson 263.



## **Part I. Social Art Cinema as National Cinema**

## Chapter 1. Ideas of National Cinema

### Realist Debates

In Britain, academic and critical debates on British cinema began to take shape in the 1940s through such journals as *Sequence* and *The Penguin Film Review*.<sup>1</sup> During this period, critics attempted to place British cinema in opposition to Hollywood. This attempt was driven by the need to promote British cinema in the domestic market where American movies were dominant.<sup>2</sup> Even though the critical intention over this period was based on market forces, critical approaches were removed from the industrial practices of British cinema.<sup>3</sup> British cinema had to come to terms with the commercial prevalence of Hollywood, especially after World War II, when more American films increasingly dominated the British market. This caused many critics to fear the elimination of British cinema in its own national market and the eventual dominance of American film culture. Thus, despite the mass consumption of American films by British audiences, there was a move by some intellectuals to an identifiable form of British cinema in order to distinguish it from its American counterpart.

This critical attitude directed at Hollywood resulted in some hostility to popular cinema in general. As a result, the term "popular" became disassociated from British cinema. As Janet Thumin points out, Hollywood was critically categorised as a "low/mass/industrial" culture while British cinema was largely seen to represent "high" culture.<sup>4</sup> In some quarters, this cultural attitude was, to some extent, related to the literary tradition in film criticism. *Sequence's* editors, for example, were largely associated with literary criticism. Even though film criticism, in the words of John Gibbs, was not necessarily "the result of a direct application of the criteria of literary

criticism to film," some of *Sequence's* critical work still indicated the journal's "parallel presence to literary criticism."<sup>5</sup> British cinema was brought into academic debate where it was considered, like literature, to be a "cultural form" valued for its artistic quality, and that distinguished it from the mass culture of Hollywood.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the nationally significant "quality" of British films was distinguished from Hollywood mass production.

According to Andrew Higson, in promoting the notion of the "quality" of British cinema, critics became associated with thematic implications which revolved around the representation of "reality more than images of reality."<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, as John Ellis adds, in order to emphasise the depiction of reality, critics also "formed a highly coherent set of aesthetic judgements"<sup>8</sup> about British cinema. In Ellis' terms, "the quality film" was referred to as displaying "a restrained tone" in visual style which was derived from its own documentary tradition.<sup>9</sup> This association of the aesthetics of documentary with the critical tendency to emphasise the artistic value of films has been a key point in subsequent critical debates.

In response to Andrew Higson's account of the contribution of the documentary to British film history,<sup>10</sup> Robert Murphy argues that the preference for documentary aesthetics is "more true of film criticism than of commercial films: what was 'realist' was assumed mistakenly to be 'documentary'."<sup>11</sup> This suggests that in defining national cinema, a certain type of aesthetic particularity was established in film culture. As Samantha Lay notes, this critical attitude resulted from "defining what [British cinema] is not" rather than what it is.<sup>12</sup> In other words, what could be seen as British national cinema was clarified through what could not be seen as British cinema. For instance, such films as Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's *A Matter of Life and Death*

(1946) and *The Red Shoes* (1948) were critically dismissed because, as Andrew Moor argues "in the context of the later 40's, the fantasy elements of the Powell-Pressburger aesthetic are a rejection of the austerity of the time."<sup>13</sup> Indeed, in the opinion of Moor, "they do not fit into the understated 'quality realist' cinema which has been taken to represent our authentic national cinematic style."<sup>14</sup>

During the 1950s, cinema was no longer the dominant form of cultural activity in Britain due to the advent of television and the expansion of other types of leisure activities.<sup>15</sup> With cinema attendance in decline throughout this period, the UK film industry suffered financially as more American imports dominated the UK box-office.<sup>16</sup> Since the late 40s, critics came to terms with the fact that "the quality films" were not always well received by the mass audience at the box-office. As a result, their attempts to generate quality films for the general public in the 1940s had changed by the 50s with their exhibition in specialised theatres. This critical move was influenced by developments in the European art cinema of the time. Critics began to take account of European art cinema that included works by, for example, Ingmar Bergman, Michelangelo Antonioni and Italian Neo-realist directors such as Vittorio De Sica and Roberto Rossellini.<sup>17</sup> Under these circumstances, the quality film critics, to an extent, played a part in dislocating many British films from their position in popular culture. Consequently, even though the film industry was enjoying relative success, popular British genre films such as the Ealing comedies and war films were not academically or critically investigated.<sup>18</sup>

This critical valorisation of particular themes and styles emerged from intellectual debates about "quality film" and led to a "native" auteur theory in Britain.<sup>19</sup> This consideration of the visual style of realist films is based on a critical tendency that has

developed through *Sequence* and its successor, *Sight and Sound*. Due to the influence of auteur theory,<sup>20</sup> film criticism began to focus on textual analysis and the stylistic elements of individual films. With its interest in American and European, as well as British films, *Sequence* developed a critical emphasis on the visual style of film (representation) that did not limit the idea of visual style simply to presentation, "naturalism" in Raymond Williams' term<sup>21</sup> or "surface realism" in Andrew Higson's term.<sup>22</sup> Focusing on the representation of landscape, place and space in realist films, *Sequence's* main concern was the form of a film.<sup>23</sup> However, as it was editorially disposed toward literature, *Sequence* tended to prioritise thematic meanings, for example, referring to "aesthetic work" as "thematic with representation," in the words of John Gibbs. Gibbs suggests that *Sequence's* focus was on "what is said" in the text rather than "through how" and, thus, "what is said" contributed to the aesthetic quality of a film.<sup>24</sup> In addition, because of its interest in popular cinema through examination of American auteur directors such as John Ford, *Sequence* attempted to explore ways in which reality was projected through the form of popular filmmaking. Therefore, Julia Hallam's contention is that:

[T]his binary division, between the so-called 'transparency' of popular conventions and the 'opacity' of films that use non-realist strategies with the aim of creating a different vision, a different view of reality, continues to inflect critical attitudes to the use of realism in popular cinema.<sup>25</sup>

As can be seen from Hallam's argument, the popular culture debate in the 50s brought a new style of realist filmmaking to the British film industry.

*Sequence's* critical concerns about the projection of reality through personal vision came to life in the form of the Free Cinema movement. Considering that some of the

critics who wrote for *Sequence* (such as Lindsey Anderson) were themselves actively involved in the Free Cinema movement, this is hardly surprising.<sup>26</sup> The Free Cinema movement carried out *Sequence's* critical ethos in non-commercial filmmaking through such documentaries as *O Dreamland* (Lindsey Anderson, 1953) and *Momma Don't Allow* (Karel Reisz/ Tony Richardson, 1955). However, it was not until the 60s New Wave that there was an attempt to create an alignment between realism and popular cinema. Influenced by the impact of the Free Cinema movement, directors like Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson helped to initiate the 60's New Wave<sup>27</sup> by founding an independent company, Woodfall, and producing *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (Karel Reisz, 1960), *A Taste of Honey* (Tony Richardson, 1962) and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (Tony Richardson, 1962).<sup>28</sup>

British auteurism was further developed through the journal *Movie*. First published in 1963, *Movie's* contribution can be accredited to its emphasis on institutions in discussing authorial creativity.<sup>29</sup> Even though its critical position was against the "quality" approach to British cinema, focusing on more mainstream films, *Movie* still failed to consider the specific economic and political structures of British studios. *Movie* considered how certain American directors obtained their authorial creativity in spite of the constraints placed upon them by the studio system. In the words of Pam Cook and Mieke Bernink, the journal placed onus on "how a specific auteur quality could be emerged from specific conditions of production."<sup>30</sup> As these critics applied auteur theory to the Hollywood studio system, they seemed to dismiss what was unique about the British studios with many British directors not even being discussed.<sup>31</sup> Even though Hitchcock's name was frequently mentioned, discussions mainly revolved around his work in Hollywood rather than on his early British films.<sup>32</sup> In addition, as *Movie*

concentrated on formal analysis - in particular, mise-en-scene - the British New Wave, which was the dominant form of filmmaking at that time, was criticised for its lack of style and invention. *Sight and Sound*, in contrast to *Movie*, categorised 60s New Wave directors such as Tony Richardson<sup>33</sup> and Lindsay Anderson<sup>34</sup> as auteurs, thus displaying the journal's willingness to associate auteur theory with social realism. As David Wilson notes, while *Movie* was more concerned with the "form" of film, *Sight and Sound* based its criteria around "content."<sup>35</sup> As discussed earlier, even though *Sight and Sound* (as *Sequence* had done earlier) sought a stylistic mode for realism, the journal privileged thematic meanings over aesthetics. *Movie's* criticism of both journals was, in the words of Pam Cook and Mieke Bernink, based on its "discarding outmoded artifice in favour of the simplicity and freshness of personal observation of everyday reality."<sup>36</sup> In contrast to *Movie's* attack on the 60s New Wave for its lack of style, *Sight and Sound* recognised New Wave filmmakers as auteurs because they consistently conveyed social and political awareness through their works. This in turn validated the "poetic realism" of the New Wave, signifying its aesthetic creativity.

Critical tendencies of both *Movie* and *Sight and Sound* established a particular form as art form since they approved of films which had, according to Christine Geraghty, "an identification of personal style and intelligence."<sup>37</sup> Subsequently, the film text became something that was educational while film criticism began to encourage discerning viewers to *read* films through textual analysis.<sup>38</sup> This resulted in realist film debates bypassing the consideration of extra-textual factors, this is, in Andrew Tudor's words, "to whom and why a certain film [or film culture] is appealing to audiences."<sup>39</sup> For instance, the 60's New Wave was not only a highly distinctive film form, but it also appeared novel thematically. The popularity of a number of New Wave films at the box-

office was due to its unprecedented subject matter and representation. Such New Wave films as *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* could communicate with the 60s' social consensus particularly in terms of sexuality.<sup>40</sup> Andy Medhurst argues that:

It was these film's treatment of sexual matters that was a crucial part in their being acclaimed as some kind of artistic renaissance. Key words in the discourse of acclamation were 'maturity' ... and 'frankness'. Thus the sight of June Ritchie's naked back in *A Kind of Loving* was seen as a step forward, even a breakthrough, in the quest for a 'relevant' and 'contemporary' national cinema. Obviously this attitude has its roots in the omnipresent hegemony of 'realism' that still dominated conceptions of cinema in Britain at the time.<sup>41</sup>

While the British New Wave was critically approved for its realist style and social significance, this critical attitude ignored commercial mainstream films such as Hammer horror, James Bond and Carry On films that were regarded as lacking in intellectual stimulation due to their formulaic plots and spectacular style.

This association with socially-engaged themes and documentary modes in realist film debates has met with some disapproval because it exhibits a preference for a restrained style in film criticism. However, since the 1970s when Colin MacCabe and Colin McArthur began to acquire substantial influence,<sup>42</sup> *Screen* began to examine the extent in which realist film debates had contributed a single form of realism. Thus, realist films began to be explored through a consideration of their thematic diversity and stylistic concerns.<sup>43</sup> In his article 'A Lecture on Realism,' Raymond Williams contends that realist debates in Britain had resulted in "a particular attitude to perceiving realism" which subsequently dismissed "the potential of variation of cinematic modes."<sup>44</sup>



Similarly, Julian Petley argues that while British critics have established a certain type of realist style, stylisation itself is reviled.<sup>45</sup> Petley also points out that the dominant critical attitude towards British cinema has five tendencies which are:

[a] hostility towards stylisation, the hegemony of the 'documentary spirit', the elevation of 'content' over 'form', isolation from wider European artistic trends (and especially from modernism in its various forms) from the 1920s onwards, the conflation of moral prescriptions with aesthetic criteria, or the elevation of the former over the latter.<sup>46</sup>

What these five tendencies suggest is that thematic implications play an important part in evaluating British cinema to the detriment of stylistic and aesthetic concerns. Petley's contention is that the critical emphasis on "documentary spirit" in films' form and content resulted in a preference for the ideological implication of film and enmity towards stylistic experimentation. Since the critically acclaimed 60s New Wave proved its commercial viability, this critical stand became governing. Thus, as can be seen from Petley's argument, critical focus on British cinema became focused upon social realism through theme and subject matter. Subsequently, as John Hill notes, the three elements of realism which are frequently considered are "a focus on 'ordinary' lives, a refusal of both the classical and melodramatic conventions of mainstream Hollywood, and a use of techniques associated with documentary such as the use of real locations, natural light, and unadorned camera movement."<sup>47</sup> However, as Hill goes on to argue, "the meaning of such elements is dependent upon context and, thus, their capacity to signify 'realism' is always intertextual and relative to the cinematic norms prevailing."<sup>48</sup> Moreover, this alliance to a specific theme and style in national cinema debates has meant that cinematic norms are rarely defined in terms of commercial validity or artistic

criteria.<sup>49</sup>

### **Anti-realist (or Fantasy) Debates**

As Andrew Higson notes, since the 1970s<sup>50</sup> theoretical work has been produced which has enabled a "re-thinking of the terrain of British Cinema."<sup>51</sup> This "terrain," which had been dismissed due to its overemphasis on British cinema as a "cultural presentation" of the nation, has ultimately inspired much protracted discussion. As Pam Cook notes, this critical shift comes from the awareness that:

A major problem for British filmmakers and critics has been the desire to differentiate their national cinema from the Hollywood movies that have always dominated the domestic market. In many cases, the resistance to the internationalism of Hollywood has led to the impasse of an essential British identity. However, the documentary-realist option is not necessarily the most obvious or natural route to take in defining a quality British cinema.<sup>52</sup>

This line of approach appears to have been influenced by the auteur theory of *Sequence* and *Movie* and has developed by allying itself with reception theory and debates on modernism, popular culture, and postmodernism. Having acknowledged the dominance of realist film in defining national cinema, critics began to look at "the lost continent" of the British film industry.<sup>53</sup> More importantly, this critical shift promoted the idea that national cinema had distanced itself from popular mainstream films. In other words, anti-realist debates placed their critical attention onto audiences when constructing the notion of national cinema. This shift is related to an awareness that the critical emphasis on realist film had neglected the interaction between audience and film. As illustrated in the previous section, realist film debates (from 1940s' quality film debates onwards)

tended to focus on the artistic credentials of national cinema. In other words, realist film debates proposed that what national cinema is and what might constitute the nation's film culture should be concerned with artistic "quality."<sup>54</sup> In this respect, film criticism became a means to judge what films constitute a British national cinema. In response to this, anti-realist debates concerned themselves with what films appeal to mass audiences and started to examine films that received significant responses in the market place. Thus, popularity became a key factor in national cinema debates. Vincent Porter notes that "as hegemony necessarily works by consent rather than coercion, popularity is a necessary, although not always sufficient, criterion of hegemony."<sup>55</sup> By placing an emphasis on popularity, critics began to consider how what is dominant in the market place could also be seen as a form of national cinema.

As Ian Christie points out, British cinema is deemed to be classified "either as 'entertainment' (i.e. non-serious) or as a form of 'propaganda' (i.e. making a socially or personally ameliorative appeal)."<sup>56</sup> Indeed, the former is referred to as "non-quality" film and the latter is referred to as "quality" film and, as a result of this, the notion of national cinema has tended to focus on "quality" films. However, due to this critical shift, the new terrain of British cinema dealt with films of "non-quality" and the tension between "quality" and "non-quality" films. For instance, Jeffrey Richards refers to Hammer horror as a "symbolic and mythological counterpart" to the 1960s New Wave and Swinging London films.<sup>57</sup> Aware of the classical dichotomy between entertainment and propaganda, academics were concerned with what cinematic pleasure fantasy films can and have provided, thus attempting to understand the visual aspect of British cinema through an analysis of mainstream movies. This approach examined studio-produced popular genre films such as Gainsborough costume drama, Ealing comedy

and Hammer horror. Subsequently, a visual excessiveness in contrast to a restrained style of realism came to be understood in terms of its generic nature. In her study of the spectacle of costume and art direction in Gainsborough costume dramas, Pam Cook notes that these films have been marginalised because realist debates subordinated mise-en-scene to narrative concerns.<sup>58</sup> In this respect, the spectacle of Gainsborough is meant to transgress the boundaries of verisimilitude (rather than staying in line with historical accuracy) and offer a generic entertainment.

However, despite the validity of exploring this dismissed terrain of British cinema and extending national cinema debates to a consumption-based discussion, I would argue that the re-evaluation of fantasy films is, to a large extent, based on the assumption that popular films should be examined in terms of how they connote social and historical issues. Thus, work on fantasy films seems to have interpreted "cinematic pleasure" as "serious" pleasure.<sup>59</sup> In other words, fantasy films appear to be legitimised because of the link between theme and social context. For instance, the flamboyant visual style of Gainsborough in such films as *Madonna of the Seven Moons* (Arthur Crabtree, 1944) represents, in the words of Cook, "loss of identity" particularly in terms of the Britain's post-war decline as a global power.<sup>60</sup> Through such analysis, what Gainsborough fantasy appears to provide is a re-thinking of national identity, not as a pure and fixed form, but as a "fluid and unstable" one.<sup>61</sup> This descriptive and interpretative approach to fantasy films has met with some criticism. Applying Rick Altman's argument on genre theory to the British fantasy genre, one could argue that it "fails to recognise the discursive dimension underlying textual configuration" of particular genres.<sup>62</sup> As a result, British genres became something indigenous that exist within British culture and are derived from British gothic literature and other cultural

forms such as architecture.<sup>63</sup> In this sense, British genres are, according to Marcia Landy, regarded as something:

[m]ore than an abstract system of formula, conventions, and codes that are universally applicable. National identity, social history, and ideology play a central role in their formation. Moreover, budgetary considerations, as well as particular studies, directors, stars, and literary sources, are determining factors in differentiating British genre production from Hollywood's.<sup>64</sup>

However, British genres are not only created in opposition to Hollywood and genre films do not necessarily project national identity.<sup>65</sup> As Peter Hutchings points out in his study of Hammer horror, while the genre borrowed many generic norms from American and European films, by using mainly British characters and locations, Hammer determined its elements within national contexts and defined its cultural position within a national culture.<sup>66</sup>

More importantly, what drove the development of Hammer horror appeared to be market forces. From 1949 to the 1960s when Hammer grew to unprecedented popularity,<sup>67</sup> its process of generic construction can be understood in terms of the interaction between production and audience. While gaining mass appeal, according to Hutchings, the Hammer production company was happy to characterise itself as commercial entertainment and did not hesitate to foreground "the cyclical, formulaic and serial nature of its products."<sup>68</sup> Consequently, Hammer played a major role in defining British horror, while at the same time attempting, as Hutchings points out, "to (re) identify an audience, the nature of which (because of demographic factors and changing and changing definitions of youth, class and gender) was unstable."<sup>69</sup>

Instead of seeking to project a sense of national identity, Hutchings argues that some Hammer films are not "very British at all," although they still have British cultural implications:

While an important component of a British national cinema must be its propensity to address specifically national issues and concerns, account also needs to be taken of films like *The Haunting* [Robert Wise, 1963] and *The Masque of the Red Death* [Roger Corman, 1964] which, while not connecting with a British context in any thematic or stylistic way, do testify to the importance of American-financed production in Britain throughout the 1960s. Similarly, that *The Bride of Frankenstein* can to a certain extent be seen as British horror film in exile signifies rather pointedly the hostility of 1930s British film censors to the development of an indigenous horror genre.<sup>70</sup>

Bearing this in mind, I would propose that, despite their critical achievement in expanding an awareness of the terrain of British cinema, fantasy film debates have limited themselves to stylistic and generic analysis. These are worthwhile in the sense that they give a perspective which does not just consider fantasy films as a group of non-realist texts. However, such emphasis on generic concerns appears merely to validate the distinction between realist and fantasy films. In addition, such generic focus by critics tends to designate anti-realist films as an entity and thus overlooks the specificity of particular films. As Alan Lovell notes:

If the claims made for them [fantasy film] were persuasive, then a new and interesting account of the British cinema would have been constructed.

Unfortunately the case for the anti-realist genres has been much weakened

by its dependence for its sense of value on a 'dilute surrealism.' Effectively, surrealism has operated as a form of easy genre valuing, privileging the 'excess' of horror film, melodrama, and low comedy as against the oppressiveness of realism.<sup>71</sup>

Lovell's comment suggests that fantasy film debates simply position themselves in opposition to thematic analysis. In so doing, the debates emphasise and examine the stylistic aspects of British cinema which were disregarded by those championing realism. Subsequently, fantasy film debates have focused upon exploring alternative forms of cinematic modes and national film culture. However, such genres as the Carry On films are underestimated since they do not deploy stylistic excess.<sup>72</sup> This indicates that anti-realist debates have also projected an understanding of national cinema that is reflectionist - a particular critical discourse that is in opposition to realist debates in terms of filmic style. Thus, as Charles Barr notes, "it is not simply a matter of counting titles, of drawing compensatory attention to a range of films often omitted from the histories ... the conventional binary opposition of realist and non-realist is a too rigid one [and] at any rate, the terms of its application to British films needs reworking."<sup>73</sup>

### **The Exclusiveness of a Sense of National Cinema**

As should be apparent, national cinema debates in Britain have traditionally posited a dichotomy between realist and anti-realist films. As Peter Hutchings argues, "the term realist and anti-realist/fantasy have acquired a certain mobility in British film criticism."<sup>74</sup> More importantly, both these terms are related to the idea that national cinema should be defined through either film production or consumption. In general terms, the realist debate refers to film as an ideological medium and thus takes issue

with the economic and political structure of the production of national cinema. In contrast, the anti-realist argument discusses the hegemonic structure of the consumption of national cinema, seeing film as a mass medium.

Despite their continued interest in British cinema,<sup>75</sup> both realist and anti-realist critics have continued to revolve around a thematic and aesthetic evaluation, causing contextual aspects of national cinema to be disregarded. For instance, even though anti-realist film debates claim to be based on film consumption or audience figures, they tend to revert back to thematic and aesthetic evaluations which are themselves related to textual analysis. Thus, realist and anti-realist film debates have focused on the interpretation of films within a sociohistorical context. Such debates produced "a cultural discourse" around British national cinema with various institutional factors being neglected.

Despite national cinema debates focusing on the ideological and stylistic implications of British cinema as a national cinema, I would argue that national cinema is not a definite notion related only to its textual features and ideology; it is also affected by its varying sociohistorical contexts. As noted earlier, debates have constructed the meaning of British national cinema as a *singular* definition of British film culture. In this respect, what is clear about British national cinema debates is that when institutionalising the idea of national cinema, they have often neglected the importance of intertextual aspects. As Colin MacCabe argues, the dominant paradigms of national cinema debates cannot fully explain the ways in which national cinema is constructed in contemporary cultural conditions:

These who isolate themselves within the narrow and exclusive traditions of high art, those who glory in the simple popularity of the popular, both



effectively ignore the complex way in which traditions and technologies combine to produce audiences. It is in this figuring of different audiences that the political reality of art can be found - the particular way in which an audience is addressed and constituted in relation to the political form in which it participates. ... What this might suggest is that we should be looking for political groupings along the faultlines opened up by these cultural products.<sup>76</sup>

However, this is not to say that textual interpretation, either in the form of thematic or stylistic evaluation, should be discharged from national cinema debates. Rather, it is to say that such debates define national cinema as a definite term due to the extent to which they are reliant on textual interpretations. This resulted in British national cinema becoming something which exists only within British cinema. However, in the words of Barbara Klinger:

There are numerous and palpable intertextual interventions between a given text and its socio-ideological environ. The context which monitors any film's entry into the world is titanic; among its representational members are industrial practices of exhibition and distribution, including promotional advertising, and popular or academic criticism. The text, 'in practice', is an intersection at which multiple and 'extra-textual' practices of signification circulate. While extrinsic representational factors are apt to be expunged from serious textual analysis as vulgar or as environmental noise which interferes with the veracity of the text itself, they play a significant role in directing/constructing the reading and consumption of textual objects ... they embody a network of ideologically-determined practices as worthy of

attention as specific textual attributes. Extrinsic social and representational forms which skirt the text comprise a cluster of textual sites of signification informative to a comprehension of the more global mechanisms through which texts are negotiated within social formations.<sup>77</sup>

As can be seen from the social art cinema of the 1980s, which will be discussed in the following chapter, national cinema is something which constructs its presence within a specific period of time. Therefore, there is a clear need to employ a multi-dimensional approach to the social formation of the idea of national cinema.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> John Ellis, "The Quality Film Adventure: British Critics and the Cinema 1942-1948," *Dissolving Views: Key Writings on British Cinema*, ed. Andrew Higson (London: Cassell, 1996) 67.

For discussion about the development of British film and the British film industry before and during the Second World War, see Anthony Aldgate, and Jeffrey Richards, *Britain Can Take It: The British Cinema in the Second World War*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1994); Michael Chanan, *The Dream That Kicks: The Prehistory and Early Years of Cinema in Britain*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1996); Clive Coultass, *Images for Battle: British Film and the Second World War, 1939-1945* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1989); H. Mark Glancy, *When Hollywood Loved Britain: The Hollywood "British" Film 1939-1945* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1999); Nicholas Reeves, *Official British Film Propaganda During the First World War* (London: Croom Helm, assn. Imperial War Museum, 1986).

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of Hollywood's dominance over British exhibition since the 1940s, see Paul Swann, "The British Culture Industries and the Mythology of the American Market: Cultural Policy and Cultural Exports in the 1940s and 1990s," *Cinema Journal* 39.4 (2000): 27-41.

<sup>3</sup> Ellis 66-69.

<sup>4</sup> Janet Thumin, "The 'Popular,' Cash and Culture in the Postwar British Cinema Industry," *Screen* 32.3 (1991): 265. For example, the editors of *The Penguin Film Review* wrote "the film constitutes not only a new form of entertainment but a novel instrument for influencing the taste, mode of life and emotions of virtually unlimited numbers. Films are a new art." (Editorial, *The Penguin Film Review* 3 (1947): 7).

<sup>5</sup> John Gibbs, "Sequence and the Archaeology of British Film Criticism," *Journal of Popular British Cinema* 4 (2001): 25.

<sup>6</sup> For instance, Emil Ludwig wrote "it is true that in France, in Britain and even in Russia the art of the cinema is influenced by financial considerations, but at least the decisions are made by artists, and many films are played by actors who know their jobs and created by great directors. ... [However, Hollywood producers] sell and buy the films; they are not concerned with knowing what they are about." ("The Seven Pillars of Hollywood," *The Penguin Film Review* 1(1946): 94).

<sup>7</sup> Andrew Higson, "Critical Theory and 'British Cinema'," *Screen* 24.4-5(1983): 91.

<sup>8</sup> Ellis 67.

<sup>9</sup> Ellis 78-79.

For a discussion of the history of documentary in Britain, see Ian Aitken, "The British Documentary Movement," *The British Cinema Book*, ed. Robert Murphy (London: BFI, 1997) 58-67; Roy Armes, "Grierson and the Documentary Idea," *A Critical History of British Cinema*, Arms (London: Cinema Two, 1978) 127-43; Roy Armes, "Documentary at War - Humphrey Jennings," Arms 145-58; Stuart Hood, "John Grierson and the Documentary Film Movement," *British Cinema History*, ed. James Curran and Vincent Porter (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983) 99-112; Alan Lovell, and Jim Hillier, *Studies in Documentary* (London: Secker & Warburg [for] BFI, 1972); Don Macpherson, ed., *Traditions of Independence: British Cinema in the Thirties* (London: BFI, 1980); Paul Rotha, *Documentary Diary: An Informal History of the British Documentary Film, 1928-1939* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1973); Elizabeth Sussex, *The Rise and Fall of British Documentary: The Story of the Film Movement Founded by John Grierson* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1976).

<sup>10</sup> Higson argues that "under the unique circumstances of World War II, the documentary idea came to inform both much commercial film-making practice and the dominant discourses of film criticism." ("Britain's Outstanding Contribution to the Film: The Documentary Realist Tradition," *All Our Yesterdays: 90 years of British Cinema*, ed. Charles Barr (London: BFI, 1986) 72).

In comparison with Higson, Robert Colls and Philip Dodd argue that the documentary tradition has formed "a limited cinematic imagination" in British cinema. ("Representing the Nation: British Documentary Film, 1930-1945," *Screen* 26.1 (1985): 368).

<sup>11</sup> Robert Murphy, "The Heart of Britain," Murphy 70.

<sup>12</sup> Samantha Lay, *British Social Realism: From Documentary to Brit-grit* (London: Wallflower, 2002) 8.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Moor, "No Place Like Home: Powell, Pressburger Utopia," *The British Cinema Book*, ed. Robert Murphy, 2nd ed. (London: BFI) 114.

<sup>14</sup> Moor 109.

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of the social implications of cinemagoing activities in the 1950s, see Christine Geraghty's chapter, "The Experience of Picturegoing: Cinema as a Social Space," *British Cinema in the Fifties: Gender, Genre and the 'New Look'* (London: Routledge: 2000) 1-20.

<sup>16</sup> For a detailed analysis, see Philip Corrigan, "Film Entertainment as Ideology and Pleasure: A Preliminary Approach to a History of Audiences," Curran and Porter 24-35.

<sup>17</sup> Ellis 90.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Murphy, *Realism and Tinsel: Cinema and Society in Britain 1939-1949* (London: Routledge, 1989) 230.

<sup>19</sup> Ellis 90.

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of French auteur theory of the 1950s, see André Bazin, "La Politique des Auteurs," *The New Wave: Critical Landmarks*, ed. Peter Graham (London: Secker & Warburg, 1968) 137-55; François Truffaut, "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema," *Movies and Methods I: An Anthology*, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: U of California P, 1976) 224-37.

For the more politicised auteurism of Cahiers du Cinéma in the later 60s, see Ben Brewster, "Notes on the Text, John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln* by the Editors of Cahiers du Cinéma," *Screen* 14.3 (1973): 29-43; Nick Browne, "Cahiers du Cinéma's Rereading of Hollywood Cinema: An Analysis of Method," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* Summer (1978): 405-16; Cahiers du Cinéma Editors, "John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln*," Nichols 493-529; Peter Graham, ed., *The New Wave: Critical Landmarks* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1968).

For a discussion of American auteur theory, see Andrew Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962," *Film Culture* 27 (1962/63): 1-8; Andrew Sarris, *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions 1929-1968* (New York: Dutton, 1968); Andrew Sarris, *'You Ain't Heard Nothing Yet': The American Talking Film, History and Memory 1927-1949* (New York: Oxford UP, 1998).

<sup>21</sup> Raymond Williams, "Realism, Naturalism and Their Alternatives," *Cinetracts* (1977-78): 1-6.

<sup>22</sup> Andrew Higson, "Space, Place, Spectacle: Landscape and Townscape in the 'Kitchen Sink' Film," Higson, *Dissolving Views* 136-37.

<sup>23</sup> Gibbs 16.

<sup>24</sup> Gibbs 19.

The journal's critical preference for thematic implications also applied to American films. Despite its interest in American movies, for instance, *Sequence* indicated that American films were "considered [in terms] of quality, rather than *because* they were popular." Indeed, while John Ford was discussed to a large extent, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940) was critically approved for the film's engagement with social issues with the less reputable *The Informer* (1935) received a dismissive reading. (Gibbs 23-24).

<sup>25</sup> Julia Hallam, with Margaret Marshment, *Realism and Popular Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000) 13.

<sup>26</sup> Alan Lovell and Jim Hillier argue that "the Free Cinema/*Sequence* position was modified into one simplified diagram of the cinema, a mixture of Marxist and liberal attitudes - art is personal expression, personal expression is extremely difficult within a capitalist economic system, the artist's position is a very difficult one in our society." (Lovell and Hillier 158).

<sup>27</sup> The New Wave succeeded the British documentary tradition of "poetic realism" which was developed by John Grierson and Humphrey Jennings. "Poetic" is based on the relationship between filmmaker and objects implying that filmmakers can express their personal view through the film. "Realism" implies that what is seen on screen should represent the external world. In this respect, "realism" is deemed to erase the existence of the filmmaker as an observer in order to authenticate what is seen as reality. In terms of aesthetics, therefore, "poetic realism" suggests that a distance is kept from objects so as to compensate the reflection of the personal view of the filmmaker. In other words, the objectification of filmed objects is believed to be a signifier of reality. (John Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956-1963* (London: BFI, 1986) 127-29).

More interestingly, in addition to deploying the poetic realism of the British documentary tradition, the New Wave had a three point manifesto: firstly, British cinema should deal with authentic working class subjects; secondly, British cinema should be permissive towards sexual matters; and thirdly, British cinema should be creative aesthetically. (Terry Lovell, "Landscape and Stories in 1960s British Realism," *Screen* 31.4 (1990): 367). What is interesting here is that the New Wave engaged with poetic realism in its pursuit of aesthetic creativity. The New Wave claimed that current British cinema was attached to the life of the middle class, ignoring working class culture and communities. This concern with the working class is related to the fact that the New Wave had strong connections to the writers of the New Left. Thus, the New Wave's aesthetics, aka "poetic realism," was an ideological means to represent their political theme.

The fact that the British New Wave was committed to the idea of cinematic apparatus as an ideological tool meant that they assimilated themselves with the attitude of the French New Wave in the 1960s. Due to the influence of modernist culture, the importance of cinema as a means to present ideological implications and, as an alternative to Hollywood cinematic norms, became an important issue to both movements. In addition to this, both movements merged with critical developments of the time which were strongly associated with journals such as *Sequence* or *Cahiers du Cinéma* in Britain and France respectively. Like British New Wave directors, many of their French counterparts including François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard also acted as critics prior to their filmmaking careers. Despite such cultural similarities, the British and French movements eventually moved into quite different practices of cinematic aesthetics. The French challenged aesthetic norms, with directors' personal expression being seen as pivotal to their own ideology. On the other hand, the British New Wave went back to the documentary tradition of British cinema.

It is arguable that this difference stems from the way in which both cultures perceived and coped with Hollywood and, more broadly, with their conceptions of popular film. The French New Wave explored American films and found ways in which they could operate alongside them. Thus, British and American films were still considered in terms of their cultural attributes in film criticism. With this cultural background in mind, the British New Wave appeared to detach itself from Hollywood by returning to the approaches of the documentary tradition. What the "tradition" of British documentary signifies is what can be seen as "authentic" or authentically "British." With this approach the British New Wave could elaborate the idea of its distinctiveness from American film (and, more broadly, mainstream popular films). In this sense, the New Wave of the 60s is not so much different from the cultural attitudes of the *Sequence* contributors and their association with the literary tradition. As a result, the French New Wave became a "new" tradition, while the British New Wave strengthened "old" traditions re-inscribing the aesthetics of the documentary.

<sup>28</sup> The foundation of Woodfall reflects the new wave directors' intention to be artistically free from the mainstream industry and the constraints of the studio system. (Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism* 39-41).

<sup>29</sup> For instance, see V. F. Perkins, "The British Cinema," *Movie Reader*, ed. Ian Cameron (London: November Books, 1962) 7-11.

<sup>30</sup> Pam Cook, and Mieke Bernink, *The Cinema Book*, 2nd ed. (London: BFI, 1999) 278.

<sup>31</sup> For instance, Peter Hutchings suggests that to understand Terence Fisher's auteur quality the particularity of the British industry should be taken into account. Hutchings argues that "what value there is in Terence Fisher's work ... exists because of the British film industry and the opportunities it afforded Fisher, not despite the industry. ... Fisher's career encompassed these elements [Highbury, post-war Gainsborough and 1950s B movie] along with Hammer horror [and this] is also quite revealing inasmuch as it highlights the sort of connections that exist between different parts of the industry. Seen in this way, Fisher's progression from post-war Gainsborough via B-moves to Hammer exploitation cinema becomes an expression of broader changes in the industry, and particularly its increasing reliance on American markets and American finance." (conclusion, *Terence Fisher: British Film Makers Series* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2001) 162-163; also see Peter Hutchings, "The Histogram and the List: The Director in British Film Criticism," *Journal of Popular British Cinema* 4 (2001): 30-39).

For discussions about British studios, see Charles Barr, *Ealing Studios* (London: Cameron & Tayleur, assn. David & Charles, 1977); Alan Burton, Tim O'Sullivan and Paul Wells, *Liberal Directions: Basil Dearden and Postwar British Film Culture* (Trowbridge: Flicks, 1997); Alan Burton, Tim O'Sullivan and Paul Wells, *The Family Way: The Boulting Brothers and Postwar British Film Culture* (Trowbridge: Flicks, 2000); Allen Eyles, *Gaumont British Cinemas* (London: BFI, 1995); Geoffrey Macnab, *J. Arthur Rank and the British Film Industry* (London: Routledge, 1993); Tom Ryall, "A British Studio System: The Associated British Pictures Corporation and the Gaumont-British Pictures Corporation in the 1930s," Murphy, *The British Cinema Book* 27-36; Patricia Warren, *British Film Studios: An Illustrated History*, 2nd ed. (London: B.T. Batsford, 2001).

<sup>32</sup> Jeffrey Richards, "Rethinking British Cinema," *British Cinema, Past and Present*, ed. Justin Ashby and Andrew Higson (London: Routledge, 2000) 25.

For further discussion about Alfred Hitchcock, see Charles Barr, *English Hitchcock* (Moffat: Cameron & Hollis, 1999); Andrew Britton, "Hitchcock's Spellbound: Text and Counter-text," *Cineaction* 3/4 (1986): 72-83; Raymond Dugnat, *The Strange Case of Alfred Hitchcock* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974); Nick James, ed., *Hitchcock* (London: BFI, 1999); Robert E. Kapsis, *Hitchcock: The Making of a Reputation* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992); William Rothman, *Hitchcock: The Murderous Gaze* (Cambridge:

Harvard UP, 1982); Tom Ryall, *Alfred Hitchcock and the British Cinema* (London: Croom Helm, 1986); Tom Ryall, *Alfred Hitchcock and the British Cinema: With a New Introduction* (London: Athlone, 1996).

<sup>33</sup> For instance, see "A Free Hand," *Sight and Sound* 28.2 (1959): 64.

<sup>34</sup> For instance, see Tom Milne, "This Sporting Life," *Sight and Sound* 31.3 (1962): 113-15.

<sup>35</sup> David Wilson, ed., introduction, *Sight and Sound: A Fiftieth Anniversary Selection* (London: Faber and Faber, assn. BFI: 1982) 18.

This critical discrepancy between two journals is summarised by Charles Barr as "what is cinematic" versus "what is worthy." ("Introduction: Amnesia and Schizophrenia," Barr, *All Our Yesterdays* 26).

<sup>36</sup> Cook and Bernink 265.

<sup>37</sup> Geraghty 13.

<sup>38</sup> Pam Cook and Mieke Bernink argue that "the concentration on the formal organisation of the film text itself at the expense of other forms of analysis led to a reinforcement of some of the least productive aspects of the *auteur* theory: the 'good' film as the coherent, non-contradictory expression of the director's personal vision and the task of evaluation given to the perceptive critic whose insights mark them off from the ordinary viewer." (Cook and Bernink 265). Arguably, this critical attitude toward intellectualism applies also to *Sight and Sound*.

<sup>39</sup> Andrew Tudor, "Why Horror? The Peculiar Pleasures of a Popular Genre," *Cultural Studies* 11.3 (1997): 455.

<sup>40</sup> John Hill argues that the exploitative presentation of sexuality in the New Wave was its "exchange value for box-office," but that, in fact, this attitude to sexuality is not as progressive as it appears. ("Working-class Realism and Sexual Reaction," Curran and Porter 309).

<sup>41</sup> Andy Medhurst, "Victim: Text as Context," *Screen* 25.4-5 (1984): 28.

<sup>42</sup> See Colin MacCabe, "Realism and the Cinema: Notes on Some Brechtian Theses," *Screen* 15.2 (1974) 7-27; Colin McArthur, "Days of Hope," *Screen* 16.4 (1975): 139-44.

<sup>43</sup> Lay 29-31.

<sup>44</sup> Raymond Williams, "A Lecture on Realism," *Screen*, 8:1 (1977): 63-65.

<sup>45</sup> Julian Petley, "The Lost Continent," Barr, *All Our Yesterdays* 101.

<sup>46</sup> Petley 99-100.

<sup>47</sup> John Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s: Issues and Themes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999) 134.

<sup>48</sup> Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s* 134.

This view of realism as a contingent form is also fully discussed in Julian Hallam's chapter, "Realism and Film: Discursive Formations," *Realism and Popular Cinema* 3-23. For a discussion of the historical development of realism debates, see Christopher Williams, ed., *Realism and the Cinema: A Reader*, (London: Routledge; Kegan Paul [for] BFI, 1980).

<sup>49</sup> Ian Christie argues that the critical dismissal of Powell and Pressburger's work "reflects the deep-rooted British cultural bias towards some form of 'realism'; and the belief that cinema can only be judged on its literary pedigree. ... the film which dramatically transformed Powell's ... reputation, *Peeping Tom* [1960], emerged not from the 'new wave', but from the deposed lower depths of exploitative commercial production." (*Arrows of Desire: The Films of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger* (London: Waterstone, 1985) 101-02).

<sup>50</sup> The publication of three books: Raymond Durnat, *A Mirror for England: British Movies From Austerity to Affluence* (London: Faber and Faber, 1970); David Pirie, *A Heritage of Horror: The English Gothic Cinema 1946-1972* (London: Gordon Frase, 1973); and Charles Barr, *Ealing Studios* (London: Cameron & Tayleur, assn. David & Charles, 1977) came to play a major part in initiating anti-realist film debates.

<sup>51</sup> Higson, "Critical Theory and 'British Cinema'" 80.

<sup>52</sup> Pam Cook, "Neither Here nor There: National Identity in Gainsborough Costume Drama," Higson, *Dissolving Views* 53-54.

<sup>53</sup> See Petley.

Petley's use of this term is criticised by Peter Hutchings and Leon Hunt. Both Hutchings and Hunt argue that even though Petley pointed out the neglect of popular mainstream films in British cinema history, the term "lost continent" has helped to consolidate the marginalisation of these films as something hidden. See Peter Hutchings, *Hammer and Beyond: The British Horror Film* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1993) 13-14. Also see Leon Hunt, *British Low Culture: From Safari Suits to Sexploitation* (London: Routledge, 1998) 2.

<sup>54</sup> See Ellis.

<sup>55</sup> Vincent Porter, "The Hegemonic Turn: Film Comedies in 1950s Britain," *Journal of Popular British Cinema* 4 (2001): 81.

<sup>56</sup> Ian Christie, ed., *Powell, Pressburger and Others* (London: BFI, 1978) 58.

<sup>57</sup> Jeffrey Richards, *Films and British National Identity: From Dickens to Dad's Army* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1977) 165.

<sup>58</sup> Pam Cook, "Another Time, Another Place: National Identity in Gainsborough Costume Dramas," *Research Papers in Media and Cultural Studies: British Cinema and National Identity*, ed. James Donald and Stephanie Donald (Brighton: U of Sussex, 1995) 16-17.

<sup>59</sup> Charles Barr's work on Ealing comedies would be another example. Even though he discusses the studio's input into Ealing films in terms of, in particular, the political attitudes of producers, Barr tends to focus on the projection of national life and "Englishness." See "Projecting Britain and the British Character: Ealing Studios," *Screen* 15.1 (1974): 87-121; "Projecting Britain and the British Character: Ealing Studios Part II," *Screen* 15.2 (1974): 129-63.

<sup>60</sup> Cook, "Another Time, Another Place" 21.

<sup>61</sup> Cook, "Another Time, Another Place" 21.

Cook argues that "there were key differences between the contemporary realist films' treatment of this reapprochement and its depiction in the costume romances. In the realist films, British characters remain first and foremost British. Their values may be challenged, even modified by contact with other cultures, but this tolerance and flexibility is in most cases seen as an essentially British quality. In costume dramas, British identity is in crisis, seriously at risk of being swallowed up by the European Other. It is interesting, however, that this Other, and the qualities that are seen to make it Other, are given an unusual amount of space and value. The costume films deal in fantasies of loss of identity. This suggests that identity itself is fluid and unstable, like the costume genre itself, a hybrid state of form." ("Neither Here Nor There" 61-62).

Sue Harper also demonstrates a similar view in her study of Gainsborough. Harper focuses on a contradiction in the films' sensualised-glamorous style in the sense that it is redundant to narrative structure and narrative in Gainsborough films. As this style is excessive beyond narrative, it creates "a non-verbal discourse" in addition to narrative, with this non-verbal discourse imbuing the film with a social and political discourse. Hence Gainsborough melodrama not only gives a cinematic pleasure through its excessive style but also a possibility for diverse discourses and a means to engage with the story. (*Picturing the Past: The Rise and Fall of the British Costume Film* (London: BFI, 1994) 125-127). Both Cook and Harper's views are meaningful in the sense that they deal with the cinematic pleasure of Gainsborough, and enable us to read the social and historical implications of such pleasure. Cook and Harper's validation of the work of Gainsborough collaborates with the feminist point of view of Marcia Landy. Landy argues that the value of Gainsborough films is reliant on their feminist significance, in particular, in terms of the pre-war and post-war context. When considering the films' melodramatic elements, she points out that Gainsborough costume dramas portray women's changing status in the post war era. ("Melodrama and Femininity in World War Two British Cinema," Murphy, *The British Cinema Book* 81-82.)

<sup>62</sup> Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI, 1999) 108.

Altman goes on to argue that: "instead of concentrating on the question 'how are texts organized?' we do well to remember that textual organization is controlled by discursive goals. In short, we need always to ask 'who speaks this generic vocabulary? To whom? And for what purpose? This is true not only when genre terms are used in an anomalous fashion, but especially when they are used in what seems an appropriate, accurate and transparent manner." (108).

<sup>63</sup> Pirie and Cook are criticised in that they find the cultural origin of Hammer horror and Gainsborough costume dramas in the fantasy elements of Gothic literature. This tendency is criticised as an attempt to legitimate popular films as a "high" art form. See Peter Hutchings' chapter, "For Sadists Only? The Problem of British Horror," *Hammer and Beyond* 3-23. Also see Hunt 8-10.

<sup>64</sup> Marcia Landy, *British Genres: Cinema and Society, 1930-1960* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991) 11.

<sup>65</sup> For instance, Jonathan Coe also argues that Hammer horror portrays "British family life" and allegorises "the liberal moral climate" of the 1960s. ("Hammer's Cosy Violence," *Sight and Sound* 6. 8 (1996): 10-13). This is acceptable but I would argue that Coe neglects the stylistic aspect of Hammer. As Peter Hutchings argues, 60's Hammer films' popularity is very much related to their technological aspects, in the sense that they were filmed in colour, as well as their polemical sexual representation. (*Hammer and Beyond* 19).

<sup>66</sup> Hutchings, *Hammer and Beyond* 20.

<sup>67</sup> Jonathan Rigby, *English Gothic: A Century of Horror Cinema* (London: Reynolds & Hearn, 2000) 36.

<sup>68</sup> Hutchings, *Hammer and Beyond* 11.

<sup>69</sup> Hutchings, *Hammer and Beyond* 21.

<sup>70</sup> Hutchings, *Hammer and Beyond* 15.

For a discussion of censorship in Britain, see Tom Dewe Matthews, *Censored: What They Didn't Allow You to See and Why: The Story of Film Censorship in Britain* (London: Random, 1994); Annette Kuhn, *Cinema Censorship and Sexuality 1909-1925* (London: Routledge, 1988); James C. Robertson, *The Hidden Cinema: British Film Censorship 1913-1972* (London: Routledge, 1974).

<sup>71</sup> Alan Lovell, "The British Cinema: The Known Cinema?" Murphy, *The British Cinema Book* 238.

<sup>72</sup> As Leon Hunt points out, "this critical remapping has, however, tended to congeal into a new orthodoxy - out with documentary and kitchen-sink realism, in with Powell and Pressburger, Gainsborough melodrama, hammer horror. If something like *Carry On* is still comparatively marginal, it's because this process of recuperation has often been dominated by a rather simplistic opposition between an implicitly 'realist', critically respectable British cinema and 'non-realist' genres such as horror and melodrama which were critically deposed but often very popular." (Hunt 2). Thus, Hunt goes on to criticise the critics' neglect of the *Carry On* genre in terms of their "academic intellectualism." In comparison, Andy Medhurst claims that cultifying the *Carry Ons* is inappropriate since it leads to a confirmation of their low cultural status. ("Carry On Camp," *Sight and Sound* 2.4 (1992): 16-19).

<sup>73</sup> Barr, "Introduction: Amnesia and Schizophrenia" 15.

<sup>74</sup> Hutchings, *Terence Fisher* 17.

<sup>75</sup> There has been a dismissal of British cinema as a whole. For instance, Peter Wollen claims that British films are "utterly amorphous, unclassified, unperceived." (*Signs and Meanings in the Cinema* (London: Secker & Warburg; BFI, 1969) 115). Also, in a frequently quoted reference, François Truffaut suggested that there was "a certain incompatibility between the terms 'cinema' and 'Britain'." (*Hitchcock* (London: Granada, 1978) 140). However, academic interest and examination of British cinema, especially since the 1970s, has put the artistic value of British cinema on the agenda.

<sup>76</sup> Colin MacCabe, "Defining Popular Culture," *High Theory/Low Culture: Analysing Popular Television and Film*, ed. MacCabe (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1986) 8-9.

<sup>77</sup> Barbara Klinger, "'Cinema/Ideology/Criticism' Revisited: The Progressive Text," *Screen* 25.1 (1984): 44.



## Chapter 2. The Emergence of Social Art Cinema:

### Channel 4 and British Cinema in the 1980s

In a 2002 feature in *The Guardian*, the closure of Film Four Ltd (Channel 4's film production arm) was described as the "end of an era."<sup>1</sup> Film Four Ltd. was established in 1998 with the appointment of a new head of Film at the TV station, Paul Webster, who took over from David Aukin.<sup>2</sup> Film Four Ltd, which took over all Channel 4 film production for four years, announced its closure in July 2002. What is interesting about this *Guardian* piece is the reaction to the company's demise which, as the sub-heading explained, "leaves a large hole in the landscape of the British film industry." In looking at the feature, it becomes clear how Film Four Ltd. and Channel 4 have contributed to the British film industry.

In his article, Andrew Pulver argues that among the channel's achievements are an increasing international awareness of the potential of British cinema through such films as *Four Weddings and A Funeral* (Mike Newell, 1994) and *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1996) and the subsequent financing of the British film industry by such bodies as the Arts Council-administered lottery funding.<sup>3</sup> In addition, Derek Malcolm, *The Guardian's* film critic, noted that Channel 4's reduced financial investment into British filmmaking would mean that directors with "innovative creativity" would have to face drastic cuts in budget allowances.<sup>4</sup> This apparent pessimism concerning a post-Film Four "era" suggests the extent of Channel 4's role in the development of the British film industry since the station's launch in 1982. Therefore, it is worth reflecting on the ways in which the channel has impacted on British social art cinema.

Channel 4 first broadcast on 2nd November 1982 after years of anticipation and debate concerning a fourth broadcasting channel. Since the outset, there have been a number of discussions about whether Channel 4 has fulfilled its cultural expectations.<sup>5</sup> However, despite various opinions on the station's cultural role, it is generally accepted, as *The Guardian* article claims, that the channel has made an important contribution to British filmmaking throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Indeed, in the 1980s, Channel 4 established itself as an integral component of the British film industry through its considerable financial involvement.<sup>6</sup>

Channel 4 emerged under new governmental policy towards the cultural industries. In 1984-85, the Thatcher government passed a new Films Act which applied market principles to the film industry, and abolished the 1947 Eady Levy which allocated a percentage of box-office receipts to British-made films. In addition, the government also abolished the 25-per cent tax break for investment in film production and privatised the National Film Finance Corporation (NFFC) so as to minimise state involvement and financial support to the industry.<sup>7</sup> However, the government also encouraged private enterprise within a free market economy and this free market entrepreneurial policy contributed to the establishment of an independent fourth channel.<sup>8</sup> Ironically, Channel 4 took advantage of Thatcherite policies asserted its cultural remit through projecting a subversive political attitude to that government.

Financial support was not the only thing that Channel 4 brought to the British film industry. As John Caughie proposes: the station also offered "a diversity not only in forms of representation and in what, and who, can be represented, but also in the forms of production, and in the geographical and social locations from which it can come."<sup>9</sup> In this respect, although Channel 4 can be seen as a private investor acting within the spirit

of Thatcherism, it also played a significant role in expanding British filmmaking beyond the geographical and cultural boundaries of London into the nation's heartland where the effects of 1980s' conservatism or Neo-liberalism was plain to see.<sup>10</sup>

Bearing this in mind, I examine in this chapter the ways in which Channel 4 conducted its financial support for film production in the 1980s in order to ascertain and evaluate what cultural remit the channel established within the British film industry. This chapter determines in what directions this new source of finance drove British cinema during the 1980s. By concentrating particularly on social art cinema, I explore the relationship between the economic and cultural factors evident in British cinema during the 1980s, while highlighting the relationship between institutions and film culture.

### **The Film on Four Project: A Privileged Supporter of British Cinema**

John Hill notes that social art cinema was a prominent trend, indicating the extent of Channel 4's impact on both the British film industry and British cinema. Hill notes that social art cinema "was given a particular impetus by Channel 4," and was a cinematic genre which was driven by the channel's "joint commitment to the support of a 'national cinema' (which would win prestige internationally by circulating as 'art') and to the fulfilment of a public-service remit (which favoured a degree of engagement by cinema with matters of contemporary social concern)."<sup>11</sup> Social art cinema is characterised as the combination of social concerns in terms of its subject matter and visual concerns in terms of its style.<sup>12</sup> To Hill, social art cinema was not a new formation of the 1980s,<sup>13</sup> but was an emergence of the "*reapproachment* between social realism and art cinema narration" which the British New Wave of the 1960s explored.<sup>14</sup>

As Hill has discussed elsewhere,<sup>15</sup> in order to define art cinema in Britain, it should be examined in terms of its production and distribution as well as its narration and style, which most notably can be found in David Bordwell's work.<sup>16</sup> Yet, Hill also acknowledges that British cinema came to be more firmly considered to be a form of art cinema through the social art cinema of the 1980s.

In December 1980, as the Broadcasting Bill was passed, Channel 4's foundations began to be built and it became a subsidiary of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA). Channel 4 company board (including such members as the former Trade Secretary Edmund Dell and filmmaker Sir. Richard Attenborough) appointed Jeremy Isaacs as Chief Executive in September 1980. In January 1981, Isaacs appointed three Commissioning Editors - Liz Forgan for Actuality, Naomi McIntosh for Education, and David Rose for Fiction. While establishing the company's structure, Isaacs defined the channel's approaches to British filmmaking in response to the claim made in the late 70s by the Independent Film Makers Association (IFA) that the channel should provide a non-governmental foundation to support programmes (including films) which promoted cultural and social values. In his letter to the IFA, Isaacs stated that:

[S]uch a foundation was not necessary, and would risk replicating the bureaucratic structure of the Channel itself in funding film-makers. And the Board [the Board of Directors of Channel 4] also considered that Channel 4 should itself retain the right to dispense its own funds, and could not afford to set aside anything like so large a sum for independent works as your proposal [titled 'Channel Four and Innovation -The Foundation' and published in 1980 by the IFA] suggested. ... Instead of the foundation, therefore, we propose the following: 1) to appoint a commissioning editor

knowledgeable in, and sympathetic to, work being done by independent film-makers; 2) to provide funds to regional workshops on a bursary basis after publicly inviting applications for such bursaries; 3) to fund provision of additional facilities in at least two centres, one out of London, at which experimental programme makers can learn to use video equipment; 4) to commission, on its merits, the work of the best independent film-makers.<sup>17</sup>

With this remit in place, Channel 4 began broadcasting in 1982, enabling them to release their investment plan for British films under the working title of "Film on Four." Given the nature of this, Channel 4's promotion of British cinema can be divided into three strands: direct financial support to British cinema production under Film Four International; indirect support to independent works under the Department of Independent Film and Video;<sup>18</sup> and an increased number of British films shown on TV.

In terms of direct funding, Channel 4 initially allocated £6 million and then increased this figure to £12 million during the course of the 1980s. The channel allowed its maximum budget of £750,000 for *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Stephen Frears, 1985) and, in the form of the pre-purchase of TV rights, it bought the TV rights for *A Room With A View* (James Ivory, 1985) and *Mona Lisa* (Neil Jordan, 1986). In addition, the channel also backed a number of foreign titles including *Paris, Texas* (Wim Wenders, 1984), *Vagabond* (Agnès Varda, 1985) and *Sacrifice* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1986).<sup>19</sup> John Hill points out that the channel's investment in film production differs in approach depending on whether the film is British or foreign. According to Hill, while their investments in foreign films were made for a variety of reasons, Channel 4's commitment to British films was justified by the fact that they were "British productions" which dealt with "contemporary social and political topics."<sup>20</sup> Hill uses the

following films as an example: *The Ploughman's Lunch* (Richard Eyre, 1983), *Wetherby* (David Hare, 1985), *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), *Letter to Brezhnev* (Chris Bernard, 1985), *No Surrender* (Peter Smith, 1985), *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (Stephen Frears, 1987), *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (Alan Clarke, 1986), *High Hopes* (Mike Leigh, 1988) and *Riff-Raff* (Ken Loach, 1990). However, it is difficult to generalise about the dominant characteristics of the films they funded as the channel supported other types of films apart from those with "contemporary social and political topics." Indeed, as Hill also acknowledges, the channel also supported "heritage costume dramas, comedies and British arthouse films."<sup>21</sup>

In addition, the diversity of these Channel 4-backed films suggests that its commitment to British cinema might be related to institutional as well as cultural obligations concerning its status as the fourth national broadcaster, which the channel was publicly obliged to deliver in line with the IFA. As previously referred to, Channel 4's commitment to films which were "British productions" with "contemporary social and political topics"<sup>22</sup> was derived from the channel's "support of a 'national cinema' and to the fulfilment of a public-service remit."<sup>23</sup> As can be seen from Hill's analysis of Derek Jarman's work - especially *The Last of England* (1987)<sup>24</sup> - social art cinema of the 1980s demonstrates that arthouse or avant-garde films can touch upon social and political issues without losing commercial appeal. While the idea was initiated by the Labour government in 1978 through the White Paper on Broadcasting, the fourth channel was established under the Conservatives in 1982 at a time when the Thatcher government was enjoying immense public approval through the Falklands War. Yet, ironically, Channel 4 established its cultural remit through political responses to jingoistic trends with such programmes as an hour-long seven o'clock News, *Visions*

and *Black on Black* and films like *The Last of England* and *The Ploughman's Lunch*. More importantly, I would suggest that what the channel attempted to establish was the *image* of "culture" especially in public reception. With the cultural climate of the time resulting in a distinctive media image,<sup>25</sup> the channel might aim to achieve this idea of a cultural TV station with an agenda of "innovation and experiment in form and content."<sup>26</sup>

Thus, with its commitment to cinema which deals with political and social issues, the channel can be understood in the context of its need to define a cultural remit for itself. As Hill notes, Channel 4's particular critical preference for films that presented national concerns in terms of subject matter and concerns about filmic style, resulted in the proliferation of social art cinema.<sup>27</sup> The Film on Four project was mainly conducted through the channel's drama department where David Rose, who was in charge of commissioning the channel's financial support to feature production, showed a strong interest in film. Rose notes:

The present television companies have huge capital investments in studio, and they have been reluctant to emphasise the film element. ... With electronically recorded drama in studios we know the constraints, the emphasis on text and character relationship. With film the visual is stronger.<sup>28</sup>

At first glance, Rose seems to be emphasising the visual strength of film aesthetics and trying to compromise "the constraints" of TV drama with film. However, while the channel's commitment to national cinema encouraged the renaissance of British cinema during the 1980s, it should also be noted that the channel's foundations were built around its status as a commercial broadcaster. What this implies is that the channel's

commitment to national cinema can be understood in terms of its need to obtain enough films to fill drama slots. Television dramas usually project the idea of nation/region in for instance, language, social background, costumes and characterisation. Consequently, the channel's preference for social and political issues in films can be understood as a preference for subject matter which compliment the format of television dramas. This is not to say that the channel did not have any "critical preference" for cinema, but the channel required films to be close to the format of television drama through retaining the stronger visual elements of the cinematic medium.

Furthermore, Channel 4 did not have a studio for drama production at the time of its launch. Evidently, film was an alternative to studio drama which, in other words, clearly needed to be visually strong, as can be seen in Alan Fountain's statement that they wanted something "[to break] up the sameness of current television."<sup>29</sup> For instance, Channel 4 allocated only two hour-long weekly sports programmes, as the BBC had a virtual monopoly on sports. Instead, Channel 4 promoted foreign sports such as American football, not generally available in the UK.

In fact, Channel 4 was not able to produce in-house programmes, but instead had to buy or commission programmes from independent production companies. This method was not particularly new in British broadcasting since both BBC and ITV had already adopted this approach. Similarly, the channel needed to fill up most of its slots with independent productions including ITV-produced programmes.<sup>30</sup> Sylvia Harvey observes that:

The independents had provided 25 percent of the hours of programme transmission for 48 per cent of programmes production costs. This compares with a 30 per cent allocation of hours to ITV and ITN. ... the channel had



also published the annual totals of independent companies with who it had contracts (in 1984, 281 companies; by 1987, 360 companies).<sup>31</sup>

This fundamental reliance on independent production companies implies that the channel was "a relatively cheaply funded channel, with a significantly higher proportion of 'acquired' material than any of the other channels."<sup>32</sup> There were pressures on the channel to provide original programming with relatively low budgets and high demands for buying out-of-house productions. However, independently made works do not always bring these qualities to a commercial environment, especially when a limited budget is given to independent producers. Rod Stoneman, then Channel 4 Assistant Commissioning Editor for Independent Film, stated in 1984 that "there's a problem with cost, because if you're realistic about innovation in terms of form and structure, it actually is more expensive. ... In fact, if you do it properly, it's more expensive because you have to do it several times in several different ways to get it right."<sup>33</sup>

Even though the channel committee acknowledged the difference between television and cinema aesthetics, they could limit the risk by their 'Terms of Trade.' In the commissioning process, Channel 4 intended to give more freedom to independent producers, an intention which they had little choice over since the station did not have studio facilities. However, in terms of budget, the channel had control over productions and shared financial risks with production companies. If the costs were less than the production's budget, Channel 4 received 50 percent of the approved saving for investing in the production company's future projects. However, if the production costs were more than the agreed budget, the independent producer had the responsibility of wholly subsidising the deficit. Hence, pre-production budgeting was very crucial to independent productions.<sup>34</sup> What all this implies is that while producers were supposed

to have much more freedom from the control of financial resources during the filmmaking process, they also needed to fit their project into a limited budget in order to gain Channel 4's support. In discussing production costs, independent companies also had to confront a lack of technological facilities. Thus, while the channel opened a new culture of commissioning programmes made by independent producers, they failed to provide full support and promote diversity in the independent sectors.<sup>35</sup>

The channel did not intend itself to be an ambassador of national cinema, rather its function was to obtain more dramas with stronger or different forms of visual presentation. Consequently, the channel would allow the aesthetic and cultural space of the film medium to expand beyond the terrain of television. What the channel required from Film on Four was a form of fiction which mixed tropes of drama and cinema and would thus fit well within a television format. In addition, as most of Channel 4-backed films were initially made for television screenings (the channel's distribution arm, Channel Four International, was not established until later in the 1990s), there was a demand from the newly launched channel for British films to adopt "a formal interest in the medium."<sup>36</sup> John Hill argues that in terms of style this resulted in "more recognisable art cinema conventions, such as feature-length narratives and authorial signature."<sup>37</sup> Rose and Donohue note that in terms of content it resulted in the examination of "the complexities and realities of contemporary [British] society."<sup>38</sup> This in turn projected a specific type of British subject matter as well as a style that related to European art cinema and was recognisable in the global market. For instance, *My Beautiful Laundrette* was produced as a TV movie but after a special screening in Edinburgh was soon expanded to 35mm for cinema releases with the film being shown in New York.<sup>39</sup>

With a number of Channel 4-financed films such as *My Beautiful Laundrette* and *The Crying Game* (Neil Jordan, 1992) receiving a successful theatrical run, the channel began to gain a reputation as a privileged British filmmaker causing an increase in the channel's financial contribution to British filmmaking. The channel allocated its biggest budget for drama which covered Film on Four projects with films receiving the largest number of viewing hours along with cartoons. In 1987, the channel allocated £23.2 million for its drama sector and allowed 951 hours for feature films and cartoons compared with entertainment which received £19.4 million and was allocated 705 hours.<sup>40</sup> Hence, the channel gained an international reputation as the privileged supporter of British filmmaking through the 1980s and 1990s. For instance, in Channel 4's annual report of October 1995, the channel's performance and support in British filmmaking was highlighted:

Channel 4 has a formidable track record of innovation and excellence. 'Film on Four' has played a major part in sustaining the British film industry. *In 1993 channel 4- backed films won more Oscar nominations than any Hollywood studio except Warner Bros.* (my italics) - including for the widely acclaimed 'Crying Game.' In 1994, Channel 4's 'Four Weddings and a Funeral' was a huge hit in America, broke box-office records for a British film in the UK and collected awards by the crate-load. In 1995 the channel has also backed the critically acclaimed 'The Madness of King George', the powerful 'Death and the Maiden' and the popular Scottish production 'Shallow Grave', named by BAFTA as Outstanding British Film of the year.<sup>41</sup>

In this section of the report, which was titled "Channel 4's performance," the italics above are quoted and highlighted in the middle of the page. Thus, the channel seems to consider the success of these British films as one of their prominent triumphs.

The channel's success as a recognisable British filmmaker needs to be put into context. It was achieved during a period when international co-production was widespread and when media boundaries were undergoing transformation, helping to revive a previously threatened national culture by circulating "national" materials in domestic and international markets.<sup>42</sup> This media environment helps in understanding Channel 4's success. Channel 4's investment in the British film industry was self-beneficial because the channel would be seen as an internationally recognised British filmmaker or broadcaster.<sup>43</sup> Equally, the high level of nationally specific issues in social art cinema enabled the channel to establish itself as a nationally important television station. Ultimately, Channel 4's success in the 1980s meant that the other TV channels began to pump money into the film industry, helping to activate and invigorate British filmmaking.

### **Quality TV and the Audience:**

#### **Expanding Exhibition Windows for British Cinema**

During the 1980s, Channel 4 gained a reputation as a producer of "quality television." As James Lyons argues, quality television implies "innovative, complex, and sophisticated shows, with often controversial subject matter."<sup>44</sup> Subsequently, the channel initiated a new exhibition culture for cinema viewing, becoming a producer of "highbrow" and "liberal" programmes. Channel 4's often polemical subject matter put them under attack from reactionary sections of the press and got them into trouble over

censorship.<sup>45</sup> Here the two terms "highbrow" and "liberal" are of interest, because they affected British viewers' attitudes to television viewing at a time when movies were receiving greater air time because of Film on Four.

In a 1983 article, Simon Blanchard notes that in Britain there has been a "false and discriminating polarity" which differentiates between "cinema = public = good" and "TV = private = bad."<sup>46</sup> According to Stephen Lambert, since television as a medium gives the impression that it is "live" and "real" as opposed to the "fantasy" of cinema, it is regarded as constituting "collectively shared experience."<sup>47</sup> The mass appeal of television lends itself to the perception that it produces lowbrow forms of culture. Compared with television, cinema implies a form of artistic expression that is carefully and painstakingly crafted.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, I would argue that Channel 4's attempt to put films on TV compromises this non-authenticity of television medium, eventually legitimating the station as a culturally originated institution.

Channel 4's reputation as a producer of alternative television created a niche for a certain audience. In particular, the channel was popular with sixteen to twenty-four years olds previously neglected by other broadcasters.<sup>49</sup> The channel's aim to reach "all of the people - some of the time" enabled them to target potential audiences that had been ignored by other broadcasters, placing particular emphasis on specific or marginal topics. Channel 4 wished to attract a new group of television-viewers and encourage minority interests and taste. For instance, Channel 4 promoted experimental and independent filmmaking under the Department of Independent Film and Video, supporting film and video workshops throughout the country. They granted £370,000 for workshops in January 1981, increasing to £675,000 by March 1983. In keeping with this policy, a programme was scheduled called *The Eleventh Hour* which dealt with

independent or experimental short works and was aimed at a specific type of audience.<sup>50</sup> This is not to dismiss the achievement of Channel 4's grant for experimental and independent British cinema. Of course, as Lambert asserts, the grant-aided project helped to allow for an exploration of "the economical, imaginative and non-naturalistic uses of video and expanding the possibilities of 'short' films."<sup>51</sup> Indeed, a large amount of later Black British filmmaking emerged from the nation-wide film and video workshops that were backed by Channel 4.<sup>52</sup>

While there were institutional dilemmas within the channel,<sup>53</sup> it initiated a new cultural agenda for television aesthetics which transfigured the medium in terms of public perception. Discussing the production of his 15 part series *Visions: Cinema*, John Ellis notes that:

We vacillated between two distinct conceptions of the programme: one, the more conventional, to use TV to look at cinema; the other, more avant-gardist, to treat the programmes as the irruption of cinema into TV. The second conception involves the use of cinematic forms of address rather than televisual, and assumptions about the viewing attitude that belongs to cinema rather than to TV.<sup>54</sup>

What Ellis's comment suggests is that there was a certain degree of innovation and experimentation which was altering the boundaries of television and cinema aesthetics enabling audiences to view TV very differently. In addition, this innovation could be encouraged because the production companies were, to some extent, disassociated from the idea of television programme making as they were technically separated from the channel through their status as independent production companies.<sup>55</sup>

What resulted from the relationship between Channel 4 and British film during the 1980s was the building not of a mass audience but a specialised viewership for British cinema achieved through an expansion of exhibition space. This would indicate that a genre such as social art cinema was not engaged with "popular forms of filmmaking at the level of production and distribution," but appealed to a specific audience because of television exposure. Social art cinema was, in the words of John Hill, popular among "one - primarily youthful - section of the mass audience," rather than the "mass of people,"<sup>56</sup> thus prompting a renewed interest in British cinema as an important national cultural product.

In 1993 Channel 4 began to sell its own advertising. The channel's justification to take over this revenue from ITV was that money saved would enable them to increase their financial support for those British films which Channel 4's director Michael Jackson believed to be "innovative and risky subjects and treatments."<sup>57</sup> Seemingly, the channel was aware that its engagement with British cinema was a big part of its appeal to particular target audiences. Thus, in the 1980s, Channel 4's involvement with the British film industry helped to drive British filmmaking into "aiming at more specialised markets - both in the cinema and on TV, and at home and abroad."<sup>58</sup>

Channel 4's involvement in the film industry increased the commercial potential for a distinctive British cinema.<sup>59</sup> Because distribution companies were concerned about screening big-name Hollywood films, the monopoly of film production and exhibition represented by EMI and Rank had been an obstacle to the theatrical distribution of British cinema.<sup>60</sup> Under these circumstances, Channel 4's funding was not only related to the financial stability of the British film industry but also to the exhibition potential of British films and if this kind of support was withdrawn then the British film industry

would face great difficulties. Channel 4-backed films were meant to be screened on the channel after their theatrical release, with guaranteed re-broadcasting slots in the future. Encouraged by Channel 4's success, by the end of the 1980s, BBC and ITV also participated actively in the British film industry by funding feature films. In spite of Channel 4's groundbreaking work, the station gained only minor financial benefits through their investment in British feature films.<sup>61</sup> Yet Channel 4's triumph should not be measured solely by profit, but by their position as the prime producer of culturally allied TV.<sup>62</sup>

For even though there are criticisms of Channel 4's deficit-funding scheme, the other aspect of their involvement in British film - expanding the source of exhibition - should be considered. The channel's expansion of exhibition windows for cinema allowed British film in the 1980s to reach viewers more easily and frequently because of TV screening. Given the fact that Britain had the highest video rental figures in Europe,<sup>63</sup> the films shown on TV drew attention to British films of the 1980s. Youth markets became the main audience for British cinema of the 1980s and the industry would hardly ignore their demands.

If the problem of building audiences for low budget British cinema is related to the issue of innovation in film aesthetics,<sup>64</sup> then film screenings on TV could provide an opportunity to popularise non-traditional film aesthetics amongst audiences. It can be argued that the relationship between film aesthetics and audience comprehension is a learned one and the more audiences become familiar with aesthetics, the more film aesthetics begin to develop.

One might claim that the alliance between TV and cinema has placed limitation on film aesthetics in the 1980s,<sup>65</sup> through only in terms of media production. As John



Hill notes, "it is not so much the television medium itself which is the issue but the use to which it is put."<sup>66</sup> As well as issues of production, film aesthetics develop in association with cultural factors such as consumption. However, in terms of coping with Hollywood if the alliance between TV and cinema in the 1980s was the "culturally driven solution" of national cinema,<sup>67</sup> it at least established a cultural perception of British film through the increased diversity and accessibility of cinema exhibition.

### **Conclusion**

Channel 4's financial involvement in the British film industry helped the development of a particular type of national cinema that was eventually labelled social art cinema. In addition, the radicalism often formed in social art cinema was perceived as a cultural response into the policies of the Thatcher government, with its "hybrid" style considered as "artistic" because it combined European art cinema traditions with television aesthetics. Thus, Channel 4 was able to construct an agenda for national cinema in the 1980s through the use of television. By the 1990s, the channel was displaying deliberately different approaches to the British film industry, especially through the launch of its digital channel, Film Four which altered Channel 4's attitude toward British cinema and other institutional factors that will be discussed in the following chapter.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> "End of an Era," *Guardian* 12 July 2002, Friday review: 2-4.

<sup>2</sup> For Webster's policy in Film Four, see John Hill's interview article, "'Changing the Guard': Channel 4, Film Four and Film Policy," *Journal of Popular British Cinema* 5 (2000): 53-63.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Pulver, "End of an Era," *Guardian* 4.

<sup>4</sup> Derek Malcome, "Where Does British Film Go From Here?" *Guardian* 4.

<sup>5</sup> For an example of positive response, see Sylvia Harvey, "Deregulation, Innovation and Channel Four," *Screen* 31.1-2 (1989): 60-78. For an example of negative response, see Andrew Higson, "A Wee Trend Channel: A Review of Some Recent Literature About Channel Four," *Screen* 30.1-2 (1989): 80-91.

<sup>6</sup> Nick Roddick divides 80s UK film production into commercial, publicly subsidised and television-funded production in his book *British Cinema Now*. Roddick's model takes account of a newly emergent financial source of the 1980s - funding from broadcasters. However, Roddick appears to argue that the nature of financial sources determines the aesthetic style of film. In his model, if a film is financed by a commercial market-aimed individual company, the film is a commercial product. If a film is financed by a public body or broadcasters, the film is bound to be more artistic and cultural. ("New Audiences, New Films," *British Cinema Now*, ed. Martyn Auty and Nick Roddick (London: BFI, 1985) 19-29).

As Duncan Petrie argues, Roddick's model "is underpinned by an assumption of the mutual exclusivity of the categories 'culture' and 'commerce'." (introduction, *New Questions of British Cinema*, ed. Duncan Petrie (London: BFI, 1992) 9). Thus, Roddick fails to encompass the fact that film is a commercially oriented product regardless of the nature of funding sources. The emphasis on the style of art cinema is Channel 4's attempt to promote the channel backed films in the international market. However, I also acknowledge that, subsequently, this preference for visually enhancing films affected the UK film industry also focusing on such types of film as social art cinema.

<sup>7</sup> Leonard Quart, "The Religion of the Market: Thatcherite Politics and the British Film of the 1980s," *British Cinema and Thatcherism: Fires Were Started*, ed. Lester Friedman (London: UCL, 1993) 23.

For the history of governmental policy toward the film industry, see Margaret Dickinson and Sarah Street, *Cinema and State: The Film Industry and the British Government 1927-84* (London: BFI, 1985).

<sup>8</sup> Quart 25.

<sup>9</sup> John Caughie, "Representing Scotland: New Questions for Scottish Cinema," *From Limelight to Satellite: A Scottish Film Book*, ed. Eddie Dick (London: BFI/SFC, 1990) 23.

James Saynor argues that this expansion is partly because of the then commissioning editor for the channel's Fiction Department, David Rose's "regional vision." According to Saynor, Rose encouraged "geographical oddities" which resulted in exploring an exotic and spectacular "provincial landscape" in such films as *Angel* (Neil Jordan, 1982) and *Hero* (Barney Platts-Mills, 1982). Rose himself also addressed his preference for films which "take strength for a sense of the particular, a sense of time and space." (James Saynor, "Writer's Television," *Sight and Sound* 2.7 (1992): 30).

<sup>10</sup> In terms of financial support, Channel 4 embodies the notion of non-governmental investment in British film production. However, it is not because the station was the first instance of private investment, but because its funding was a primary source. For instance, with the rise of independent production companies, in the late 1950s National Provincial Bank and Lloyds Bank invested in the production of the Allied FilmMakers group and Bryanston respectively. (See John Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956-1963* (London: BFI, 1986) 39-40). Indeed, British Screen (formerly the National Film Finance Corporation) and BFI Production Board also played a considerable part in British filmmaking in the 1980s, but Channel 4 had invested in more than half of feature film production during the period.

<sup>11</sup> John Hill, *British Cinema of the 1980s: Issues and Themes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999) 67.

<sup>12</sup> While noting that David Rose played a key role in establishing the characteristic of the channel backed films, James Saynor argues that "Rose's cinema represented an intense amalgam of realism and fantasy." (Saynor 30). I would argue that this mixture of realism and fantasy elements in social art cinema appear to be related to the subject matter of realism and the visual style of fantasy.

<sup>13</sup> In an opposition view to Hill, Christopher Williams argues: "the principle concern of the European art film - loneliness, who am I?, social and moral confusion, the importance of the stylish exterior, in ways which are both direct and hitherto unknown in British filmmaking ... all three attempt a blending of the British social-diffuse with some of the concerns of the European art film. This social art cinema was a

new formation. It is also provided the conceptual framework which defined the substance of Channel 4's contribution to British film-making." ("The Social Art Cinema: A Moment in the History of British Film and Television History," *Cinema: The Beginnings and the Future*, ed. Williams (London: U of Westminster P, 1996) 199-200).

<sup>14</sup> Hill, *British Cinema of the 1980s* 66.

At the same time, Hill also notes social art cinema de-constructs different stylistic conventions such as popular genres, art cinema, documentary and avant-garde. (See 67-68). Martin Hunt considers social art cinema as a post-modern practice which crosses the tradition of British social realism with diverse sets of filmic style. Hunt also suggests that one has to understand social art cinema within the context of the development of social realism. ("The Poetry of the Ordinary: Terence Davies and the Social Art Film," *Screen* 40.1 (1999): 1-16).

<sup>15</sup> See John Hill, "The Rise and Fall of British Art Cinema: A Short History of the 1980s and 1990s," *Aura* VI.3 (2000): 18-32.

<sup>16</sup> David Bordwell, "The Art Cinema as Mode of Film Practice," *Film Criticism* 4.1(1979): 56-64.

<sup>17</sup> Letter to the IFA, 7 Apr. 1981. Quoted in Simon Blanchard, "Where Do New Channels Come From?" *What's This Channel Fo(u)r?: An Alternative Report*, ed. Simon Blanchard and David Morley (London: Comedia, 1982) 25-28.

<sup>18</sup> Stephen Lambert, *Channel Four: Television with a Difference?* (London: BFI, 1982) 140.

<sup>19</sup> Hill, *British Cinema of the 1980s* 56.

<sup>20</sup> Hill, *British Cinema of the 1980s* 56.

<sup>21</sup> Hill, *British Cinema of the 1980s* 56.

<sup>22</sup> As can be seen from above titles, all films share in common some conceptualisation of national identity. This can be seen to come from the cultural condition of the 1980s and its relation to the Thatcher government. Leonard Quart argues that: "Thatcher's prime contribution to British filmmaking was not the business climate she created, but the subject matter her policies and the culture she helped create provided British directors." (Quart 25).

<sup>23</sup> Hill, *British Cinema of the 1980s* 67.

<sup>24</sup> For the analysis of Derek Jarman's work, see Hill, *British Cinema of the 1980s* 153-61.

For discussions about Derek Jarman, also see Chris Lippard, ed., *By Angels Driven: The Films of Derek Jarman* (Westport: Praeger, 1996); Michael O'Pray, *Derek Jarman: Dreams of England* (London: BFI, 1996).

<sup>25</sup> The relationship between cultural climate and media image is explored in Thomas Elsaesser, "Images for Sale: The 'New' British Cinema," Friedman 57-58.

<sup>26</sup> Broadcasting Act 1981(London: HMSO, 1982) 13, quoted in Hill, "Changing of the Guard" 53.

<sup>27</sup> Hill, *British Cinema of the 1980* 64-68.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Lambert 139.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Lambert 150.

"Fiction" is Channel 4's house term for drama. It implies that the channel tried to compromise expectable vacancies of studio-made dramas with films.

<sup>30</sup> ITV was in charge of allocating the Channel's advertising revenue with the channel taking over from ITV in 1993.

<sup>31</sup> Harvey 66.

<sup>32</sup> Harvey 67.

<sup>33</sup> "Eight Programme-makers: Channel 4 - One Year On," *Screen* 25.2 (1984): 7.

<sup>34</sup> Lambert 153.

In this respect, Lambert also argues that there arise few questions about profit sharing between Channel 4 and film production companies, concerning; 1) sales of programmes to overseas broadcasting, 2) box-office profit, 3) merchandise business profit, 4) inestimable advertisement benefit.

<sup>35</sup> John Ellis, "Broadcasting and the State: Britain and the Experience of Channel 4," *Screen* 27.3 (1986): 18.

<sup>36</sup> Hill, *British Cinema of the 1980* 68.

<sup>37</sup> Hill, *British Cinema of the 1980* 68.

<sup>38</sup> David Rose, and Walter Donohue, "Fiction on Four: A Channel Four Internal Background Position Paper," Jan. 1982. Quoted in Lambert 140.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Grade, "Getting the Right Approach: Channel Four and the British Film Industry," *Big Picture, Small Screen: The Relations Between Film and Television*, ed. John Hill and Martin McLoone (Luton: U of Luton P, 1996) 179. Subsequently, the film received New York Critics Circle Award for Best

Screenplay, Hanif Kureishi, and Best Supporting Actor, Daniel Day-Lewis with Kureishi being nominated for Best Screenplay at the Oscars.

<sup>40</sup> Appendix 1 in Harvey 77.

<sup>41</sup> Channel Four, *The Channel 4 Funding Formula: The Case for Abolition/A Report from Channel 4* (London: Channel 4, 1995) 5.

<sup>42</sup> See David Morley, and Kevin Robins, "Space of Identity: Communications Technologies and the Reconfiguration of Europe," *Screen* 30.4 (1989): 11-34.

<sup>43</sup> For instance, in 1987 David Rose received a special award at Cannes and Channel Four had twenty-one films at its market stake.

<sup>44</sup> James Lyons, "Signifying Seattle," diss., U of Nottingham, 2000, 97.

<sup>45</sup> Paul Giles, "History with Holes: Channel Four Television Films of the 1980s," Friedman 75.

<sup>46</sup> Simon Blanchard, "Cinema-going, Going, Gone?" *Screen* 24.4-5 (1983): 111.

<sup>47</sup> Lambert 80-81.

<sup>48</sup> John Caughie argues that this misconception is related to a certain rhetoric that television dramas are less authorial - thus, less creative, performed, visually more conventional. Caughie also contends that there has been a tradition of what he terms "art television" which challenges narrational and stylistic conventions like art cinema. ("Rhetoric, Pleasure and 'Art Television': Dreams of Leaving," *Screen* 22.4 (1981): 9-31). I do realise that there has been a lot of highbrow TV over the years. However, my concern is mass appeal TV programmes such as soap operas and general entertainment.

<sup>49</sup> Harvey 69.

<sup>50</sup> Lambert 150.

<sup>51</sup> Lambert 140.

<sup>52</sup> Channel 4 and the Great London Council were major supporters of Black Film workshops such as Black Audio Film Collectives and Sankofa. Among those emerged from these workshops are: *Territories* (Sankofa Film and Video, 1986), *The Passion of Remembrance* (Maureen Blackwood/ Issac Julien, 1986) and *Handsworth Songs* (John Akomfrah, 1986). However, Channel 4 decided to withdraw its budget for black film workshops in the early 1990s. (Manthis Diawara, "Power and Territory: The Emergence of Black British Film Collectives," Friedman 147-60). Also see, for a discussion for Channel 4's black programmes, Paul Gilroy, "C4-Bridgehead or Bantustan?" *Screen* 24.4-5 (1983): 130-36.

<sup>53</sup> For instance, as a commercial TV station, Channel 4 had to face audience rating. John Ellis criticised the falseness of audience rating as it indicates a non-specific mass. According to Ellis: "the audience who are adduced are always other people: the particular viewer proposing the criticism never admits that it is based on her or his own TV viewing habits and assumptions. The 'audience' is other people, other people who watch the programme while its is transmitted, rather than an off-air recording; other people who abhor complexity; other people who invariably use TV as a source of entertainment spiced with information." ("Channel 4 -Working Notes," *Screen* 24.6 (1983): 50).

<sup>54</sup> Ellis, "Channel 4 -Working Notes" 42.

<sup>55</sup> Ellis, "Channel 4 -Working Notes" 39-40.

<sup>56</sup> Hill, *British Cinema of the 1980* 69-70

<sup>57</sup> Channel 4 Television Corporation, *Report and Financial Statement 1997* (London: Channel 4, 1998). Quoted in Hill, "Changing the Guard" 55.

<sup>58</sup> Hill, *British Cinema of the 1980* 64.

<sup>59</sup> John Hill, "Cinema," *The Media in Britain: Current Debates and Developments*, ed. Jane Stokes and Anna Reading (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999) 79-80.

<sup>60</sup> Elsaesser 63.

For a discussion about the monopoly of EMI and Rank, see John Walker's chapter, "Monopoly Money: Thorn-EMI and Rank," *Once and Future Film: British Cinema in the Seventies and Eighties* (London: Methuen London, 1985) 28-40; Archie Tait, "Distributing the Product," Auty and Roddick 80-93. For reports on the distribution and exhibition in the 1980s, see *The Distribution of Films for Exhibition in Cinemas and by Other Means* (London: HMSO, 1982); *Films: A Report on the Supply of Films for Exhibition in Cinemas* (London: HMSO, 1983).

<sup>61</sup> Jeremy Isaac noted in 1987 that "we've helped over 100 films now, and only around half a dozen have so far returned money." (Quoted in Saynor 31.)

<sup>62</sup> Hill, *British Cinema of the 1980s* 61.

<sup>63</sup> Julian Petley observes that by 1989 7million videos are rented every week and that 30 million video recorders are equipped in Britain. ("The Video Image," *Sight and Sound* 59.1(1989): 24).

<sup>64</sup> Tait 89.

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<sup>65</sup> For instance, Alan Parker openly criticised in *A Turnip-head's Guide to the British Cinema* (written and directed by himself, Thames Television, 12 Mar. 1986) that British cinema became television film. Parker argues: "now one of the problems, to my mind, of British movies is that most of our directors learn their trade on the small screen or the small stage. Also, too many of them have been brought up on the notion of film and not movies, with a consequence that most contemporary British films have admirable depth but not cinematic width." (Quoted in Martin McLoone, "Boxed in?: The Aesthetics of Film and Television," Hill and McLoone 78).

<sup>66</sup> John Hill, "British Television and Film: The Making of a Relationship," Hill and McLoone 166.

<sup>67</sup> Hill, "Cinema" 85.

## **Part II. The Elements of the 90s British Film Industry**

### Chapter 3. Funding and Distribution Structure: The Localisation and Commercialisation of British Cinema towards a Global Audience

In their study of cultural globalisation, David Morley and Kevin Robins suggest that while cultural transformation constructs a transnational/multinational space, this, in return, allows for further attention on locality in the cultural industries. Morley and Robins note that:

The global-local nexus is about the relation between globalising and particularising dynamics in the strategy of the global corporation, and the 'local' should be seen as a fluid and relational space, constituted only in and through its relation to the global.<sup>1</sup>

This suggests that in cultural production, locality is used to emphasise the "particularity" of a product in relation to the globalised market, as opposed to the homogeneity of a globalised product.<sup>2</sup> In this respect, a national cinema is a localised product and "British" cinema is specifically localised films when seen in relation to this globalised market. Thus, the British film industry's move to secure distribution revenues both at home and abroad through its production funding structure during the 1990s suggests that the local (that is, national) can be sold internationally as local/national: through the *commodification* of the idea of national cinema. With the flow of finance into the British film industry through public funding, regional broadcasters and international investors, British cinema of the 1990s constructed its potential to be seen as a new kind of popular British cinema within this globalised market, with social art cinema being its preferred generic form. In doing so, being British (being national/being localised) was used to specify the "particularity" of British cinema. Thus, "culturally-

British" cinema is a type of British cinema which is aimed at a "larger and more diverse audience," in other words, an international one.<sup>3</sup>

Bearing this in mind, this chapter will examine the ways in which financial and distribution structures in British filmmaking in the 1990s drove the production of "culturally-British" film in order to specialise British national cinema in the globalised market. As Morley and Robins note, globalisation began through an economic re-formation, which resulted in cultural transformation.<sup>4</sup> As a result, cultural globalisation nowadays can hardly be discussed without relating it to the economic re-construction of the cultural industries. Thus, looking at the economic and financing structure of British filmmaking will allow for an insight into the cultural transformation of the British film industry and its impact on British cinema of the 1990s. Furthermore, I would suggest that this industrial formation promoted the idea that British cinema of the 1990s could be engaged with localised subject matter and aimed at a broader market, as can be clearly demonstrated through the proliferation of a genre such as social art cinema.

### **Subsidies and the Search for Distributors**

With the international success of a number of British films throughout the 1980s such as *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981), *Angel* (Neil Jordan, 1982) and *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Stephen Frears, 1985), more public funding for British filmmaking became available during the 1990s. Even though all funding allocations are decentralised and administered by different organisations, funding allocation generally exhibits two common tendencies: a preference for films which have secured a distribution deal or have more potential to get a distribution deal internationally; and an emphasis on the commercial prospects of national/regional films. What is significant



about this public funding is that it stimulated and encouraged British filmmaking that was associated with national/regional subject matters. As most subsidies are supervised by regional arts councils, in particular, lottery funding, films which dealt with regional issues became commercially preferable and as a result British cinema of the 1990s embraced specifically "regional" characters, locations and political issues, and came to terms with the cultural and social hybridity of the nation. For instance, *The Crying Game* (Neil Jordan, 1992), *Twin Town* (Kevin Allen, 1997) and *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1996) present issues about Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland respectively. In addition to this issue of cultural hybridity, economically, each regional council tended to establish a localised infrastructure towards regionalised filmmaking (in particular, in Scotland) and to encourage international recognition through the exhibition of films on the film festival circuit. For this purpose, the commercial prospects of projects, and their potential to attract subsidies and investment became a key consideration. Public funding sources' preference for commercially promising films, rather than low-budget or experimental films meant that financial support was more likely to be offered to films which had secured a distribution deal or were expected to get a distribution deal. This helped to construct an alliance between public funding bodies and domestic and international distributors.

Most significantly, public funding emerged from British Screen Finance (BSF). BSF is a privately owned body - the shareholders being Channel 4, Granada Television, Rank (FF) and United Artists Screen Entertainment, but can be regarded as a subsidy-providing organisation, since it was under a government award of £2 million a year which is the main funding source of the body, as well as a contract to receive £2 million a year from the European Co-production Fund.<sup>5</sup> In addition, BSF remained one of the

most important subsidy funding sources, particularly when it started administering the Arts Council of England's Greenlight Fund, which has raised £5 million a year from lottery funding since 1996. For instance, the BSF awarded £1.5 million to the film *Land Girls* (David Leland) through the Greenlight Fund in October 1996.

The number of BSF backed films and their budgets have both increased during the period of 1991-97. In 1997, BSF spent £55.8 million which was the biggest figure recorded from the body. The number of BSF-backed films reached its highest of 20 in 1994. Yet, the total budget was £54.1 million. This means that the average investment from the body had increased since 1995. (See Table 1).

Table 1  
Number of British Screen Backed Films and Average Budgets, 1991-97

Year	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
<b>Film backed</b>							
British Screen	11	9	10	14	4	9	10
European co-prod fund	1	5	7	8	5	10	8
Both funds	1	3	1	2	-	2	10
Total films	11	11	16	20	9	17	18
<b>Film finance (£m)</b>							
Average film budget	2.126	2.331	2.471	2.709	3.311	2.220	3.112
Average BS investment	0.414	0.300	0.294	0.319	0.414	0.424	0.415
Average ECF investment	0.250	0.409	0.310	0.289	0.281	0.257	0.346

Source: *Screen Finance* 28 May 1998: 4.

The majority of these films were co-funded with European co-production money (administered by BSF) and UK broadcasting companies. However, by 1997 the European investor's involvement in BSF-backed films declined.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, other non-broadcasting UK investors from UK-based sales agents and pre-sales to UK distributors (such as Capital Films, Distant Horizon, Handmade Films, Intermedia, J&M Entertainment, Mayfair Entertainment and The Sales Company) increased. See Table 2. *Screen Finance* argued that this change resulted from commercial UK investors' interest

in "upmarket drama which the body is specialised in"<sup>7</sup> including films produced by BSF in 1997 such as *All the Little Animals* (Jeremy Thomas), *The Governess* (Sandra Goldbacher), *Sliding Doors* (Peter Howitt), *Titanic Town* (Roger Michell) and *Such a Long Journey* (Sturla Gunnarsson). This suggests that the BSF board's funding strategy placed a particular interest in the commercial potential of a particular film. BSKyB's exclusive deal<sup>8</sup> with BSF-backed films indicates the commercial potential of films which the body had funded.

Table 2  
British Screen/European Co-production Fund/Greenlight Fund (GF): Sources of Co-investment, 1993-97

Year	1993 £m(%)	1994 £m(%)	1995 £m(%)	1996 Exc. GF £m(%)	1996 Inc.GF £m(%)	1997 Exc.GF £m(%)	1997 Inc.GF £m(%)
British Screen	2.944 (7.4)	4.463(11.8)	1.657 (5.6)	3.818(10.1)	3.818 (7.0)	4.567 (8.2)	4.567 (7.4)
European co-prod fund	2.170 (5.5)	2.312 (6.1)	1.404 (4.7)	2.568 (6.8)	2.568 (4.7)	2.421 (4.3)	2.421 (3.9)
Greenlight Fund	-	-	-	-	3.500 (6.4)	-	1.500 (2.4)
Channel Four	2.364 (6.0)	0.620 (1.6)	1.475 (5.0)	-	-	1.591 (2.9)	2.241 (3.6)
BskyB	-	1.923 (5.1)	1.614 (5.4)	1.253 (3.3)	1.545 (2.8)	1.865 (3.3)	1.865 (3.0)
BBC	-	-	-	5.456(14.5)	5.706(10.4)	2.454 (4.4)	2.454 (4.0)
Other UK television	-	4.222(11.2)	-	2.590 (6.9)	2.590 (4.7)	0.995 (1.8)	0.995 (1.6)
Lottery funding	-	-	-	3.445 (9.1)	3.445 (6.3)	5.842(10.5)	5.842 (9.5)
Other UK investors	4.840(12.2)	4.716(12.5)	5.971(20.0)	0.995 (2.6)	1.959 (3.6)	18.246(32.7)	20.243(32.9)
European investors	16.059(40.6)	29.577(78.4)	12.864(43.2)	12.769(33.8)	13.199(24.2)	15.593(27.9)	17.093(27.8)
Commonwealth investors	3.857 (9.8)	2.895 (7.7)	0.957 (3.2)	1.525 (4.0)	1.525 (2.8)	1.508 (2.7)	1.508 (2.5)
USA investors	3.272 (8.3)	3.251 (8.6)	3.605(12.1)	1.649 (4.4)	12.283(22.5)	0.275 (0.5)	0.275 (0.4)
Other investors	4.023(10.2)	0.200 (0.5)	0.250 (0.8)	1.667 (4.4)	2.467 (4.5)	0.452 (0.8)	0.452 (0.7)
<b>Total</b>	<b>39.529(100)</b>	<b>54.179(100)</b>	<b>29.797(100)</b>	<b>37.735(100)</b>	<b>54.605(100)</b>	<b>55.804(100)</b>	<b>61.456(100)</b>

Source: *Screen Finance* 28 May 1998: 4.

\* Prior to 1996, the BBC was included in other UK television.

In addition to BSF, lottery funding became one of the most significant sources of public funding during the 1990s. However, it is difficult to pin down the exact use of lottery funding in UK film production since funds are administered by each regional arts council: the Arts Council of England, the Scottish Arts Council, the Arts Council of Wales and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. Despite this, what all councils had in common was that the fund was allocated to films which had the potential to gain wide

distribution on their completion. This meant that rather than supporting the development of a project, the Lottery Funding Boards preferred films which had a higher likelihood of being completed and exhibited. For this purpose, regional councils began to become involved in co-financing with private investors, UK-broadcasters and UK or non-UK major distributors.

In comparison with other arts councils, the Arts Council of England (ACE) had the most significant budget and number of projects. ACE's concern about the distribution of films became clearer in 1997 when the body announced three beneficiaries for franchise funding; Pathé Pictures, the Film Consortium and DNA Films.<sup>9</sup> ACE's investment in one foreign and two commercially reliable production companies was criticised as potentially causing "an unhealthy increase in competition for domestic projects" and less funding opportunities to non-commercial projects.<sup>10</sup> Soon after, in response to this criticism, the ACE decided to invest £12 million worth of lottery money in "non-commercial" films for six years, but then the body delayed the scheme indefinitely and also put back in motion its plan to use lottery money to support the distribution of British films and develop screenplays.<sup>11</sup>

The reasons ACE was attracted to these three production companies demonstrates that ACE's major concern was with the distribution sector. Pathé Pictures' managing director, Alexis Lloyd, assumes that the ACE was attracted to Pathé's distribution arrangements in France, Germany and the UK.<sup>12</sup> In response to public criticism about public funding towards a French company, Pathé Pictures appointed Andrea Calderwood, former head of TV drama at BBC Scotland, to handle the lottery franchise. Calderwood announced the first three franchise films: *The Darkest Light* (1999) directed by Simon Beaufoy and Billy Eltringham, an adaptation of Oscar Wilde's *An*

*Ideal Husband* (1999) and *Ratcatcher* (1999) directed by Lynne Ramsay.<sup>13</sup> In addition, both the Film Consortium and DNA Films had a strong bond with specific distributors; Calton and PolyGram respectively. Indeed, one Lottery Film Panel member noted that "what gets distributed is something that the Arts Council pays close attention to..."<sup>14</sup>

After the ACE, the Scottish Arts Council (SAC) awarded the second-largest number of grants for film production during the 1990s. An award for 1995 was £1,374,245 for a total of five films, of which two were feature films (£1,137,178) including *Stella Does Tricks* (Coky Giedroyc, 1997), a co-production between Sidewalk Films and BFI production.<sup>15</sup> The SAC began its funding for feature films in 1995 with £1 million to the total £5 million budget of *Poor Things* (Sandy Johnston), which was produced by the Ealing Studio-based Parallel Productions and was based on a novel by Scottish writer Alasdair Gray.<sup>16</sup>

SAC appears to have been the Arts Council that was most concerned with the projection of locality and the impact financing Scottish filmmaking might have on local economics. The SAC restricted its guidelines by providing funding only to Scottish filmmakers who live, work and are resident in Scotland for tax purposes as well as those who form co-productions which include a Scottish partner which fulfils these criteria, while the ACE guidelines do not contain such restrictions. However, both councils started emphasising the commercial viability of winning projects when they began to become involved in funding feature films and subsequently began to fund fewer projects with bigger budgets. In December 1997, the SAC proposed that it would set-up an ACE style lottery franchise and introduce a French-style points system to assess the projection of Scottishness in projects. In this new plan, the SAC continued its liaison with Scottish Screen under the condition that they recommended projects seeking

£100,000 or more, while films looking for more than £250,000 would have to be approved by the council.<sup>17</sup>

Scottish Screen - the amalgamation of four organisations: the Scottish Film Council, Scottish Film Production Fund, Scottish Broadcast and Film Training and Scottish Screen Locations - was the UK's first integrated funding body for screen culture and industry, followed by the foundation of the Film Council in 1999. With the foundation of this body in 1997, as with the SAC, Scottish Screen's main aim was to support and explore Scottish talent and Scottish companies, and the body has emphasised the importance of short films as a means of discovering and nurturing new Scottish talent. For instance, director Peter Mullan and producer Frances Higson worked on shorts like *Fridge* (1996), before making the Scottish Screen-backed feature *Orphans* in 1997. While the body was concerned with the development of new Scottish talent, receiving £200,000 of its development fund for scripts (matched by Film Four), Scottish Screen also wanted to encourage outside producers and filmmakers to come to Scotland and make films. As a result, Scottish Screen planned to set up a new 40,000 square foot studio complex at Pacific Quay, Glasgow, which included four studio spaces equipped for single and multi-camera production.<sup>18</sup> It appears that, as then chief executive John Archer notes,<sup>19</sup> Scottish Screen pursued its aim to "nurture and develop talent for audiences in a global market."<sup>20</sup>

What this suggests is that the regional councils' actual aim was not only exploiting its regional personnel and establishing local complexes, but also securing wide-range distribution in either cinema or television. The regional councils' partnership with regional/national broadcasters indicates this move. For instance, when the Glasgow Film Fund (GFF) established its new fund in 1997, there was a clear intention to

maintain their relationship with the BBC and Channel 4. When the Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Enterprise Glasgow stopped subsidising the fund, the fund doubled its budget for feature film production with a mixture of public funding from the European Regional Development Fund, the Glasgow Development Agency and Glasgow City Council, as well as the profit made on the GFF's first investment in *Shallow Grave* (Danny Boyle) in 1993 and finance from the private sector. Even though *Shallow Grave* was the only film to date to repay its loan, the film's success gave the GFF 72% of returns (240% recuperation) when cross-collateralised with its 10 other investments. More importantly, this success gave the GFF confidence to expand its film production to projects anywhere in the UK while the old fund concentrated on attracting film production projects in Glasgow. What this implies, according to *Screen Finance*, is that the new fund would be involved in the financing of projects which provided "an appealing package including stars, directors, and distribution deals."<sup>21</sup>

In comparison with other public-funding bodies' moves towards commercial feature films, the British Film Institute (BFI) withdrew its support from feature filmmaking in July 1998. As a government supported film body, the BFI had aimed throughout the 1970s and 1980s to support experimental and new films which otherwise might not be taken up in the marketplace. Indeed, its financial support for director Derek Jarman is a case in point. In addition, while other minor public funding sources such as the Scottish Film Production Fund and the Glasgow Film Fund also invested in producer-driven development funding, the BFI was the only public funding body to have a direct contact with filmmakers when constructing financial support.<sup>22</sup> As a result, the body has played a significant part in launching the careers of such directors as Terence Davies and Issac Julien.<sup>23</sup> However, with the foundation of BFI Films in 1997,

the division responsible for theatrical and non-theatrical distribution, sales of rights (including archival materials) and video publishing, the body appears to have shifted their focus onto the "educational" distribution of its various and diverse collections, especially shorts including video/16mm work, documentaries, classics and foreign-language films.<sup>24</sup> The BFI spent £2.5 million in 1996-97 and £4.09 million in 1997-98 on film and television production, of which £850,000 was on features. Thus, the body's decision to withdraw from feature filmmaking resulted from the need to support non-mainstream and experimental UK filmmakers who had more difficulties securing financial support. The BFI announced its plans to continue making short films via the £150,000 New Directors Fund jointly financed with Channel 4 and to back features, shorts and videos in partnership with local film funds via the Regional Development Unit's £1 million production fund.<sup>25</sup>

As has been demonstrated, most public funding (with the exception of the BFI) appears to have attempted to heighten, through its funding allocation, the commercial viability of British cinema in a global market (including the home market). This move was clearly presented with the launch of the Film Council and its announcement of initial projects for the future.<sup>26</sup> The Film Council was launched in October 1999<sup>27</sup> and took over the management of all of the UK's publicly funded national film bodies with the organisation officially opening in March 2000. The council merged the British Film Institute, British Screen and the British Film Commission and took over the control of the Arts Council of England's National Lottery Film Fund. What this suggests is that public funding for UK filmmaking is increasingly becoming centralised and that consequently the council will greatly affect British film culture and UK filmmaking in the future.



While the council did not announce a dedicated European co-production fund in its initial projects, it was intended that the fund would still be administered with British Screen, which would have control over its management in exchange for being absorbed into the council. However, *Screen Finance* notes that the council appeared more concerned with its American counterparts than with Europe.<sup>28</sup> In response to this, Ben Gibson, the former head of BFI production, argued that the council's preference for a commercial film industry "will perpetuate a nonsensical distinction between commerce and culture and will fail to make industrial sense." Gibson also contended that "posturing against culture and attacking marginal film cultures in the name of populism should be outlawed ... not for moral but for business reasons."<sup>29</sup> It is not clear at present how the Film Council will shape the UK film industry, but it is clear that it will play a considerable part in UK film production in the new century.

### **TV Funding: The Expansion to Theatrical Release**

TV funding was the second biggest and most active funding source for UK film production in the 1990s. Since its launch in 1982, Channel 4 has been heavily involved in British filmmaking and has established its image as a provider of quality television. As a direct result of Channel 4's success in the 1980s, other broadcasters (ITV and BBC) have also become involved in the film industry in the form of co-financing. During the course of the 1980s, this alliance between television and British cinema also resulted in the expansion of exhibition windows beyond theatrical runs. With the emergence of satellite and cable channels, this expansion has further increased in the 1990s and thus more films have been required for television showings. Peter Todd notes that the broadcasters need "films which can be showcased in cinemas, used for repeated

television screening, become part of a library of films and, ideally, have the potential of a spin-off television series."<sup>30</sup> The considerable involvement of BSkyB in British filmmaking would seem to confirm this trend and I will return to this later. In addition to this, UK broadcasters started to impinge on the theatrical release of films which they had financed. For instance, Channel 4 founded its own sales arm, Film Four International in 1995 to deal with international sales of Channel 4-backed films.<sup>31</sup> As a result, Channel 4 has remained one of the most active distributors of Arts Council films, followed by Entertainment, First Independent and Miramax, and has picked up such titles as *Babymother* (Julian Henriques, 1998), *Land Girls* (1998), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Adrian Noble, 1996) and *Orphans* (1997).

As illustrated in chapter 2, Channel 4's input into the UK film industry has helped a new remit for British film culture - diverse, experimental and thus "artistic" to emerge through the course of the 1980s, as well as creating a newly formed image of the channel, with its own interests in mind. The channel's activity in UK film production in the 1990s continued to sustain its image of being "independent."<sup>32</sup> While maintaining this image of "being independent," the channel's actual move towards the film industry in the 1990s appeared increasingly commercial with the launch of its digital channel, Film Four.<sup>33</sup> Having stabilised its status as a privileged British producer, the channel began to build a vertically integrated "mini-studio" type of film business.<sup>34</sup> In 1998, with the launching of its feature film division Film Four Production, its distribution arm, Film Four Distribution, Film Four International and Film Four Lab as well as the creation of an entirely separate umbrella production company called Film Four Ltd., the channel has demonstrated its intention to be more commercial.

When the channel's relationship with British Screen went cold due to British

Screen's "exclusive"- in Channel 4's terms - deal with BSkyB in 1994,<sup>35</sup> the channel began to find other co-backers, especially in Europe. For instance, Channel 4 invested £17.173 million for fifteen feature film productions in 1997 (£17.045 for 17 in 1996) and eight of the fifteen films were wholly UK productions: *The Acid House* (Paul McGuigan), *Babymother*, *Elizabeth* (Shekhar Kapur), *Hilary and Jackie* (Anand Tucker), *Martha Meet Frank*, *Daniel and Laurence* (Nick Hamm), *Orphans*, *A Price above Rubies* (Boaz Yakin) and *Prometheus* (Tony Harrison) and one was a wholly Irish production: *Dancing at Lughnasa* (Pat O'Connor). The others were international co-productions involving UK production companies, or were films produced outside the UK: *Croupier* (Mike Hodges), *Land Girls*, *My Name is Joe* (Ken Loach), *The Red Violin* (François Girard), *Velvet Goldmine* (Todd Haynes) and *Vigo* (Julien Temple). See Table 3.

Table 3  
Feature Films Backed by Channel 4 in 1997

Title	Production company	Budget (£m)	Channel Four Investment (£)
The Acid House	Picture Palace North	1.20	670,000
Babymother	Formation Films	2.00	1,010,000
Croupier	Little Bird/Tatfilm (Ger)	3.50	1,400,000
Dancing at Lughnasa	Ferndale Films	7.00	1,000,000
Elizabeth	Working Title Films	14.70	1,000,000
Hilary and Jackie	Oxford Film Company	4.90	1,796,000
The Land Girls	Greenpoint Films/West Eleven Films/ Camera One (Fra)/Arena Films (Fra)	5.00	806,000
Martha, Meet Frank, Daniel and Laurence	Banshee	3.00	2,071,000
My Name is Joe	Parallex Pictures/Road Movies (Ger)	2.50	500,000
Orphans	Antonine Green Bridge Productions	1.70	846,000
A Price Above Rubies	Rubies Incorporated	3.50	484,000
Prometheus	Holmes Associates/Michael Kustow Productions	1.60	1,046,000
The Red Violin	Rhombus Media (Can)/Mikado (Ita)	6.20	1,400,000
Velvet Goldmine	Zenith Productions/Killer Films (USA)	4.50	1,069,000
Vigo	Impact Pictures/Nitrate Films/ Little Magic Films (Jap)/Mact Films (Fra)/Road Movies (Ger)/Tornasol Films (Spain)	3.40	2,075,000
<b>Total (15 films)</b>		<b>64.70</b>	<b>17,173,000</b>

Source: *Screen Finance* 19 February 1998: 7.

\* The list includes all films going into production in 1997.

In doing so, Film Four International handled ten films in 1997: *Alive and Kicking* (Nancy Meckler), *Bent* (Sean Mathias), *Brassed Off* (Mark Herman), *Croupier*, *Fever Pitch* (David Evans), *Jump the Gun* (Les Blair), *The Slab Boys* (John Byrne), *True Blue* (Ferdinand Fairfax), *Welcome to Sarajevo* (Michael Winterbottom) and *The Woodlanders* (Phil Agland) and in 1998 handled most of the films produced by Channel 4 during 1997-98.<sup>36</sup>

As John Hill notes, the channel took a further step "towards the US market and a form of 'safe' filmmaking."<sup>37</sup> To expand its film business internationally, Film Four Ltd. set up a joint venture with Arnon Milchan's Hollywood based film financing and production company, Regency Enterprises and the French Television channel, TF1. It was agreed that each company would contribute one third of the budget for each of three English-language feature films a year, which were budgeted up to £15 million each. The Film Four Distribution would distribute the films in the UK and TF1 would do so in France with Regency Enterprises being responsible for distribution in Austria, Germany, Italy, South Korea and Switzerland, as well as for the television rights for the films outside the UK and France.<sup>38</sup> At this point, the company wanted to increase the proportion of their investment for each project in order to obtain as many international rights as possible and also to acquire more films through Film Four International.

In contrast to Channel 4, it was unlikely that the BBC, as a government-administered body, would move towards an integrated system such as Film Four Ltd.<sup>39</sup> However, in 1999 the BBC decided to separate off BBC Films into a separate, semi-commercial entity to be jointly owned by BBC Worldwide, the commercial arm of the public broadcaster and BBC television. Under this new first look deal, Worldwide was committed to invest up to £40 million in four projects a year over five years thus

doubling BBC films £7 million annual budget and obtaining a considerable level of distribution rights. In 1998, Stewart Till claims that it was not clear "whether BBC's feature film involvement was more based around theatrical distribution or television movies for exclusive broadcast use."<sup>40</sup> However, in fact, since January 1995, the BBC has taken account of the theatrical release of films in the close links they have forged with their sales agent, The Sales Company.<sup>41</sup> In addition, after the critical success of *Mrs Brown* (John Madden, 1997), the BBC appears to have become more actively involved in the theatrical release of its productions.<sup>42</sup> In 1997 three films, *Jilting Joe* (BBC Scotland), *Divorcing Jack* and *Titanic Town* (BBC Northern Island) were developed, financed and earmarked for theatrical release, and BBC backed films were released in the UK by leading distributors such as Buena Vista, UIP, PolyGram, Pathé, First Independent and the Feature Film Company and in the USA by Miramax Films, October Films and Fox Searchlight.<sup>43</sup> Both Channel 4 and the BBC's interest in the theatrical release of feature films has clearly increased as a result of the need to obtain films which will be potentially successful at the box-office. Since box-office performance plays a part in attracting a mass audience in ancillary markets, broadcasters need to secure films which can be exhibited both nationally and worldwide.

Among the major UK broadcasters, ITV's investment in the film industry was not as significant as its counterparts during the 1990s in terms of budget levels and numbers of films. This is partly because the company is a conglomerate of six independent companies: Carlton, Granada, United News and Media, Yorkshire Tyne Tees TV, HTV and Scottish Television, meaning that negotiating finance plans is often more complicated and time-consuming. Despite this, ITV has begun to make relatively slow and careful moves towards UK filmmaking. While Granada Television's film division

made its first ITV Network-commissioned film, *Up on the Roof* (Simon Moor) in 1996,<sup>44</sup> Carlton Films also backed its first feature, *Complicity* (Gavin Millar, 2000), which was co-financed with J&M Entertainment in exchange for rights to the film's television showing in the UK. ITV's move towards the film industry still remains firmly in the territory of purchasing TV screening rights and they have yet to become as intrinsically involved in film production as the BBC and Channel 4. Yet, as acquiring films with commercial potential becomes more of a necessary activity for UK broadcasters, in part, due to the increase of digital and satellite channels, it is perhaps inevitable that ITV will become more actively involved in film production and distribution in the future.

As these discussions above demonstrate, the primary reason television broadcasters have tended to expand their involvement in the UK film industry in recent years is to obtain more control over films and their financial success as well as acquiring higher numbers of films for television showings. The head of network programming for British Sky Broadcasting (BSkyB), James Baker, has noted that "as UK outlets [have] multiplied ... [due to] the introduction of digital packages. ... [we need] to move into [our] own-produced films, so as to gain control over both content and exploitation of all UK rights."<sup>45</sup> BSKyB has invested around £6.5 million in UK film production and has given UK pay-television rights to around forty British Screen-backed films since February 1994. In addition, the company has invested in UK-produced films such as *Wilde* (Britian Gilbert, 1997) through its output deal<sup>46</sup> for pay-television rights with such UK distributors as PolyGram Filmed Entertainment, Rank Film Distributors, Pathé-Guild and Handmade Films. While actively moving into UK film production in order to obtain UK films for its satellite and pay-television

screenings, the company has also, concurrently, attempted to construct and project a commercial and popular image for itself. In doing so, the company has showed "a strong and clear vision of what it wants [in particular, to differentiate the channel from its rival Film Four], a straightforward business culture and a supportive attitude toward the production office" and has subsequently moved onto the theatrical release of a number of BSkyB produced films, as well as continuing with satellite and digital showings of films backed by the company.<sup>47</sup>

### **International Co-production: The Securing of International Exhibition**

As discussed earlier, international co-production is not a new phenomenon in the globalised cultural industries.<sup>48</sup> What is significant about British filmmaking in terms of international co-production is the increase of American co-production and the decrease of European co-production.<sup>49</sup> Arguably, the cause of this shift is due to European co-production not being able to provide as wide a release for films in the international market. As can be seen from the Film Council's approach to co-operation with American partners, the alliance between non-European partners and UK investors has strengthened and it is likely to remain strong in the future.

Yet, until the early 1990s, European co-production increased dramatically from 1987 to 1993, with a consensus to establish Europe as a cultural entity which could compete with Hollywood and protect its own market from the flow of Hollywood films. Co-productions increased from 12% of total films made in Europe in 1987 to 37% in 1993, and in the UK the budget used in co-production films was more than £92 million in 1994, a 200% increase in comparison with figures in 1993. Thus, as a result, European co-productions appeared to play a key role in the production boom of the UK

film industry in the 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>50</sup> The most significant funding source used to increase and improve European co-production was Eurimage, which was founded in 1989 by the Council of Europe. The number of members in Eurimage had increased to twenty-five countries by 1995 but the UK withdrew from the body in November 1995. While, as *Screen Finance* argues, the UK and Ireland benefited most from this fund,<sup>51</sup> the Department of National Heritage announced its withdrawal. Due to the UK's withdrawal from the body, the number of UK-linked co-productions and minority-UK co-productions (which is the main form of UK subsidy from Eurimag) significantly decreased in 1996.<sup>52</sup> Arguably, the lack of support for international distribution deals with European-based funding<sup>53</sup> resulted from UK producers and investors seeking non-European partners (in particular, distributors) who could offer more lucrative distribution deals.<sup>54</sup>

While European co-production remains in decline in the UK, American investors have become more actively involved in UK film production. American finance was allocated to 14 out of 116 British films in 1997 representing 12.07% of UK film production and 22 out of 88 in 1998, making a figure of 23.86% of the total number of production.<sup>55</sup> In most cases, as far as the distribution of films is concerned, American finance was invested in British films in the form of pre-sale and this scheme resulted from an increase in the number of unreleased UK films at the time. In 1995, half of the 76 UK films waiting for distribution did not receive a theatrical screening, and half of these 38 films did not secure a distribution deal at all until 1997.<sup>56</sup> In 1996 the number of unreleased UK films increased (see Table 4), with this partly being due to the increase in the number of productions, resulting from an overload of lottery funded



Table 4  
Types of Release for UK films, 1990-96

Year produced	Wide release(%)	Limited release(%)	No release(%)
1990	29.4	47.1	23.5
1991	32.2	37.3	30.5
1992	38.3	29.8	31.9
1993	27.1	28.8	44.1
1994	37.7	31.9	30.4
1995	26.3	23.7	50.0
1996	23.7	18.4	57.9

Source: *Screen Finance* 14 May 1998: 10.

\*Wide release: Hollywood style release: opening or subsequently showing on a larger number of screens and/or exhibited widely in commercial cinema in more than one major provincial centre across the UK. \*No release: this figure includes films with a distribution deal or a release, as of May 10 1998.

films. While the number of screens in the UK had increased from 2,166 in 1996 to 2,838 in 1997, due to the increase of multiplexes (most of these multiplexes are owned by American majors), this did not help British films to obtain distribution deals. As multiplexes are run on a wide-release basis with massive television advertising, there are often only a small number of screens available for smaller UK films and smaller UK distributors.<sup>57</sup> In addition to this, the lack of well-known stars or directors in a number of British films has made it difficult for small films to be effectively marketed. Thus, pre-sale deals with US majors acted as a solution to the problem of obtaining wide and diverse distribution for British films.

By 1997, the most significant non-UK investor in British filmmaking was PolyGram Filmed Entertainment (PFE).<sup>58</sup> In John Hill's words, PFE took a part in introducing the potential for "an international distribution network and a Hollywood-style attitude for promotion" in British filmmaking.<sup>59</sup> PFE entered into the film business in 1991 and, when the company bought a 100% stake of Propaganda Films and Working Title Films in September 1991, it emerged as a major non-UK investor in the UK film

industry. With the international success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Mike Newell, 1994), the company seemed to take a further step into British filmmaking with PFE investing in five features in 1995 and backing a further eight films in 1996.<sup>60</sup> Due to its solid position in terms of acquiring films, the company obtained an agreement with BSkyB in 1997, stipulating that PFE would supply its films for BSkyS's pay-per-view service twelve months after a film's theatrical release. According to *Screen Finance*, this deal with BSkyB made PFE the first distributor to solidify its plans to maximise the potential of the UK pay-per-view exhibition window and signifies PFE's influence on the distribution of British films.<sup>61</sup>

However, due to its overall financial problems - a loss of FFI 77 million - US\$ 141,68million in 1998<sup>62</sup> PFE's investment in British filmmaking dramatically decreased. Thus, in 1998 Miramax overtook PFE to become the US major most actively involved in British production with a total of five films, in comparison with a total of three in 1997. Miramax invested in British films such as *Shakespeare in Love* (John Madden, 1998), *Elephant Juice* (Sam Miller, 1999) and *Mansfield Park* (Patricia Rozema, 1999) through Miramax or its British production arm, Miramax HAL. Arguably, this increase in Miramax's involvement in UK film production is, to some extent, related to the withdrawal of PFE from this territory.

Thus, despite PFE's financial involvement in British films taking a downturn in the later-90s, UK film production still maintained its strong alliance with US majors. (See Table 5). This is a result of American distributors' needs to obtain locally-based films. As *Screen Digest* argues, "locally produced features become crucial to sustain market share of US distributors, especially faced with [the] increasing popularity of native films, particularly in Europe."<sup>63</sup> As a result, locally produced films are important

in order to build up non-US revenues for distribution. For UK investors, in order to secure distribution revenues, in particular in the international market, US majors are ideal partners. As the UK film production sector is separated from the distribution sector, UK projects often have to pre-sell a film's rights in order to obtain finance and distribution. As no retained financial back-up for marketing as well as distribution exists in the UK film industry, deals with distributors are an increasingly important concern for the production sector both in terms of obtaining finance for the development of a project, and of receiving profits quickly through a secure distribution deal. For instance, the ACE awarded lottery money to a US major for the first time in August 1998, with £1 million going to Miramax HAL for its £6.40 million adaptation of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* and, as a result, the film was distributed by Miramax in the USA market, with the film's television rights going to one of the co-financiers, the BBC.

Table 5  
Major's Non-US Production Relationship

	France	Germany	Italy	Netherlands	Spain	UK	Argentina	Brazil	Japan	Australia
Disney		1	1	1		2	1		1	
Dreamworks						1				
MGM/UA	1					1				
Paramount									1	
PolyGram	3			1		9				1
Sony Pictures Ent.		1				1		1	1	
21st C-Fox						1				1
Universal										
Warner Bros.	1	3	1		1	1				1
Total	5	5	2	2	1	16	1	1	3	3

Source: *Screen Digest* February 1998: 34.

In terms of British filmmaking, the significance of this increase in international co-production was its success in securing distribution sectors for British films. In fact, UK-produced films were exhibited on 113 screens in 1999 with this being 85% higher than the average of 61 screens in 1998, and this was a direct result of pre-sales to North American distributors.<sup>64</sup> As many of these international investors had strong distribution

arms in the UK and abroad, opportunities for British films to receive wide releases increased dramatically. The fact that British films were gaining significant box-office success in European countries<sup>65</sup> indicates the consequence of alliances with international investors. On the one hand, this meant that there was increased pressure on British filmmakers to make their films attractive to a mass audience. Subsequently, first-week screenings became increasingly crucial in terms of determining the financial fate of a film.<sup>66</sup> However, on the other hand, while test screenings and first-week runs became more important, there was also a need to organise a concrete marketing strategy for British films, as will be discussed in the following chapter. In this respect, the integrated structure of US majors and their experience of devising massive promotional campaigns could be seen as the key in terms of determining and maximising the successful reception of British films, especially in the USA. For instance, *Billy Elliot* (Stephen Daldry, 2000) was promoted throughout the USA by its American distributors, Universal Studios after its successful reception in test screenings.

### Conclusion

While the British film industry allied itself with television funding and exhibition (in particular, through Channel 4) during the 1980s, it then moved towards a construction of a "public-private alliance"<sup>67</sup> in the 1990s with links being formed with broadcasters and US distributors in order to stabilise the "production-led and fragmented" UK film industry.<sup>68</sup> Through this alliance with broadcasters and major distributors, British cinema obtained more opportunities to secure distribution and the direct result of this was a new commercialisation of some aspects of British cinema. In doing so, low-budget and experimental film production and distribution has been

neglected since this public-private alliance has moved towards a commercial product and market.<sup>69</sup> However, this does not necessarily mean that this public-private alliance has resulted in British filmmaking receiving bigger budgets. For example, *Emma* (Douglas McGrath, 1996), which was produced by Matchmaker Films with £6.32 million, was wholly financed by Miramax and *Surviving Picasso* (James Ivory, 1996), which was produced by Merchant Ivory Productions with a budget of £10.13 million, was financed by Warner Bros. In comparison, *Trainspotting*, which was produced by Figment Films and backed by Channel 4 and PolyGram Filmed Entertainment, had a budget of only £1.70 million while *Brassed Off* (1996), which was backed by Channel 4 and Miramax, spent £2.53 million on production. In some cases, UK and US co-productions spent more than £6 million with, for instance, *Richard III* (Richard Loncraine, 1995), which was produced by Bayly and Pare Production and backed by BSkyB, United Artists, British Screen Finance and Screen Partners, spending £8 million on production. Instead, rather than increasing budgets for British films, British cinema of the 1990s developed to produce a particular type of British cinema which could attract a share of the global mass market.

During the 1990s, the finance and distribution structure of the British film industry caused British filmmaking to be localised and commercialised towards cultural globalisation. While the film industry is still dominated by Hollywood in terms of globalised culture, the UK film industry has transformed its production and distribution structure in order to come to terms with "living with Hollywood."<sup>70</sup> In so doing, an attempt has been made to construct a Hollywood-style infrastructure as can be seen from Channel 4's move to form a mini-studio which controls its production and distribution or the formation of a Europe-based cultural community through European

co-productions and Eurimage funding. However, both attempts seem to have failed, resulting in the decrease of European co-productions due to the lack of a stable distribution sector and the shutdown of Film Four in 2002.<sup>71</sup> As a result of this, the "public-private alliance" structure of the British film industry has been constructed as a financial solution resulting from the combination of the government's desire to stimulate the British cultural industries and private inventors' desire for wide international exhibition. Thus, as a consequence, it has further driven British cinema to foreground and focus on notions of the local and regional in order to differentiate their product. Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner, co-chairmen of Working Title, note that "in terms of the way we do business, we *have* become more American, but in terms of our creative choices definitely not. ... We are never going to compete with the big Hollywood blockbusters because we don't know how to make them."<sup>72</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> David Morley and Kevin Robins, *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries* (London: Routledge, 1995) 117.

<sup>2</sup> Kevin Robins, "Tradition and Translation: National Cultural in Its Global Context," *Enterprise and Heritage: Crosscurrents of National Culture*, ed. John Corner and Sylvia Harvey (London: Routledge, 1991) 34-35.

<sup>3</sup> Film Policy Review Group, *A Bigger Picture: The Report of the Film Policy Review Group* (London: Dep. of Culture, Media and Sport, 1998) 4.

<sup>4</sup> Morley and Robins 10-19.

<sup>5</sup> The contracts expired, respectively, in April and March 1999.

<sup>6</sup> In 1997, for the first time since 1990, Europe was not the most prominent financier of BSF films replaced by UK investors.

<sup>7</sup> *Screen Finance* 28 May 1998: 3.

<sup>8</sup> A £6 million output deal in February 1994, which resulted in its relationship with one of its shareholders, Channel 4 going cold.

<sup>9</sup> Pathé Pictures, a French media group was awarded £33 million, The Film Consortium whose films, produced by members of the consortium, include *Interview With The Vampire* (Neil Jordan, 1992), *The Crying Game* (Neil Jordan, 1994) and *Land and Freedom* (Ken Loach, 1995) was awarded up to £30.25 million, and DNA Films, whose founder producers are Duncan Kenworthy (producer of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and Andrew Macdonald, producer of *Trainspotting*) was awarded £29 million for six years. (Details from *Screen Finance* 29 May 1997: 1-4).

<sup>10</sup> *Screen Finance* 29 May 1997: 4.

<sup>11</sup> *Screen Finance* 7 Aug. 1997: 1+.

<sup>12</sup> *Screen Finance* 29 May 1997: 4.

<sup>13</sup> Elisabeth Scheder Bieschin, "Managing the Mini Boom," *Sight and Sound* 8.10 (1998): 18. From three projects, it is clear that Pathé intended to employ British materials and talents.

<sup>14</sup> *Screen Finance* 27 Nov. 1997: 13.

<sup>15</sup> *Screen Finance* 29 Nov. 1995: 13-14.

<sup>16</sup> *Screen Finance* 6 Sep. 1995: 3.

<sup>17</sup> *Screen Finance* 11 Dec. 1997: 5; *Screen Finance* 19 Feb. 1998: 2-3.

<sup>18</sup> Claire Mount, "Border Raids," *Pact Magazine* Aug. 2000: 13-15.

<sup>19</sup> John Archer resigned in July 2001.

<sup>20</sup> John Archer, "Creative Industries," *proc. of Scotland's Cultural Strategy – Where Next?* 25 June 2001: U of Glasgow, 14 Aug. 2002 <[http://www.culturalpolicy.arts.gla.ac.uk/conference/Archer\\_J.htm](http://www.culturalpolicy.arts.gla.ac.uk/conference/Archer_J.htm)>.

<sup>21</sup> *Screen Finance* 25 May 2000: 7.

<sup>22</sup> Angus Finney, *Developing Feature Films in Europe: A Practical Guide* (London: Routledge, 1996) 26-27.

<sup>23</sup> BFI's film policy during the 1980s to 1990s is discussed in an interview with Colin MacCabe, who had acted as the Head of Research of the BFI from 1989 to 1998, in John Caughie, and Simon Frith, "The Film Institute and the Rising Tide: An Interview with Colin MacCabe," *Screen* 41.1(2000): 51-66.

<sup>24</sup> Jane Giles, "BFI Films: A Remit for Cultural Diversity," *Vertigo* 8 (1998): 51-53. Also See *Screen Finance* 13 Nov. 1997: 3.

<sup>25</sup> *Screen Finance* 6 Aug. 1998: 4-7.

<sup>26</sup> The chairman of the council, Alan Parker, announced a number of initiative projects: First, the council would allocate £55 million worth of lottery funding, taking over from the Arts Council of England, and projects would be selected by an individual with creative control over the fund so as to avoid the committee decision-making process of the ACE. Second, the council would allocate an annual £16 million to the BFI, £15 million to film franchises, and between £150,000 and £1 million to the British Film Commission. Third, the council would allocate £5 million worth of the Development Fund to support "high quality innovative and commercially attractive screenplays" for a slate of projects. Fourth, the council would allocate £10 million of the Premiere Production Fund for high-profile films, aiming at 8-10 films a year with a minimum of £1 million per project. Fifth, the council would allocate £5 million to the New Cinema Fund to develop new talent working outside the mainstream, taking over £1.2 million

of the BFI Production Fund. Sixth, the council would allocate £1 million a year over a three-year period for training purposes. (Details from *Screen Finance* 11 May 2000: 1-3).

<sup>27</sup> For an interview with its chief executive John Woodward, see Louise Bateman, "The New Gatekeeper," *Pact Magazine* May 2000:12-14.

<sup>28</sup> This is due to that British Screen's chief executive Simon Perry was expected to leave the body because of his disagreement with the Film Council's attitude towards European partnership. (See *Screen Finance* 11 May 2000: 3). In addition, I would argue that this speculation come from the fact that Alan Parker had been well-known for his "populist approach" towards filmmaking and his partnership with American companies through his directing career in the USA. See his interview, which took place before his appointment as chairman of BFI in 1998, Nick James, "The Thoughts of Chairman Alan," *Sight and Sound* 7.11 (1997): 10-12. Also see *Screen International* 23 Jan. 1998: 2.

<sup>29</sup> *Screen Finance* 12 Nov. 1998: 4-5.

<sup>30</sup> Peter Todd, "The British Film Industry in the 1990s," *British Cinema of the 90s*, ed. Robert Murphy (London: BFI, 2000) 20.

<sup>31</sup> The first film which Channel Four International dealt with was *The Madness of King George* (Nicholas Hytner, 1994). The company sold the distribution right of the film to Samuel Goldwyn Company. For more details about this deal, see *Screen Finance* 11 Jan. 1995: 3.

<sup>32</sup> My use of the term "independent" here derives from Susan Picken, "Digital Futures: Independents' Day," *Vertigo* 9 (1999): 19-20. According to Picken, being independent implies the channel's position as an independent private broadcaster as opposed to pre-existing broadcasters such as the BBC; as can be seen from the films backed by the channel, aspiring to produce more cutting-edge and innovative films such as Derek Jarman's work or *Shallow Grave* and *Trainspotting*.

<sup>33</sup> William Raban argues that in contrast to its activity in the 1980s, Channel 4 deposed its commitment to experimental and innovative films during the 1990s. Raban notes, for instance, that "the long standing commitment of the Independent Film & Video Department at Channel 4 to promote diversity of aesthetic form now seems to be in serious doubt. Following the change to 24hour broadcasting, Channel 4 displayed an increasing tendency to ghettoise expanded work into the dark zones of post-midnight transmission." ("Expanded Practice in Television: Defending the Right to Difference," *Vertigo* 8 (1998): 42-44).

<sup>34</sup> Many have referred to the tendency of the UK industry in the 1990s as a mini-studio in the sense that the industry attempted to establish a Hollywood-style studio system. Film Four Ltd. is clearly a case in point.

<sup>35</sup> British Screen signed a £6 million output deal with BSkyB in February 1994. In this three-year deal, BSkyB had the pay-television rights to at least 30 films backed by British Screen. This deal encouraged Channel 4, which was the biggest shareholder of British Screen, to turn their back on British Screen. The channel called this deal "an insult." (*Screen Finance* 23 Feb. 1994: 9).

<sup>36</sup> *Screen Finance* 19 Feb. 1998: 8.

<sup>37</sup> John Hill, "British Television and Film: The Making of a Relationship," *Big Picture, Small Screen: The Relationship Between Film and Television*, ed. John Hill and Martin McLoone (Luton: U of Luton P, 1996) 169.

<sup>38</sup> *Screen Finance* 4 Mar. 1999: 10.

<sup>39</sup> In terms of critical preference in funding projects, it is clear that BBC also had become more concerned about the commercial potential of projects, being encouraged by Channel 4's success. In 1992, an executive in the BBC film funding panel, Alan Howden noted that: "at the BBC, we're talking about films that are pitched more into the mainstream category of entertainment ... Our belief is that it's worth developing films with good commercial possibilities." (James Saynor, "Writers' Television," *Sight and Sound*, 2.7 (1992): 31).

<sup>40</sup> *Screen Finance* 5 Mar. 1998: 4.

<sup>41</sup> Finney 52-53.

<sup>42</sup> *Mrs Brown* was produced by BBC Scotland in 1996 for a total of £2 million as an exclusive television project, then the film was converted into a theatrical release by Miramax Films for a USA release. Consequently, Judi Dench was nominated for a Best Actress Academy Award at the Oscars.

<sup>43</sup> *Screen Finance* 2 Apr. 1998: 11.

<sup>44</sup> Granada Television had persuaded the ITV Network to initiate feature filmmaking since 1993. Among ITV companies, Granada has shown the most serious commitment in feature filmmaking since its first film production, *The Field* (Jim Seridan, 1990). Granada was also involved in the production of *Jack and Sarah* (Tim Sullivan, 1995) and *August* (Anthony Hopkins, 1995). (Finney 56).



<sup>45</sup> Bertrand Moullier, "Sky's the Limit," *Pact Magazine* July 2000: 22-23.

<sup>46</sup> Despite various financial structures, the main financial deal in co-production can be summarised into "House Keeping or First Look" and "Output" deals. With Housekeeping deals, "the end-user distributors provide overheads and invest development money and, as a result, they have an exclusive right to be the first distributor to acquire that product. The deal usually has a finite period (normally 1-3 years) and a predetermined range of money, and the distributor often has control over which projects are or are not produced. In Output deal, the distributor agrees a calculated percentage of the budget for a certain distribution in a certain territory, and also is obliged to take the deal on the fixed commercial arrangement such as marketing." (Finney 63).

<sup>47</sup> Moullier 23.

<sup>48</sup> For instance, Helen Blair and Al Rainnie have argued that the Hollywood major's involvement in the UK film industry has long been a key strategy in order to gain control over their exhibition. See "Flexible Films?" *Media, Culture & Society* 22.2 (2000): 187-204.

<sup>49</sup> At the beginning of the 1990s, six leading producers and directors - Stephen Frears, David Ross, Tim Bevan, John Schlesinger, Stephen Woolley and Lynda Myles - discussed the forthcoming shifts in the UK film industry in the following decade. They argued in light of funding sources that the UK film industry would have a stronger relationship with European funding sources and with broadcasters. ("British Film-Where Now?" *BFI Film and Television Handbook 1990*, ed. David Leafe (London: BFI, 1989) 24-32). As has been demonstrated, the broadcasters' involvement in British filmmaking seems to have become increasingly stronger relationship during the period. However, I would suggest that European co-production did not appear as effective as assumed in the above article.

<sup>50</sup> Angus Finney, *The State of European Cinema: A New Dose of Reality* (London: Cassell, 1996) 92.

<sup>51</sup> By 1995 fifty-five feature films and documentaries had benefited from Eurimage, including *Land and Freedom* (Ken Loach, 1995), *The Pillow Book* (Peter Greenaway, 1996) and *The Fifth Province* (Frank Stapleton, 1997).

<sup>52</sup> *Screen Finance* 1 Oct. 1997: 8+.

For instance, international co-production, excluding US investment, was 27.3% of the whole of UK production in the first nine months of 1997 and it went down to 14.8% in 1998. (*Screen Finance* 1 Oct 1998: 11).

<sup>53</sup> I would argue that distribution deals do not simply indicate the actual number of films in cinemas. What European partners could not provide was an integrated system to enable "critical mass," such as press coverage and effective marketing. For instance, The European Film Academy organised a workshop for European filmmakers entitled 'No Motion Without Promotion: Marketing for Filmmakers' at Rotterdam in 2 February 1997. This indicates that European bodies were aware of the lack of marketing support for European films. Angus Finney argues that the European film industry needs to "improve the way in which it is 'published' and 'commercialized.' ... producers need to operate more like 'labels' - co-ordinating their marketing and distribution strategies, and developing vertical integration in exhibition, distribution and production." In contrast, American studio-owned distributors could provide systemised strategies to expose films in the market place, which, arguably, was a key reason why UK producers began to search for American partnerships. (Finney, *The State of European Cinema* 71-72). In addition to the lack of distribution deals, European co-productions have several fundamental problems. Finney notes that there is a risk of additional costs due to different languages, tax schemes and currency exchange rates; and a risk of additional requirements such as stars, crews, and casts from each country involved in the project. (Finney, *The State of European Cinema* 98).

<sup>54</sup> For further discussion about, for instance, Eurimage's distribution support, see Dina Iordanova, "Feature Filmmaking Within the New Europe: Moving Funds and Images Across the East-West Divide," *Media, Culture and Society* 24.4 (2002): 517-36.

<sup>55</sup> Eddie Dyja, ed., *BFI Film and Television Handbook 2000* (London: BFI, 1999) 22-23.

<sup>56</sup> *Screen Finance* 1 May 1997: 8-11.

<sup>57</sup> For discussion about UK independent distributors, see Patricia Dobson, "Never a Sure Thing," *Sight and Sound* 7.9 (1997): 22-26.

Having acknowledged the difficulty of independent distributors, Steve McIntyre argues that lottery funding should also be used to promote independent cinemas to allow small low-budget British films to be exhibited, in his article, "The Lottery: Where Will All the Money Go?" *Vertigo* 7 (1997): 3-7. Chris Chandler argues that there is a need to support local art-house cinemas in order to encourage British independent films and foreign-language films access to their audiences, in his article "Beyond the London

Thing," *Vertigo* 7 (1997): 58-59. For information about regional art-houses, see Nick James, "Days of Independence," *Sight and Sound* 3. 6 (1993): 34-39.

<sup>58</sup> PFE is referred to as US finance in spite of its Europe-based nature.

<sup>59</sup> John Hill, "Cinema," *The Media in Britain: Current Debates and Developments*, ed. Jane Stroke and Anna Reading (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999) 84.

<sup>60</sup> The titles of films backed by PFF during 1995 to 1996 include *Trainspotting*, *The Pillow Book*, *Dead Man Walking* (Tim Robbins, 1995), *A Life Less Ordinary* (Danny Boyle, 1997), *The Borrowers* (Peter Hewitt, 1997), *Mr. Bean* (Mel Smith, 1997), *Photographing Fairies* (Nick Willing, 1997), *The Matchmakers* (Mark Joffe, 1997) and *Wilde*.

<sup>61</sup> *Screen Finance* 12 June 1997: 7.

<sup>62</sup> For further details, see *Screen Finance* 29 Oct. 1998: 3-4.

<sup>63</sup> "From Studio to Screen: The Major's Integrated Strategy," *Screen Digest* Feb. 1998: 34.

Michael Kuhn, then president of PolyGram Filmed Entertainment, also clarifies this view. Kuhn notes that "the reason one does local production, for example, is because if you have French language movies in France, you have a much better chance of selling all your films to Canal Plus and TFI and getting good screens in the Gaumont theatres, and so on, than if you don't." (Finney, *The State of European Cinema* 89).

<sup>64</sup> *Screen Finance* 8 June 2000: 6.

<sup>65</sup> See *Screen Finance* 11 June 1998: 11.

<sup>66</sup> *Screen Finance* 28 Oct. 1999: 9+.

<sup>67</sup> Ian Christie, "As Others See Us: British Film-making and Europe in the 90s," Murphy 73.

<sup>68</sup> Film Policy Review Group suggested that, thus, the UK industry should attempt to establish the US model of "distribution-led integrated structure." For doing so, the Group emphasises the importance of efficient promotion and creating the vertical structure of production-distribution-marketing for British cinema. (Film Policy Review Group 14). In response to the Group's proposal, Gill Henderson argues that this types of distribution-led system would encourage only commercially-driven and mainstream UK films and neglect "specialised" independent British and foreign-language films. (See "Instead of Dreaming of New Ideas," *Vertigo* 8 (1998): 46-47).

<sup>69</sup> Despite this, I would argue that there is still development and exhibition funds available for non-mainstream films from various funding sources such as regional art councils, the BFI and Channel 4 which has helped such films to reach a limited number of audiences through exhibition in such venues as local art-house cinemas.

<sup>70</sup> Hill, "Cinema" 86.

<sup>71</sup> See "End of an Era," *Guardian* 12 July 2002, Friday review: 2-4.

<sup>72</sup> Imogen Edward-Jones, "Notching up Blockbusters," *Times* 14 June 1999: 21.

#### Chapter 4. Selling Popular British Cinema as an Identifiable Entity

As argued in the previous chapter, the extended importance of the distribution sector in the UK film industry led to a need for the organised marketing of British cinema. In August 1999, Alan Parker was announced as the new chairman of the Film Council, resigning his former position as chairman of the British Film Institute. In his new capacity, Parker announced that "the Film Council will make changes to create a coherent strategy for production, distribution, inward investment and education."

*Marketing Week* argued that Parker's emphasis on "a coherent strategy" meant that there was an increased need to channel marketing and distribution for British cinema in the market place.<sup>1</sup> Mia Bays, distribution and marketing manager of the Film Consortium, notes that "we lean heavily on PR, and have to be cleverer in our marketing. But we also need to take more of a maverick's attitude." This indicates the increased interest in the promotion of British cinema during the 1990s. Thus, I would suggest that while the UK film industry had become strongly commercially driven during the course of the 1990s, its marketing<sup>2</sup> would come to create the "popular" notion of British cinema in the home and international markets, in order to maximise British cinema's commercial potential. Furthermore, I argue that social art cinema was promoted as a national cinema with the notion of "popular cinema" being incorporated into this, in contrast to the niche appeal of the genre during the previous decade.

The promotional activity around 90s' British cinema is associated with diversifying the image of British cinema. After the election of the new Labour government, Chris Smith, the Secretary of Culture, Sports and Heritage claimed that the government would "bring democracy to culture."<sup>3</sup> This governmental emphasis on the

diversification of cultural practice appeared in the form of financial input to the UK film industry, as has been demonstrated in the previous chapter. In addition to financial support to UK film production, the labour government's policy of support to diverse cultural practice suggested a need to re-interpret "Britishness" at the time of a new political period, and cultural industries came to play a part in establishing "rebranded Britain."<sup>4</sup> This implies that the social and political figurations of Britishness were converted into cultural terms. As a result, British film production of the 1990s showed "a recognisable but diverse set of characteristics" of Britishness under these social and cultural circumstances<sup>5</sup> and this diversity led marketing to enlarge the idea of British cinema in relation to the notion of both the national and the popular.

In addition to these socio-political changes, circumstances around exhibition also influenced the ways in which British cinema was promoted. In terms of exhibition revenue, the prominent changes were an increase in the number of screens and multi-faceted revenue. With the involvement of distributors into the film industry, there were further opportunities for British films to receive nationwide release and overseas exhibition in the 1990s. Considering the expansion of multiplex cinemas in the UK, broader exhibition implied that British cinema should be specialised in order to distinguish itself, in particular, from the Hollywood blockbuster.<sup>6</sup> Geoff Smith claims that the increase in multiplexes has restricted the exhibition of British cinema because multiplexes largely operate through the exhibition of mainstream films and British cinema was seen not to have an over-abundance of marketable elements.<sup>7</sup> However, Smith's view is concerned only with the actual number of British films in exhibition and neglects the competition with Hollywood which enabled British cinema to be specialised in the market place through marketing. In this respect, I would argue that the

expansion of revenue through USA major-owned multiplexes required British cinema to be promoted as a "particular" product at the level of marketing rather than being a marginalised one. Then senior vice president of marketing for Fox Searchlight, Valerie Van Geldar, acknowledged before the release of *Waking Ned Devine* (Kirk Jones, 1998), that the film has "no marketing elements" - in other words, "no big stars or high concept." In addition, Van Geldar argues that "what to do [with such a film as *Waking Ned Devine*] is [to] put the movie out and it serves as its own best advertising vehicle."<sup>8</sup> Expanding this to social art cinema in general, Van Geldar's view indicates, unlike Smith's view, that British cinema was driven to "assertive" marketing.

More importantly, due to multi-faceted revenue in the 1990s, marketing became increasingly diversified and complicated at the different stages of release. J.P. Telotte notes that "in an era, that has become practically defined not only [through] the effects of 'mass media' but by the interweaving of many media, films today seldom really stand alone. Each new release operates ... within a complex web of information."<sup>9</sup> Therefore, as Telotte argues, marketing became "[an] establishing of context" which primarily denotes "the story of the film" to attract distributors to see and buy it, and more broadly, "designed to condition our viewing or 'reading' of it, even to determine the sort of pleasures we might derive from it."<sup>10</sup> Telotte's concept of building a "context" around the film can be understood in terms of the fact that, in the present climate, films are promoted in multi-dimensional ways to produce a wide range of discourses around the film, rather than a singular form of discourse. A similar perspective can be found in Barbara Klinger's notion of the commodification of films through marketing. Klinger notes that "the goal of promotion is to produce multiple avenues of access to the text that will make the film resonate as extensively as possible in the social sphere."<sup>11</sup>

In her study of the commodification of film through promotional activity, Klinger asserts that promotional activities reflect and, as a result, produce "digressive" social discourses when the commercial value of a film is elaborated through promotion:

The circulation of film as a commodity, therefore, engenders its fetishization into a series of specialized features which will establish its exchange-value, but also guarantees its extension into the social sphere through the signifying activities of the promotional network to its commodification.<sup>12</sup>

While promotional activity aims to maximise the commerciality of a film, it tends to be integrated into the social sphere, so as to attract as large an audience as possible.<sup>13</sup> To achieve commercial success for a film, the film industry brings "consumable identity"<sup>14</sup> to a film through promotional activity. Here, a consumable identity makes a meaning or meanings for a film through reception. Celia Lury argues that, on account of Jean Baudrillard's notion of signification,<sup>15</sup> consumer culture in modern society is based less on the exchange value of goods and more on the sign value of them. In other words, every type of goods, including cultural products, creates an identity(ies) for a commodity.<sup>16</sup> In this respect, promotional activity reflects what meaning the film industry attempts to produce around a film and thus shows what kind of cultural sphere is elaborated through it. In the process of commodification, however, promotional activity not only establishes new cultural spheres, but also collaborates with existing cultural and social spheres of the time. Thus, looking at promotional activity gives an indication of what social and cultural spheres the film collaborates with, and what cultural spheres are produced through it.

Therefore, Klinger's notion of "digressive discourse" explains that through the process of building a consumable identity through marketing, films become

transformable and transferable objects. Klinger's view stems from the idea that the reception of a text is determined by different types of information from various promotional activities. As a result, reception creates either a strongly appealing selling point or a meditated selling point based on all resources.

This approach seems to counterweigh the idea that films are determined texts at the stage of reception, an idea that can be found in Justin Wyatt's notion of high concept marketing. Wyatt refers to a dominant marketing trend within the film industry as "high concept." According to Wyatt, high concept operates to "summarise" the product "in a single sentence"<sup>17</sup> in order to "sell the film through the concept."<sup>18</sup> As Wyatt goes on to note, "high concept functions as a form of differentiated product primarily through two routes: through an integration with marketing and merchandising and through an emphasis on style."<sup>19</sup> What Wyatt's notion of high concept suggests is that the film constructs "a single image" which establishes a cohesive meaning and thus attracts as large audience as possible.<sup>20</sup> "A single image" does not mean that a film is technically marketed through a singular discourse, but implies that a number of discourses are established and then "integrated" into a solid notion about what the film is about. More importantly, Wyatt suggests that the meaning of a film is created through marketing prior to its release. While he examines the historical development of the form of high concept marketing considering aesthetic, institutional and economic factors within the film industry, Wyatt notes that the key point of high concept marketing is establishing a singular discourse around the film. Despite the fact that Wyatt's high concept is based on promotions around Hollywood-mainstream films, this can apply to marketing in general in the sense that marketing aims to create the particularity of a product and distinguish it from other products in order to maximise marketability.

However, Wyatt appears to argue that the reception of a film is primarily conducted by the producer. In other words, Wyatt claims that what marketing attempts to deliver about the film is what the audience perceives about the film. Even though he discusses the relationship between consumer culture and marketing, Wyatt positions consumers as a passive mass, and the producer (of marketing) as a dominant force in reception. As Janet Staiger notes, marketing is "not informative" but "manipulative" in the sense that it carries "desires and fantasies of pleasure" that the consumer is believed to experience through the product.<sup>21</sup> However, Staiger also notes that "as with any other instance of a culturally produced discourse, an advertising representation can be ignored, rejected, distorted, or incorporated by the consumer."<sup>22</sup> Therefore, as Staiger goes on to argue, "the reception of advertising is not guaranteed by its production."<sup>23</sup> This consumer-led approach is based on changed perspectives to consumer culture. As Celia Lury argues:

Consumption was understood to be a thoughtless, trivial, or passive activity in which the author-derived criteria for valuing artworks - including originality and individual genius - were lost; through the association of the meaning with this negative conception of consumption, the objects of popular culture were excluded from the preferred movements of authentication. ... it is important to remember that the art-culture system is itself a contested field, and not all individuals or social groups have historically had the same relationship to either high or popular culture. ... the development of consumer culture cannot established without considering how they interact with historical developments in other kinds of production and con[sumption].<sup>24</sup>



This suggests that consumer culture is related to the interaction between individuals and social meanings, which are derived from marketing. Also, as marketing takes place in a number of different stages around the release of the product, this interaction can appear in different formations. Thus, as Klinger argues:

The success of commodification relies on a personalization or privatization of what are originally public discourses; the further a text can be extended into the social and individual realm by promotional discourses, the better its commercial destiny. ... The intense intertextual environment of mass culture, then, is not simply a context full of free-floating signifiers that can be operated by members of society as they will; mass culture also embodies a series of ideological procedures accompanying textual production that bear significantly on reception - procedures marked in this particular case by the digressing spectator.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, looking at promotional strategies helps to achieve an understanding about the ways in which British cinema has conceptualised itself, and how the specific genre of social art cinema was circulated as national cinema in the context of the 1990s.

### **Generic Identification**

As one of a number of common promotional activities, emphasis on generic identification was commonly used for the promotion of 90s' British cinema. Using generic identification in promotion can be understood as an attempt to establish popular forms of filmmaking. This allowed for a conversion of the niche market appeal of social art cinema in the 80s into the mass appeal of social art cinema in the 90s. Even though the social art cinema of the 80s deployed generic conventions of popular filmmaking

such as crime, horror and science fiction, it also exploited art cinema traditions such as avant-garde and non-narrative experimental film, as well as the documentary tradition.<sup>26</sup> In doing so, social art cinema established a niche market for itself, especially through TV screenings. However, the TV screening of films became a part of mass appeal in the 90s, since film screenings took a larger part in the commissioning of Hollywood blockbuster films as well as British cinema, as a result of more competition with satellite, cable and pay-per-view TV as well as the video and DVD market. Under these circumstances, the generic elements in some forms of social art cinema were used to promote their textual nature. Using generic identification in marketing is not a new phenomenon. As genre contains a certain expectation about a film, generic affiliation can be used to deliver the characteristic of the product. As Rick Altman argues, genre is not used to deliver "a quality of texts" but to build a "name-brand" for a specific film.<sup>27</sup> Altman notes, by name-brand, that generic affiliation is a means to bring "not a value of material products, but the value of the term itself."<sup>28</sup>

One can find, for instance, on the poster of *The Full Monty* (Peter Cattaneo, 1997), the phrase "the year's most revealing comedy,"<sup>29</sup> and on one of *Little Voice* (Mark Herman, 1998), "a comedy that breaks the records."<sup>30</sup> Along with emphasis on the genre (comedy), one can find the use of primary colours in these posters. The poster of *Little Voice* is filled with black and purple on the background, while the poster of *The Full Monty* shows a strong contrast between a yellow background and red titles, which occupies one third of the poster. Neither of these posters emphasise stars from the film. (See Appendix, Fig. 2 and 3).<sup>31</sup> Rather, they emphasise genre and the colours play a dominant factor in conveying the brightness and humour of the generic category. As a further example, the poster for *Divorcing Jack* (David Caffrey, 1998) also has a strong

red colour as a background with characters being featured in comic poses, which implies the generic identification of the film as comedy. (See Appendix, Fig. 5).<sup>32</sup> Of course, comedy is not the only genre whose meanings are conveyed and fixed through promotional activities. For instance, on the poster for *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (Guy Ritchie, 1998) emphasis is placed on the figure of Vinnie Jones, who is shown in the foreground of the poster with two crossed long guns on his shoulders, while behind Jones, there are two other characters - two of the five lads, the butcher played by Dexter Fletcher and Eddie by Nick Moran - displayed in comparatively small size. (See Appendix, Fig. 6).<sup>33</sup> The emphasis on Jones can be justified through his persona as a notorious footballer, especially in the home market, through an association with another popular form - football. In addition to displaying two long guns, Vinnie Jones' reputation as a "bad boy" (he is known for violent behaviour in the pitch) conveys the generic identification of the film, gangster.

However, generic identification through promotional activity is not as straightforward as the above examples might suggest. In some cases, the genre of the film is (re)organised through promotional activity. When looking at the advertisement of *Elizabeth* (Shekhar Kapur, 1998), more emphasis is placed on the film as a tragic thriller rather than as a heritage film. The picture displays the faces of the four main characters with the subtitles of "heretic, lover, traitor and assassin" ascribed to each of them respectively. (See Appendix, Fig. 7).<sup>34</sup> This suggests that the success of *Elizabeth* is reliant on "the initial positioning of the film as a thriller about intrigue, treachery and skulduggery rather than a historical costume epic."<sup>35</sup>

Like *Elizabeth*, *The Wings of the Dove* (Iain Softley, 1997) takes a similar approach in its promotion. With Helena Boham-Carter, who is widely recognised as a

heritage film actress being foregrounded, the film creates an apparent referential link to the heritage film.<sup>36</sup> However, in addition to this, the promotion of the film tends to produce further discourses. The taglines for the film was "a couple with everything but money. An heiress with everything but love. A temptation no one could resist."<sup>37</sup> This seems to promote *The Wings of the Dove* as a romantic-thriller (which is located in the past). Thus, both films are promoted to appear as genre films (romantic thrillers) while their identification as heritage films is still indicated. What this suggests is that the promotional activities of both films tend to expand - or digress in Klinger's terms - discourses around the films and as a result this leads to further commodification, as Klinger argues.

However, the re-organising of generic identification is not something that only occurs with the heritage film. Like *Elizabeth, Brassed Off* (Mark Herman, 1996), a box-office success in the 90s both at home and in the international market, is promoted as a youth romance, despite the film's strong elements of social realism. The film was given the tagline "Fed up with the system. Ticked off at the establishment. And mad about ... each other."<sup>38</sup> On the video cover (the same as the main poster), the film's two principle characters are emphasised as in love with big smiles on a pink background. (See Appendix, Fig. 8). Considering political ramifications of the film, the happy-go-lucky type of romance suggested by the poster seems inappropriate, but it creates an expectation about the importance of the romance narrative for the film. Thus, the promotion of the film tends to map "a narrative image" of youth romance onto the film before the film is seen by audiences. As Duncan Petrie argues:

The idea of the 'narrative image' can be applied both in a literal sense: a poster design or logo, or in a broader sense encompassing the key

marketable features of a project which will be concentrated on during the campaign and hopefully implanted in the mind of the potential audience.<sup>39</sup>

Using generic identification is a simple way to establish a "narrative image." Narrative image is an institutionalised and materialised framework which brings an expectation and curiosity to the film. On one hand, it should be specific in order to make a solid form of narration (or a solid form of expectation of the story line of the film). On the other hand, it should contain "scrambled meanings," in order to create "as wide as possible a range of curiosities without losing the specificity of the film."<sup>40</sup>

In this respect, either using one straightforward generic identification, as can be seen in the case of *The Full Monty*, or a more complex identification with a number of genres, as can be seen in the case of *Elizabeth*, is an attempt to build a solid commercial foundation for the film through the prior circulation of a narrative image. In doing so, as John Ellis notes, narrative image "confines itself to known and safe ideological trends in society" and film culture of the time.<sup>41</sup> However, since Ellis is mainly concerned with publicity around theatrical exhibition, there is a need to expand this notion of "narrative image" to the scope of promotion through new technologies and different stages of marketing at different moments of release.

Therefore, I would argue that considering various revenues for marketing, constructing a narrative image should be understood more broadly as an "establishing context" for the film, in J.P. Telotte's words, as well as simply providing narrational information. Narrational information is still a valid means in marketing, but there are also a number of other forms of information which play a part in establishing the context for a film. Even after the film's theatrical release, additional information is provided as a part of promotion through such avenues as the web.<sup>42</sup> For instance, in

response to the claims that the Sheffield slang might make it difficult for audiences to understand *The Full Monty*, the marketing team distributed publicity that included "a glossary of English terms [actually, "Sheffield" terms]." David Dinerstein, then senior vice president of marketing for Fox Searchlight, argued that "I don't think it is any harder to understand what's going on than it was in *Secret & Lies*."<sup>43</sup> In addition to this publicity, the marketing team designed a dictionary for the English slang used in the film on its official website. When looking at the official website for *The Full Monty*, it is apparent that the whole site is designed in the form of a dictionary where visitors can get a literal explanation about slang when double-clicking each word, for instance, clock, quid, chuffin and full monty. In the quiz section, visitors can test their knowledge about Sheffield dialect such as: A benny is a) the name of some 458,000 unfortunate people b) a pill taken to help you go to sleep c) a sudden outburst of temper.<sup>44</sup> As Dinerstein notes, in one sense, this could be a way to give pre-information in order to make audience understand this slang. In addition, the whole website is designed for "fun" play, and allows interaction with the film in order to encourage visitors to see the film.

### **Image alone: Image without Information**

Apart from using generic identification, one can find another promotional strategy for social art cinema: image without information. This type of image making is related to the increased importance of "style" in consumer culture. As Stuart Ewan argues, "style has become part of the common vernacular of self-expression and perception" in consumption.<sup>45</sup> A prominent example, in this case, is *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1996). In the trailer and poster, *Trainspotting* is aimed at character-based promotion.

The characters: Begbie, Diane, Sick Boy, Spud and Renton are introduced with their names. (See Appendix, Fig. 9). In the poster which is designed in the style of a train ticket,<sup>46</sup> each one is posed under a harsh numbered name - #1 Begbie # 2 Diane #3 Sick Boy #4 Spud #5 Renton, with their pose conveying a sense of "attitude" in Wyatt's words.<sup>47</sup> The reason that the film uses character-based promotion is initially not so much related to "attitude." Rather, the character-based theme is to underplay a potential disadvantage, which might occur due to the popularity of the original novel. David Coultas, trailer producer and director of Creative Partnership, noted that "people would know about Irvine Welsh,<sup>48</sup> would know what kind of story it would be, would know there would be drugs in it and that it would be pretty 'full-on'. ... So what we had to do was counteract that with a trailer that was character-based. It introduced the characters as people you understood and it didn't mention drugs at all."<sup>49</sup> Indeed, this simple tactic turned out to be effective in constructing the image of the film.

This type of image-making marketing was possible, to an extent, because the film's target audience were 16 to 24-year-olds, who became the main cinema audience during the 1990s. As Adam Minns argues, "with both production and admission levels rising, a host of UK titles are aiming to ride the 'cool Britannia' wave by appealing to younger audiences' increasing interest in cinema-going."<sup>50</sup> Thus, the character-based promotion was integrated into and introduced the "attitude" of youth culture in the 90s and attached the notion of "Cool Britannia."<sup>51</sup> As Karen Lury notes, "as a commodity which critiques but also takes part in a culture increasingly defined by the character and power of brand, the film engineers an ambivalence which resonates with the particular qualities of British youth in the 1990s."<sup>52</sup> The success of *Trainspotting* influenced a number of films to relate to this success including such films as *Twin Town* (Kevin

Allen, 1997) and *Velvet Goldmine* (Todd Haynes, 1998). *Velvet Goldmine's* marketing strategy was named "Trainspotting-in-style" and a poster was designed to "emphasise the film's subtly-stylised look." As Collin Hankins, marketing director for the film, notes, even though the film adopted the image of "millennium glam" to distinguish it from the "grunged-out style" of *Trainspotting*, what the marketing has in common with *Trainspotting* is that "both are promoted as a look."<sup>53</sup> Thus, as Claire Monk argues, these films "transformed underclass material into an appealing, profitable, and exportable commodity."<sup>54</sup>

This kind of image-making promotion is an effective choice for small-budget films which do not have recognisable stars, like *Trainspotting* and *Human Traffic* (Justin Kerrigan, 1999),<sup>55</sup> and relies on making the film a "must-see" film through "word of mouth" effects.<sup>56</sup> *Trainspotting* used a special teaser trailer, which was shot by the film's director, Danny Boyle, and was financed by the distributor, PolyGram, several months in advance of the film's release.<sup>57</sup> The teaser trailer featured Renton being tied to railway tracks with no footage or lines from the film being used. This teaser delivers a powerful and striking visual image rather than telling the actual story of the film, and it played a part in the film's image-making. Thus, Wyatt suggests that the promotion of *Trainspotting* is an operation with "controversy, barbed nihilism and pop glamour" with "the mantra" that says "Choose life. Choose a job. Choose a starter home. Choose dental insurance, leisurewear and matching luggage. Choose your future. But why would anyone want to do a thing like that?"<sup>58</sup> With its "why would you" question, the illustration of style (controversial glamour) through strong images tells audiences "what they should choose." The manner of the "why would you" question encourages its target audience to identify with the glamorous image projected and eventually to choose to see



the film. Since the target audience of the film was the young and the core marketing strategy was to appeal to youth culture, the image-oriented promotion made *Trainspotting* a must-see "cult" movie even before its arrival on screen.

Thus, when depending on word-of-mouth effects, such promotional strategies tend to produce powerful visual images around a film. Perhaps as a result of this, a new advertisement outlet emerged in the UK - bus shelter advertisements - as a new venue to promote films. *Screen International* reported, in its 12 July 1996 issue, that film and video marketers in the UK were increasingly using bus shelter advertisements to promote their products. According to the reporter, Mike Goodridge, the bus shelter advertisement is an efficient venue for promotion because it is active during night-time as well as the daytime since it is backlit even at night. It can also display a group of different images related to a film since the number of venues is enough to produce a variety of images around a film. In addition to these attractions, it is worth noting that a survey indicated that 15-24 year-olds regard the bus shelter advertisement as a medium for them.<sup>59</sup> This implies that the bus shelter advertisement is useful for the promotion of youth or youth-oriented films and can provide strong and powerful images to attract the attention of target audiences. Thus, for *Trainspotting*, this emerging venue was an ideal one to be included in its promotional activities due to its youth appeal and ability to highlight striking images. PolyGram UK displayed different posters featuring each character from the film through bus shelters nation-wide.

While strong images were being utilised to construct "the context" of the film, *Trainspotting* also made "a natural and inevitable brand extension to the film"<sup>60</sup> through the packaging of the original book, posters, press advertisements, the soundtrack CD, trailers and the film. Like *Trainspotting*, the soundtrack CD played a part in *Human*

*Traffic*'s promotion before its cinema release. The record publishers Metrodome and London Records distributed hundreds of leaflets to major clubs across the country.<sup>61</sup> Another example would be the promotion of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* and *Divorcing Jack*. After its success at cinemas, *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* was sold for £1 million for a spin-off TV series. In the case of *Divorcing Jack*, HarperCollins, publishers of the original novel, began a promotion campaign with the writer, Colin Bateman being used in a number of TV and radio interviews on the film's theatrical release. As Duncan Petrie points out, "literary adaptation is a significant phenomenon" in British cinema,<sup>62</sup> and what is interesting about this relationship between literature and film, in this case, is that this traditional association became a strong element in product tie-ins.

This type of brand extension can be, in some cases, dependent upon more specific images such as directors and producers. As noted before, it is difficult for social art cinema of the 1990s to rely on the promotion of star images due to lack of well-recognised or marketable stars, in spite of a few exceptions. Instead, one can find cases in which the director plays a role as a brand name. There are a few recognisable British "name" directors such as Ken Loach, Mike Leigh, Guy Ritchie and Danny Boyle. For example, on the *Trainspotting* advertisement, it is emphasised that the film is directed by the director of *Shallow Grave* with the poster declaring that the film is "from the makers [director Danny Boyle, producer Andrew Macdonald and scriptwriter John Hodge] of *Shallow Grave*."<sup>63</sup> It is clear that the impact of Danny Boyle is made attractive through the success previously achieved with *Shallow Grave* (1994), although there is no actual mention of Danny Boyle's name.

It is not a recent trend to use the title of "auteur" for a commercial film. By the

time "auteur" became a significant critical term in the 1960s, it became more associated with a commercial status in the industry to clarify "promotional technology and production feats, dislocating" a text from mainstream films.<sup>64</sup> Through the influence of academic work in the 1950s and 1960s, "auteur" came to put emphasis on the authorship credentials of the (individual) artist as the source of the work and its unified conception. Yet, the commercial status of auteur has changed due to the changes in production and consumption. Auteur was, to some extent, a means to conceptualise foreign films for the American market, but this separation becomes blurred due to the demand and the increase of international co-productions, consequently, auteur is associated with "auteurist consumption from the auteurist film text."<sup>65</sup> Thus, the determinism of the term auteur is diminished and in doing so auteur gains a multi-dimensional connotation. In this sense, the multi-dimensional connotation allows the term "auteur" to be capable of building a star image. In other words, auteur becomes a specialised, marketable-concept without limiting a text to the terrain of the auteurist text.

As can be seen from the Danny Boyle example, his auteur-star position is based on the box-office success of his previous work, in other words, his potential for box-office success. This potential, which is demonstrated by *Shallow Grave*, made him "immediately"<sup>66</sup> appear to be a specialised auteur and Boyle became a brand which indicated what, in this case, his second feature, *Trainspotting* might be like. Thus, this status for Boyle could promote *Shallow Grave* as well as *Trainspotting*. For instance, a trailer for *Shallow Grave* was featured in the video version of *Trainspotting*. By the time the video was released, *Trainspotting* had gained box-office success and tie-in selling, such as T-shirts and posters, were successful. As a result, Boyle's image as an auteur was already established and could be used for the ancillary selling of *Shallow Grave*.

Boyle's brand image contributed to his film. Therefore, as Timothy Corrigan asserts, auteurist film is "defined by institutional and commercial agencies" such as production companies, distributors or promoters and identifies "a critical tautology [of auteur directors' works], capable of being understood and consumed without being seen."<sup>67</sup> The commercialisation of auteurs is distinctly dissociated from "a text of ideas, styles, or nuances of expression" unlike auteur films in the 1950s and 60s and associated with the "consumable identity" of a director.<sup>68</sup> This suggests that while 50 and 60s auteurist films were aimed at establishing a niche appeal through specialisation, contemporary auteurist films are aimed at a mass appeal through highlighting the star image of the director.

From this point of view, it is worth considering Guy Ritchie, in the sense that his auteur status as a celebrity figure is combined with his personal life and his potential for being a box-office hit director. Guy Ritchie came under the spotlight when his debut film, *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, smashed box-office records in the UK and US. The film's success helped him appear to be a cool-cinema kid-turned-successful film director, which is similar to Quentin Tarantino's image after his success with *Reservoir Dogs* (1992).<sup>69</sup> Thus, before his second film *Snatch* (2000) was released, there was a widely-felt expectation about the film and Ritchie became a key factor in its promotion. For instance, Ritchie and Vinnie Jones (who plays in *Snatch*) featured on the cover page of popular film magazine, *Total Film* before the films' nationwide release.<sup>70</sup> For Ritchie, however, the title of auteur is not the only element which stimulates public attention, and the fact that he is the husband of Madonna should also be taken into consideration. He is often pictured in *Heat*, the high-selling UK weekly celebrity magazine either with Madonna or on his own. As a result, although Ritchie is a British

director who has an identifiably personalised style, what made Ritchie a potential concept for marketing is his status as a celebrity figure as well as an auteur director. In contrast, Ritchie was often neglected by critics or reporters who called him "cool Madonna's English boyfriend," "the best British boyfriend of Madonna," "good looking middle-class Englishman with the cockney accent" or "Guy 'Mr Madonna' Ritchie."<sup>71</sup> This suggests that the auteur is not always a "critics-friendly" term as it was in the 50s and 60s, but becomes to a large extent a "marketing-friendly" term.

### **British Cinema as an Identifiable Entity**

In her study of the cultural implication of the national and the popular within European cinema, Nataša Ďurovičová argues that "the European cinemas' peculiar status is that they tend to hold a middle ground between these two mass media models - neither the official public discourse distributed from on high nor a rating-shaped textual air filler."<sup>72</sup> What Ďurovičová suggests is the long history of European cinemas' association with the notion of national cinema which signifies them as something non-Hollywood, or, more importantly, as opposed to Hollywood films. According to Ďurovičová, this stems from a peculiar dichotomy that Hollywood is equivalent to entertainment, that is, popular, and national cinema is something foreign, that is, art.<sup>73</sup> As a result of this, European cinema has taken up a specialised market as art cinema, meaning that it has an artistic formal quality and is therefore "authorial." Ďurovičová then goes on to argue that while American cinema became associated with the notion of the popular, European cinema has been combined with the notions of the national and popular simultaneously. As a result of this, Ďurovičová argues that European cinemas began to "provide the concept of 'popular' with a set of formal properties different from

simply those of a genre/generic cinema."<sup>74</sup> While Ďurovicřová's discussion is based on the academic reception of European cinema, I would believe that this remaking of the national and the popular operates through marketing as will be demonstrated through the marketing strategies of social art cinema.

In marketing, the notion of national cinema appears to foreground nationality and national identity at a fundamental level. These elements of national origin can be employed through language, local place and local events in the text. In terms of marketing, the national origin is defined in an even more obvious way; for instance, the term "British" can be found to be foregrounded in promoting social art cinema in the 1990s. In doing so, however, the implications that resulted from the foregrounding of British cinema appear to be discursive. I would argue that this is a result of the increase in international co-production and, thus, transnational trade. In 1998, Fox Searchlight's president Lindsay Law suggested that "quite often, a specialised movie will have many, many distributors ... and then it becomes impossible to do a coherent global-releasing scheme."<sup>75</sup> This suggests that marketing might have taken different approaches towards different revenues. For instance, *Wilde's* (Brian Gilbert, 1997) marketing team produced two different posters. The first one was mainly for UK circulation, and a second poster was then produced for wider release - presumably for overseas distribution. Noemi Rav, the head of marketing for Capitol Films, discussed how "the first campaign we designed had a strong classical feel. It is a lavish shot of Stephen [Fry] striding through groups of lawyers and stresses Wilde's great individuality." In comparison, the second poster "is hip and slightly younger, with a zebra skin pattern in the background. I thought it would work well in the territories where they don't want just another period drama."<sup>76</sup> (See Appendix, Fig. 10).

More importantly, this also suggests that the emphasis on "British" can be used differently according to various exhibition venues with the binary gravity of the national (cultural) and the popular (entertaining) being taken into account. When *Land Girls* (David Leland, 1998) was released in the UK and USA in 1998, it had different trailers for each market. Paul Davis of Intermedia Films, which co-ordinated the European trailer strategies for *Sliding Doors* (Peter Howitt, 1998), *Wild Man Blues* (Barbara Kopple, 1997) and *Land Girls* at the time, observed that "in America they're chasing the upscale art-house audience who would go to see films like *The Wings of the Dove*, whereas here [for the UK and European market] we're pitching it at a much younger audience and releasing it into multiplexes," and, as a result of this, "the US trailer emphasises nostalgia as a romantic backdrop to the film's love story, but here we're playing up the humour and positioning it as a film about the relationship between three friends."<sup>77</sup> Davis' comment implies that the "attractiveness" of British cinema is different, and slightly different narrative images were created for the film for the UK and overseas markets.

One can find the frequent emphasis on the term "British" in the promotion of social art cinema. In the advertisement for *This Year's Love* (David Kane, 1999), a quotation from the *Express on Sunday* is used with the phrase that the film is "a British comedy that could be the surprise hit of the year."<sup>78</sup> Meanwhile, the *Trainspotting* advertisement notes that "*Shallow Grave* was the best British film of last year, *Trainspotting* is the best British film of the decade."<sup>79</sup> *Wonderland* (Michael Winterbottom, 1999) uses a quote from *Time Out* on its advertisement which notes that "[the film] makes most new British cinema look downright frivolous,"<sup>80</sup> while *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* includes a phrase at the top of the advertisement, noting

that the film is "the year's best British movie..."<sup>81</sup> The emphasis on the term "British" in marketing is presumably not a new phenomenon of the 1990s. There has often been an emphasis on "British" or "the best of British" in the past. However, the connotations of "British" cinema in the 1990s can be different from the connotations in another era. For instance, if "British" may connote the idea of historical costume dramas represented by *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (Alexander Korda, 1933) in the 1930s, the term "British" may evoke a different discourse of Britishness related to the Oscar success of *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981) in the 80s.

In the video trailer for *Shallow Grave*, the main phrase informs us that "in the tradition of Hitchcock's classic comes a new British thriller that will make the master himself proud."<sup>82</sup> This reference to Hitchcock, the most internationally recognisable British director, lays claim to carry forward the legacy of British cinema. At the same time, considering the reputation of Hitchcock and his status as a popular film director in the public's perception, *Shallow Grave* is anticipated as being able to obtain the popular appeal of Hitchcock's films. Another means to associate with other forms of popular culture can be seen through the marketing of *Sense and Sensibility* (Ang Lee, 1995). *Screen International* reported that *Sense and Sensibility's* marketing aimed at "quoting critics from popular newspapers such as *The Daily Mail*, which linked it [the film] to *Four Weddings and A Funeral* (Mike Newell, 1994) to combat misconceptions of the film as a traditional costume drama."<sup>83</sup> Therefore, I would argue that the promotion of social art cinema was aimed at mass appeal through digressing discourses. On the one hand, the promotion encouraged the genre to be seen as nationally specific. On the other hand, it enabled the genre to be received as entertaining and popular. Such digression led to the further commodification of social art cinema.



As John Caughie argues, the interdependence between broadcaster and the film industry in Britain blurred the boundaries of these two mediums in terms of its aesthetics and drove nationally specific materials valuable in the global market: in other words, the commodification of national cinema.<sup>84</sup> Thus, the roles of television as public information (cultural and political) and public entertainment (popular and mass) has also become indistinct. In doing so, in terms of film consumption, television was still an important venue for film screenings, but the meaning of TV screenings was different from the 1980s. During the 1980s, with Channel 4's newly established image and its cultural remit as a venue for independent and experimental filmmaking, TV was regarded as a "special" venue for film exhibition. Even though the channel commissioned a number of big-budget popular films for its prime time slots, it managed to maintain its image as a channel with an alternative cultural remit in the 80s. In the 90s, in contrast, retail and leisure venues such as video and more importantly DVD and other screening windows, such as satellite, digital TV and pay-per TV, were more available. Thus, this type of film viewing including terrestrial TV as well as screenings on other TV-medium venues became "something very ordinary" rather than "something special," a point which will be discussed in the following chapter.

In addition, as John Caughie argues, "what the international market values in national specificity are precisely those qualities which transcend the local and make it universal: humanity, character, and in particular, character in adversity."<sup>85</sup> I would suggest that these qualities of universality and adversity apply to the home market, as well as the international market. For instance, when looking at the advertisement for *The Full Monty* in *Screen International*, the top of the page is filled with the film's box-office gross to date (up to 27th January 1998). The film was promoted as the box-office

number one followed by *Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1993), *Independence Day* (Roland Emmerich, 1996), and *Men in Black* (Barry Sonnenfeld, 1997), with the phrase noting "they've pulled it off now the biggest film of all time in the UK."<sup>86</sup> (See Appendix, Fig. 11). While emphasising the national origin of the film by noting that this is a UK film, the advertisement also implies that this film is something that is as entertaining as any Hollywood blockbuster. Thus, this advertisement demonstrates that the distinction between the national and the popular becomes vague, and considering the wider readership of *Screen International*, distributors, sales companies as well as ordinary viewers, the discursive use of this distinction has wide implications.

The result of this remapping of British cinema, in order to position it between European art and popular film, was a new context of British cinema as an identifiable entity and, subsequently, a consumable object. For instance, in the American trailer for *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, we are informed that "the comedy that *conquered Britain* (my italics) is coming to America." As can be seen from the term "conquered," a "British import"<sup>87</sup> is promoted as a potential hit. In addition, the term "Britain" implies that the film is non-American to American audiences. This clear preference to a non-American identity is not simply to be regarded as an aim to promote a film as art cinema, as it had been in the 1950s and 1960s. Rather, being British is a means to specialise the film's potential in the market and to give the film an "authentic value" as "the exotic."<sup>88</sup> As Julia Hallam argues, "being different enables the lives of unknown peoples and the places they inhabit to be represented as a commodity, a spectacle for consumption."<sup>89</sup> As can be seen from the promotion activities of *Billy Elliot* in the US market, identifying the national origin of the film encouraged *Billy Elliot* to be perceived as art cinema in the US market and this will be discussed in

chapter 9. Thus, even though the film had massive promotional support from its US distributor, Universal Studios, *Billy Elliot* came to be regarded as "must-see" art cinema with limited exclusive screenings. In doing so, *Billy Elliot* was equated with previously successful British films, which were referenced in advertisements and included *The Full Monty*, *Notting Hill*, *Four Weddings and A Funeral* and *Elizabeth*. Through such generic referencing of other British films, British cinema itself, as well as *Billy Elliot*, became an identifiable entity in the global market.

### Conclusion

The promotional activities of social art cinema attempt to fill a gap in the market place, caused by lack of stars and the small-scale nature of productions, and to take up a more secure place in enlarged market venues of the 90s. In order to achieve this, promotion used generic (re)identification or creates expressive images which aim to maximise a film's marketability and avoid falling into the category of the non-marketable. In doing so, the strategy was based on an illustration of the image of a film rather than demonstrating it and thus marketing initiated diverse discourses around social art cinema through the circulation of many images at different points of promotion. Consequently, this led to a need to create a new image for British cinema as a consumable object through an encompassing of the boundaries of national and popular cinema. Through this process, the notions of popular and national cinemas are no longer in opposition to each other. There are still claims that this remapping of the national and the popular marginalises "a real sense" of national cinema. As John Hill argues:

[T]he marketing of national specificity for international consumption is likely to encourage the use of the most conventional or readily recognisable

markers of nationality and national identity. ... Thus, the images of Britain which are most readily exportable are precisely those which a more enquiring (or 'proper') national cinema would seek to challenge.<sup>90</sup>

Despite this criticism, I would argue that as British film production in the 90s produced "a recognisable but diverse set of characteristics," the promotional activities of social art cinema also initiated recognisable but diverse discourses around British cinema with social art cinema achieving a significant popularity in the market place. I would not suggest that the promotional activity around social art cinema of the 1990s has established a new consensus for British cinema in the market place. However, at the very least, it tended to establish a new "context" for British cinema by appealing to a mass audience through the commodification of the idea of national cinema.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Amanda Wilkinson, "Parker Seeks Better Direction for UK Films," *Marketing Week* 12 Aug. 1999: 19.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Kahn divides film Marketing into four stages: market research, advertising, publicity, and promotion. ("Motion Picture Marketing," *The Movie Business Book*, ed. Jason E. Squire (1983; London: Columbus, 1986) 264-7). I acknowledge the different stages of marketing, however, when examining marketing activities, I refer to marketing as a full range of promotional activities, such as press coverage, publicity and tie-in selling as well as advertising. This is because in the contemporary film business marketing frequently means all aspects of promotion related to the film. James Paul Roberts notes that "in the film industry as a whole marketing is usually equated with promotion and, more specifically, with the advertising and PR used to launch a film. ... Indeed, we now have reached the stage where the two terms, marketing and promotion, are virtually interchangeable. ... [Because] promotion tends to be the most obvious issue to address if a company wants to become more marketing orientated. ... promotion also has a role to play in reducing the perceived risk associated with releasing a film, in that good, co-ordinated promotion has proved to be very successful in increasing the revenue-generating potential of that film." ("Marketing Issues in the Film Industry Today," *New Questions of British Cinema*, ed. Duncan Petrie (London: BFI, 1992) 96-97). Therefore, in this chapter I will use the terms marketing and promotion exclusively.

<sup>3</sup> Chris Smith, *Creative Britain* (London: Faber, 1998) 3.

<sup>4</sup> Steven Driver, and Luke Martell, "Blair and 'Britishness'," *British Cultural Studies: Geography, Nationality, and Identity*, ed. David Morley and Kevin Robins (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001) 465.

<sup>5</sup> Moya Luckett, "Image and Nation in 1990s British Cinema," *British Cinema of the 90s*, ed. Robert Murphy (London: BFI, 2000) 88.

<sup>6</sup> The number of multiplex cinemas has increased from 52 in 1990 to 142 in 1997 and the number of screens has risen to 1,222 in 1997 from 452 in 1990. The 1,222 screens were 51.2% of total UK screens compared to 27.2% in 1990. (Details from Stuart Hanson, "Spoilt for Choice? Multiplex in the 1990s," Murphy 50).

<sup>7</sup> Geoff Brown, "Something for Everyone: British Film Culture in the 1990s," Murphy 32.

<sup>8</sup> Pamela Cuthbert, "Devine Intervention," *Screen International* 20 Nov. 1998: 9.

<sup>9</sup> J.P. Telotte, "The Blair Witch Project Project: Film and the Internet," *Film Quarterly* 54.3 (2001): 32.

<sup>10</sup> Telotte 32.

<sup>11</sup> Barbara Klinger, "Digressions at the Cinema: Commodification and Reception in Mass Culture," *Modernity and Mass Culture*, ed. James Naremore and Patrick Brantlinger (Bloomington: Indiana U P, 1991) 124. This article was previously published as "Digression at the Cinema: Reception and Mass Culture" *Cinema Journal* 28.4 (1989): 3-19.

<sup>12</sup> Klinger 126-27.

<sup>13</sup> Colin Hoskins et.al address a similar point of view to Klinger in this respect. They note that promoting a film is a means to "position the product [film] for the segment" in order to maximise potential audiences. Here the segment implies different audience groups and their different tastes in films. A film can deliver different appealing points through promotional activities, and lack of appeal to segments can be minimised by how promotional activities satisfy as many audiences as possible. (Colin Hoskins, Stuart McFadyen, and Adam Finn, *Global Television and Film: An Introduction to Economics of the Business* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997) 119).

<sup>14</sup> Klinger 125.

<sup>15</sup> See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton and Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983).

<sup>16</sup> Celia Lury, *Consumer Culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 1996) 68-72.

<sup>17</sup> Justin Wyatt, *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood* (Austin, U of Texas P, 1994) 18.

<sup>18</sup> Wyatt 14.

<sup>19</sup> Wyatt 19.

<sup>20</sup> Wyatt 113-14.

<sup>21</sup> Janet Staiger, "Announcing Wares, Winning Patrons, Voicing Ideals: Thinking about the History and Theory of Film Advertising," *Cinema Journal* 29.3 (1990): 20.

<sup>22</sup> Staiger 21.

- <sup>23</sup> Staiger 21.
- <sup>24</sup> Lury 57-59.
- <sup>25</sup> Klinger 132.
- <sup>26</sup> John Hill, *British Cinema in the 80s: Issues and Themes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999) 67-68; 70.
- <sup>27</sup> Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI, 1999) 120.
- <sup>28</sup> Altman 121.
- <sup>29</sup> Advertisement, *Empire* Sep. 1997: 55.
- <sup>30</sup> Advertisement, *Empire* Jan. 1999: 9.
- <sup>31</sup> However, when possible, star appeal is used as a main marketing point. For instance, the poster of *Little Voice* pictured Michael Caine with critics' comments on Caine's excellent acting being displayed. See Fig. 4 (Advertisement, *Screen International* 12 Mar. 1999: 3).
- <sup>32</sup> Advertisement, *Time Out* 30 Sep.-7 Oct. 1998: N. pag.  
In this advertisement it is explicitly noted that the film is a "comedy thriller."
- <sup>33</sup> Advertisement, *Time Out* 14 Oct.-21 Oct. 1998: 87.
- <sup>34</sup> Advertisement, *Time Out* 14 Oct.-21 Oct. 1998: 87.
- <sup>35</sup> Nick Roddick, "Shotgun and Weddings," *Mediawatch '99*, supp. of *Sight and Sound* 9.3 (1999): 13.
- <sup>36</sup> See advertisement, *Screen International* 9 Jan. 1998: 7.
- <sup>37</sup> Details from *Internet Movie Database*, 28 Mar. 2002 <<http://us.imdb.com/Tanglines?0120520>>.
- <sup>38</sup> Details from *Internet Movie Database*, 28 Mar. 2002 <<http://us.imdb.com/Taglines?0115744>>.
- <sup>39</sup> Duncan J. Petrie, *Creativity and Constraint in the British Film Industry* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991) 121-22.
- <sup>40</sup> John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema: Television: Video* (London: Routledge, 1982) 78-79.
- <sup>41</sup> Ellis 79.
- <sup>42</sup> Telotte 34.
- <sup>43</sup> Benedict Carver, "Revealing Monty," *Screen International* 22 Aug. 1997: 11.
- <sup>44</sup> Details from *'The Full Monty' Home Page*, 25 Mar. 2002 <<http://www.foxsearchlight.com/fullmonty/quiz.htm>>.
- <sup>45</sup> Stuart Ewan, "Marketing Dreams: The Political Elements of Style," *Consumption, Identity and Style: Marketing, Meanings and the Packaging of Pleasure*, ed. Alan Tomlinson (London: Routledge, 1990) 46.
- <sup>46</sup> The taglines of *Trainspotting* was "never let your friends tie you to the tracks."
- <sup>47</sup> Justin Wyatt, "Marketing Sight and Sound A-Z of Cinema," *Sight and Sound* 7.6 (1997): 39.
- <sup>48</sup> Irvine Welsh is the writer of the best-selling original novel, *Trainspotting*, who later joined the script writing of the film. The original novel, *Trainspotting* was published in 1993 by Secker & Warburg. The collection of scripts of *Trainspotting & Shallow Grave* was also published in 1996 by Faber and Faber.
- <sup>49</sup> Brant Drewery, "Trailer for Sale or Rent," *Creation* Dec. 1999: 31.
- <sup>50</sup> Adam Minns, "Cool School," *Screen International* 6 Feb. 1998: 17.
- <sup>51</sup> "Cool Britannia" is a marketing ploy which the New Labour government promoted as a new image of Britain. While focusing on a projection of this newly established image through cultural products such as Britpop, fashion and films, the government drove the idea that young people are "key producers and consumers" of British culture. Therefore, the idea of Cool Britannia was associated with "youthfulness, creativity, and self-confidence." (Driver and Martell 465-66).
- <sup>52</sup> Karen Lury, "Here and Then: Space, Place and Nostalgia in British Youth Cinema of the 1990s," Murphy 107.
- <sup>53</sup> Minns 17.
- <sup>54</sup> Claire Monk, "Underbelly UK: The 1990s Underclass Film, Masculinity and the Ideologies of 'New' Britain," *British Cinema, Past and Present*, ed. Justine Ashby and Andrew Higson (London: Routledge, 2000) 276.
- <sup>55</sup> In terms of the scale of promotion, it should be noted that *Trainspotting* (made with a budget of £1.70 million) spent a considerable amount (around £1 million) on its marketing. Lisa Heys, a former marketing executive for *Trainspotting* at PolyGram and the present head of UK marketing at Film Four, notes that it is "because the talent behind the film had already had a hit with *Shallow Grave*." (Louise Bateman, "Marketing Movies Matters," *Pact Magazine* Sep. 1999: 13).  
This implies that *Trainspotting* already had a core audience after the success of *Shallow Grave*, and it allowed the distributor to confidently predict a mass appeal for the film. In contrast, *Human Traffic* was promoted on a budget of £500,000 due to its unpredictable fate at the box-office.

<sup>56</sup> Duncan J. Petrie suggests that "word of mouth" should also be perceived as a form of marketing strategy and this strategy is a "very effective and cheap way" to stimulate mass attention on a film. (*Creativity and Constraint in the British Film Industry* 129).

<sup>57</sup> Angus Finney, *No Motion without Promotion: Marketing for Filmmakers* (Berlin: European Film Academy, 1997) 15.

Teaser trailers are not often made for low-budget films like *Trainspotting*, but *Trainspotting* could use it effectively due to the financial support from its distributor. Having learned lessons from *Trainspotting*, *Human Traffic* also made a teaser trailer.

<sup>58</sup> Wyatt, "Marketing: Sight and Sound A-Z of Cinema" 39.

<sup>59</sup> Mike Goodridge, "Bus Stops Are Go," *Screen International* 12 July 1996: 26.

<sup>60</sup> Karen Lury 107.

<sup>61</sup> Bateman 12.

<sup>62</sup> Petrie, *Creativity and Constraint in the British Film Industry* 124.

<sup>63</sup> Advertisement, *Empire* Feb. 1996: 22-23.

<sup>64</sup> Catherine Grant, "www.auteur.com," *Screen* 41.1 (2000): 103.

<sup>65</sup> Grant 105-06.

<sup>66</sup> Timothy Corrigan, "Auteurs and the New Hollywood," *The New American Cinema*, ed. Jon Lewis (Durham: Duke UP, 1998) 59.

<sup>67</sup> Corrigan 50.

<sup>68</sup> Corrigan 51.

<sup>69</sup> For instance, the advertisement explicitly notes the film's similarity with Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs*. The notion of auteur in contemporary cinema is ambiguous in the sense that it contains both the textual elements of film and the star image of the director. For instance, the episodic story line and revolutionary style of both films also made it easier to put both Tarantino and Ritchie in the category of auteur directors.

<sup>70</sup> Cover, *Total Film* Oct. 2000.

<sup>71</sup> Philip French, "Guy's Gangsters are Scorsese Lite, but You Can't Walk Away from Renée," *Guardian Unlimited* 3 Sep. 2000, 17 Oct. 2000 <<http://www.guardianunlimited.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4058592,00.html>>; "Oi! Mate! Wanna Buy A Spin-off?" *Guardian Unlimited* 27 May 2000, 17 Oct. 2000 <<http://www.guardianunlimited.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4022579,00.html>>.

<sup>72</sup> Nataša Đurovičová, "Some Thoughts at an Intersection of the Popular and the National," *The Velvet Light Trap* 34 (1994): 6.

<sup>73</sup> Đurovičová 4.

<sup>74</sup> Đurovičová 5.

<sup>75</sup> Cuthbert 9.

<sup>76</sup> "Oscar Campaign," *Screen International* 29 Aug. 1997: 20.

<sup>77</sup> "Coming Attraction," *Sight and Sound* 8.7 (1998): 26.

<sup>78</sup> Advertisement, *Empire* Mar. 1999: 8.

<sup>79</sup> Advertisement, *Empire* Feb. 1996: 22-23.

<sup>80</sup> Advertisement, *Empire* Mar. 2000: 37.

<sup>81</sup> Advertisement, *Empire* Sep. 1998:13.

<sup>82</sup> Details from *Trainspotting*, dir. Danny Boyle, perf. Ewan McGregor, Ewan Bremner, Jonny Lee Miller, Kevin McKidd, and Robert Carlyle, 1996, video, PolyGram, 1996.

<sup>83</sup> Mike Goodridge, "Sense and Marketability," *Screen International* 29 Mar. 1996: 34.

<sup>84</sup> John Caughie, *Television Drama, Realism, Modernism, and British Culture* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000) 182-83.

<sup>85</sup> Caughie 196.

<sup>86</sup> Advertisement, *Screen International* 30 Jan. 1998: 3.

<sup>87</sup> The term is used in an advertisement of *Billy Elliot* in *The New York Times*. See advertisement, *New York Times* 8 Oct. 2000: AR13.

<sup>88</sup> Celia Lury 182.

<sup>89</sup> Julia Hallam, with Margaret Marshment, *Realism and Popular Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000) 195.

<sup>90</sup> John Hill, "The Issue of National Cinema and British Film Production," Petrie, *New Questions of British Cinema* 17.

## Chapter 5. National Cinema in the Multi-media Age

In 1997 *Screen Digest* analysed the theatrical distribution of first-run releases in 26 countries. While there was a difference between individual nations (for instance, Australia had a 13.9% growth in 1995-96, but Brazil fell by 13% in the same period), the UK showed 7.6% growth in 1994-95 and in general it would be fair to report that theatrical distribution increased in the international film market.<sup>1</sup> As I established in chapter 3, in applying this situation to the UK, there was growth in film production during the 1990s in relation to this increase in the distribution sector. In terms of exhibition, by 1996 the number of UK cinema sites increased to 742 with the number of screens increasing to 2,166 in 1996. The increase of multiplex cinemas played a part in the growth of cinema site and screen numbers. Multiplex sites accounted for 12.80% of all UK cinema sites and 39.66% of UK screens in 1996.<sup>2</sup>

*Screen Digest* suggests that this upsurge resulted also from the development of technologies for screening film in other media such as video and Internet streaming.<sup>3</sup> For instance, in the UK the DVD market sold 5,000,000 discs on its launch in 1998<sup>4</sup> and 2,314,000 in 1999.<sup>5</sup> By 1999 there were 4.1 million satellite dishes in Britain and 3.2 million homes with cable TV, an increase of 1.1 million from the previous year. While satellite penetration seems not to have changed during 1998-99, it has dramatically taken off in the UK in the 10 years since the launch of Sky. In terms of cable TV, the increase has resulted from more areas being fitted with cable lines, 50% of TV households now having a broadband cable. By July 2000, four million homes had digital television via Sky and Ondigital<sup>6</sup> and by 1998 the video market (the retail and rental market) increased its revenues to £1.437 million from £1.227 million in 1997.<sup>7</sup>



*Screen Digest* adds that "theatrical distribution [is] no longer the most lucrative market, [but] still sets the tone for a film's success in other media."<sup>8</sup> In fact, in the UK cinema admission revenues reached £139.30 million, being the second biggest since 1974 (£138.50 million).<sup>9</sup> Thus, unlike those who predicted that cinema would no longer exist due to home entertainment, it seems that theatrical exhibition has become even more important since a film's success at the box-office affects its success in the ancillary markets. All this indicates that the emergence of a new technology culture has ensured that more films have been produced to satisfy a more substantial public demand.

Considering this, due to the innovation of new technologies, film consumption in the 1990s can no longer be discussed solely in terms of theatrical presentation. Of course, VHS and TV screenings have been long established, but during the last decade film consumption became much more diverse. All the new means of viewing films - DVD, video, satellite, pay-per-view TV, digital TV, Cable TV and the Internet all emerged in a new culture of technology that resulted in what John Hill refers to as an "increased accessibility of films and the emergence of more 'active' viewing."<sup>10</sup> What Hill's observation suggests is that this changed exhibitional environment has had an affect on spectatorship.

In this chapter, I examine how this techno culture has influenced the reception of social art cinema. While discussing material factors of film, Raymond Williams suggests an examination of the technology involved. Williams' concern is related to the different viewing modes as well as the technological aspect of filmmaking. What Williams refers to as "signal systems"<sup>11</sup> is an important factor in constructing the ways in which viewers perceive and understand cinema. As Williams asserts, "within any specific culture, the nature of the signals, and of the shared signifying system within

which they must operate, is radically connected with the social organization of a very wide area of perceived reality."<sup>12</sup> Bearing this in mind, however, I am not attempting simply to define how audiences perceived national cinema in relation to this genre, or how individual films were received, or how individuals used multi-media to watch films. Instead, I will discuss how the changed environment of film consumption transformed the viewing habits of spectators and thus how this influenced notions of national cinema positioned within multi-media.

### **Cinema as Art and Commodity**

John Hill notes that in the 1980s, increased TV revenues encouraged social art cinema to present "more difficult and demanding forms of cinema" and, consequently, it "moved away from 'popular' forms of filmmaking" in order to concern itself with cinematic image differing from TV drama and mainstream films.<sup>13</sup> Considering this, I would argue that by the 1990s, the stylistic attributes of the genre were the result of the fusion of art cinema and popular genre conventions. However, its niche appeal has also been converted into more mass appeal. This is a result of multi-faceted patterns in film viewing, to reiterate John Hill's argument, of "increased accessibility of films and the emergence of more 'active' viewing."

An article titled 'Make Your Own Film Festival' from *The Guardian* amply demonstrates how active viewing operates in film consumption and considers that:

Cinema and summer supposedly go together, but when you think about it, there's no good reason for this. Why should hot, sunny days inspire the urge to sit in a dark room with hundreds of strangers? Added to which, barbecues, lilos and picnic hampers are all forbidden in the average

multiplex. So why not take advantage of home entertainment technology and hold your own film festival? All you need is a video projector, or, failing that, a long extension lead so you can put your TV in the garden. Print a programme, put out a few deck-chairs, then curate your own weekend festival.<sup>14</sup>

As can be seen from the term "home entertainment," film viewing can just as easily be located in private places, for example the home, rather than being limited to public places such as cinemas. In addition, the reference to "your own film festival" suggests that film viewing is more "personalised (privatised)" not only because of space, but also in respect of the individual's control over his or her viewing activities. This interactivity between viewer and medium suggests that, as Andrew Tolson notes, "what people do with these technologies ... is important."<sup>15</sup>

This private cultural environment can apply to multiplexes as well as home viewing. Even though multiplexes are public places, the recent development of multiplexes suggests that they are providing a viable alternative to home entertainment. Multiplexes have bypassed the traditional concept of cinemagoing as a social activity and have promoted cinema and film watching as very much part of the collective emerging from the new technology.<sup>16</sup> Because these huge complexes have pubs, cafés, dance clubs and sports centres on their sites, they provide "total" leisure and much more than just cinemas. Thus, it appears that the multiplex is now considered to be not only a place to see a film, but also a place to experience other recreational facilities. Going to the cinema, then, is not just associated any more with going to see a film: it has become instead an opportunity to use various other entertainments that appeal to a more diverse audience. David Fraser, director of FITCH, the design and brand development

consultancy, notes that multiplexes are run on the basis of "a lifestyle decision (going for an evening out) of audiences, instead of a product-based decision (going to a particular film)."<sup>17</sup> All the services provided in multiplexes are subject to this idea that "there are multiple choices. Now you can choose" with a number of films provided for a choice as well.

In this sense, comparison can be made between multiplexes and home entertainment if only because audiences have more control over their own cinema viewing. To some extent, the facilities that multiplex screens provide serve to create a certain atmosphere that is very different from the traditional film show. The good sightlines for audiences, big and comfortable chairs, room between seats and the cup holders on chairs are designed to act as compensation for audiences who would otherwise stay at home watching films on television, DVD, video, satellite or cable. As Barbara Klinger notes, "trends affecting the exhibition site ... strongly interact with the phenomenon of viewing, affecting the historical apprehension of films."<sup>18</sup> Thus, this consumer-centred film viewing promotes the importance of individual spectators' decisions as to what to see and consequently the pejorative perception of the public as passive consumers is overcome.

However, this does not imply that the spectator is the only producer of meanings for a film. There are also numerous inputs from exhibitors, distributors, critics and broadcasters whose information indicates what a particular film can provide and eventually helps to attract audiences. Technological innovation does not only increase the number of exhibition windows, but also the number of discourses around films and film viewing. When the availability of exhibition windows increases, there is more film-related information in the form of either printed or electronic material. Film publications

are now more specific: there are now magazines that specialise in all the various mediums including DVD and video such as *DVD review*, *Total DVD*, *Empire*, *Total Film* and *SFX* (sci-fi specialised magazine). Film guides in newspapers and special interest magazines publish lists of films on terrestrial TV, satellite, cable and digital and there are also programme guides for specific mediums such as *Satellite TV*. Satellite or digital broadcasters produce their own timetables and comments on films showing and there are occasionally supplements of satellite film screenings in daily newspapers. Also, terrestrial television advertises film screenings on digital TV (for instance, Channel 4's advertisements for its digital channel, Film Four). Most films have their own web sites to promote them. DVD extras provide insider information on the process of making films.

Thus, this proliferation of information about films does not so much create what Stuart Ewan called, "a closed universe of discourse,"<sup>19</sup> but instead expands on and at the same time redefines meanings that existed before. For example, the huge box-office success of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (Guy Ritchie, 1998) prompted reference to it in the *Empire* review of the re-release of the classic British gangster film *Get Carter* (Mike Hodges, 1971).<sup>20</sup> The review of the film starts with the tagline "classic 1971 gangster flick which makes *Lock, Stock [and Two Smoking Barrels]* look like a kid's matinee," and continues that "this is a gangster film without the laughs of *Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, the pop of *Pulp Fiction* or the theatre of *The Godfather*."<sup>21</sup> Considering that *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* gained popular appeal because of its excessive "post-Tarantino style," I would suggest that it encouraged a reappraisal of *Get Carter*. In other words, *Get Carter* became re-interpreted in relation to contemporary film. In addition, the film was understood as

relating to the social issues involved in *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*. The review for *Get Carter* concludes by proclaiming that "it's violent without buckets of blood, sexy without being explicit, and contains a revelatory sequence with a film projector that trumps 8mm."<sup>22</sup> While this comment is alluding to *Get Carter*, it is actually engaged with critical reception and discourses around *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*. With the publicity surrounding *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, there was much media discussion about violence in contemporary British gangster films and the film was often accused of initiating or "worsening" this trend.<sup>23</sup> The implication here is that *Get Carter's* re-evaluation as a gangster movie is dependent on *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*. In other words, with the (re)reference to *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, *Get Carter* becomes contemporary. Thus, *Get Carter* retains those elements of a fashionable movie because of its glorification of violence and its mythologising of the gangster which was deployed in *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*.<sup>24</sup>

Within these multiple discourses, technical aspects of film become a key factor. Barbara Klinger points out how technology, film collecting and multi-media culture play a part in privatised film consumption:

[e]ngaged with technological developments that mimic the conditions of the movie theatre within the home. Paramount among these development is home theatre, an entertainment centre that promises improved image and sounds reproduction through big-screen television sets, A/V receivers to deliver both audio and video signals, Dolby digital surround sound (and other multi-channel sounds options), and quality playback systems like hi-fi VCRs and laserdisc players. As the direct legates of the so-called digital

revolution, contemporary film collectors are very much part of the 'high-tech' film culture that has emerged over the last few years. For this group of collectors, the desire for cinema is inextricably linked to the desire for the newest and the best technology.<sup>25</sup>

Even though, as Klinger acknowledges, technology-concerned consumption is more central to "high-end" collectors who are very keen on buying the most expensive and newest equipment, home entertainment makes technical description one of its overriding selling points.<sup>26</sup>

For instance, looking at the review of the *Shooting Fish* DVD in *DVD Review*, there is more emphasis on the technical side of the DVD than on filmic images or textual information. Along with the name of the director, production year, supplier and cast, the review supplies the film format (2.35:1 anamorphic) and audio format (stereo). The "final verdict" of the film is drawn from consideration of picture, sound quality, entertainment, extras and value [for buying/collecting]. The reviewer, Mike Richardson concludes that *Shooting Fish* is "a must-buy for anyone wanting to expand their British comedy collection."<sup>27</sup> As can be seen from this example, collecting value is related as much to technological factors as to the film itself. In this techno culture, better technology does not always mean obtaining a better quality film or more accessibility to a film, it also expresses the viewer's cultural taste. In her study of British audiences' reaction to satellite dishes, Charlotte Brunson notes that whether satellite TV provides better choice and quality is a secondary issue for people who choose to have a satellite dish. For them, a satellite dish is a satisfying choice in a privatised consumer culture where to choose "to like what's better to like" is always a concern.<sup>28</sup>

What this indicates is that home entertainment consolidates the idea of film as a consumable object. As can be seen from the rapid rise in its sales, the DVD has begun a new era of film collecting. Of course, DVD did not initiate the collecting of films.<sup>29</sup> There were videos and even earlier there were 8mm reels. However, it is generally argued that DVD is a more collectable item because of the quality of picture and sound as well as its durability and compact size.<sup>30</sup> DVD does not wear out or crumple so that visual and auditory quality does not degrade like VHS. Also it does not take up as much space on collectors' shelves. In addition, as a result of the DVD's marketability as a collectable property, the packaging of DVD has become commodified. Subsequently, the DVD has the added value of "show-it-off-to-yer-mates."<sup>31</sup>

Put in this context, this interest in technology relates to the filmic image as well as technological equipment. Film is no longer a rigid object as viewers are capable of reconfiguring and transforming images through new technologies. Subsequently, film becomes a transferable material, indeed, an artistic material. The evaluation of film as an art form has also much to do with the effect of aesthetic transformation which Barbara Klinger discusses in its relationship to entertainment and the collector whose front room culture:

[is] also shaped by the various machines designed to reproduce films in the home. The technological aspect of the collector's world is particularly responsible for creating a film aesthetic that can transform a film's previous value (created through film reviews or academic criticism, for example) for domestic consumption.<sup>32</sup>

To apply this aesthetic transformation to general domestic film consumption, a film aesthetic can be displayed through different functions in a number of different mediums



or in one medium. A viewer who has a three channel sound system connected to a wide screen TV will experience sound quality virtually on a par with the cinema. Equally, a viewer who purchases a video copy of *Trainspotting* will enjoy any amount of screen size possible including a normal 4:3 TV screen, a 16:9 widescreen, or a letter-box screen format if the TV has that function on its remote control. The traditional concept of "the original" disappears. After screening *Another Days in Paradise* (Larry Clark, 1999) on Sky Premier Exclusive, there were claims that this would lead to bigger (Hollywood) movies' debuting on TV and smaller British films having less screening opportunities. In response to this, Rupert Preston, Managing Director of Metrodrome Distribution pointed out that "it is a different version, a director's cut."<sup>33</sup> This suggests that the idea of cinema as a transformable object is generally accepted amongst those in the production sector as well as among viewers. Therefore, as Mark Jancovich and Lucy Faire argue, film viewing becomes "a matter of the experience that one values and the relationship that one wants to establish to a particular type of film."<sup>34</sup>

Since an image can be displayed in diverse formats, a film aesthetic has become engaged with what Klinger refers to as "the hardware aesthetics."<sup>35</sup> As she argues, in this techno culture "the evaluation of film through the lens of hardware priorities transforms them according to imperatives drawn from technological considerations. ... films are reread through the ideology of the spectacular; and form triumphs over content."<sup>36</sup> Thus, in terms of its aesthetics, a film receives more consideration when it becomes a technically exciting commodity. Technical aspects of film are now as important as story line or what the film is about.

In this respect, while in the 1980s stylistic diversity with social art cinema is a means to appeal to a more specialised market,<sup>37</sup> in the 1990s the "specialised" market

had expanded into a more general "popular" film market. Hence, 80's social art cinema deployed the reflexivity of cinematic forms and style while being informed by postmodern image culture and maintaining its hybrid style into the 1990s. Regarding changes in film consumption during the 1990s, however, the point is that so-called art cinema style within social art cinema is received differently and can no longer be perceived as having the specificity of art cinema or of possessing a quality which is different from mainstream films.

In addition, increased preference for filmic style penetrates aesthetic difference within different mediums because, as Klinger notes, "it is not the specificity of the film that matters but the ability of audio-video technologies to transform the *experience* of watching into an aesthetic one."<sup>38</sup> In the age of video and DVD, the filmic image has become more televisual, as new ways of film viewing are now mediated through TV screens. Each medium provides different functions, so textual image can be configured accordingly. This transformable visual spectacle created by technical equipment becomes a key part of pleasure during cinema viewing. For instance, if they wish, viewers can now alter the screen ratio of the TV to wide screen or letterboxed vision. Cinema viewing itself constructs its own public sphere detached from the idea of the public sphere as a place. As Miriam Hansen suggests, this cinema as a public sphere allows "a more centrifugal, less textually predetermined reception of filmic images."<sup>39</sup>

In this respect, the reception of social art cinema as art cinema needs to be considered in how it relates to a mass audience in contrast to its minority appeal. Initially, as John Hill proposes, social art cinema "embrace[d] more recognisable art cinema conventions."<sup>40</sup> Channel 4's involvement in film production and distribution during the 1980s was instrumental in British cinema deploying an art cinema style

which itself incorporated hybrid conventions of European art cinema traditions, avant-garde and even documentary and to be marketed and consumed as art cinema.<sup>41</sup>

However, in techno culture there are no specific television formats. Thus, the "hybridity" of art cinema style is less associated with art cinema consumption in the 1990s. This relationship between stylistic spectacle and popular appeal is often demonstrated by production sector of the film industry. For instance, Harriet Bass, the New Producers Alliance comments that "with some British films, you see them and think, *Inspector Morse* on my telly looks better. People do want bright colours and big bangs and escapism. ... there's so much more we can do."<sup>42</sup>

### **The Indigenous Popular**

As demonstrated in chapter 2, in the 1980s with the advent of Channel 4, the broadcaster's involvement in film production was of some significance in terms of its expansion of exhibition opportunities for British films. TV as public broadcasting encouraged television companies to be aware of its public credibility both in the international and national markets. Thus, local subject matter (British subject matter) in film screenings and TV's involvement in film production were factors through which television could play an important role in the development of national cinema. In the international market, social art cinema could be recognised as identifiably British simply because of its subject matter. In the home market, the political nature of social art cinema in its stance towards the government enabled the genre to be commodified as specific to the nation. The very concept of national cinema obligated broadcasters to be interested in representations of specifically British issues and, for this reason, social art cinema committed its support to the establishment of a home industry. This political

engagement with social and political issues of the 1980s was a means by which film screenings on TV could accomplish the medium's civic image as a conveyor of national identity, not necessarily just as a broadcaster of Hollywood classic movies and blockbusters.

However, due to the global growth of media markets, the broadcaster's role as public service has changed and consequently this affected the meaning of film screening on TV. As Monroe E. Price argues:

Deregulation, globalism, and the lack of criticism of government may oddly coalesce: the emphasis on market forces can reduce the function of television and radio as *the press*, as a critic of the state. ... Transformed, broadcasting no longer has the same politically subversive potential; if subversive, it is so in a new way, sapped of what was virtually synonymous with a tendency toward depoliticization, part of an effort by the state to diminish the potency of the media to disturb the status quo.<sup>43</sup>

Subsequently, the broadcaster was given the potential of, in the words of Price, "its own public sphere, outside and potentially, against the domain of the nation-state."<sup>44</sup> I would argue that this promoted TV stations to become more openly commercially driven. On the launch of Film Four, the pay-TV channel of Channel 4 in November 1998, Dan Brooke, head of marketing and development for Channel 4 noted that "if you are setting up a channel and just showed the kind of film filed in your mind under 'subtitled' then you would be setting up a very niche channel. ... [Film Four] is going to be a lot more accessible and mainstream than that."<sup>45</sup> Brooke's comment clearly indicates that the channel was concerned with its viability in the market place and did not hesitate to confirm its intention to take an assertively popular approach. The channel's then chief

executive Michael Jackson also confirmed this, stating that "Film Four is dedicated to film 12 hours a day, so it will screen a greater quantity of films than Channel 4.

However, it is not just about quantity: it is also about range."<sup>46</sup>

This attitude derived from the highly competitive multi-media market. With sports and films being the two major selling points for digital services,<sup>47</sup> film screening on their channel becomes a main source for attracting sponsorship. For example, on its launch in June 1997, Channel 5 obtained a sponsorship from the Belgian beer company, Stella Artois, for regular movie screening slots at 9 o'clock.<sup>48</sup> Interestingly, Channel 5 made a special theme song for this prime time movie screening. Thus, as Barbara Klinger suggests, the culture of home entertainment "emphasizes the viewing of a film as a major event, a memorable occasion for both you and your guests."<sup>49</sup>

John Hill argues that in the 1980s "cinema-going was only exceptionally an 'event' and, in a number of respects, television has taken over the cinema's former function of catering to the regular cinemagoer."<sup>50</sup> However, as Hill notes, in the context of the 1990s where the proliferation of multi-media was dominant, "television can also use film as an 'event,' breaking up the televisual flow and offering a 'special' experience."<sup>51</sup> Film screening on TV was, in the word of John Caughie, "a special *national* (my italics) event,"<sup>52</sup> but it has become "an event" that carries less connotations of "nation" and more of entertainment. In this respect, I would argue that 90s social art cinema needed to be presented differently on TV in order to adapt to television's changed social and cultural function.

Rather than emphasising the political aspect of the genre, social art cinema was circulated with diverse meanings at the different stages of presentation. This is because

in the environment of multi-faceted exhibition, the specificity of the different mediums is blurred. As Anne Friedberg notes:

*Screens* are now 'display and delivery' formats - variable in versions of projection screen, television screen, computer screen, or headset device. *Film* is a 'storage' medium - variable in versions of video, computer disks, compact discs (CDs), highdensity compact video-disc players (DVDs), databanks, on-line servers. Spectators are 'users' with an 'interface' - variable in versions of remotes, mice, keyboards, touch screens, joysticks, goggles and gloves and body suits. ... the apparatus we came to know as 'the cinema' is being displayed by systems of circulation and transmission which abolish the projection screen and begin to link the video screens of the computer and television with the dialogic interactivity of the telephone. Multimedia home stations combining telephone, television, and computer (what will we call these: tele-puters? Imagephones?) will further reduce the technical differentiation of film, television, and the computer.<sup>53</sup>

What this suggests is that TV's function in film consumption is related to a "screen." Film viewing is televisulised as most of the new mediums are conveyed through TV screens on the basis of the idea of home entertainment.

Thus, in order to attract viewers, each presentation needs to provide a specific message around the films showing. As Barbara Klinger asserts, each channel of exhibition has "a particular 'persona' in its presentation of films, whether it be an archival sensibility which presents the film as a classic or an irreverent 'kitschy' format which updates the entertainment value of an old film through parody."<sup>54</sup> For instance, the term "TV premiere" has been commonly used to inform viewers of forthcoming film

screenings in the sense that they are being shown for the first time on television. This value creates the idea of "must see TV," creating the opportunity for a film to be reappraised. This revaluation may encourage more attention to a film, and perhaps persuade audiences to see the film in other formats, in case they miss the screening on TV. Thus, for anyone missing the TV premiere of a film, there is the opportunity for them to rent the video or DVD of the film. The cultural industries initiate the making of meanings around films in order for the films to compete against each other in the market place. To achieve the commercial viability in comparison with the rival, the cultural industries commodify films.

Thus, each media company produces specific meanings and values for a film or a group of films. For instance, Film Four aired *East is East* (Damien O'Donnell, 1999) as a "UK TV premiere" in April 2001. The film was premiered as part of a British Film Month, which included non-Channel 4 productions such as *Monty Python's Life of Brian* (Terry Jones, 1979), *Gregory's Girl* (Bill Forsyth, 1981), *Quadrophenia* (Franc Roddam, 1979), *Human Traffic* (Justin Kerrigan, 1999) and *Twin Town* (Kevin Allen, 1997), and Channel 4-backed films such as *Shopping* (Paul W.S. Anderson, 1994), *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1996), *Shallow Grave* (Danny Boyle, 1994), *My Name is Joe* (Ken Loach, 1998), *Secrets and Lies* (Mike Leigh, 1996) and *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Stephen Frears, 1985).<sup>55</sup> Here, *East is East* is valued as an example of British cinema. However, if Film Four wanted to launch a comedy month, the film might be in the showing list again. By branding a film as British cinema, a meaning is evoked that is often used to commodify the value of a film in digital and satellite TV showings. British Sky Broadcasting (BSkyB) has started to acquire the rights to older movies allowing a more financially viable film packaging through combining them with

first-run contemporary films.<sup>56</sup> In this respect, depending on the package, the perception of a film can be subtly altered by the manner in which the film is presented - for example, as part of a director's season or as a part of a gangster season. In this era where the meaning of a film is no longer aligned with that text itself, I would argue that the concept of national cinema should be taken into consideration by itself.

The term "national cinema" is still valid in the sense that it can bring an identity to commodities and indeed a consumable identity. The connotations of national cinema can be utilised as a means to position the film on the channel as something distinctive in the market place. In addition, as can be seen from the "British Film Month" on Film Four, national cinema also carries the meaning of something, in the words of Jesús Martín-Barbero, "indigenous." Martín-Barbero argues that:

For a long time the question of the indigenous was bounded by a populist and romantic notion that identified the indigenous with *the original*, and that in turn with the *primitive*. Transformed into the touchstone of identity, the indigenous would seem to be the only thing that remains for us of the authentic, that secret place in which the purity of our cultural roots remains and is preserved. All the rest is contamination and loss of identity.<sup>57</sup>

Martín-Barbero then asserts that the indigenous has merged with popular culture resulting in "the authentic popular."<sup>58</sup> In this respect, the emphasis on "national" relates to creating "authenticity" for film as a consumable object.

As a result, the nationally specific issues are encouraged and indeed this promoted the aspect of indigenous local within the nation to be presented in the social art cinema of the 1990s. John Caughie argues that while local and national specificity are widespread in cinema, these localities are somehow constricted because the localities



presented are selected for attracting international audiences.<sup>59</sup> However, I would argue that Caughie neglects the fact that the local factors in films are targeting home audiences as well. Granada Media Group chief executive, Steve Morrison, notes that the reason media companies require more British films is their consideration for the demand from home audiences especially in the ancillary market. Morrison noted that "the audience for Hollywood films had fallen over the years, because people can see them elsewhere long before they receive terrestrial windows."<sup>60</sup> This in turn enabled an increase in the projection of provincial agendas, as demonstrated in chapter 3. Colin Leventhal, Channel 4 International managing director argues that "in the UK we are looking at a situation where ... we have become parochial in terms of gearing UK productions for UK audiences."<sup>61</sup> Therefore, as John Hill asserts, "the social and national in scope" should be understood as "a strengthening of the local aspects of *cinema*."<sup>62</sup>

### Conclusion

In the article 'Show Me the Culture!' Nick Roddick argues that in the 1990s British films are constricted to "the business side of movies" and have lost the aura of "film-as-art."<sup>63</sup> Roddick claims that this is partly the result of the fact that films are made for multiplex screenings in order to maximise their profits. Roddick seems to believe that the artistic nature should be separated from the commercial aspect of film business and that encourages films that are suitable for showing in art house cinemas is a way to keep British film culture. Roddick asserts:

The concept of films as a mass-audience form - as something made for a multiplex - is where we are: culturally, economically and aspirationally. If

there is nowhere left to show film-as-art, then what is the point in making it, since film, by definition, only exists as an artform when turned into two-dimensional images in a public place?<sup>64</sup>

I would argue that Roddick fails to recognise, in the words of Raymond Williams, "the decisive material factor in film" when discussing the industrial and commercial aspect.<sup>65</sup> According to Williams, televisualised cultural surroundings caused by multi-media enables "commercial popular culture" to be linked with "established culture."<sup>66</sup> As has been demonstrated in this chapter, while commercial aspects of film are stressed, social art cinema increasingly deployed national and local issues from the early 80s onwards. Therefore, rather than simply dismissing its commercial condition, social art cinema of the 1990s should be understood in terms of its blending of popular and indigenous elements. As Williams argues:

The fully autonomous development of native popular cultures, which keep showing their strength whenever there is even half-chance, but which have been denied any mature expression and growth by the pressures and prestige of a skillfully homogenized and falsely universal cinema: popular *cinema* rather than popular films.<sup>67</sup>

In this respect, social art cinema showed a latent way that popular culture integrated into indigenous culture in the era of multi-media.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Screen Digest* May 1997: 110.

<sup>2</sup> *Screen Finance* 6 Feb. 1997: 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Screen Digest* 110.

<sup>4</sup> *Screen Finance* 18 Feb. 1999: 6.

<sup>5</sup> *Screen Finance* 16 Mar. 2000: 12.

<sup>6</sup> Eddie Dyja, ed., *BFI Film and Television Handbook 2000* (London: BFI, 1999) 44; Eddie Dyja, ed., *BFI Film and Television Handbook 2001* (London: BFI, 2000) 50-51.

<sup>7</sup> *Screen Finance* 18 Feb. 1999: 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Screen Digest* 110.

<sup>9</sup> Dyja, *BFI Film and Television Handbook 2000* 20.

<sup>10</sup> John Hill, "Film and Television," *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, ed. John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998) 610.

<sup>11</sup> Raymond Williams, *The Sociology of Culture*, fwd. Bruce Robbins (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995) 130-37.

<sup>12</sup> Williams 135.

<sup>13</sup> John Hill, *British Cinema of the 1980s: Issues and Themes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999) 69.

<sup>14</sup> Steve Ross, "Make Your Own Film Festival..." *Guardian Unlimited* 22 June 2001, 23 July 2001 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4208141,00.html>>.

<sup>15</sup> Andrew Tolson, "Popular Culture: Practice and Institution," *High Theory/Low Culture: Analysing Popular Television and Film*, ed. Colin MacCabe (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1986) 153.

<sup>16</sup> Kevin J. Corbett examines, in detail, the technological development of multiplexes in order to come to terms with the cultural shift brought about by technology. See "The Big Picture: Theatrical Moviegoing, Digital Television, and Beyond Substitution Effect," *Cinema Journal* 40.2 (2001): 17-34.

In addition, the recent trend for multiplexes is city centre locations and more screens in each site. For example, Cine U.K. who entered into the multiplex industry relatively late in 1995, opened its second multiplex in the town centre of Wakefield with 12-screens in 1996. (Brian Hornsey, Stuart Smith, and Kate Taylor, *Five or More the Mushrooming of the Multiplex* (Wakefield: Mercia Cinema Soc., 1997) 6). Prior to this, multiplexes were, generally speaking, situated in out-of-town sites with parking facilities being heavily advertised and targeted mainly suburban-middle class types who had easy access to a car. With the change of multiplex locations to town centres, the number of screens has significantly increased. For instance, Warner Village cinemas are building a number of "megaplexes" (cinemas with twenty or more screens) that will include 32-screen cinema located on the site of London's Battersea Power Station, a 21-screen cinema in Bradford and a 30-screen cinema in Birmingham. (Stuart Hanson, "Spoilt for Choice? Multiplexes in the 90s," *British Cinema of the 90s*, ed. Robert Murphy (London: BFI, 2000) 50).

<sup>17</sup> Ralf Ludermann, "Dedicated to You," *Screen International* 19 July 1996: 22.

For reports on a research of consumer behaviour in multiplexes, see Ralf Ludermann, "Spending Power," *Screen International* 26 July 1996: 38. However, these amusement facilities are not only to satisfy spectators, there is also an economic reason. Mary Scott reports that "with cinemas taking home between 90p and 95p per admission from the sales of concession, expanding the retail offer will provide the consumer with a much greater opportunity to spend money on ancillary goods and keep the exhibitors margins profitable." ("Future Projections," *Screen International* 23 Jan. 1998: 42).

<sup>18</sup> Barbara Klinger, "Film History Terminable and Interminable: Recovering the Past in Reception Studies," *Screen* 38.2 (1997): 116.

<sup>19</sup> Stuart Ewan, "Marketing Dreams: The Political Elements of Style," *Consumption, Identity and Style: Marketing, Meanings and the Packaging of Pleasure*, ed. Alan Tomlinson (London: Routledge, 1990) 52.

<sup>20</sup> The film was re-released on 11 June 1999.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew Collins, rev. of *Get Carter*, dir. Mike Hodge, *Empire* July 1999: 31.

<sup>22</sup> Collins 31.

<sup>23</sup> For example, see, Nick Hopkins, "Lock, Stock and Too Much Glamour," *Guardian Unlimited* 9 Sep. 2000, 17 Oct. 2000 <<http://www.guardianunlimitd.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4061358,00.html>>.

<sup>24</sup> I would also argue that the re-release of this film relates to the significant performance of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* and consequently the popularity of British gangster films.

<sup>25</sup> Barbara Klinger, "The Contemporary Cinephile: Film Collecting in the Post-Video Era," *Hollywood Spectatorship: Changing Perception of Cinema Audience*, ed. Melvyn Stokes and Richard Maltby (London: BFI, 2001) 136.

<sup>26</sup> As Klinger does acknowledge, there are other forms of collecting which do not revolve so much around new technologies. Klinger terms them as "low-end" collecting. For a more detailed discussion on these kinds of practices, see Kate Egan, "The Celebration of a Proper Product," unpublished.

<sup>27</sup> Mike Richardson, rev. of *Shooting Fish*, dir. Stefan Schwartz, *DVD Review* No.27 2001: 61.

<sup>28</sup> Charlotte Brunson, *Screen Taste: Soap Opera to Satellite Dishes* (London: Routledge, 1997) 163.

<sup>29</sup> For a discussion of video collecting, see Charles Tashiro, "The Contradictions of Video Collecting," *Film Quarterly* 50 (1996-7): 11-18.

<sup>30</sup> Ian Freer, "Die! Video! Die!" *Empire* Sep. 1998: 75-76.

<sup>31</sup> Dan Jolin, and James White, "Blade Runner: Director's Cut," *Total Film* Jan. 2001:112.

<sup>32</sup> Klinger, "The Contemporary Cinephile" 141.

<sup>33</sup> Adam Minns, "On the Campaign Trail with Rupert Preston," *Screen International* 3 Sep. 1999: 9.

<sup>34</sup> Mark Jancovich, and Lucy Faire, with Sarah Stubbings, *The Place of the Audience: Cultural Geographies of Film Consumption* (London: BFI, 2003) 194.

<sup>35</sup> Klinger, "The Contemporary Cinephile" 141.

<sup>36</sup> Klinger, "The Contemporary Cinephile" 141.

<sup>37</sup> Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s* 64.

<sup>38</sup> Barbara Klinger, "The New Media Aristocrats: Home Theater and the Domestic Film Experience," *The Velvet Light Trap* 42 (1998): 14.

<sup>39</sup> Miriam Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1991) 111.

In this respect, it is interesting to note Alan Parker's comment on contemporary British cinema. Criticising *The Full Monty* as an example, he claims that "most of contemporary British films are indistinguishable from TV movies" and suggests that they should focus on a wider scale narrative which shows a cinematic aesthetic. He cites *Lawrence of Arabia* as an opposition to television-led contemporary British films. (*Screen Finance* 30 Oct. 1997: 9). Parker's comment is based on the belief that TV and cinema should have different aesthetic priorities and it gives little consideration to cultural shifts in reception. Parker neglects the fact that there is not much medium specificity in film viewing due to advanced forms of technology. Thus, the aesthetic discrepancy between mediums becomes less recognisable and more reflexive.

<sup>40</sup> Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s* 68.

<sup>41</sup> John Hill, "The Rise and Fall of British Art Cinema: A Short History of 1980s and 1990s," *Aura* VI.3 (2000): 26.

<sup>42</sup> Caroline Westbrook, "The Modern Guide to Screen Entertainment," *Empire* Oct. 1995: 153.

<sup>43</sup> Monroe E. Price, *Television, the Public Sphere, and National Identity* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995) 17.

<sup>44</sup> Price 37.

<sup>45</sup> Louise Tutt, "Film for All?" *Screen International* 30 Oct. 1998: 13.

<sup>46</sup> Nick Broadshaw, "The Fourth Way," *Time Out Guide to Film 4: The New Film Channel from Channel 4*, supp. of *Time Out* 28 Oct.-4 Nov. 1998: 6.

<sup>47</sup> Stuart Kemp, and Adam Minns, "The Big Turn on," *Screen International* 11 Sep. 1998: 11.

<sup>48</sup> Stuart Kemp, "Bought to You," *Screen International* 6 June 1997: 12.

It appears that broadcasters achieve a big sponsorship through movie slots in prime time. Channel 4 has had various sponsors for their movie premiers including Diet Coke, The Guardian and Doritos.

<sup>49</sup> Klinger, "The New Media Aristocrats" 7.

<sup>50</sup> John Hill, "British Cinema as National Cinema: Production, Audience and Representation," *The British Cinema Book*, ed. Robert Murphy (London, BFI, 1997) 250.

<sup>51</sup> Hill, "British Cinema as National Cinema" 250.

<sup>52</sup> John Caughie, "The Logic of Convergence," *Big Picture, Small Screen: The Relationship between Film and Television*, ed. John Hill and Martin McLoone (Luton: U of Luton P, 1996) 220.

<sup>53</sup> Anne Friedberg, "The End of Cinema: Multimedia and Technological Change," *Reinventing Film Studies*, ed. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (London: Arnold, 2000) 440.

<sup>54</sup> Klinger, "Film History Terminable and Interminable" 125.

<sup>55</sup> Made in Britain: *East is East* UK TV Premiere, Part of British Film Month, advertisement, n. p.

The background of this pamphlet was designed with a national flag to emphasise the scheduling of British Film Month.

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<sup>56</sup> *Screen Finance* 11 Nov. 1999: 9.

<sup>57</sup> Jesús Martín-Barbero, "Communication from Culture: The Crisis of the National and the Emergence of the Popular," trans. Philip Schlesinger, *Media, Culture & Society* 10 (1998): 459.

<sup>58</sup> Martín-Barbero 459.

<sup>59</sup> John Caughie, *Television Drama: Realism, Modernism, and British Culture* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000) 198.

<sup>60</sup> Stuart Kemp, "Picture Perfect?" *Screen International* 23 Jan. 1998: 47.

<sup>61</sup> Stuart Kemp, "Shadow Boxing," *Screen International* 24 Jan. 1997: 41.

<sup>62</sup> Hill, "British Cinema as National Cinema" 251.

<sup>63</sup> Nick Roddick, "Show Me the Culture!" *Sight and Sound* 8.12 (1998): 23.

<sup>64</sup> Roddick 26.

<sup>65</sup> Raymond Williams, "British Film History: New Perspective," *British Cinema History*, ed. James Curran and Vincent Porter (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983) 22.

<sup>66</sup> Williams 23.

<sup>67</sup> Williams 23.

## Part III. Case Studies

## Chapter 6. *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*:

### The Critical Reception of Its Popularisation and Stylistic

In his discussion of film policy during the 1990s, Toby Miller highlights "the commerce-culture divide of British film."<sup>1</sup> As Miller argues, "the dividing line between them is not so great as this might imply, as both were concerned with cinematic specificity and commercial viability."<sup>2</sup> This ambiguity revolving around the desire for "cinematic specificity and commercial viability" can be applied to the critical reception of British cinema during the 90s. This chapter will discuss this ambivalence in critical response in terms of national and popular cinema through a case study of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (Guy Ritchie, 1998). *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* was made in 1997 and written and directed by Guy Ritchie. On its release in 1998, the film was a huge box-office success. It cost just £1 million to make but gained £13 million in box-office receipts in the UK, resulting in the film becoming one of the biggest British box-office successes in UK film history.<sup>3</sup> After its success at the box-office, Ritchie sold his copyright of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* for a spin-off TV series and the film became worth £1 million in TV broadcasting rights. *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* grossed 13% of its total profit during its first week of release in the US, and more than £3 million in the US within three months of its release.<sup>4</sup> In addition, therefore, to its reputation as a trendy-setting gangster film that spawned many imitations, its sale to television indicates the longevity of the public's attention for the film itself. In spite of this public approval, however, the film was coolly received by critics.

When looking at reviews and commentaries of the film in various publications

such as newspapers, film journals and popular film magazines, either in print or electronic form, I found different evaluations of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*. Thus, I will examine these various responses in order to discuss the cultural dimension embedded in the critical evaluation of this film. I.Q. Hunter and Heidi Kaye note that the meanings which are constituted around texts have "political dimensions" and, as they argue, "we need not only to ask why certain audiences respond to certain texts, but also to explore the implications of the contexts and products of those responses in our culture."<sup>5</sup> Bearing this in mind, I believe that looking at the political dimensions of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* would allow for an insight into the ways in which these reviews framed the film and, more broadly, how social art cinema was perceived accordingly.

### **"Quality Newspapers":**

#### **Depictions of Violence in Contemporary British Gangster Films**

Newspapers such as *The Times* and *The Guardian* argued that *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* brought new trends of violence into contemporary British cinema. In *The Sunday Times*, Bryan Appleyard noted that "in the wake of *Lock, Stock* [and *Two Smoking Barrels*], small, low-budget British films have discovered violence anew."<sup>6</sup> It is generally accepted that the film came to play a part in the revival of the gangster genre after its heyday of 1959 to 1963, as it was followed by other films such as *Circus* (Rob Walker, 2000), *Rancid Aluminium* (Edward Thomas, 2000) and *Gangster No 1* (Paul McGuigan, 2000).<sup>7</sup> What is interesting about Appleyard's comments is his approach to the depiction of violence in *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*. While discussing the film in relation to the British gangster tradition including such films as



*Get Carter* (Mike Hodges, 1971) and *The Long Good Friday* (John Mackenzie, 1981), Appleyard claims that *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* encourages violence:

At a deeper and perhaps more disturbing level, there is a strong stylistic contemporary Britishness about these new-wave gangsters. ... This style relates back to a British tradition of glamorised violence. *The Long Good Friday* and *Get Carter* are powerful films that have directly inspired the present generation of directors, and Lynda La Plant's work still haunts every cop show on television - but it has also left a nasty taste in the mouth.<sup>8</sup>

As can be seen by the term "glamorised," Appleyard asserts that *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* stylises and celebrates violence. He further argues that the questionable morality of the film allows violence to prevail in British society.

Appleyard suggests that "there is a fine line between ordinary street cool and gangster cool. The first is an adolescent neurosis, the second is a criminal psychosis."<sup>9</sup> Then he goes on to argue that *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* "exploits the first by celebrating the second."<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, according to Appleyard, the film makes violence commonplace and acceptable to the viewer.

This point of view that violence is somehow glorified is shared by John Abbott, director general of the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS), who notes that *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* portrays "serious" crime as "a bit of a laugh."<sup>11</sup> It is worth noting here that the "serious" response to the film is grounded in the assumption that the film overly dwells on violence. It means that commentators assume the film engages with issues affecting present day society and people who see the film.<sup>12</sup> Abbott argues that:

These types of films are not new. They come in and out of fashion and

currently they are the vogue. What filmgoers must realise is that the type of people our detectives deal with are vicious and very unpleasant. ... We can't stop people seeing these films, so we must have confidence the audience know the difference.<sup>13</sup>

Abbott also adds that the directors neglect their social role at the expense of commercial success by noting that "filmmakers had forgotten their sense of social responsibility in their desire to make money."<sup>14</sup>

In relation to the issue of violence, Appleyard also criticises the artistic value of the film. Similarly, Abbott notes that contemporary British gangster films project crime and violence through "rose-tinted spectacles."<sup>15</sup> As Appleyard argues, "compared with the American masterpieces of the film noir genre of the 1930s, [contemporary British gangster films] lack the aesthetic sophistication that would give depth to the horrors they depict."<sup>16</sup> He goes on to argue that while classical gangster films including American ones are understood as morally and culturally acceptable, contemporary British gangster films are criticised for their lack of artistic value and also their ability to incite crime. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to examine the critical reception of those classical films approved by Appleyard within the gangster genre at the time of their release. Despite this, I believe that this category of "classic" has been created by contemporary critics. As Steve Chibnall argues:

This type of criticism is rooted in a dubiously monolithic notion of the British crime genre in which a handful of classic films supply a template for future film-making. The perception of the classics themselves is equally *selective* (my italics), filtering the texts for those elements which conform

most closely to the moral convention of retribution for the wrongdoer and the critically valorised tradition of social realism.<sup>17</sup>

This implies that the critical response to *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* indicates the ways in which critics such as Appleyard determine, in the words of Steve Neale, "the production of cultural perspective" towards contemporary British gangster films.<sup>18</sup> This "selective" distinction between the classic and contemporary, to some extent, establishes a certain class distinction with genre films. Thus, the classic becomes the high-end of genre films, and the contemporary is downgraded to the low-end. As Mark Jancovich argues, this class distinction within genre studies comes from "those who wish to distinguish themselves from the consumers of genre films."<sup>19</sup> It is clear that Appleyard reflects his own view of class distinction towards gangster films and, as a result, makes an ideological and aesthetic judgement on contemporary gangster films.

As Steve Chibnall suggests, therefore, perhaps contemporary British gangster films should be understood as embodying two types: "gangster heavy" and "gangster light." According to Chibnall, the former is referred to as a film which employs conventional generic elements of the gangster film and the latter is referred to as a film which deploys stylistic excess and diversity through "post-modern cinematic techniques."<sup>20</sup> "Gangster light" which includes such films as *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, does not appear to engage with social issues on the surface due to their generic and stylistic hybridity. However, unlike Appleyard's view, Chibnall argues that gangster light reflects its social and cultural concerns through "an idealised pastiche of the real."<sup>21</sup> In this respect, Philip Kemp argues that they "implicitly or explicitly" carry an "invigorating sense of social ferment" in British society.<sup>22</sup> Thus, as Claire Monk points out, *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* should be understood in the

context of male culture – "laddism," in the specific context of the 1990s.<sup>23</sup> This suggests that contemporary British gangster films should be understood in terms of their localised influences as well as within the conventional frame of genre.<sup>24</sup> For instance, the "veteran" actor P.H. Moriarty, who appeared in *The Long Good Friday*, performs as porn-king Harry in *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* in a clear pastiche of the older British gangster film. However, as seen earlier, Appleyard appears to focus simply on the genre structure of gangster films and fails to recognise the way in which this particular genre engages with the cultural circumstances of the time.

#### **Film Journals: *Sight and Sound* and *Salon Magazine*<sup>25</sup>**

In the film journals *Sight and Sound* and *Salon Magazine*, the visual style of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* is criticised in a similar manner to that of the newspaper critics. Even though these journals draw more attention to the film's style than the newspaper reviews, their comments are still negative and the film seems to be described pejoratively as a "cool-blooded-cockney" gangster film. In his review for *Sight and Sound*, Danny Leigh claims that *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* "smacks of condescension" noting that it is "high on spectacle, low in identity, the audience is presumed to have a cinematic frame of reference largely confined to Quentin Tarantino."<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Mary Elizabeth Williams in *Salon Magazine* claims that the film's "self-conscious style" makes it "more like corpse-strewn Gap khakis" than visually exciting.<sup>27</sup> In addition, Williams compares "the grainy texture and amber lighting" of the film with "porn films made in the 1970s."<sup>28</sup>

While both reviewers, to an extent, regard the stylistic frame of Tarantino's influence as creative, Ritchie's pastiche is regarded as "non-authentic."<sup>29</sup> For instance,

Williams argues that "while the Hong Kong genre built itself on tortured-yet-wry antiheroes and even *Pulp Fiction* offered a few likeable (if highly strung) doofuses, *Lock, Stock et.al.* suffers from a dearth of sympathetic or even memorable characters." Williams then concludes that "the basic premise [of Ritchie's film], like one of Hatchet Harry's victims, has been beaten to death."<sup>30</sup> Consequently, as Leigh claims, *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* is criticised for its lack of cinematic aesthetics. Referring to Ritchie's previous career as a music-video director, Leigh notes that "the film often appears less a movie and more the work of someone demonstrating a special feature of their new camcorder."<sup>31</sup>

In addition, as can be seen from Danny Leigh's review, the film is derided as failing to represent the real world due to its redundancy of visual images. However, here the question arises as to how the film can represent "London low life" if Leigh insists that the film is hardly realistic. Thus, I would argue that Leigh fails to recognise the elements of locality in British genres while focusing on how local life is represented.

The use of local space in *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* should be understood in terms of British gangster films. As Charlotte Brunsdon argues, British gangster films have two kinds of space: "the generic space of Hollywood and American film-noir with its low key lighting and doom laden plot; and literal space of their English location."<sup>32</sup> This suggests that what characterises this genre of gangster films as British is its use of local space and thus this locality allows audiences to relate themselves, in the words of Vincent Porter, to the "social and psychological realities of their everyday life."<sup>33</sup> For instance, the use of the cockney accent in *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* can be seen as a reflection of locality and an indication of its location, the East end of London, although there is little to confirm this location in its

mise-en-scene. However, considering the international screening of the film, it is not apparent that the cockney accent could be seen as representing the specificity of physical space. In other words, "cockney" might just mean English or British in general rather than East-London, or, as Ritchie notes, simply "the rhyme of poetry."<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, considering the increase in generic and stylistic hybridity in British gangster films,<sup>35</sup> there is a need to discuss how the film's local space is constructed through its visual style.

Relating to the ambiguity of the key local accent, *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* also blurs, to some extent, the specificity of spatial and temporal significance, leaving instead a sense of the "here and now" throughout the film. I would suggest that this sense of "here and now" is a result of generic mixture in the "international pulp" genre, which will be discussed in the following chapter in relation to *Trainspotting*. As David Desser notes, *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* is evidence of the European implant of the "international pulp" genre. By the term "international pulp," Desser refers to films which "derive their structure from combinations of film-noir and gangster films, which revel in stylistic excess and appeal particularly to young audiences."<sup>36</sup> In this respect, it would be useful to compare the spatial use in *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* with the work of Wong Kar-Wai, whose international recognition has been achieved through international pulp. Ackbar Abbas argues that Wong's use of space creates "blind space" in such films as *Chungking Express* (1994), in the sense that "it is a space that is at once very much there (in the effects it can produce) and not there (as directly discernible cause)."<sup>37</sup> This "blind space" dilutes the definition of space and creates "universal" space, and this is one of the reasons why the international pulp genre could appeal to a wide range of audience across countries.

Having acknowledged that "Wong's 'international style' is characteristic of so much transnational cinema of the 1990s,"<sup>38</sup> Julian Stringer notes that the use of a transnational mix of pop music plays a part in his movies appeal to international audiences as well as local audiences. As Stringer argues: "a wide range of music on a soundtrack helps a film travel far and wide. Specifically, Wong's work appears more and more to have one eye on the massively expanding mainland market, and one on the markets created out of the various Chinese diasporic communities active throughout the world."<sup>39</sup> This implies that the use of popular music, especially in relation to the selling of soundtracks, has become a key selling point for contemporary films. However, in his *Sight and Sound* review, Danny Leigh instead criticises the use of music in *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, noting that "while Danny Boyle employed the edgy, sardonic Iggy Pop, Ritchie opts for famously boorish retro-rockers Ocean Color Scene."<sup>40</sup> While valuing the film in terms of its reflection of the external world, Leigh also attempts to find a political meaning from its music. However, I would argue that Leigh neglects the fact that the term "Britpop" became increasingly branded and a trend in the UK and overseas.<sup>41</sup> In other words, the dominance of music in *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* should be understood as a means of expanding its marketability in the era of transnational cinema.

This prominence of music, which Estella Tincknell and Deborah Chambers argue is "given to a soundtrack composed of extradiegetic elements and marketed separately," was a common practice during the 1990s, and foregrounds "spectacle" in such films.<sup>42</sup> For instance, in the card game in *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, the music precedes the image and highlights the dexterity of hand movements rather than what is going on in the game with the characters. There is a moment where one player shows

anger at losing his money and is expelled from the game. Although this might symbolise and anticipate Eddy's failure at the end of the game, it does not have significant narrative meaning since the expelled player has not even been identified and thus has not built up any relationship with the game itself. Before the game moves to a climax - that is to Harry and Eddy's final confrontation - the image no longer has a significant function. Rather the image has become subordinate to the music.

However, this dependence on music hardly means that *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* is any "less a movie," as Leigh argues.<sup>43</sup> This dismissal comes from a belief that cinema has its own aesthetics distinguishable from other visual mediums, which fails to recognise the multifaceted revenues of exhibition. As demonstrated in chapter 5, films are no longer sold only through theatrical release. Steve Chibnall notes this current in terms of "gangster light." As Chibnall argues:

Gangster light is not for solitary spectators, but invites a more gregarious viewing situation in which comments can be exchanged and excesses of style and performance noted. These are the conditions associated with video rental (and, to a lesser extent, the viewing of sell-through video) rather than theatrical exhibition.<sup>44</sup>

What this suggests is that in terms of extended revenues in film consumption, the "gangster light" genre has developed a style which fits into the nature of the mediums through which the genre is most likely to be projected and seen. Chibnall's view also implies that "gangster light" is aimed at a particular target audience. As Claire Monk points out, in the context of the 1990s, the increase of gangster films produced and their excessive style is related to the advent of "an under-25 (implicitly, largely male) audience" as a main audience.<sup>45</sup> In this respect, Monk notes that the failure of *Face*



(Antonia Bird, 1997) is a result of foregrounding "a confused address" of a politicised message in promotion even though the film contains characteristics of Chibnall's "gangster light."<sup>46</sup> Applying this to *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, in the words of Dan Jolin, "Ritchie proves he knows what his audience wants."<sup>47</sup> Referring to Eddy during the card game in *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, a voice-over claims that "he is good at reading people's reaction. Everybody has a reaction." This, in a way, applies to Guy Ritchie because he is certainly adept at anticipating the (target) audience's response - a useful attribute for any filmmaker and tellingly for critics.

### **Film Magazines: Popularisation and Stylisation**

In contrast to film journals, film magazines have given more positive reviews of the film. For instance, in *imagesjournal*, one of the online magazines, Garry Johnson notes that the shades of yellow, brown and grey used to visually enhance *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* make the film "less slick, less premeditated and more spontaneous."<sup>48</sup> In addition, Johnson's response to the depiction of violence appears sympathetic. Johnson notes that "while the movie has a high body count, most of the violence is implied rather than depicted graphically."<sup>49</sup> Considering this difference between the two publications, I will discuss the reviews of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* in the popular UK film magazine *Empire* on the film's cinema, video and DVD release in order to suggest the ways in which the film has been perceived in terms of its style. As *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* is a good example of British social art cinema in the 90s, I would believe that the term British social art cinema can be suggested by the way in which these reviews from popular film magazines frame the film.

The reviews of the film in *Empire* echo the review in *Imagesjournal* in the sense that positive comments on the film's style can be seen as relating to the film's popularity. While newspapers and film journals focus, in particular, upon the film's plot and the amorality of violence, popular film magazines analyse the film's style. As the best selling film magazine in the UK, *Empire* provides a good example for examining why popular magazines analyse *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels'* style more heavily than the film's plot and structure. Reviews of the film appeared on three occasions in *Empire*; on its cinema release, video release and DVD release. The cinema release review is written by Kim Newman, while the video and DVD release reviews are written by Andrew Collins. It is important to note that Kim Newman and Andrew Collins are regular long-term contributors to *Empire*. This means that, as professional critics, they know that the magazine is more interested in popular films than art cinema and they further understand the kind of readers the magazine targets are young cinema-goers and the major customers of video and DVD rental. This implies that even though the three reviews are written by two different reviewers, common debates can be found here on the critical reception of the film with similar frameworks being used to evaluate *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*. Accounting for Tarantino's international reputation as a director of the popular genre, "international pulp," these comments highlight and promote the film as a "British implant" of this genre, as David Desser notes.<sup>50</sup>

Firstly, both reviewers reference Quentin Tarantino when discussing the film's style and the film's depiction of violence. As Collins argues, "incidentally, the body count maybe high, but the actual violence is deceptively tame, and there's your real similarity with Tarantino,"<sup>51</sup> while Newman notes, "of all the recent attempts to put a

Tarantinoid spin on the British gangster movie, this is the freshest and most successful."<sup>52</sup>

Secondly, both reviews focus upon the style of the film rather than simply mentioning the plot and structure. Thus Newman identifies "Ritchie's colour-desaturated style, [and] use of unusual back ground music,"<sup>53</sup> and Collins discusses the film in terms of "Ritchie's exuberant technique [which] employs freeze-frame and slo-mo meaningfully while the elegant sepia look simultaneously disguises the limited locations and muddies the period, adding a fantasy feel."<sup>54</sup> As can be seen, both reviews seem to consider the style of the film, including colour, freeze frame, slo-mo and music, as its main strength. Both reviews mention the comic characters and witty dialogues but only as a way of further analysing the style of the film. Thus, Newman argues that the film's complicated and contrived plot could weaken the impact of the film, but the style is seen as maintaining its impact. As he argues, "it is, at heart, an extended shaggy dog story, as is revealed by snippets of cockney narration that introduce minor characters or prod the plot along, but writer-director Guy Ritchie and his cast have enough freestyle energy and bizarre confidence to get away with it."<sup>55</sup>

However, there is a difference in the evaluation of the film's style between the two reviews. Newman's review, which was published just before the cinema release of the film, gives a rather neutral comment on the style. As Newman argues, "*Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* is too mixed-up to synopsis easily and too rickety to think about closely ... [but] mostly tasteful black comedy gives the whole film the feel of an altered state of *perception* (my italics)."<sup>56</sup> In comparison, the review on the film's video release places far greater emphasis on the style of the film and through this emphasis argues that the film is one of the best examples of modern British cinema. In this respect, the

film's stylistic strength is evaluated in the video release review through the discussion of British cinema in general and the film's place within it. As Collins argues, "[the film's strength] lies in the cohesive whole: stylish, vivacious, witty, smart, energetic ... [and] this glorious *entertainment* (my italics) will restore your faith in industry and country."<sup>57</sup> Collins then upgrades the value of this film to the status of art in his review following its DVD release. As he notes, "there is *art* (my italics) in this bit of fun."<sup>58</sup>

It could be argued here that Collins' confidence in upgrading the film to the status of "art" is based on the film's prior box-office gross and its huge popularity. This implies that by the time Collins wrote the review, it had become obvious that the film proved a significant attraction to audiences. It further suggests that, as a popular magazine reviewer, Collins was aware of the popularity of the film, and could confidently make a strong claim for it through a further emphasis upon its style. In their study of market performance and film critics, Jehoshua Elisahberg and Steven M. Shugan argue that "critics are predictors rather than influencers at the aggregate box office level."<sup>59</sup> With this in mind, I would suggest that Collins' review attempts to clarify the main reason as to why the film could be attractive to audiences.

Even though Newman acknowledges that the stylisation of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* gives an "altered" pleasure, his comment is still too careful to anticipate the success of the film. However, on the other hand, Collins appears convinced that the stylisation of the film drives audiences to attend and appreciate it. As he notes, "our critics loved *Lock, Stock [and Two Smoking Barrels]* - but who trusts them? More importantly, the public loved it."<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, in his review on the film's DVD release, he concludes that "what Guy Ritchie has done with the New Italian Job" is to emphasise "the elegant sepia of J.D's bar; the instinctive game of slowdown and

freeze-frame during three-card brag; and Big Chris's balletic car-door revenge on Dog."<sup>61</sup> He appears to consider the new component of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* derived from *The Italian Job* (Peter Collinson, 1969) as being the film's stylistic excess. Indeed, the scenes Collins references all deploy stylistic excess.

Referencing both *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981) and *The Italian Job*, Collins identifies two different traditions of British cinema, one imbued with national cinema and one with popular cinema, and thus establishes the position of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* in relation to these two notions. As he notes:

There was something off-putting about this film when it came out. ... its imminent arrival was bawled across billboards and the media with an enthusiasm and self-confidence that might have been interpreted as Avengers-style fear of failure. However, British films aren't just released, they are dressed in ceremonial colours and paraded before the world, ambassadors not just for their industry but their country (Blame Colin Welland).<sup>62</sup>

When *Chariots of Fire* won four Oscars in 1982, Colin Welland accepted the award for Best Original Screenplay, famously declaring that "the British are coming!" In the light of the situation in the Falklands, Welland's declaration implied a triumphal nationalism precipitated by the Falklands War. Thus, by placing the film in opposition to an attempt to read films in association with national concerns, Collins can confidently argue that "this glorious entertainment will restore your faith in industry and country. And it was only supposed to blow the bloody doors off."<sup>63</sup>

Given the reviews in *Empire* and elsewhere, it appears that this particular style provides a new component of British popular cinema and an alternative means of

gaining popularity. As Leslie Felperin, editor of *Moving Pictures*, proudly notes, *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* and *Trainspotting* are "two parameters of current British gangster [films]" which show "cinematic inventiveness." Felperin also adds that these films proved that British films "could be quite saucy, forceful, inventive in our style."<sup>64</sup> Similarly, as has been demonstrated, the *Empire* reviews suggest that the popularity of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* depended on the view of British cinema as a popular and stylish cinema rather than as a national cinema which is associated with national or social issues.

### Conclusion

As can be seen from *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, social art cinema of the 1990s, as opposed to the 1980s, amplified the popular aspect of British film over national portrayals through stylistic excess. Moreover, this is something some critics have noticed and picked up on. As many have pointed out, to an extent, this current is related to a desire to define or re-define what Britain meant at a period during which a sense of Britishness was being re-established under the auspices of the New Labour government. Beyond this scope of sociological enclosure, Moya Luckett notes that the increased stylisation of British cinema in the 90s is an expression of the energy, style and sexuality of British culture in the 1990s.<sup>65</sup> Expanding on this, I would suggest the term "new image" to identify a tendency of British cinema which social art cinema of the 90s has developed; namely, the presentation of localised subject matters through stylistic excess.

Steve Chibnall argues that *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* shows that "Britain's filmmakers are not isolated from the aesthetic and narrative trends evident in

international cinema," and, more importantly, that "a distinctive national cinema is still identifiable in the way international influences are applied to texts that are decidedly British in their subject-matter."<sup>66</sup> Therefore, my argument is that British social art cinema of the 1990s was concerned with its visual style in order to establish the "new image" of British cinema as a popular cinema. As can be seen to occur in the case of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* through an analysis of *Empire* reviews, there is a link between popularisation and stylisation in social art cinema of the 1990s.

However, critical reception has not yet established a substantial framework for this new inclination relating to the issue of national and popular cinema. A prominent example can be found in the editorial of *Sight and Sound*. In the November 1998 issue, the editor suggests,

We challenge multiplex exhibitors to take heart from the success of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* and to ditch more of their loss-making studio-quota films in favour of British and other European productions. ... If Blair's government wants to see images of Britain in the world's cinemas, it must encourage culture and commerce together.<sup>67</sup>

*Sight and Sound* appears to believe that what is seen by the nation and gains commercial success represents national cinema. However, this position changes slightly in a subsequent issue. In its December 1998 issue, the editor argues:

The film industry is suffering from a lapse in good-quality product. ... As depressing statistics pile up showing the recent fall back of British movie performance, the media knives are already out for any British movie deemed a commercial failure (especially any that have received lottery funding.)<sup>68</sup> This means everything apart from *Sliding Doors* and *Lock, Stock*

*and Two Smoking Barrels*. Yet, two such commercial hits and a few artistic triumphs - say, *My Name is Joe*, *The General*, *The Wings of the Dove* and *Love is the Devil* - is probably an equivalent success ratio to the Americans.<sup>69</sup>

What is significant in these two articles is that *Sight and Sound* and, more broadly, film criticism in general, seem to continue to revolve around a firm division between "commerce vs. culture." In other words, commerce implies something popular and thus non-authentic, and culture represents something artistic and national. It appears that they have yet to find the way in which to comprehend the notion of national cinema in the context of these new filmmaking conditions. I do not suggest a new distinction to re-define the relationship between the notions of the national and the popular. Rather, I would suggest that while film production moved towards exploring a way to embody the national and popular and to accommodate the market place, critics still reflected a deceptive method of aesthetic judgement in discussing the notion of national cinema.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Toby Miller, "The Film Industry and the Government: 'Endless Mr Beans and Mr Bonds'?" *British Cinema of the 90s*, ed. Robert Murphy (London: BFI, 2000) 41.

<sup>2</sup> Miller 41.

<sup>3</sup> Tom O'Sullivan, "The Entrepreneurs," *Guardian Unlimited* 11 Apr. 1999, 17 Oct. 2000 <<http://www.guardianunlimited.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,3852648,00.html>>.

In this article, Guy Ritchie and Matthew Vaughn were introduced as one of the next generation of the entrepreneurs in UK, with their co-owned production company, Ska Management valued to take half of the £37.5 million which the film has grossed in world-wide sales. They were the only names rooted in the cultural industries among seventeen names.

<sup>4</sup> Details from Box Office Guru, 24 Oct. 2000 <<http://www.boxofficeguru.com>>.

<sup>5</sup> I.Q. Hunter, and Heidi Kaye, eds., introduction, *Trash Aesthetics: Popular Culture and Its Audience* (London: Pluto, 1997) 6.

<sup>6</sup> Bryan Appleyard, "What's so Cool about Gangster Chic?" *Sunday Times* 11 June 2000, sec. 9: 6.

<sup>7</sup> Steve Chibnall, and Robert Murphy, "Parole Overdue: Releasing the British Crime Film into the Critical Community," *British Crime Cinema*, ed. Chibnall and Murphy (London: Routledge, 1999) 12-13.

After this relative slump, however, the British gangster film began to enjoy a revival during the 1980s when the economic policy of the Thatcher government encouraged individuals to construct an economy based on private enterprise.

<sup>8</sup> Appleyard 6.

<sup>9</sup> Appleyard 7.

<sup>10</sup> Appleyard 7.

<sup>11</sup> This article is written by a crime correspondent, Nick Hopkins, "Lock, Stock and Too Much Glamour," *Guardian Unlimited*, 9 Sep. 2000, 17 Oct. 2000 <<http://www.guardianunlimited.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4061358,00html>>.

<sup>12</sup> However, John Abbott was reported to acknowledge that there is no actual evidence to connect the increase of crime and the success of the gangster film. (See Hopkins). This suggests that Abbott's claim is clearly based on his personal view on this genre and on moral responsibility. This response to gangster films in terms of their depiction of violence and their social influence has long existed in Britain. For a related discussion, see Jessica Allen, Sonia Livingstone, and Robert Reiner, "True Lies: Changing Images of Crime in British Postwar Cinema," *European Journal of Communication* 13.1 (1988): 53-75. For a discussion of the moral panic, see also Martin Barker, ed., *The Video Nasties: Freedom and Censorship in the Media* (London: Pluto, 1984).

<sup>13</sup> Hopkins.

<sup>14</sup> Hopkins.

<sup>15</sup> Hopkins.

<sup>16</sup> Appleyard 7.

His placing of film noir into the 1930s as opposed to the 1940s is at odds with the general view.

<sup>17</sup> Steve Chibnall, "Travels in Ladland: The British Gangster Film Cycle 1998-2001," *The British Cinema Book*, ed. Robert Murphy, 2nd ed. (London: BFI, 2001) 282.

<sup>18</sup> Steve Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (London: Routledge, 2000) 228.

<sup>19</sup> Mark Jancovich, "A Real Shocker: Authenticity, Genre and the Struggle for Distinction," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 14.1 (2000): 26.

<sup>20</sup> Chibnall, "Travels in Ladland" 283.

<sup>21</sup> Chibnall, "Travels in Ladland" 283.

He argues that "the most crucial characterisation of 'gangster light' is what we might call its 'faux-ness.' This is not used in the pejorative sense in which 'fake' is used, implying an attempt to be authentic, but as a word to describe an idealised pastiche of the real which is willingly, and even enthusiastically, legitimated by the viewer." (283).

A similar approach can be found in Scott Bukatman's study of Science Fiction films. The overwhelming visual effects of sci-fi make the scene spectacular and the spectacular is a main form of entertainment in this genre. Bukatman compared the audience's relationship with this visual power to "the sublime."

Bukatman argues that "the spectacle was a simulacrum of reality, but spectators were not duped by these

illusions ... Some pleasure, however, clearly derived from responding to these entertainment *as if they were real*. ... The overwhelming perceptual power granted by these panoramic displays addressed the perceived loss of cognitive power experienced by the subject in an increasingly technologized world. ... the sublime became an important mode for these mareoramas, landscape paintings, stereoscopic views and science-fiction films." (249-250). According to Bukatman, while the sublime experience is related to the audiences' sensation, it conducts a different illusion from one of verisimilitude. Thus, the sublime experience completes the filmic world as a "phenomenal world," which is separated from reality. ("The Artificial Infinite: On Special Effects and The Sublime," ed. Annette Kuhn, *Alien Zone II: The Spaces of Science Fiction Cinema* (London: Verso, 1999) 249-275).

<sup>22</sup> Philip Kemp, "New Maps of Albion," *Film Comment* 35.3 (1999): 66.

<sup>23</sup> Claire Monk, "From Underworld to Underclass: Crime and British Cinema in the 1990s," Chibnall and Murphy 172-88.

<sup>24</sup> Moya Luckett, "Image and Nation in 1990s British Cinema," Murphy 88-89.

<sup>25</sup> I do not pretend to argue that these two journals represent journal criticism. However, these publications share a similar editorial attitude (highbrow film criticism) which differs from popular film magazines. *Sight and Sound* introduces *Salon Magazine* as an on-line journal of "serious" writing on cinema. After pointing out the dominant obsession of film magazines with the life styles of celebrities, *Sight and Sound* has commented that an on-line journal like *Salon Magazine* can be an alternative to "first class, authoritative and thoughtful writing" on cinema. (Kate Stables, "Information Overload," *Sight and Sound* 9.3 (1999) Mediawatch'99: 4). Thus, I believe that looking at reviews in the two journals will demonstrate the critical reception of the film.

<sup>26</sup> Danny Leigh, rev. of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, dir. Guy Ritchie, *Sight and Sound* 8.9 (1998): 47.

<sup>27</sup> Mary Elizabeth Williams, rev. of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, dir. Guy Ritchie, *Salon Magazine* 5 Mar. 1999, 22 Oct. 2000 <<http://www.salon.com/ent/movies/reviews/1999/03/05reviewc.html>>.

<sup>28</sup> Williams.

<sup>29</sup> Leigh 47.

<sup>30</sup> Williams.

<sup>31</sup> Leigh 47.

<sup>32</sup> Charlotte Brunson, "Space in the British Crime Film," Chibnall and Murphy 148.

<sup>33</sup> Vincent Porter, "Between Structure and History: Genre in Popular British Cinema," *Journal of Popular British Cinema* 1 (1998): 34.

<sup>34</sup> "I Love 1998," BBC 2, 17 May 2003.

This use of local language can also be found in Ritchie's second film, *Snatch* (2000). Mickey (Brad Pitt) speaks inscrutable Irish in *Snatch*. Yet, it is presumably not clearly evident, even for British audience that Mickey is an Irish-gypsy figure. In *Snatch*, Mickey is a duplicitous character who combines Brad Pitt's star image and his cinematic persona in *Fight Club* (David Fincher, 1999).

<sup>35</sup> John Hill, "Allegorising the Nation: British Gangster Films of the 1980s," Chibnall and Murphy 160.

<sup>36</sup> David Desser, "New Kids on the Street: The Pan-Asian Film," Sir Stanley Thomlison Memorial Lecture, U of Nottingham, Nottingham, 21 Feb. 2001.

<sup>37</sup> Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Cultural and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997) 53.

<sup>38</sup> Julian Stringer, "Wong Kar-Wai," *Fifty Key Contemporary Filmmakers*, ed. Yvonne Tasker (London, Routledge, 2001) 397.

<sup>39</sup> Stringer 389.

<sup>40</sup> Leigh 47.

<sup>41</sup> See David Hesmondhalgh, "British Popular Music and National Identity," *British Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kevin Robins (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001) 273-86.

<sup>42</sup> Estella Tincknell, and Deborah Chambers, "Performing the Crisis: Fathering, Gender, and Representation in Two 1990s Films," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 29.4 (2002): 51.

<sup>43</sup> Leigh 47.

<sup>44</sup> Chibnall, "Travels in Ladland" 283.

<sup>45</sup> Monk 176.

<sup>46</sup> Monk 183.

<sup>47</sup> Dan Jolin, rev. of *Snatch*, dir. Guy Ritchie, *Total Film* Oct. 2000: 81.

<sup>48</sup> Garry Johnson, rev. of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, dir. Guy Ritchie, *Imagesjournal* 21 Oct. 2000 <<http://www.imagesjournal.com/issue08/reviews/lockstock/text.html>>.

<sup>49</sup> Johnson.

<sup>50</sup> Desser.

The similarities between the work of Ritchie and Tarantino are frequently discussed; twisted narrative structure, use of extradiegetic music and a mixture of various cinematic techniques and special effects. However, as Gary Johnson argues, Ritchie takes a more openly humorous approach. (See Johnson). Ritchie also willingly acknowledges his intention to take a humorous approach noting that "I found comedy and violence entertaining." ("Big Shot," Channel 4, 27 Oct. 2001). The use of comic elements can be seen in terms of the influence of 80s British gangster films such as *A Prayer For The Dying* (Mike Hodges, 1988) and *The Long Good Friday*. As John Hill argues, furthermore, the "extensive use of cinematic illusion and pastiche" plays a part in creating a comic mood in the film. (Hill 166-67). For example, the scene in which the burglars, Harry and Barry the Baptist kill each other is similar to the last gun fight in the Western and Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* (1992).

<sup>51</sup> Andrew Collins, video rev. of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, dir. Guy Ritchie, *Empire Online* 1 Mar. 1999, 4 Apr. 2001 <<http://www.empireonline/review.asp?id=4482&ss>>.

<sup>52</sup> Kim Newman, rev. of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, dir. Guy Ritchie, *Empire Online* Sep. 1998, 4 Apr. 2001 <<http://www.empireonline/review.asp?id=1709&ss>>.

<sup>53</sup> Newman.

<sup>54</sup> Collins.

<sup>55</sup> Newman.

<sup>56</sup> Newman.

<sup>57</sup> Collins.

<sup>58</sup> Andrew Collins, DVD rev. of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, dir. Guy Ritchie, *Empire Online* 1 Apr. 1999, 4 Apr. 2001 <<http://www.empireonline/review.asp?id=4529&ss>>.

<sup>59</sup> Jehoshua Elisahberg, and Steven M. Shugan, "Film Critics: Influencers or Predictors?" *Journal of Marketing* 61.2 (1997): 77.

<sup>60</sup> Collins, video rev.

<sup>61</sup> Collins, dvd rev.

<sup>62</sup> Collins, video rev.

<sup>63</sup> Collins, video rev.

<sup>64</sup> "Big Shots."

<sup>65</sup> Moya Luckett, "Image and Nation in 1990s British Cinema," Murphy 88.

<sup>66</sup> Chibnall, "Travels in Ladland" 289.

<sup>67</sup> "Diversity Challenge," editorial, *Sight and Sound* 8.11(1998): 3.

<sup>68</sup> For instance, see Jacques Peretti, "Shame of a Nation," *Guardian* 26 May 2000, Friday review: 2-3.

<sup>69</sup> "How Bad is It?" editorial, *Sight and Sound* 8.12 (1998): 5.

## Chapter 7. Towards a Global Audience:

### *Trainspotting*, Localised Subject Matter and Globalised Image

In her study of the localisation of British cinema in the mid-1990s, Julia Hallam argues that this mode of localisation can be seen as "flexible specialisation" in globalised cultural industries.<sup>1</sup> By the term flexible specialisation, Hallam is referring to those films that are associated with the projection of local characters, dialogues and places. Such films would include *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1996) and *Twin Town* (Kevin Allen, 1997). While cultural industries have become globalised and, thus, homogenised, contemporary British cinema has specialised its marketability with an emphasis on the regional. As Hallam argues, flexible specialisation is a mode which "stresses the importance of localised production complexes" in a homogenised image market.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, according to Hallam, this tendency is related to the multi-nationalisation of cultural industries in production and distribution. In other words, in the global economics of a post-modern society, while the national origin of a cultural product is marginalised, the locality of a cultural product has become a means to distinguish a product in the international market. Hallam goes on to argue that flexible specialisation stems from the tendency

[to] side-step the growing role of the cultural industries at the regional level in post-industrial societies throughout Europe which are seeking to develop their own urban regeneration policies and initiative. In spite of the homogenising tendencies of the global image market, it is not possible to eradicate or transcend difference at the national and regional level.<sup>3</sup>

What this suggests is that the active involvement of regional bodies in the cultural industries places an emphasis on selling their products to both the international and the home markets. As demonstrated in chapter 3, the involvement of regional bodies with media production in Britain during the 1990s appeared as a financial involvement and what resulted was the production of specific local or national identities.

This mode of flexible specialisation is such because the specificity of locality can only be understood in relation to the globalisation of the image market. Since cultural industries have become globalised at the level of distribution and exhibition as well as financial structure, this newly-formed dynamic has resulted in "*re-localisation*."<sup>4</sup> Globalisation is about both blurring spatial boundaries and re-forming them, and, therefore, local/national spaces have re-configured their provincial identities in the context of the newly-formed dynamics of globalisation.<sup>5</sup> In order to sustain local identity within a globalised space, regions needed to establish local infrastructure in terms of local economics. In addition, the local/national was needed to establish the specificity of the place in order to attract financial investment. In this respect, globalisation can, according to Kevin Robins, be understood as "inserting a multiplicity of localities into the overall picture of a new global system."<sup>6</sup> Flexible specialisation in British filmmaking has arisen from funding schemes and training programmes which were organised by regional bodies.<sup>7</sup> As a result, as I demonstrated in chapter 3, in order to win competitive funding schemes filmmakers tended to link themselves to social history of the place from which the film's funding had emerged.<sup>8</sup>

Bearing this in mind, flexible specialisation *intends* to project specific localities and communities. In order to secure the financial involvement of local/regional bodies, contemporary British films have, more often than not, become associated with local

places, as well as local dialects, local events and local characters. However, as Hallam argues, this tendency toward the regional does not mean "the renaissance of local culture" as an opposition to homogenised global culture.<sup>9</sup> Instead, the visual representation of locality in contemporary British films is more concerned with the projection of a specific place in order to appeal to investors, rather than as a reflection of local culture.<sup>10</sup> In proposing that local culture is "overshadowed by an emergent world culture and by the resilience of national and nationalist culture," Hallam understands flexible specialisation as a reformation of a local economy in the context of a globalised economy.<sup>11</sup> While the local economy is likely to survive in the new global context, local culture could diminish because of a dominant global image culture. To Hallam, the emphasis on locality, as opposed to local culture, represented through the mode of flexible specialisation in such films as *Twin Town*, presents something which is antiquated and anachronistic. Hallam asserts that "*Twin Town*, like *Trainspotting*, treats images of national identity as impoverished signifiers of a bankrupt culture that has difficulty adjusting to forces of modernisation and change."<sup>12</sup>

However, Hallam's arguments neglect the ways in which flexible specialisation has established a national image culture through visualisation, that is, something which complicates the notion of a global image culture. As a result of this, the use of local space in contemporary British film has expanded its expressiveness beyond the notion of locality. Hence, this chapter will examine the ways in which *Trainspotting* has established a new image culture in British filmmaking and expanded British film's spatial boundaries through the visualisation of space. In this respect, *Trainspotting* has been specifically chosen because, through its national and international success, the film demonstrates the potential of regional filmmaking in Scotland and Britain, while at the

same time combining both globalised image and localised subject matter in contemporary British film.

### **Globalised Image and Localised Subject Matter**

In an interview with Geoffrey Macnab before the national release of *Trainspotting* in 1996, Danny Boyle noted that "we<sup>13</sup> wanted the film to have a vibrancy - a humour, an outrageousness, we always wanted it to be *larger than life* really (my italics). You can get away with so much with humour, smuggle so much in."<sup>14</sup> Here, it is worth looking at the way in which Boyle and his team have introduced the notion of being "larger than life" into *Trainspotting*. The term allows for a discussion of the ways in which *Trainspotting* expands the spatial boundaries of Scotland/ Edinburgh through excessive visualisation, transforming local space into a universal space creating an international as well as national appeal. It is generally argued that *Trainspotting* has had a major impact upon contemporary British cinema.<sup>15</sup> However, this evaluation is not based on *Trainspotting's* shocking and provocative subject matter, but, rather it stems from the film's distinct visual aesthetics.<sup>16</sup> Subsequently, this raises the question as to how the visual aesthetics of *Trainspotting* work in relation to the film's controversial subject matter.

Arguably, *Trainspotting* has developed a spatial anonymity through visual excess, while the spatial locality (Scotland/Edinburgh) is apparent through dialogue, subtitles and local events. For example, Renton (Ewan McGregor) moves down to London to escape from his junkie lifestyle, the spatial transformation from Edinburgh to London is clearly presented through the change of location. This is not to say that there is no allusion to locality in *Trainspotting*. Rather, due to the spatial construction of the film,

the filmic space becomes "a form of spectacle" without the context of spatial identity.<sup>17</sup> Thus, in *Trainspotting*, the spatial identity of the local place (Scotland) is diminished - or, at the very least, weakened. The film's opening sequence can be seen as a clear case in point because it deploys spatial discontinuity which is visible rather than invisible, leaving spatial shifts out of narrative logic. In so doing, the film creates the anonymity of space so that the identity of the pro-filmic space (Scotland) becomes a diegetic space that connotes a meaning or meanings. Richard Maltby and Ian Craven suggest that cinematic space plays a part in making meaning in film through "the displacement between represented space and expressive space."<sup>18</sup> According to Maltby and Craven, filmic space is an important element in constructing meanings in accordance with other filmic elements such as framing, lighting, mise-en-scene, which all contribute to spatial construction. Hence, space connotes the meaning which amplifies the story.<sup>19</sup> They argue that "in the communication between a visual entertainment medium and its audiences its [spatial presentation] role is a crucial one," and thus, "a richer understanding about how filmic meaning is constructed can be obtained by examining its visual discourse rather than by presuming that its meaning is located solely in plot and dialogue."<sup>20</sup>

*Trainspotting* begins with Mark Renton and Spud (Ewen Bremner) running along a street in order to escape the store detectives who are pursuing them. By the time a speeding car from a side road suddenly crosses Renton's path, it is not clear what is happening. (This narrative event is put into chronological order later in the film). Renton then stands up, looks at the shocked driver, and laughs defiantly. Renton seems to enjoy the chaos around him as if his desperate running away was nothing. Then the title "Renton" appears on his cynical laughing face. This indicates the subject of the



voice-over, which as well as the subject's name was introduced from the film's first shot. From this point onwards, spatial continuity is disrupted. The opening sequence can be divided up as follows:

Shot 1. Street (Renton in medium still shot)

Shot 2. A place (Renton in medium shot)

Shot 3. A place (the same place as shot 2, Renton in full shot)

Shot 4. Insert (speedy tracking shot)

<Football pitch > - Sequence 1

Shot 5. Pitch (Renton in close up)

Shot 6. A place (Renton in medium shot)

Shot 7. Pitch (Renton in knee shot)

Shot 8. A place (Renton in full shot)

Shot 9. Pitch (Renton in full shot)

Shot 10. A place (Renton in close-up)

Shot 11. Swanney's flat

< Sick boy, Spud, Allison and Renton drugging in Swanney's flat > - Sequence 2

Shot 12. A place (Renton in full shot)

< Begbie, Tommy and Renton's parents > - Sequence 3

Shot 13. A place (Renton in close-up)

Soon after the identity of Renton is clarified by the name title, Renton's medium shot in the street (Shot 1) is displaced by Renton in another place (Shot 2). Sometime later this place is revealed as Swanney's flat. However, here this shot transition breaks spatial continuity spontaneously and creates a sense of the anonymity of space. The football pitch scene then follows Renton's single shot. Up to this point, three different spaces

have been introduced into the film. However, due to temporal and spatial continuity being disrupted, mainly by editing, in these scenes, represented space is transformed into expressive space.

It is interesting to look at the relationship between shot transition and spatial discontinuity in this opening sequence. As can be seen from the table, Renton's medium still shot in the street (Shot 1) is displaced by Renton in medium shot in another place (Shot 2) which is disclosed as being Swanney's flat where Renton and his mates do drugs in Shot 13. It is a very confusing shot transition, not merely because of the anonymity of the places, but also because of the discontinuity of space caused by speedy and dynamic editing. The shot then cuts to Renton in full shot in the same place (Shot 3). From this full shot, the place (Swanney's flat) becomes characterised (expressive space) by coloured lighting and a presentation of bare mise-en-scene. The flat is very sparse and gloomy. With the usual space thus established, it is then subject to an engagement with a narrative event which helps to develop the film's story. However, this shot is followed by a speedy tracking insert shot (Shot 4). This rapid spatial shift disturbs the perception of space and, to some extent, highlights the anonymity of the space shown previously. The space that Renton is in (Shots 2 and 3) has an unclear relationship with the previous shot as well as the following sequence. As Maltby and Craven discuss, this shot transition and the spatial disruption that results, still "offers us information about a new plot development [and] the mild sense of displacement produced by the change of view is itself displaced into an act of interpretation at the level of character, action, or story."<sup>21</sup>

Thus, I would argue that this shot transition is effective in motivating spatial shift. In this sense, voice-over can be referred to as a kind of motivation. In Shot 2, Renton's

voice-over - "Choose good health, low cholesterol and dental insurance. Choose fixed-interest mortgage repayment. Choose a starter home." - overlaps during the shot transition, and seems to motivate the shot transition, particularly as Renton is by now under the effects of Ecstasy. With the mise-en-scene creating a bare, dark and dirty atmosphere, this shot illustrates that Renton's life-style is the exact opposite of the one he is describing. With the tirade of "Choose your friends. Choose leisurewear and matching luggage. Choose a three-piece suite on hire purchase in a range of fucking fabrics. Choose DIY and wondering who the fuck you are on a Sunday morning," in Shots 3 to 4, the voice-over again contributes to the shot transition. While the rant continues, Renton's friends - Sick boy, Begbie, Spud and Tommy are introduced in the same way as Renton has been introduced earlier, with each character's image being accompanied by a name title. The behaviour and clothes of Renton and his friends are distinct from the other footballers. The players represent those who have the kind of life-style that Renton's voice-over evokes. Relatively speaking, it is apparent that Renton and his friends do not have this kind of lifestyle and that the voice-over fills the gap of spatial discontinuity through specific thematic cues.

Unlike classical Hollywood conventions, this voice-over does not simply function as a cue to develop narrative and make a spatial shift imperceptible.<sup>22</sup> Space is one of three systems of classical Hollywood style, along with narrative logic and time, and these three factors can create diverse and complex relationships of meaning by being used in different formations. However, the most powerful of these three systems is narrative logic. As classical narrative aims to create narrative continuity, the other systems, that is time and space, are subordinate to the same principle. As a result, filmic space usually has little connotation in and of itself and is generally subordinated to

causal chains of narrative. Making continuity of image limits the possibilities of diverse visual discourses at the expense of the flow of narrative and, in this sense, blocks various discourses that a combination of narrative and image could potentially create.

Rather than being used to allow spatial continuity, in the opening sequence of *Trainspotting*, voice-over emphasises the discontinuity of space and disrupts the unification of spaces into diegetic space. Here it is worth noting feminist approaches to the ideological function of sound, and voice-over as a component of sound. Mary Ann Doane points out that film sound has traditionally been dominated by male characters that impose a male perspective on an image. She also argues that voice-over de-articulates the engagement between male characters and diegetic space. This is because voice-over comes from non-diegetic space and thus lacks significance in space and time. Subsequently, voice-over introduces direct communication with an image because it is subject to an involvement with that image.<sup>23</sup> The anonymity of space in Shots 2, 3, 6, 8, 10 and 12 is therefore likely to disrupt spatial articulation. Thus, even though the agency of voice-over is clearly Renton, the voice-over arguably becomes disembodied because of the anonymity of space.

This is applicable to the use of voice-over in *Trainspotting's* opening sequence. Shot 12, in particular, demonstrates this effect of diegetic space and voice-over. After Sick boy, Spud, Alison and Swanney have injected themselves (Sequence 2), there is a cut to a full shot of Renton lying down on the floor (Shot 12). Before Shot 12, other shots are shown, what we call, in classical style, such as shot/reverse shot, eye match, medium waist, or full shot. Then, Renton's voice-over overlaps into Shot 12, stating "the only drawback, or at least the principal drawback, is that you have to endure all manner of cunts telling you that." By the time the voice-over finishes, the "cunts" (Begbie,

Tommy and Renton's parents) comments follow. The spatial relationship between Shot 12 and Sequences 2 and 3 is apparently discontinuous. In fact, Renton is in the same space in Shot 12 as Sequence 2, as has been mentioned. In Sequence 3, we see Renton in his parents' house. This makes spatial relationships even more complicated. While the previous Sequences 1 and 2 have the origin of sound - or voice - in diegetic space, Shot 12 does not. Hence, the agency of voice-over is distanced from represented space (physical space) and linked with expressive space, where excessive images are constructed through exuberant music, speedy editing, and what Danny Boyle aptly terms, "noir lighting in colour."<sup>24</sup> This draws attention to space itself and image in space, rather than actual events in each space. Thus, fracturing space through spatial discontinuity builds up its own dynamics, which creates its own discourse. As a result, space defines itself through these dynamics.<sup>25</sup>

What such an analysis of the film's opening sequence suggests is that *Trainspotting* visualises its physical space. As Jeffrey Sconce argues, when the redundancy of image reveals the "material identity" of film, such a visual image becomes "the primary focus of textual attention" (visual pleasure), instead of being "invisible in service of the diegesis."<sup>26</sup> In terms of its visualisation of space, the film is a successor to the tradition of British New Wave films of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Films such as *Room at the Top* (Jack Clayton, 1958) and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (Karel Reisz, 1960) have prompted discussion concerning the visualisation of cities in British cinema.<sup>27</sup> For instance, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* was located in Nottingham and the city itself was represented through an iconography of class issues, youth culture and modernisation.<sup>28</sup>

While the social concerns of New Wave films introduced a political agenda into

the processes of the nation's economic and cultural modernisation, its aesthetics have also provided a potential for visualisation in the British realist film. Influenced by European art cinema of the 1960s as well as the British documentary tradition,<sup>29</sup> the New Wave films took account of the aesthetic concerns of poetic realism and developed a self-conscious stylistic discourse.<sup>30</sup> In so doing, the landscape of cities has been frequently foregrounded. In terms of narrative logic, the frequent insertion of landscape is redundant because of its lack of narrative motivation and relatively long temporal duration. Thus, the landscape of cities becomes visual pleasure and spectacle.

Andrew Higson argues that "the self-conscious aestheticization of the landscape erases the danger, the traces of the otherness, rendering it an exotic and spectacular landscape like so many other landscapes with which 'we' are familiar."<sup>31</sup> What this suggests is that the identity of the place in New Wave films becomes abstract, ceasing its physical identity and obtaining universality through visualisation. Higson goes on to suggest that:

The city, apparently a place of poverty and squalor, becomes photogenic and dramatic. In becoming the spectacular object of a diegetic and spectatorial gaze-something precisely 'to-be-looked-at' - it is emptied of socio-historical signification in a process of romanticization, aestheticization (even humanization). [Therefore] this production of the city *as image* undercuts the moral sanction which authorizes our gaze at it, and at the same time tends to *separate* the protagonist from the space which defines it.<sup>32</sup>

Applying Higson's assertion to *Trainspotting*, since the city of Edinburgh<sup>33</sup> displayed such *an image*, the film does not primarily engage with traditional imagery relating to the city - that is, Celtic romanticism or Tatanism,<sup>34</sup> and de-authorises socio-historical

signification. This is not to say that there is no Scottish identity expressed in the film; nor is it to say that the film does not engage with any socio-historical discourse regarding place. These are both present. For instance, Renton and his mates go to the countryside, dragged by Tommy who appreciates the glory of the Scottish landscape. However, the others are unimpressed, and Renton in frustration shouts to Tommy who is seen in the distance of an extreme long shot of the landscape: "I don't hate the English. They're just wankers. We can't even pick a decent, healthy culture to be colonised by... What does that make us?" This scene touches on notions of Scottish nationalism and identity<sup>35</sup> and, as mentioned earlier, the film tends to foreground a physical representation of Scotland. Despite this, visual exuberance de-authorises socio-historical signification to a large extent and, as a result, *Trainspotting* has introduced a new image for Scotland and the Scottish which is in opposition to the stereotypical one.

In addition to *Trainspotting*, many Scottish films made in the 1990s played a part in presenting a new image of the local through the visualisation of place. These include *Shallow Grave* (made in 1995 by the Boyle, Macdonald, Hodge trio of *Trainspotting*), *My Name is Joe* (Ken Loach, 1998) and *Ratcatcher* (Lynne Ramsay, 1999).<sup>36</sup> In contrast, and to reiterate my previous point, Hallam claims that 90s British films such as *Trainspotting* and *Twin Town* presented "images of national identity as impoverished signifiers of a bankrupt culture that has difficulty adjusting to forces of modernisation and change."<sup>37</sup> I would argue that Hallam fails to consider that, as I have demonstrated through the above analysis of *Trainspotting*, excessive visualisation allows localised subject matters to expand beyond the boundaries of a specific region and consequently attract broader audiences.

Flexible specialisation is not only about adopting localised subject matter, but also

about adapting to a global image culture.<sup>38</sup> David Desser proposes that there has been a mode of cinematic internationalisation since the smash-hit *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994), and that this mode of "international style" has achieved youth-cult status on a global level. This international style can be summarised through the work of such internationally acclaimed directors as Quentin Tarantino, Kitano Takeshi and Wong Kar-Wai. What these directors' films have in common is excessive visualisation that attracts international youth audiences.<sup>39</sup> As Petrie points out, *Trainspotting* is frequently linked to the style of Tarantino because of its use of "excess including temporal manipulation, intrusive editing, freeze frames, split screening and on-screen subtitles."<sup>40</sup> The Boyle, Macdonald, Hodge trio also acknowledge their awareness of youth audiences in making *Shallow Grave* and *Trainspotting* suggesting that *Trainspotting* has illustrated how localisation and globalisation can be achieved in contemporary British cinema. Indeed, after enjoying international recognition, *Trainspotting* was followed by other successful films such as *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (Guy Ritchie, 1998) and *Human Traffic* (Justin Kerrigan, 1999).

### **"The Commodification of Place"<sup>41</sup>: The Local as Commodity**

With the local as a commodity (as a profitable product) aimed at a global audience, what *Trainspotting* indicates is "the commodification of place" in a postmodern global context. By looking at the ways in which *Trainspotting* is produced, promoted and consumed, the film can be seen to demonstrate a way of the local being positioned within global culture in terms of cultural production. As Kevin Robins argues, this signifies the idea that the local is "a relational and relative concept within a global-local nexus."<sup>42</sup> Cultural production has become transnationalised and



multinationalised in the sense that the economic structure of the cultural industries has made it difficult to clarify and denote the national origin of products. In addition, the internationalisation of economic structure has effected the form of cultural production, with the local becoming a means to specify the particularity of a product. This resulted from the desire of local bodies to promote locality in order to attract investors. For instance, Wright, Johnston & Mackenzie (a firm of Scottish Solicitors based in Glasgow) include a section called Creative Industries on its web site, which emphasises the firm's expertise in the film industry.<sup>43</sup> The site promotes the firm's close relationship with the Glasgow Film Fund (since its inception in 1993) and the Glasgow Film Office (since 1997) with a number of films the company was associated with clearly foregrounded, including *Shallow Grave*, *Small Faces* (Gillies MacKinnon, 1996) and *My Name is Joe*.<sup>44</sup> Such an emphasis shows the extent to which local businesses are linked with the cultural industries in terms of economics.

In addition, there has been an increasing awareness of the visualisation of the local in promoting itself in cultural products, especially in commercial films. GFF's (Glasgow Film Fund) preference for feature films, as well as their intention to theatrically release films when selecting their first investment, indicates local governments' willingness to pursue broad distribution. The body awarded £1 million to *Shallow Grave* (with Channel 4 being a major inward investor).<sup>45</sup> The unexpected success of *Shallow Grave* gave Scottish film bodies confidence and money to invest in their next project, *Trainspotting*, which was made by the same team who had made *Shallow Grave*. *Trainspotting* became a massive hit in the home and international markets, and without overly romanticising Scotland showed the potential for locally produced films to be international hits.<sup>46</sup> After these two projects, Scotland became a

*place* to make films. Local government's support for regional filmmaking has not only appeared in the form of financial input, but also in the form of providing services and local facilities. For instance, Glasgow City Council provides police service for parking and traffic management for exterior filming in the city and it is also willing to make necessary locations available. A statement of intent from the Council included the following: "other than exceptional circumstances and unless law is being violated, *no* (my italics) Council official shall refuse to permit production companies the use of public facilities because the official does not approve of the script."<sup>47</sup> This demonstrates the extent to which regional governments encourage and nurture regional filmmaking.

This local funding scheme expanded further and became more favourable towards feature films and short film schemes. In particular, Scottish funding bodies wanted to attract non-Scottish (outside) filmmakers and producers, including Hollywood-based directors, to come and make their films in Scotland. As a result, in 1995 Ken Loach and producer Sally Hibbin came to Glasgow and filmed the critically acclaimed *Carla's Song*.<sup>48</sup> To date, Loach and Hibbin's London-based production company, Parallax Pictures have made four feature films in Scotland. However, when the big-budget Hollywood epic *Braveheart* (Mel Gibson, 1995) was partly shot in Ireland (in spite of its subject matter), Scottish funding bodies recognised a need for an efficient and integrated system. Consequently, in April 1997, an amalgamation of four organisations (the Scottish Film Council, Scottish Film Production Fund, Scottish Broadcast and Film Training and Scottish Screen Locations), Scottish Screen was founded and the body announced a studio plan in Glasgow. This plan was initiated by Sony, who were looking to get involved in filmmaking in Europe, Scottish-born actor Sean Connery (whose Fountainbridge Films had a deal with Sony), and the then-chairman of Scottish Screen

and director of Phoenix Pictures (part of Sony), James Lee.<sup>49</sup>

Inspired by the success in Scotland, Northern Ireland began to encourage filmmaking. The Northern Ireland Film Commission (NIFC) launched a £575,000 development fund for a film and television drama series in 1997. What is especially interesting about the NIFC's scheme is that the body's decision for selecting projects is dependent on the way in which Northern Ireland is portrayed on screen. Even though the money came wholly from the European Union's Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, the NIFC also emphasised that the fund was open to any producer in the world and not confined to just British or European filmmakers.<sup>50</sup> This indicates the concern of local bodies in enhancing the visualisation of place.

The willingness of councils and authorities to be involved in filmmaking allows local bodies to establish an infrastructure for a cultural industry by attracting filmmakers to the city, which in turn aids the local economy. Indeed, as can be seen from the case of Wright, Johnston & Mackenzie, filmmaking can create economic synergy at a local level. This collaboration also promises to generate an image of a particular place (presumably a "positive" image of the city in question) through the national and international distribution of regional films. In this respect, the local can be seen as an attraction for tourists and a place for investment.<sup>51</sup> It would appear, then, that regional authorities expect to benefit economically through filmmaking, though not through a primary cost-benefit result. For example, the GFF recuperated 240% of its budget with the production of *Shallow Grave*, but this is the only film with which the body has recuperated its losses up to the present time. However, it is not just economic factors I am concerned with: cultural matters should also be considered, as the reconstruction of global space is as much about, in the words of Robins, "imaging

space" as it is about economic space.<sup>52</sup>

While localities need to attract investment in order to cope with the global economy, local governments intend to promote a clear local identity and a distinct positive image, what Robins refers to as "the quality of life of particular places."<sup>53</sup> The geographic transformation of economics has enhanced a "deterritorialization" of culture, and because of this, cultural identity is no longer defined in association with place as much as it used to be. Thus, while culture (global image culture) is homogenised, the specificity of local culture becomes of interest.<sup>54</sup> Rather than being given a single national identity, popular culture produces a multiple cultural identity through localised products. People experience a diverse and specific local culture through cultural products and their appreciation and interpretation is linked with their specific socio-historical locales.<sup>55</sup> What this denotes is that the local is actually given a space to establish its identity rather than it being dominated by a pre-determined national identity. Furthermore, there has been a need to construct a national identity which reflects the cultural hybridity of the nation through the representation of local culture. This move towards a representation of hybridity is significant not only in the context of a nation, but also in the context of the local. For instance, contemporary Scottish films have brought diverse (and therefore, to a larger extent, new) perceptions about Scotland and Scottish identity through the international success of especially *Trainspotting*.<sup>56</sup> In so doing, this new identity through visualisation of place is sold in the global market through international distributors.<sup>57</sup>

This newly-created identity through the visualisation of a specific locale is aimed at global audiences as well as local ones. In the process of regional filmmaking in the global market, the actual subject matter of a film is not the main concern, since

circulating regional films (reaching as many audiences as possible) is what regional bodies are actually interested in (as Danny Boyle points out).<sup>58</sup> For instance, *Twin Town* was premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in Utah, before being screened at the Berlin Film Festival.<sup>59</sup> Interestingly, this particular instance of massive promotion was organised partly by the film's main financier, PolyGram Filmed Entertainment. Indeed, international film festival circuits are something regional film bodies highlight as a means to promote local-based films aimed at a global market. Consequently, regional film bodies tend to prefer projects which have secured distribution deals or are more likely to get a wide distribution, as discussed in chapter 3.

I would argue that *Trainspotting*, with its localised spatial configuration, has successfully communicated itself to an international audience. As Duncan Petrie points out, *Trainspotting*, as well as its predecessor *Shallow Grave*, has positioned Scotland in the realm of the global cultural industries, or, at the very least, within the realm of UK filmmaking:

As images of contemporary Scotland they [*Trainspotting* and *Shallow Grave*] had little direct connections with established cinematic or televisual traditions, rejecting both Celtic romanticism and naturalistic grit. *Trainspotting* in particular had forged a new sophisticated urban aesthetic, the combination of a young cast, edgy subject-matter, vibrant colours, visual pyrotechnics and a pounding soundtrack a direct allusion to the sensory pleasures of club culture, a major influence also on the Scottish novels of both Welsh and Alan Warner.<sup>60</sup>

Bearing this in mind, I would contend that the visual style of *Trainspotting* plays a part in branding the local/regional including background in location, dialects and local

events as a commodity. For this reason, *Trainspotting* has converted its more recognisable and influential aesthetic elements into a brand name through tie-in selling,<sup>61</sup> most obviously through soundtrack CD, but also through T-shirts, posters and various editions of the video.

With its portrayal of "urban experience and environment"<sup>62</sup> and its representation of the city through the postmodern influence of international style, *Trainspotting* has located Scotland as a new place to make films. What this means is that Scotland has become a cultural commodity through a projection of contemporary Scottish identity in contemporary Scottish films. In the opening of *Shallow Grave*, David (Christopher Eccleston) says of Glasgow that "this could have been any city." In this respect, what *Trainspotting* has achieved through the mode of flexible specialisation is what any city would have wanted to achieve through regional filmmaking that is establishing a new image of the city.<sup>63</sup>

### **Conclusion**

As I have demonstrated, *Trainspotting* illustrates a way in which flexible specialisation can be practiced in regional filmmaking. The film achieves a successful combination of localised subject matter which presents specific localities and deploys a vibrant style which fits into a global image culture. Through its international success, *Trainspotting* has established a new local identity for Scotland and Scottish films. It has relocated the cultural identity of Scotland and reconstructed the imaging identity of place. With the production of other Scottish films being boosted by the success of *Trainspotting*, Scottish film becomes a distinct cultural entity to be sold to the international market. In addition, many British films such as *Lock, Stock and Two*

*Smoking Barrels* (Guy Ritchie, 1998) and *Billy Elliot* (Stephen Daldry, 2000) have followed in the steps of *Trainspotting* in the sense that they have also deployed a mode of flexible specialisation. Thus, as Petrie proposes, this cultural identity of contemporary Scottish film should be understood in the wider context of British cinema.<sup>64</sup>

To a large extent, then, British cinema has become a cultural entity in the international market with localised films taking a part in reconstructing imaging space for the national cinema through the mode of flexible specialisation. With the changing geography of globalisation, in the words of Ian Christie, "identifying British becomes an important sign of the changing definition of cultural identity."<sup>65</sup> During the 1990s, the British government's interest in stimulating the cultural industries encouraged the involvement of regional authorities in filmmaking. This resulted in commercially-driven feature filmmaking which paved the way for the success of a few British films, including *Trainspotting*. Toby Miller claims that 90's British filmmaking has leaned on the commercial aspect of film culture and neglected its cultural aspect.<sup>66</sup> However, if an economic and cultural alliance in filmmaking is unavoidable, the cultural consequences of economic reconstruction should be regarded as a new form of culture. In this respect, it should also be noted that 90's British cinema has embraced a hybridity of regional/national issues and stylistic concerns by adopting the mode of flexible specialisation.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Julia Hallam, "Film, Class and National Identity: Re-mapping Communities in the Age of Devolution," *British Cinema, Past and Present*, ed. Justine Ashby and Andrew Higson (London: Routledge, 2000) 263. This term "flexible specialisation" is derived from Kevin Robins' article, "Tradition and Translation: National Culture in Its Global Context," *Enterprise and Heritage: Crosscurrents of National Culture*, ed. John Corner and Sylvia Harvey (London: Routledge, 1991) 34.

<sup>2</sup> Hallam 263.

<sup>3</sup> Hallam 263.

<sup>4</sup> Robins 34.

<sup>5</sup> For further discussion, see David Morley, and Kevin Robins, *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries* (London: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Robins 35.

<sup>7</sup> Hallam 261-63.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Mullan who was involved in a new Scottish Scheme, 8 1/2, criticised filmmakers with pretentious "agendas" related to Scotland gaining funding. See "Mullan Blasts Film Four," *Empire Online* 17 Aug. 2000, 16 Oct. 2002 <<http://www.empireonline.co.uk/news/printnews.asp?2464>>.

<sup>9</sup> Hallam 263.

<sup>10</sup> Hallam 263-64.

In this respect, Robins argues that the projection of the local should not be referred to as the projection of locality. For him, the projection of the local is more related to the recognition of actual place as a particular space within globalised space in order to attract investors from global corporations. (Robins 35). Hence, in this paper, the term locality is used to clarify that contemporary British cinema frequently emphasises a number of local characteristics as well as the use of local space through location shooting.

<sup>11</sup> Hallam 263.

<sup>12</sup> Hallam 270.

<sup>13</sup> Boyle himself, producer Andrew Macdonald and scriptwriter John Hodge.

<sup>14</sup> Geoffrey Macnab, "The Boys are Back in Town," *Sight and Sound* 2.2 (1996): 11.

<sup>15</sup> For instance, see Andrew Collins, "Films on TV," *Guardian Unlimited, Observer* 4 July 1999, 9 Oct. 2002 <[http://film.guardian.co.uk/Feature\\_Story/feature\\_story/0,4120,63007,00.html](http://film.guardian.co.uk/Feature_Story/feature_story/0,4120,63007,00.html)>.

<sup>16</sup> For instance, see Ian Nathan, rev. of *Trainspotting*, dir. Danny Boyle, *Empire Online* 1 Mar. 1996, 16 Oct. 2002 <<http://www.empireonline.co.uk/reviews/review.asp?id=34440&ss=tra...>>.

<sup>17</sup> Charles Affron, "Order and the Space for Spectacle in Fellini's 8 1/2," *Close Viewings: An Anthology of New Film Criticism*, ed. Peter Lehman (Tallahassee: Florida State UP, 1990) 122.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Maltby, and Ian Craven, *Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) 191.

<sup>19</sup> Maltby and Craven 191-96.

<sup>20</sup> Maltby and Craven 217.

<sup>21</sup> Maltby and Craven 216-17.

<sup>22</sup> For a discussion of spatial construction in the classical Hollywood paradigm, see David Bordwell, "Camera Movement and Cinematic Space," *Explorations in Film Theory*, ed. Ron Burnett (Indiana, Indiana UP: 1991) 229-36; David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia UP, 1985); David Bordwell, and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 5th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997) 190-96. For further discussion of narrative space, see Noël Burch's discussion in his chapter, "Basic Elements," *Theory of Film Practice*, trans. Helen L. Rane (London: Secker & Warburg, 1973) 3-31; Stephen Heath, "Narrative Space," *Screen* 17.3 (1976): 68-112. For a discussion on the relationship between filmic space and image, see Jacques Aumont's discussion in his chapter, "The Role of the Apparatus," *The Image*, trans. Claire Pajackowska (London: BFI, 1997) 99-147. For an account of an alternative use of space in classical Hollywood conventions, see Edward Branigan, "The Space of Equinox Flower," *Screen* 17.2 (1976): 74-105; Kristin Thompson, and David Bordwell, "Space and Narrative in the Films of Ozu," *Screen* 17.2 (1976): 41-73.

<sup>23</sup> Mary Ann Doane, "The Voice in the Cinema: The Articulation of Body and Space," *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia UP, 1986) 339-40.

The use of voice-over in the film, *Orlando* (Sally Potter, 1992) is a case in point. In the film, the voice-



over allows us to look at Orlando as a subject of image rather than an object of looking.

For further analysis on the use of voice-over, see also Siew Hwa Beh, "Vivre Sa Vie," *Movies and Methods I: An Anthology*, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: U of California P, 1976) 180-85; Michael Tarantino, "Tanner and Berger: The Voice Off-Screen," *Film Quarterly* 33.2 (1979-1980): 32-43. For further feminist analysis on Orlando, also see Julianne Pidduck, "Travel with Sally Potter's *Orlando*: Gender, Narrative, Movement," *Screen* 38.2 (1997): 172-89; Walter Donohue, "Against Crawling Realism: Sally Potter on *Orlando*," *Women and Film: A Sight and Sound Reader*, ed. Pam Cook and Philip Dodd (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1993) 217-31.

<sup>24</sup> Andrew O. Thompson, "Trains, Veins and Heroin Deals," *American Cinematographer* LXXVII.8 (1996): 82.

<sup>25</sup> Charles Affron, *Cinema and Sentiment* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982) 77.

<sup>26</sup> Jeffrey Sconce, "'Trashing' the Academy: Taste, Excess, and an Emerging Politics of Cinematic Style," *Screen* 36.4 (1995): 387.

<sup>27</sup> For the discussion of space in the New Wave films, see Andrew Higson, "Space, Place, Spectacle: Landscape and Townscape in the 'Kitchen Sink' Film," *Dissolving Views: Key Writings on British Cinema*, ed. Higson (London: Cassell, 1996) 133-56; Terry Lovell, "Landscapes and Stories in 1960s British Realism," Higson *Dissolving Views* 157-77. Both articles can also be found in Higson, *Screen* 25.4-5 (1984): 2-21; Lovell, *Screen* 31.4 (1990): 357-76.

<sup>28</sup> For a detailed analysis on working class issues and the aesthetics of the 60s New Wave, see John Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956-1963* (London: BFI, 1986).

<sup>29</sup> For an analysis of the aesthetic composition of class and the place in documentary, see Robert Colls, and Philip Dodd, "Representing the Nation: British Documentary Film, 1930-1945," *Screen* 26.1 (1985): 21-33.

<sup>30</sup> For an account of the history of poetic cinema and its development in contemporary cinema, see John Orr, *Contemporary Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1998).

<sup>31</sup> Higson 143.

<sup>32</sup> Higson 148-49.

<sup>33</sup> In fact, the film was shot in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

<sup>34</sup> Duncan Petrie, *Screening Scotland* (London: BFI, 2000) 216-17.

<sup>35</sup> Philip Kemp, rev. of *Trainspotting*, dir. Danny Boyle, *Sight and Sound* 6.3 (1996): 52-53.

<sup>36</sup> See Duncan Petrie's discussion in his chapter, "The New Scottish Cinema: Themes and Issues" *Screening Scotland* (London: BFI, 2000) 191-221.

<sup>37</sup> Hallam 269.

<sup>38</sup> In this respect, the critical and commercial failure of *Twin Town* can be seen to be a result of its lack of aesthetisation.

<sup>39</sup> David Desser, "New Kids on the Street: The Pan-Asian Film," Sir Stanley Thomlison Memorial Lecture, U of Nottingham, Nottingham, 21 Feb. 2001.

<sup>40</sup> Petrie 195. An example of such indebtedness is appeared in the aforementioned Renton name-title.

<sup>41</sup> Robins, "Tradition and Translation" 38.

<sup>42</sup> Robins, "Tradition and Translation" 25-35.

<sup>43</sup> See *Wright, Johnston & Mackenzie Solicitors Home Page* <<http://www.wjm.co.uk/film.htm>>.

<sup>44</sup> See "Creative Industries," *Wright, Johnston & Mackenzie Solicitors Home Page*, 18 Oct. 2002 <[http://www.wjm.co.uk/film\\_gff.htm](http://www.wjm.co.uk/film_gff.htm)>; <[http://www.wjm.co.uk/film\\_gfo.htm](http://www.wjm.co.uk/film_gfo.htm)>.

<sup>45</sup> Petrie 175-76.

<sup>46</sup> The film was indeed very much a Scottish affair. The writer Hodge and the producer McDonald are both Scottish, and *Shallow Grave* was nurtured by the Scottish-born writer of *Don't Look Now*, Allan Shiach. In addition, the main actor Ewan McGregor is Scottish.

<sup>47</sup> "City of Glasgow Film Charter," *Glasgow Film Office Home Page*, 18 Oct. 2002 <<http://www.glasgowfilm.org.uk/gfo/charter.html>>.

<sup>48</sup> For this film, the director Ken Loach was nominated for the Golden Lion prize at the Venice Film Festival in 1996.

<sup>49</sup> Brian Pendreigh, "Northern Lights, Cameras, Action," *Guardian Unlimited* 5 Feb. 1999, 9 Oct. 2002 <[http://film.guardian.co.uk/Feature\\_Story/Guardian/0,4120,26979,00.html](http://film.guardian.co.uk/Feature_Story/Guardian/0,4120,26979,00.html)>.

<sup>50</sup> *Screen Finance* 1 May 1997: 5.

<sup>51</sup> Robins, "Tradition and Translation" 38.

<sup>52</sup> Robins, "Tradition and Translation" 24.

<sup>53</sup> Robins, "Tradition and Translation" 38.

Robins discusses the quality of life of particular places at the economic level. However, this can also be expanded to a cultural level.

<sup>54</sup> John Hill, "Film and Postmodernism," *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, ed. John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998) 96-101.

<sup>55</sup> Jesús Martín-Barbero, "The Processes: From Nationalism to Transnationals," *Media in Global Context: A Reader*, ed. Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi, Dwayne Winseck, Jim McKenna, and Oliver Boyd-Barrett (London: Arnold, 1997) 51; John B. Thompson, *The Media and Modernity: A Social Theory of the Media* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995) 174.

<sup>56</sup> Petrie 184.

<sup>57</sup> Hallam 264.

<sup>58</sup> This is from a brief meeting with Danny Boyle, in the Broadway Cinema, Nottingham on 30 Oct. 2002

<sup>59</sup> Kevin Allen, "The Birth of *Twin Town*," *Radio Times* 19-25 Apr. 1997: 50-51.

<sup>60</sup> Petrie 196.

<sup>61</sup> Karen Lucy, "Here and Then: Space, Place and Nostalgia in British Youth Cinema of the 1990s," *British Cinema of the 90s*, ed. Robert Murphy (London: BFI, 2000) 106.

<sup>62</sup> Petrie 199.

<sup>63</sup> Robert Murphy has discussed the representation of London in 90s British cinema. See "Citylife: Urban Fairy-tales in Late 90s British Cinema" *The British Cinema Book*, ed. Murphy, 2nd ed. (London: BFI, 2001) 301-09.

<sup>64</sup> Petrie 186.

<sup>65</sup> Ian Christie, "As Others See Us: British Film-making and Europe in the 90s," Murphy, *British Cinema of the 90s* 73.

Christie argues that in the broader geography of the European Union, Britain needs to consolidate its cultural identity within a newly-formed European culture. Therefore, a narrow concept of British cinema has been encouraged to be defined as an entity of regional films (Welsh, Scottish and Irish films). Christie's argument can be expanded beyond Europe, considering the mode of flexible specialisation in 90s British cinema.

<sup>66</sup> Toby Miller, "The Film Industry and the Government: 'Endless Mr Beans and Mr Bonds'?" Murphy, *British Cinema of the 90s* 41-44.

For a similar argument, also see Tom Ryall, "New Labour and the Cinema: Culture, Politics and Economics," *Journal of Popular British Cinema* 5 (2002): 5-20.

## Chapter 8. "Billy Earns Its Stripes":

### Selling *Billy Elliot* in the UK and USA

In their discussion of the economics of globalised culture, Colin Hoskins, Stuart McFadyen and Adam Finn suggest that a "cultural discount" exists whenever cultural products such as films, television programmes and videos are exported. As they note, the issue of cultural discount is raised because:

A particular television programme, film, or video rooted in one culture, and thus attractive in the home market where viewers share a common knowledge and way of life, will have a diminished appeal elsewhere, as viewers find it difficult to identify with the style, values, beliefs, history, myths, institutions, physical environment, and behavioural patterns."<sup>1</sup>

What such an argument implies is that as the production and exhibition of a film becomes significantly globalised, it is likely to be perceived in a variety of ways depending on the regions, and that it is not only influenced by geographical boundaries but also social and cultural boundaries. Bearing this in mind, then, I would argue that films are marketed differently when they cross national boundaries because they need to minimise the problem of cultural discount and, as a result, to maximise the export potential of a film. In order to illustrate this idea of "cultural discount," this chapter will examine one of the most internationally successful British films of 2000, *Billy Elliot* (Stephen Daldry, 2000). Hence, I analyse the different marketing strategies adopted in both the UK and the US where the film enjoyed particular and unexpected success.

*Billy Elliot* is a classic rags-to-riches story about a talented boy from a working class family, and his relationships with his devoted widower father (Gary Lewis), his

loyal best friend, Michael (Stuart Wells) and, perhaps most significantly, a dance teacher, Mrs Wilkinson (Julie Walters) who discovers and nurtures his talent for ballet dancing. It is apparent that from this brief synopsis *Billy Elliot* - with its rather melodramatic, and not particularly unique story - does not really possess particularly special marketable factors. However, despite this, *Billy Elliot* grossed £1.54 million during its first weekend of release (from 29 September to 1 October 2000) in the UK and, subsequently, a total of £16.79 million (up to 7 January 2002). For its opening week (13 October 2000) in the USA, the film grossed \$2,603,380. Considering its low budget<sup>2</sup> and the fact that it was the film debut of both an unknown director (Stephen Daldry) and an unknown leading actor (Jamie Bell), the success of *Billy Elliot*, particularly in the international market, was very impressive. However, it should be noted that *Billy Elliot* was not the first British film of the 1990s to receive a successful reception in the international market. *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1996), *The Full Monty* (Peter Cattaneo, 1997) and *Brassed Off* (Mark Herman, 1996) were all recent British films that achieved box-office success in the USA as well as in other international markets.

With the idea of cultural discount in mind, I would contend that the success of *Billy Elliot* in the US was achieved through the "lowering" of its cultural discount. To demonstrate this, I compare advertisements for the film that were respectively targeted at audiences in the UK and USA. In particular, advertisements from two different types of publications will be considered, *Time Out* (the weekly London-based listings magazine) and *The New York Times* (a prominent American daily newspaper). Certainly, print advertisements are not the only evidence which can assist in establishing and determining the marketability of a film. Press coverage, posters, TV commercials and

merchandising are all important factors which need to be considered. However, when looking at advertisements in two significant publications in the UK and USA, insights into how the packaging of *Billy Elliot* diminish its cultural discount while maximising its selling points can be gained. *Billy Elliot* cannot be regarded as an all-encompassing example of how contemporary British cinema is promoted in the US market, but suggest, at least, some basic issues surrounding the notion of cultural discount.

### **UK market**

Originally entitled *Dancer*, *Billy Elliot* was screened at the Cannes Film Festival on 19 May 2000 before being shown as *Billy Elliot* at the Edinburgh Film Festival in its UK premiere on 20 August 2000. With the praise of audiences of these two international film festivals, the film was then released nationwide on 29 September 2000 in the UK, under the title of *Billy Elliot*. It is not clear why the title had been changed on its full UK release, but it is interesting to consider what the changed title suggests about how the film was targeted at a UK audience. When *Dancer* was screened at Cannes, another film with a similar title, *Dancer in the Dark* (Lars Von Trier, 2000) was also receiving a lot of critical attention.<sup>3</sup> Soon after the Cannes Film Festival, *Dancer in the Dark* was screened at the Edinburgh Film Festival as the opening film on 13 August 2000 and by this point the British film's title of *Dancer* had been changed to *Billy Elliot*.

This would indicate that the change of title from *Dancer* to *Billy Elliot* was a result of the need to minimise confusion between the two films, as *Dancer in the Dark* had achieved a higher profile because of its much publicised critical success at the Cannes Film Festival. As a low-budget, small-scale film, *Dancer* was unlikely to get a similar degree of attention. This need for *Dancer* to distinguish itself, and to

disassociate itself, from Lars Von Trier's more high profile film is significant. With this in mind, it becomes clearer why there was hardly any emphasis placed on the musical aspect of *Billy Elliot* in the film's marketing, which hardly alludes to either theatre<sup>4</sup> or film musicals. Instead, the marketing focuses on the story of a boy growing up in an industrial town.<sup>5</sup>

When comparing the posters of *Dancer* and *Billy Elliot* for its UK distribution, it might help to compare the two titles and what they suggest. The poster for *Dancer* shows Billy in his jeans bending down to the right with his arms up in the air, like a flying swan, with a background of blue flowery wallpaper which is part of a memorable, eye-catching scene from the beginning of the film. However, a later poster that is commonly recognised as the film's original poster in the home market, was made for *Billy Elliot* and not for *Dancer*. It shows a close up of Billy's face in ecstasy while dancing, and covers most of the poster's space along with the title *Billy Elliot*. This still is from the beginning of the scene in the film. (See Appendix, Fig.12).<sup>6</sup> These two posters provide an insight into the implications of the change to the film's title. The personal connotation of the title *Billy Elliot* rather than the more general connotation of *Dancer* gives a greater sense of familiarity towards Billy, the central character. In other words, the emphasis is placed on the specificity of a story about a boy called Billy Elliot, more than on the less personalised story of an anonymous dancer.

Five different versions of the *Billy Elliot* advertisement were featured in *Time Out* between 27 September<sup>7</sup> and November 2000.<sup>8</sup> In the first advertisement, Billy is pictured jumping up in the air in his boxing gear, holding ballet shoes around his neck. The background is filled with quotations from reviews of the film, with the largest quotation, on the top of the advertisement, being "a triumph," from Caroline Westbrook, reviewer

for *Empire* magazine. (See Appendix, Fig.13).<sup>9</sup> This catchphrase is then changed to "unmissable," a quote from *The Sunday Mirror*, in the second advertisement from 25 October to 1 November. (See Appendix, Fig.14).<sup>10</sup> From the 8 to 15 November issue, the background of the advertisement is framed around an American national flag and shows Billy coming out from behind the flag and breaking through it with the catchphrase "see the star who's just earned his stripes!" (See Appendix, Fig.15).<sup>11</sup> In the fourth advertisement (15 to 22 November issue) the picture of Billy jumping out of the American national flag is the same, but the catchphrase is "the winner by a landslide is..." (See Appendix, Fig.16).<sup>12</sup> In the fifth advertisement (22 to 29 November issue), the picture remains the same and the catchphrase is "the votes are in and the winner is..." (See Appendix, Fig.17).<sup>13</sup> From the third to the fifth advertisement, all of which have an American national flag in the background, a comment from the American publication, *Newsweek*, is included underneath the main catchphrase, and reads: "a movie deeply charming, so heartfelt, it's not only pointless to resist, it's damn near impossible."

The first two advertisements are filled with a number of quotations from British newspapers and magazines, and include both the name of the publication and the names of reviewers or reporters. For instance, Nick Fisher from *The Sun* is said to have noted that *Billy Elliot* is "absolutely the best ... Billy is brilliant," while other quotations include "Gripping performances, *Good House Keeping*," "Fantastic, *London Evening Standard*," and "Dazzling, *Hotdog*." These references were from tabloid papers such as *The Evening Standard* and popular magazines which suggest that *Billy Elliot* met general approval from the popular media rather than from critical film magazines or journals.

While the critical reception of the film emphasises the social realism aspect of *Billy Elliot* in terms of its subject matter (a working-class family during the 1984-85 miner's strike),<sup>14</sup> these advertisements tend to focus on its appeal as an entertaining film. For example, *Good House Keeping* is a particularly interesting reference, suggesting, through its status as a female-orientated publication, that the film can be attractive to female audiences - something which a story about a northern boy in a mining town might not immediately indicate. In this respect, quoting from a female-oriented magazine diminishes any illusion that the film is primarily for mainly male audiences. In contrast, *Elizabeth* (Shekhar Kapur, 1998) targeted a core female audience<sup>15</sup> with press coverage in women's magazines such as *Harpers & Queen*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Elle* while at the same time attempting to appeal to male audiences by marketing the film through posters that stated *Elizabeth* as "a thriller about intrigue, treachery and skullduggery rather than historical costume epic."<sup>16</sup> What the film's publicity implies is a kind of reversal of what happened with *Billy Elliot* in terms of audience gender. However, the common strategy is that while trying not to neglect the core audience, both films also attempt to appeal to different types of audiences by using what Hoskins et. al. refer to as a "marketing mix" that has to meet the needs of consumer. Applying this to *Billy Elliot*, marketing promoted the film according to the cultural requirements of these "segments" and "the result is that the needs of all are closer to being fully satisfied."<sup>17</sup> As can be seen from the case of *Billy Elliot* as well as *Elizabeth*, films as flexible texts are used to create a diverse discourse at the marketing stage.

In doing so, however, the marketing of *Billy Elliot* appears to emphasise the fact that the film is a significant contribution to, and example of, British national cinema. In this context, the term "triumph" in the first advertisement appears to have dual aims. On



the one hand, it simply represents the film's successful reception at two international film festivals. After all, even though *Billy Elliot* did not attract much press attention at Cannes, it did receive the Life Standard Audience Award at the Edinburgh Film Festival, an award which, significantly, is voted by the public, and one which could stimulate positive anticipation of the film's success on its cinema release, with this, in turn, generating more press coverage. On the other hand, along with the term "winner" in the later advertisements, the use of the word "triumph" encourages the idea that the film is an achievement of British cinema as a national cinema.

Subsequently, the appearance of the American national flag in later advertisements (from 8 November) functions in two ways. Firstly, and most obviously, the appearance of the Stars and Stripes is related to the box-office success of the film in the USA. *Billy Elliot* was released in America on 13 October 2000 in a small number of cinemas (10 theatres for the opening week). Because of the film's successful box-office chart position in its opening week, *Billy Elliot* was given a wider release with 119 screens by 5 November 2000, increasing to 510 screens by December of the same year.<sup>18</sup> This attempt to introduce the film to the American public was accompanied by a massive promotional campaign. By the time of the film's American release, an Oscar nomination for *Billy Elliot* became widely anticipated.<sup>19</sup> The box-office success of the film in the USA is symbolised by the advertisement that pictures Billy breaking out of the American national flag. Along with the image of broken stripes on the American national flag, the main catchphrase "see the star who's just earned his *stripes!* (my italics)" also emphasises the film's success in the USA. Alternatively, the term "earned his stripes," although referring to *Billy Elliot's* success in the USA, can also be seen to represent celebration and acceptance and, in this sense, implies a victory of British

cinema as a national cinema.

However, in order to ensure that *Billy Elliot* is seen as being characteristic of contemporary British cinema and that the box-office success of the film is also seen as a victory for national cinema on an international scale, the plaudits on these later publicity posters are no longer British but American with comments from American newspapers and magazines including *The Boston Herald*, *New York Daily News*, *Rolling Stone*, *The New York Observer*, *The Journal News* and *Newsweek*. These American references illustrate the importance of American critical attention to the marketability and indeed the international credibility of *Billy Elliot*.

Moreover, *Billy Elliot*'s "victory" is emphasised through the anticipation of Oscar nominations. The last advertisement for *Billy Elliot* in *Time Out* in late November of 2000 proclaims that "the votes are in and the winner is..." This phrase clearly alludes to a possible triumph at the Oscars.<sup>20</sup> Subsequently, following some recognition at the prestigious Golden Globes,<sup>21</sup> *Billy Elliot* was nominated for the following awards at the 2001 Oscars: Best Supporting Actress (Julie Walters), Best Director (Stephen Daldry) and Best Original Screenplay (Lee Hall).<sup>22</sup> I would suggest that the combination of the American national flag and the term "earns his stripes" suggests that *Billy Elliot* has been critically and commercially accepted in the USA and, as such, is a potential winner at the Oscars. The promotion of *Billy Elliot* capitalised on its popularity in the USA, which was a major selling point for the film and became a means to "frame" its later reception in the home market.

Furthermore, this marketing tactic can be understood as an attempt to shift the emphasis of the film from gloomy working-class realism to "entertaining" British film, or, at the very least, mildly gritty social realism, albeit with a large amount of

entertainment value. Arguably, this emphasis on entertainment was because the film's popularity in the USA implies that the film could compete with Hollywood. Thus, this plays a part in persuading British audiences to go and see *Billy Elliot* because it is in the terrain of Hollywood entertainment and could be regarded therefore as a popular film, while at the same time dispelling any assumption that *Billy Elliot* is a gritty, dark and tedious social realist film. The British critic Xan Brooks notes that "like it or not, Hollywood has shaped home-grown cinema. *Billy Elliot*, then, is a basic *British story* told in an *American vernacular* (my italics)."<sup>23</sup> The use of the terms "British story" and "American vernacular" are interesting in the sense that they help us to understand what *Billy Elliot* wants to affiliate itself with when selling itself to the home market. As discussed above, the film's major selling point in the UK, as the term "British story" connotes, is its status as a valid contribution to British cinema as a national cinema. Equally, the allusion to "American vernacular" acts as a reminder of its acceptance as a popular film in the Hollywood mould.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, in terms of the marketing tactics used to sell *Billy Elliot* in the UK, it is not enough just to define what the film is about. Instead, I would argue that *Billy Elliot* is not marketed as what Justin Wyatt termed a "high concept" film,<sup>25</sup> because effectively it tries to place a foot in both social realism and entertainment, placing the film in the territories of both national cinema and entertaining popular film.

### **USA market**

In common with the marketing strategies employed in the UK, *Billy Elliot* has been cited as an important contribution to British cinema in the USA, but for a different purpose. To be recognised as an example of British cinema, the film references a

number of other successful British films in advertisements, and, as such, emphasises the tradition of quality British filmmaking. Through the use of such generic referencing, the idea that British cinema is an identifiable entity is established. As *Billy Elliot* is packaged as British cinema through such generic referencing, it becomes recognisable in the American market, and, subsequently, the film becomes both exportable and marketable due to its reduced cultural discount.

When examining the advertising of *Billy Elliot* in the USA, one can find three different stages of publicity. At the first stage, prior to the American release of the film, the advertisement shows Billy in his boxing shoes, helmet and gloves standing shyly by the ballet pole among girls in white ballet dresses and tights.<sup>26</sup> The contrast between the girls' attitude and Billy's cluelessness and innocence is humorous. This comic element is also stimulated by the contrast between the appropriately costumed girls and Billy, awkward in his boxing gear. (See Appendix, Fig.18).<sup>27</sup> At the second stage, starting from the end of October 2000, this image is replaced by another advertisement displaying seven stills from the film. (See Appendix, Fig.19).<sup>28</sup> At the third stage, starting from the beginning of December 2000, the poster is simplified to show Billy jumping up in the air, holding his ballet shoes around his neck. (See Appendix, Fig.20).<sup>29</sup>

At the initial stage of the American advertising campaign, the advertisement promotes the film by evoking the idea of British cinema as an identifiable entity through other British films. It appears, on the basis of the quotations used in the advertisement, that such British films gained a significant box-office success in the USA on their release during the 1990s. For instance, quotations included on this first advertisement note that *Billy Elliot* is "from the producers of '*Four Weddings and a Funeral*' '*Elizabeth*'

and 'Notting Hill' and that it "may be the biggest sleeper since 'The Full Monty'." This dependence on other cinematic references is related to the fundamental dilemma of *Billy Elliot* in terms of populist appeal, and, in particular, the film's lack of a marketable star. Jamie Bell became a well-known figure after the success of the film, but it is unlikely that his name would have been recognisable at the time of the film's release. Unlike the use of Renée Zellweger's name and face in the contemporaneous poster for *Nurse Betty* (Neil LaBute, 2000),<sup>30</sup> Sylvester Stallone in the poster for *Get Carter* (Stephen T. Kay, 2000)<sup>31</sup> and Julia Roberts in the poster for *Erin Brockovich* (Steven Soderbergh, 2000),<sup>32</sup> Jamie Bell is unlikely to have been considered as particularly promotable. Like Robert Carlyle in *The Full Monty* (Peter Cattaneo, 1997), Jamie Bell was an unknown face at the time of *Billy Elliot*'s release in the USA, just as the director Stephen Daldry was an unfamiliar name. Thus, rather than using an actor or director's reputation as a marketing device, at the first stage of the *Billy Elliot* advertising campaign, it appears that making the film seem familiar to American audiences - by categorising it with previously successful British films - became the main goal.

The claim that *Billy Elliot* is a quintessentially British film can be exemplified by the use of the phrase "last weekend, 'Billy Elliot' swept Great Britain off its feet, becoming one of the biggest openings of any British film in history" and that it is "the most anticipated British import since 'The Full Monty'."<sup>33</sup> Thus, *Billy Elliot* is particularly associated with *The Full Monty* which gained massive popularity in the USA. To apply Rick Altman's ideas about how genre is marketed, *Billy Elliot* uses "a discursive strategy for gaining [*The Full Monty*'s] pre-sold audience" and "reinforces the identity" of *Billy Elliot* as British comedy.<sup>34</sup> The comic picture at the first stage of the advertisement also supports this association with *The Fully Monty*, by promoting the

film as a similar type of quirky British comedy.

Moving on to the second stage (*The New York Times*, from 27 October to 25 November 2000), the advertising begins to move away from placing *Billy Elliot* as a typical British comedy, and instead places it in the territory of art cinema. While this distinction between art cinema and mainstream/popular cinema is often assumed to exist at a textual level,<sup>35</sup> particularly in the US market, it also exists at an institutional level because of marketing and promotion. Thus, *Billy Elliot's* ability to define itself as art cinema by using the context of the US market to promote itself as a non-Hollywood film is achieved by foregrounding the film's cultural status and origin - that is, as a piece of quality British cinema.<sup>36</sup> In the USA, the national/industrial origin of a film is frequently based on a simple opposition of American and non-American film. In this sense, being an art film is less about textual factors, and more about the need to conceptualise a particular marketing technique, thus differentiating a film from mainstream cinema. Generally, the marketing weaknesses of non-Hollywood or non-mainstream films are usually less star appeal and fewer advertising gimmicks. Hence, such marketing weaknesses need to be compensated for via the use of an alternative, distinctive marketing concept. In this respect, the strategy of acquiring an art cinema identity is, in the words of Barbara Wilinsky, "not just [about] being a separate culture but also wanting to be separate" as a means of distinction.<sup>37</sup>

In the advertising campaign's second stage, seven stills from *Billy Elliot* are presented alongside quotations from a variety of American magazines and newspapers such as *Rolling Stone*, *The New York Post*, *The Movies*, *Newsweek*, *USA Today* and *The New York Observer*. The main headline quotation has here changed from "Fall's must-see film, *Newsweek*" (used in the first stage advertisement) to "Finally a movie to cheer

up, Leonard Maltin," while explicit references to other British films have also disappeared. In spite of "from the producer of '*Four Weddings and a Funeral*,' '*Elizabeth*' and '*Notting Hill*'" still appearing at the bottom of the advertisement, it is insignificant compared with the first stage and there is no further referencing of *The Full Monty*.

The stills on this second stage advertisement include images of Billy smiling in a medium shot, Tony (Billy's brother) dancing and singing while wearing headphones and Billy and Mrs Wilkinson (Billy's ballet teacher) dancing together. However, while the comical image from the first advertisement has been changed to focus on images which express elements of cheerfulness and dynamism, this second stage advertisement gives a far less clear idea about the film's content and storyline. While the first advertisement is based on an image of a shy boy in a girls' ballet class, thus allowing the film to be promoted as another British comedy equivalent to *The Full Monty*, the second-stage advertisement emphasises in a more general way the character of Billy and that the film is a charming and joyous one.

By the time the second-stage advertisement was launched, Jamie Bell, and also perhaps the director Stephen Daldry, were no longer unfamiliar, with Bell having become a recognisable and, perhaps more importantly, marketable name for American audiences. After gaining a successful reaction in test screenings, Universal Studios, the American financier of the film, organised a nation-wide promotional press tour with Stephen Daldry and Jamie Bell. In particular, Bell appeared on a number of chat shows including 'The Late Show with David Letterman' guest-hosted by Sarah Jessica Parker.<sup>38</sup> Hence, *Billy Elliot* was not exclusively exhibited as an art-house film considering the television coverage and massive press campaign that accompanied its wider release.

Despite the employment of such a high-profile campaign, the second-stage advertisement proclaims that this film "is something special" and "can only be seen now." For instance, the film's limited distribution and exhibition is emphasised in the second stage advertisement and phrases like "special engagements now playing in select cities"<sup>39</sup> or "special engagements now playing"<sup>40</sup> consolidate the idea that these are exclusive viewings of a rare, marginalised "British import."<sup>41</sup> However, as indicated earlier, the fact is that *Billy Elliot* was released in 27 screens by 29 October 2000 with the number of screens increasing up to 119 by 5 November 2000 and 497 by 26 November 2000. When considering the huge scale of the US market, "special engagements" of this kind are not unsubstantial exposure for a low-budget film like *Billy Elliot*. Thus, in terms of screen share, *Billy Elliot* was exhibited in a relatively wide number of theatres which was no doubt related to the fact that Universal Studios was responsible for the USA distribution of the film.

However, while the film is promoted and distributed through the mainstream system, if the film's second-stage advertising is taken into consideration, *Billy Elliot* still appears to be marketed, at least in part, as art cinema. Arguably, British films are subject to being categorised as art cinema in the USA due to their status as foreign films. However, while this might appear as a disadvantage in terms of a British film's marketability, this status of "art cinema" also allows British films to distinguish themselves and to take advantage of this distinction.<sup>42</sup> British films gain more opportunities for exhibition in mainstream theatres than other kinds of art cinema because they share the advantage of being both English language and foreign enabling them to be categorised as either art cinema or popular cinema.<sup>43</sup> Thus, while British cinema in the US market always carries the potential to be dismissed due to its non-



American content, it also has a lower cultural discount compared to other foreign films.

In the third-stage advertisement (*The New York Times*, 1 to 17 December 2000), *Billy Elliot* was placed in the "boundaries of art film" through the claim that the film is "not [an example of a] mainstream Hollywood film" and that it relies instead on positioning itself in relation to international film festivals.<sup>44</sup> This third stage implies that *Billy Elliot* is a "festival film," that is, one which can lay claim to a certain kind of artistic distinction as a member of an "elite" group, especially where low-budget productions and unknowns can work to confirm artistic status. As Julian Stringer discusses, though the term festival films is used "pejoratively" by critics and academics, it also carries an assumption that "popular Hollywood blockbusters are somehow not what film festivals [are] meant to be all about."<sup>45</sup> In this context, the advertisement, again, tends to establish the idea that *Billy Elliot* is something different from Hollywood movies, namely, the kind of film seen at film festivals.

This third-stage advertisement, thus, simply presents Billy's picture (jumping up in the air, holding his ballet shoes around his neck) with the main phrase "the winner is..." However, most of the space below this picture is filled with details of awards and prizes which the film had received up to this point. For instance, *Billy Elliot* is heralded as having won the 'People's Choice Award at the Denver International Film Festival,' the 'Sower Of Joy Award,' an award at the Norwegian International Film Festival and the Best European Film Award at the Strasbourg European Film Forum.<sup>46</sup> In addition to this, a number of these festivals are not as internationally well known as festivals like Cannes or the Venice International Film Festival. Referencing such small and specialised events, then, (in spite of the fact that *Billy Elliot* was shown at Cannes as a world premiere) underlines how the festival film at this third stage is, according to

Stringer, "defined by [its] exhibition [circumstances] rather than by [its] textual characteristics."<sup>47</sup>

At the same time, the advertisement also implicitly refers to the Golden Globe and Oscar nominations for *Billy Elliot*. While the advertisement does not directly reference the Oscars or Golden Globes, it reflects, through references to other awards, that there is some anticipation of success. Obviously, the Oscars and the Golden Globes are not film festivals but they do relate more to the commercial dimension of Hollywood and of course these awards have an important status in the film industry as a whole in terms of the scale of press attention that they elicit and the effect upon the financial success of particular films.

Indeed, the Oscars and the Golden Globes are particularly significant to foreign films in the United States, where even nominations play a part in upgrading the commercial status of a film. Thus, in such situations, the "authenticity" of the Oscars replaces the authenticity of art cinema when constructing the commercial status of *Billy Elliot*. For instance, in its 8 December 2000 issue *The New York Times* displays advertisements for *Billy Elliot* and *Erin Brockovich* on the same page<sup>48</sup> with both advertisements highlighting the term "winner" at the top. When considering the huge attention placed on forthcoming Oscar nominations at the time, the term "winner" could be seen to suggest an association between *Billy Elliot* and the Oscar ceremony. Here, in a move which highlights the need to appeal to as large an audience as possible, Billy is not only shown jumping up in the air for being awarded festival praise, but also as a potential Oscar-winner.

## **Conclusion**

As I have illustrated by looking at advertisements in *Time Out* and *The New York Times*, *Billy Elliot* was promoted flexibly in both the UK and USA markets. While concern with cultural discount operates as a means of bypassing the restrictions of internal institutions in both the UK and USA, there were, perhaps, two common factors used to promote the film. Firstly, the film's national origin was emphasised and secondly, the concept of art and popular cinema was used discursively in both markets, although the connotations of the use of these two factors in both markets were different. For instance, the emphasis on British cinema in the home market is used to distinguish *Billy Elliot* from other examples of contemporary British cinema by highlighting that it is a British film which is successful in Hollywood. In contrast, the emphasis on national origin in the US market is used to place *Billy Elliot* into the category of art cinema in order to distinguish it from Hollywood films.

Bearing these factors in mind, *Billy Elliot* as a specific text appears less important, while notions of *Billy Elliot's* "specialness" plays a more important role in selling the film both at home and abroad. However, what makes *Billy Elliot* special is its flexibility according to regions, culture and nations - even within the home market itself - making the film accessible in as many social spheres as possible. Thus, the adjustments that occur throughout the various stages of *Billy Elliot's* promotion are made on the basis of a specific agenda: the need to upgrade the commercial status of the film. In doing so, this adjustment helps to develop the meaning of the film through construction, reconstruction and the alteration of a number of different associations surrounding it. As can be seen through the specific case study of *Billy Elliot*, this process is becoming far more complicated than ever, due, in particular, to the effects of globalised film production and distribution. As a result, such promotional activities can be seen to vary

in different cultural contexts (operating around different logics) and should, therefore, be considered on a case basis.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Colin Hoskins, Stuart McFadyen, and Adam Finn, *Global Television and Film: An Introduction to Economics of the Business* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997) 32.

While Hoskins et. al. regard cultural discount as a disadvantage for foreign products when transposed to the US market, I use the term cultural discount more broadly in the sense that it exists in any market, when cultural products are exported. Therefore, I expand the economic concern of Hoskins et. al. to cultural concerns in general.

<sup>2</sup> *Billy Elliot* was produced by Working Title's subsidiary WT2, which is responsible for the company's low-budget films. For *Billy Elliot*, their expenditure came to just \$5million.

<sup>3</sup> The film eventually won festival awards for Best Actress for Bjork and the Palm D'or, awarded to the festival's best film.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Daldry had made his name in the theatre directing such plays as *An Inspector Calls*.

<sup>5</sup> Claire Monk claims that *Billy Elliot* uses a significant social event in recent British history, the 1984 miner's strike to enhance the emotional conflicts between the characters. Monk criticised the film because it does not foreground and elaborate on the social issues involved in the strike. Monk's claim is based on the fact that this film does not fit into the conventional style of social realism. (rev. of *Billy Elliot*, dir. Stephen Daldry, *Sight and Sound* 10.10 (2000): 40).

However, Monk overlooks that 90's social art cinema deploys a hybrid filmic style aiming to widen its appeal in the market place, while employing specific British subject matters. This is something that I have demonstrated in chapter 6 through the case study of *Trainspotting*. This stylistic trend is summarised as postmodern practice of hybridity by Julia Hallam. Hallam notes that such films as *Trainspotting*, *Brassed Off*, and *The Full Monty* "reflect the increasing eclecticism of British film style as it evolved during the 1980s, drawing on a range of codes and conventions associated with European and American independent traditions, television drama, documentary practice, art cinema, advertising and music video, as well as home-grown and Hollywood genres." ("Film, Class, National Identity," *British Cinema, Past and Present*, ed. Justin Ashby and Andrew Higson (London: Routledge, 2000) 266).

This stylistic hybridity can also be found in *Billy Elliot*. For instance, there is a sequence where Billy shows his emotion through dancing. The scene cuts to Billy's dancing along with the non-diegetic music, "Town Called Malice." The dancing is a symbolic representation of Billy's spiritual freedom. Here more interesting fact is that Billy's dancing presented in the manner of musical but all narrative flow is condensed in a musical sequence. Due to its use of montage, it is difficult to define this scene in a word. It evokes both the styles of European art cinema and MGM musical. Indeed, this composite style allows the film to be positioned in a various way - this is, to put it simply, social realism as well as popular entertainment, a theme I will elaborate on later in this chapter.

<sup>6</sup> Pictures from *Internet Movie Database*, 2 Oct. 2000 <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0249462/posters>>.

<sup>7</sup> The film was released nation-wide on 29th September in the UK.

<sup>8</sup> No further advertisement for the film was launched in *Time Out* after December 2000.

<sup>9</sup> Advertisement, *Time Out* 27 Sep.-4 Oct. 2000: N. pag.

<sup>10</sup> Advertisement, *Time Out* 25 Oct.-1 Nov. 2000: 93.

<sup>11</sup> Advertisement, *Time Out* 8-15 Nov. 2000: 98.

<sup>12</sup> Advertisement, *Time Out* 15-22 Nov. 2000: 115.

<sup>13</sup> Advertisement, *Time Out* 22-29 Nov. 2000: 92.

<sup>14</sup> In many reviews and reports, *Billy Elliot* is honoured as an example of a resurgence of "Brit-grit." For instance, see, Steven Morris, "Pirouettes of Praise for *Billy Elliot*," *Guardian Unlimited* 28 Sep. 2000, 17 Aug. 2001 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4069030,00.html>>.

*Billy Elliot* could obtain a safe critical status by visibly presenting subject matter, which has a working-class slant. Hence, *Billy Elliot* is authenticated through its similarities to the story line of other social realist films. While the film aims to grab the audience's attention, by promoting its entertaining aspect, *Billy Elliot* gains a critical approval from critics through the political and social circumstances discussed in the story line. Consequently, British press attention on *Billy Elliot* is determined by to what extent the film reflects the "reality" of British life. The story of *Billy Elliot* is approved as "real" by a professional ballet dancer, Philip Mosley who has a working-class background, and it is also seen to reflect the real life story of a talented boy in Birmingham.

See Martin Wainwright, "The Boy Who Became the Real *Billy Elliot*," *Guardian Unlimited* 2 Oct. 2000, 17 Aug. 2001 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4070635,00.html>>.

Also see, David Ward, "Boy Is Denied Cash to Attend Dance School," *Guardian Unlimited* 21 Oct. 2000, 17 Aug. 2001 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4079583,00.html>>.

<sup>15</sup> For the further discussion about the gender composition of heritage film audiences, see Claire Monk, "Heritage Films and the British Cinema Audience in the 1990s," *Journal of Popular British Cinema* 2 (1999): 22-38.

<sup>16</sup> Nick Roddick, "Shotguns and Weddings," *Media Watch '99*, supp. of *Sight and Sound* 9.3 (1999): 13.

<sup>17</sup> Hoskins, McFadyen, and Finn 119.

<sup>18</sup> Details from "Business Data for *Billy Elliot* (2000)," *Internet Movie Database*, 1 Feb. 2002 <<http://us.imdb.com/Business?0249462>>.

<sup>19</sup> John Patterson, "We'll Show You Ours," *Guardian Unlimited* 17 Nov. 2000, 17 Aug. 2001 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4091988,00.html>>.

<sup>20</sup> In fact, the Academy announced the full nominations for the 73rd annual Academy Awards on 13 February 2001.

<sup>21</sup> The nominations for the Golden Globes were officially announced on 22 December 2000, nominating *Billy Elliot* for Best Motion Picture and Supporting Actress (Julie Walters). See "Soderbergh Dominates Golden Globe Nominations," *Guardian Unlimited* 22 Dec. 2000, 17 Aug. 2001 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4109233,00.html>>.

<sup>22</sup> "*Gladiator* and *Crouching Tiger* Lead Race for Oscars," *Guardian Unlimited* 13 Feb. 2001, 17 Aug. 2001 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4135738,00.html>>.

<sup>23</sup> Xan Brooks, "*Billy Elliot* Brings Hollywood to Britain," *Guardian Unlimited* 28 Sep. 2000, 17 Aug. 2001 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4069420,00.html>>.

In Brooks' terms, *Billy Elliot* is pure social realism because it is set during the miner's strike and focuses on the travails of a working-class family. According to Brooks, American vernacular implies California ranch-style kitchen sink drama.

<sup>24</sup> There is an example which is indicative of the film's reception in the UK. This instance shows that the marketing attempt to place this film within the boundaries of national cinema and popular entertainment was successful. In response to the publicised critical approval given to *Billy Elliot*, Gilbert Adair wrote an essay in *The Independent*. Adair criticises that the reception given to "popular Americanised" films such as *Four Weddings and A Funeral* (Mike Newell, 1994), *The Full Monty* and most recently *Billy Elliot* as overstating the revival of British national cinema. Also he claims that this enthusiasm dismisses "authentic" film history and that this phenomenon stems from the lack of authentic art history in critical reception. Adair predicates his view on the attempt to justify the sheer distinction between the official and the alternative histories of film. He says at the end of the article that "can one imagine an opera house staging only contemporary English-speaking works, the finest of which ... are judged by critics to be equal of *Don Giovanni* and *Parsifal*? Could one consider oneself well-read if all one has ever read were the latest British and American novels? How seriously would one take an art critic who confined his journalistic attention to Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons and Tracey Emin and who had never even set eyes in a Giotto fresco or a Rembrandt self-portrait? ... that's precisely how the cinema, a medium of incalculable richness and variety, is treated in Britain today." ("One of Those Films Destined to Be Forgotten," *Independent* 12 Nov. 2000: sec. culture: 1).

It is important to add that Adair received furious responses from readers who criticised the intellectual arrogance of Adair in his attack on *Billy Elliot*. For example, readers complained that "a film enthusiast without any academic leanings, my view is more simplistic: it's well-made, beautifully acted presentation of a fascinating story." (Bruce Anderson, Shipley, West Yorkshire); "the fact that Gilbert Adair's friends know the names of Murnau, Schlöndorff, Dovzhenko et al, does not suggest to me that he is barking polemic against popular cinema." (Ben Smith, London SW18); "why not lighten up and enjoy something for itself rather [than] its success or failure to qualify membership of the pantheon." (John Paul Chapple, London W10); "many filmgoers like myself who have enjoyed the humour and pathos of *Billy Elliot*, are to be consigned by Adair to the graveyard of cinematic ignorance; we cannot compete with the enlightened cognoscenti who are able to appreciate esoteric films and award themselves the accolade of being the true cinephiles." (Roger Gaitley, Epsom, Surrey.) (Letter, *Independent* 19 Nov. 2000: 29). As can be seen, the readers address their approval to popular style of the film and claim Adair's view for intellectual ignorance.

<sup>25</sup> Justin Wyatt, *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1994).

<sup>26</sup> Universal Pictures, USA distributor of the film, used this poster as the film's main theatre poster.

<sup>27</sup> Advertisement, *New York Times*, 13 Oct. 2000: E9.

<sup>28</sup> Advertisement, *New York Times*, 17 Nov. 2000: E22.

<sup>29</sup> Advertisement, *New York Times*, 15 Dec. 2000: E31.

<sup>30</sup> See Advertisement, *New York Times* 8 Oct. 2000: AR12-13.

<sup>31</sup> See Advertisement, *New York Times* 22 Oct. 2000: AR 25-26.

<sup>32</sup> See Advertisement, *New York Times* 8 Dec. 2000: E24.

<sup>33</sup> Advertisement, *New York Times* 8 Oct. 2000: AR13.

*Billy Elliot* reached £1.54 million in its opening weekend (1 October 2000) in the UK. However, it should be noted that the film was released on massive 335 screens over the course of this weekend. In contrast, *The Full Monty* gained a total gross of £52,232,058, which makes the film the second biggest UK film in UK box-office history, and, in contrast, *Billy Elliot* is not even in the list of All Time Top 10 UK films at the UK box-office. At this point, it is worth noting that *The Full Monty* gained a significant \$244,374 through 6 screens from 13 to 17 August 1997 in its opening in the USA and was then released in the UK on 29 August 1997. Hence, *Billy Elliot* uses *The Full Monty*, in its advertisements, as it has a prominent financial record at the US box-office.

<sup>34</sup> Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI, 1999) 120.

<sup>35</sup> In many American reviews, *Billy Elliot* is discussed in relation to an American independent film *Girlfight* (dir. Karyn Kusama, 2000) which was coincidentally released at the same time as the British film. This critical alignment between two films is not found in British reviews. For instance, A.O. Scott notes that: "If you've been to see "Girlfight," Karyn Kusama's new movie about a young female boxer from the housing projects of Brooklyn, "Billy Elliot" will seem very familiar indeed." ("Escaping a Miner's Life for a Career in Ballet," rev. of *Billy Elliot*, dir. Stephen Daldry, *New York Times* 13 Oct. 2000: E29).

Roger Ebert also contends that: "Billy Elliot" is the flip side of "Girlfight." While the recent American film is about a girl who wants to be a boxer and is opposed by her macho father but supported by her brother, the New British film is about a boy who wants to be a ballet dancer but is opposed by his macho father and brother." (rev. of *Billy Elliot*, dir. Stephen Daldry, *Chicago Sun-Times Home Page* 13 Oct. 2000, 23 Aug. 2001 <[http://www.suntimes.com/ebert/ebert\\_reviews/2000/10/101302.html](http://www.suntimes.com/ebert/ebert_reviews/2000/10/101302.html)>).

In addition, Kenneth Turan reviews that "'Billy Elliot' begins with a kind of reverse twist on "Girlfight," about a girl attracted to the world of boxing." ("Billy Elliot is a Bit Too Eager to Please," rev. of *Billy Elliot*, dir. Stephen Daldry, *LA Times Home Page* 13 Oct. 2000, 23 Aug. 2001 <<http://www.calend.../1,1419,L-LATimes-Print-X!ArticleDetail-6,988,00.html>>).

<sup>36</sup> Steve Neale, "Art Cinema as Institution," *Screen* 22.1 (1981): 35.

<sup>37</sup> Barbara Wilinsky, *Sure Seaters: The Emergence of Art House Cinema* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2001) 15.

<sup>38</sup> "Billy Elliot Boy," dir. Martyn Hone, BBC 1, 6 Oct. 2001.

<sup>39</sup> Advertisement, *Los Angeles Times* 27 Oct. 2000: D14.

<sup>40</sup> Advertisement, *New York Times* 27 Oct. 2000: E18.

<sup>41</sup> Advertisement, *Los Angeles Times* 13 Oct. 2000: D3.

<sup>42</sup> While the film has striven to be referred to as art cinema, Nora Sayre's article in *The New York Times* attests to the ways in which British cinema is critically received in the USA. Sayre as a cultural historian shows her admiration of the British New Wave of the 1960s and suggests that the New Wave filmmakers presented the class conflict inherited in British society. Her admiration of the British New Wave is expressed in enthusiasm and nostalgia. She notes that "Americans who assume that Yorkshire belongs to the Brontes will find these movies moorless; Most are set in sooty northern towns or cities; indeed, the north is no longer romantic. Amid the industrial grit, young men don't know how to escape their stifling jobs and impending marriages. ... Don't expect mirth in Richardson's 1959 film adaptation of "Look Back in Anger." As written it was mordantly funny, full of cauterizing jokes, but an outside screenwriter sandbagged most of the humor." ("They Were Young, Angry and Flourishing," *New York Times* 29 Oct. 2000: AR15+).

In addition, she refers to the relatively contemporary *Trainspotting* as a descendant of the British New Wave of the 1960s in terms of its rebellious nature. Her article suggests the British New Wave, either film or literature, is a culture which is worth exploring. For instance, she says that "you may want to check out this movie [*Look Back in Anger*] for historical reasons: to learn where a whole new genre of British films began." (AR25). The artistic and cultural value of the literary background of the British New Wave is authenticated by the literary background of the writer.

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This article was published at the time *Billy Elliot* had gained a stable box-office result in the USA and had achieved a positive reception at several international film festivals. Furthermore, this article is placed above an advertisement poster of the film on the same page of *The New York Times*. Under these circumstances, her article maps the justification of *Billy Elliot* as being grounded in the British New Wave. The tradition of the British New Wave is used as a "brand" in marketing practice. Since this tradition is "esoteric" and therefore something different, this helps to categorise *Billy Elliot* as art cinema as its marketing would indicate. This authentication is related to the legacy of the British New Wave. Considering that, in order to position itself in the terrain of art cinema, I would argue that *Billy Elliot* became associated with the high art tradition (literature/ theatre) of British New Wave cinema as well as a national origin.

<sup>43</sup> Wilinsky 30-31.

<sup>44</sup> Wilinsky 15.

<sup>45</sup> Julian Stringer, "Festival Films," unpublished, 7-9.

<sup>46</sup> Advertisement, *New York Times* 1 Dec. 2000: E23.

<sup>47</sup> Stringer 6.

<sup>48</sup> *New York Times* 8 Dec. 2000: E24



## Chapter 9. *Elizabeth*:

### DVD and the Authenticity of the Heritage Film

This chapter begins with a question: how to describe *Elizabeth: The Virgin Queen* (aka *Elizabeth*, Shekhar Kapur, 1998). Whether costume drama, historical film, bio-pic, period drama or heritage film, *Elizabeth* seems to apply to all and none of these genres. It would be, at this point, worth looking at some of the definitions of these terms. According to Sue Harper, costume drama is a type of film which "uses mythic and symbolic aspects of the past as a means of providing pleasure, rather than instruction," thus it can be divided into or combined with sub-genres such as bio-pics or period horror film. In contrast, historical film "deals with real people or events."<sup>1</sup> Alternatively, George F. Custen defines the historical film as "biographical film that depicts the life of a historical person, past or present."<sup>2</sup> While Custen deals with Hollywood-studio-made bio-pics, the actual term can also describe films of the genre made elsewhere. Despite these contrasting definitions, it is clear what kind of films are being discussed here, namely, films located in the past with authentic costumes, settings and mise-en-scene.

Recently the term heritage film has generally been used to refer to these films of "past-time" and I would suggest that *Elizabeth* is generally regarded as a heritage film. Thus, I will discuss *Elizabeth* in terms of the heritage film debates. This is because the heritage film - or the way the term appears in academic discourse - suggests in which ways *Elizabeth* is associated, and disassociated, with debates around the heritage film. Furthermore, these debates can suggest, through an analysis of *Elizabeth*, what aspects are ignored when clarifying exactly what the heritage film is claimed to be in the 1990s.

### **The Heritage Film Debates**

The term "heritage" film has been widely used since the late 1980s after the success of European costume/period film in the home and international market. While it is difficult to pinpoint its generic elements, the heritage film's most obvious characteristics are its historical location and the use of period costume. With this established, the heritage film seeks to enter into other generic narratives such as romance, thriller, melodrama, or comedy. Here then arises a question: why is the term "heritage" film used instead of simply costume/period film? In other words, what are the differences between the heritage film and costume drama - between the heritage film and the bio-pics or the period drama? The debates around the heritage film are based on the idea that it provides a mode of art cinema, that is, the heritage film suggests "authorial" style and subversive ideology in opposition to the perceived conservatism of popular film. The heritage film debates are valuable in the sense that they renegotiate the terms of a genre which has been treated "lightly" or denigrated as the "Laura Ashley" style of filmmaking.

John Hill points to extra-textual elements of the heritage film in order to emphasise the overlooked artistic credentials of the genre. Due to its reliance on literature and historical sources, Hill suggests that the heritage film should be regarded as art cinema.<sup>3</sup> In his study of the history of British art cinema, Hill argues that British art cinema can be split into two camps. The first is realist film represented through works by Ken Loach and Mike Leigh, and the post-modern aesthetic experiments conducted by directors such as Derek Jarman and Peter Greenaway. The second is the heritage film. Hill refers to the heritage film as art cinema not because of its distinctive mode of narration and style, but for "the cachet of 'high art' which is borrowed from

literary or theatrical sources."<sup>4</sup> Hill argues that the heritage film "derives its 'art' form from extra-textual sources rather than its employment of the strategies of self-conscious narration and expressive visual style characteristic of art cinema in the 50s and 60s."<sup>5</sup> This reasoning is not reliant on aesthetic exploration or authorial signature of the director but more on "cultural referents" which distinguishes the heritage film from Hollywood films.<sup>6</sup> In this sense, to Hill the heritage film is a main component of British national cinema at the market place.

In addition, Hill also argues that the heritage film presents an "ambiguous" reading of the national past. According to Hill, this ambiguous reading is a result of the fact that the heritage film does not represent the past as a perfect past. Hill contends that the heritage film "acknowledge[s] that the past was not perfect and that, ... it also contained its faults."<sup>7</sup> Through this acknowledgement, the heritage film invites a diverse reading of the national past rather than a singular reading. In the words of Hill, this acknowledgement of the "construction" of the past is revealed through the heritage film's conventions which differ from classical Hollywood ones, that is, its "episodic" narrative construction and "leisurely pace."<sup>8</sup>

In contrast to Hill, Andrew Higson notes that the heritage film introduces a limited reading of the national past. In Higson's view, it provides a conservative view of the past. Higson argues that the heritage film "strive[s] to recapture an image of national identity as pure, untainted, complete, and in place."<sup>9</sup> For Higson, unlike Hill, the filmic construction of the national past glorifies the heritage and, as a result, produces "a conservative and aristocratic discourse" that tends toward elitism.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, Higson draws a distinction between the heritage film and costume drama. In his analysis of the costume drama *Comin' Thro' The Rye* (Cecil Hepworth, 1924),

Higson suggests that the pictorial and pastoral style of the film indicates the originality of the source and thus projects Victorian heritage. Its style indicates a Victorian authenticity rather than stressing the spectacle of that heritage.<sup>11</sup> In contrast to costume drama, according to Higson, the heritage film provides visual pleasure and a fetishization of period detail through a self-conscious style that presents a nostalgic fantasy of the national heritage. However, a problem with Higson's argument is that it generalises the heritage film without taking into account the diversity of heritage texts.<sup>12</sup> Thus, in the words of Claire Monk, Higson "fail[s] to engage with the essentially hybrid and impure nature of the heritage film text - their mixture of conservatism *and* progressiveness."<sup>13</sup> Therefore, Higson neglects to take into account the diversity in presentation and attitudes towards the national past that exists within heritage cinema.

Bearing this in mind, it is worth considering Ginette Vincendeau's discussion of the style of the heritage film. In answer to her own question into what it is exactly, Vincendeau refers to the heritage film as "a new genre."<sup>14</sup> She acknowledges that the heritage film stems from costume drama in the sense that both have literary sources and are period pieces. However, in Vincendeau's opinion, the difference between the heritage film and costume drama can be addressed in two ways: firstly, the shift of emphasis from narrative to setting that introduces a presentation rather than a representation of images through costumes, décor and setting; and secondly, the postmodernism impact on narrative.<sup>15</sup> To elaborate on the second point, while non-narrative presentation of mise-en-scene plays a part, the narrative itself becomes looser with the plot episodic rather than linear and the visual style pictorial rather than dramatic. This implies that visual style is less expressive of character and emotion when compared to the mise-en-scene of classical costume drama. Consequently, the visual

style, according to Hill, "exceeds narrative or expressive requirements"<sup>16</sup> and provides not only "cinematic self-consciousness" but also "display[s] the iconography ... with building, properties, costumes, and landscapes."<sup>17</sup>

The result is the creation of "heritage spectacle" in the words of Hill.<sup>18</sup>

Subsequently, the concept of the "cinematic self-consciousness" is not employed by the expressive practice of filmic modes, but by reflection of nation/national identity. The "heritage" contained within the heritage film while connoting the nation through an image of the past, also imposes self-consciously a sense of tradition that promotes a very modern idea of national identity. The "spectacle" can be understood in a similar way. For both Hill and Vincendeau, the spectacle is not employed by self-conscious aesthetic representation, but by presentation of setting, décor and costume. For instance, in terms of costume, the heritage film invites us to look "at" the costumes instead of looking "through" them.<sup>19</sup> Even so, it is questionable whether all these aspects of visual style in the heritage film can confirm it as a "new" genre distinct from pre-1980s costume/period films.

Despite its variety of subject matter, British costume dramas and historical films in the 1930s and 1940s had provided visual pleasure through their use of period costumes and settings.<sup>20</sup> While historians criticised the historical inaccuracy of costume dramas, those made by larger companies such as Gainsborough (with films such as *The Man in Grey* (Leslie Arliss, 1943) and *The Wicked Lady* (Leslie Arliss, 1945)) gained considerable popularity during the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>21</sup> In her study of costume drama, Pam Cook notes the conflict between historical detail (such as costume and period sets) and historical truthfulness. Cook argues that history in costume drama is a "fabrication" to aid contemporary readings of the past. As Cook argues, costume drama "reflects

prevailing social conditions and contributes to current ideas about history."<sup>22</sup> In this respect, Gainsborough costume dramas and war time period dramas (such as *Fanny by Gaslight* (Anthony Asquith, 1944)) showed re-interpretations of the periods they presented whilst actually addressing present issues.<sup>23</sup>

In the 1950s, costume dramas continued to accommodate social changes and cultural attitudes of the time. As Sue Harper notes, the 50s costume drama "used the historical context as a disguise in which to express disquiet about social changes."<sup>24</sup> However, as the British film industry took an economic downturn, British costume drama became less reliant upon spectacle. Because these films required big-budgets for mise-en-scene, production companies were reluctant to spend money on ornate costumes and spectacular settings. Thus, visual effect was created more through camera techniques than elements in the mise-en-scene. *Footsteps in the Fog* (Arthur Lubin, 1955) and *I Accuse!* (Jose Ferrer, 1957) are cases in point. In addition, due to production companies recognition of an emerging middle-class filmgoer, there can be found more class difference employed in characters (such as the lower middle-class and working class hero) to cater to this changing audience.<sup>25</sup> Such characters came to dominant the New Wave of the late 50s and early 60s.

Since the late 50s, British costume drama began to reveal its hybrid style and themes to a greater degree. This move was apparent in the 60s and 70s when the genre combined period setting with other popular genres such as the musical and the thriller. *Half a Sixpence* (George Sidney, 1967) and *The Day of the Jackal* (Fred Zinnemann, 1973) are cases in point. However, in the 1980s costume drama received criticism for being conventional and conservative, resulting in its complexity and projection of national identity being largely overlooked. This is related to the international success of

*Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981). *Chariots of Fire* became fatally affiliated with the conservatism and jingoism of the Thatcher government despite the critical success it received at the Oscars. While *Chariots of Fire* initiated the revival of costume dramas in production, it also invited familiar criticism of the genre that it is primarily concerned with the aristocracy, conservatism and a spectacular presentation of national heritage.

Yet, as noted earlier, the argument against "anti-heritage"<sup>26</sup> critics is that the emphasis should lie on how heritage is presented and understood rather than whose heritage is presented. Hill suggests that even though a particular social group's ("a privileged upper class") heritage is presented as nationally specific, the actual consumer of the heritage is a different "social group."<sup>27</sup> Thus, the heritage film employs a projection relative to the moment of production rather than an authoritative reading of original sources.

Thus, the heritage film allows us to look at the (national) past in a contemporary social, cultural context. This view is further developed by Vincendeau. According to her, the heritage film includes (instead of staying faithful to the original source - whether literature or historical), "recycling, pastiche and allusion" of the sources. As a result, the heritage film re-interprets the past and creates contemporary agendas for such issues as sexuality, gender and historical events.<sup>28</sup> This post-modern practice within the heritage film plays a part in the cultural construction of the past. As post-modern culture utilises numerous institutionalised pieces of information and images, it encourages readings of the reconstruction rather than authentic readings of history. Hill notes that the heritage film is "dependent on intertextual reference to other representations of the past as much as it is to the referent of 'real' history."<sup>29</sup> The heritage film is regarded as a cultural process of reconstructing history and, therefore, reflects a particular

construction of a national past and culture. As the heritage film exposes the self-referentiality of the past through a self-conscious visual style, it allows a setting up of "a nostalgic relationship to the past," or, more precisely, brings nostalgia to "the imaging of the past."<sup>30</sup> While Vincendeau focuses on the post-modern influences on narrative in the heritage film, Hill expands the post-modern influences to encompass visual style.<sup>31</sup> For Hill, the pictorial presentation of heritage through setting, décor and costume delivers dominant images that reference the process of constructing particular versions of the national past and national culture. In the terms laid down by Vincendeau, the visual style of the heritage film, where mise-en-scene is dominant over the narrative, acknowledges the process of the (re)construction of history and at the same time deals with contemporary agendas.

The argument put forward by both Vincendeau and Hill is worth examining if only because it is an attempt to re-negotiate the heritage film in the light of its style and its prior reputation to its female audiences.<sup>32</sup> Due to its style and its reputation for attracting either elderly or female audiences, the heritage film had been marginalised. However, its limited appeal cannot explain the success of recent heritage films in the home and international markets. For instance, *Elizabeth* made £5.5 million in the UK and \$29.4 million in the USA in 1998, being one of the most profitable films of the year. Similarly, Ang Lee's *Sense and Sensibility* took \$43.2 million at the box-office on its release in 1995. Taking the success of these films into account, Vincendeau comments that the heritage film should be understood as "a new type of popular cinema." She suggests that the heritage film provides a bridge between art/auteur and popular cinema. Given this parallel between aesthetic strategies and cultural references from Hollywood, to reiterate an earlier point, Hill too proposes that the heritage film



should be categorised as an art cinema due to its success in the international market and as a national cinema due to its international credentials.

While Vincendeau concentrates on European and the United States, Hill's focus is specifically to the British heritage film. Despite the differences that exist between Hill and Vincendeau, both argue that the heritage film achieved popularity internationally through referencing cultural sources (literature or historical events). This concept helps us understand the long-standing popularity of the heritage film generally and its aesthetic value within the realm of art cinema. However, it does not particularly explain the reason the heritage film can be popular in the home market. Furthermore while the debate is limited to textual developments of the heritage film, it does not explain why the heritage film has become particularly popular since the 1980s and into the 1990s - which results in developing the term the "heritage film" according to Vincendeau.

In examining the popularity of the heritage film, Claire Monk uses the term "post-heritage" to distinguish it from "pre-heritage" films.<sup>33</sup> Monk locates the success of the post-heritage film to the international success of Sally Potter's *Orlando* (1992). For Monk, the term "post-heritage" refers to those heritage films released since the 1980s which offer politicised representations of gender and sexuality which focus on gay and feminist points of view, as well as deploying post-modern practices such as self-referentiality and irony. More importantly, Monk argues that this politicised sexuality was a new element in British heritage films that differentiated it from other heritage films so that it could gain distinguishable marketability in the international market. In this regard, the popularity of post-heritage should be understood in relation to its sexual discourse rather than its presentation of heritage. Thus, as will be discussed later in this chapter, the appeal of Elizabeth is more to do with Queen Elizabeth's, in the words of

Monk, "search for a true (inner) self and authentic sexuality" than with the glorification of the Elizabethan era.<sup>34</sup> The scene where Elizabeth prepares for her speech in the congress is an example that demonstrates this. This scene consists of the juxtaposition of Elizabeth preparing her address to the bishops with the council members waiting for her in the congress. While the slow and fast tempo in the editing between scenes of Elizabeth and the congress symbolise the tension between them, Elizabeth's emotional turmoil under the pressure to approve the Act of Uniformity is also heightened.

Monk's emphasis is that if the heritage is understood only in terms of national identity, it will result in overlooking the complexities of heritage texts. Yet, this does not mean that post-heritage does not rely on spectacle. What Monk refers to as the "visual pleasure of heritage" - despite "the rebelling sexuality" - can be found in such British films as *Carrington* (Christopher Hampton, 1995), *Maurice* (James Ivory, 1987) and *A Room with a View* (James Ivory, 1986) as well as international successes like *The Piano* (Jane Campion, 1993) and *The Age of Innocence* (Martin Scorsese, 1993).<sup>35</sup>

Monk notes that its popularity resulted in an increase in the production of the heritage film during the 1990s in both Britain and the USA, thus bringing the potential of the heritage film and its art-film aesthetics into discussion. Monk focuses on the subversive narratives of the post-heritage film, in particular sexuality. However, despite her emphasis on artistic style, she does not fully discuss what results from these changes in artistic style and the way in which the post-heritage film can be different from the "pre-heritage" film. It is generally accepted that art cinema authenticated itself through an open and realistic exploration of sexual relationships as well as modern practices of cinema techniques.<sup>36</sup> In this respect, there is an authenticity in the heritage/post-heritage film, which relates to (European) art cinema in general. However, as Monk

acknowledges, the non-dominant narrative of sexuality in the heritage film is not only apparent in European/British heritage films, but also Hollywood films.<sup>37</sup>

To summarise, the heritage film provides self-conscious artistic style influenced by postmodernist practices, though it is not clear which artistic style is being delivered. In addition, the way in which the artistic style of the heritage film is associated with non-dominant discourse is hardly considered. If the heritage film is associated with postmodernism (where form represents meaning), it should be considered as to what the artistic style of the heritage film represents. These debates refer to postmodern practices as an opposition to modernism, yet, the concept of postmodernism is a complicated one which attempts both to succeed and dismiss modernism. What, then, is ignored in the complexities existing in the use of those postmodernist practices that are evident within the heritage film. The juxtaposition of different modes and styles means that as well as its accepted conventions, the heritage film might have incorporated visual techniques associated with Hollywood as well as unlikely influences such as M-TV or TV aesthetics.

However, these debates tend to define the heritage film as art cinema because of its reference to European art "form" and not through any connection to the classical Hollywood style. The term European art "form" is used here instead of European art cinema in order to clarify certain points. Most specifically, these debates ignore intricacies of the relationship between modernism and postmodernism, instead referring to one as an opposition to the other. As a consequence, the diverse representations within European cinema are neglected. This neglect relates to the fact that the art form is justified by how it should be exposed in the international market as opposed to Hollywood cinema. Thus, the diversity of the heritage film cannot be clearly explained

due to any fixed notion about European art forms in these debates. If art cinema is defined through its mode of consumption not only through its mode of film practice (style),<sup>38</sup> then I would argue that there is a need to discuss the ways in which the "artistic" mode of the heritage film is effected by changed patterns in cinema consumption.

### **The Heritage Film and *Elizabeth***

The heritage film in the 1990s has had a great deal of multi-cultural input into its content and form.<sup>39</sup> To some extent, this had a lot to do with the international crews involved in the making of the heritage film.<sup>40</sup> As well as the casting of local, indigenous and international actors, scriptwriters, directors and cinematographers from all around the world can be found in the credits of many heritage films. *Sense and Sensibility* (1995) is directed by Taiwanese-American director Ang Lee while the screenplay is written by English actress Emma Thompson. Similarly, *The Wings of The Dove* (Iain Softley, 1997) is scripted by Iran writer, Hossein Amini. In the case of *Elizabeth*, the film is directed by the Indian Shekar Kapur, who gained international recognition with *The Bandit Queen* (1994). Tim Bevan and Eric Feller, the co-chairmen of *Elizabeth's* production company, Working Title, discussed the reason they hired an Indian director for a British film,<sup>41</sup> that "rather than going for an English person who knew a lot about the period, we thought we should go for someone who knew absolutely nothing about it, so that the film would be their exploration of that piece of history."<sup>42</sup>

This ploy of bringing in a cultural outsider was seen to be successful. Matt Ford comments that "director Kapur draws the best from an outstanding cast and delivers both an atmospheric romance and a mature exploration of a big theme - the dark

duplicity, betrayal, and grubby ambition that runs through Britain's bloodthirsty history."<sup>43</sup> However, it seems unclear as to whether Kapur shared the same views about exploring history, stating that "I had to make a choice. ... whether details of history or the emotions and essence of history were to prevail."<sup>44</sup> Interviewed on the DVD version of *Elizabeth*, Kapur draws parallels with his own country's recent past and medieval England by saying that "we had Prime Minister Gandhi, it's the same story."<sup>45</sup> It appears that the producers wanted someone to place a different interpretation on a familiar era in Britain - someone understands the history of Elizabeth I in a much more objective way. However, it is not clear in which way the interpretation of history can be validated and whether it would appeal to (English) audiences. Rather, this heterogenic nature of the heritage film should be understood as justifying the authenticity of the heritage film rather than changing the way the history is interpreted.

*Elizabeth* begins with typical subtitled explanations about historical facts: the death of Henry VIII, tension between Catholics and Protestants in England, the dead king's catholic daughter Mary's challenges for the throne, her protestant half-sister Elizabeth's near-brushes with death. Then we see the brutal trial of three Protestants and the severe political wranglings between Queen Mary and council members. All this is enhanced by the dark and doom-filled lighting. The scene cuts to Elizabeth dancing with her ladies-in waiting with the bright colour and natural lighting helping to display the innocence of the young princess. Then we see Elizabeth and Lord Robert in the house dancing together, presumably in love. Along with the romantic soundtrack, their movement deliberately slows down and the names of director, scriptwriter, and producers are shown in the titles. Soon, Elizabeth is sent to the Tower. When Elizabeth, with fearful eyes, is passing the river of blood with her ladies, against a dark

background the title appears. The title credits the names of supporting actors and actresses, and this interruption with titles can be understood as a reference to what is in effect a fictional world and the creators of this world. When the titles displaying the names of director, scriptwriter and producers, the slow movement of Elizabeth and Lord Robert is deliberately dramatised.

The river of blood scene can be similarly understood. While fearful Elizabeth is placed in the middle of the scene, the appearance of celebrities as supporting actors prompts the viewers to make immediate associations outside of the historical subject matter. As some of the support cast are familiar popular culture figures such as Eric Cantona (a football player) and Kathy Burke (a TV comedian), the appearance of their names arouses a curious expectation that leads the viewer to disconnect emotionally from Elizabeth. Thus Elizabeth's anguish no longer dominates the screen, and a link is established between the cultural context manifested through the names of personalities and the text itself. Actually, there are two cultural contexts vying for dominance - historical information about Elizabeth and the popular appeal of football and TV comedy. That is not to say that reading the film does not require any knowledge of history. Rather, *Elizabeth* invites a reading knowingly informed by contemporary popular culture. Because the film becomes interwoven with other cultural texts, there is a strong suggestion of intertextuality that should be distinguished from referentiality. While the film tends not to reference historical sources by indicating a fictional world, it opens a space for other texts to inhabit. There is less attempt to achieve authenticity through historical reference, rather the film as one of many popular texts which achieves a form of authenticity through reference to popular culture.

It is generally accepted that the heritage film such as *Elizabeth* authenticates itself by its historical nature. To assure audiences, the accuracy of the story of the film is emphasised in many ways. The most common way is the "this is a true story" type of verbal or written opening credit. This authenticity is created by emphasising the factual nature of history, and also can be seen to serve an educational purpose.<sup>46</sup> For instance, when looking at advertising for *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* (Michael Curtiz, 1939), detailed promotional strategies aimed at school children can be found. The production company, Warner Brothers, contacted the local Parent-Teacher Association, sponsored history essay competitions for 'the Elizabeth-Essex period' and held a competition for home-drawn maps of 'the Elizabeth-Essex period' in English history, awarding prizes to the winners. In promotional letters sent to teachers by the manager of Warner Brothers, he wrote that "an entirely different type of educational historical picture which I believe will prove invaluable to your pupils in their studies of English history. ... a background of Elizabeth pomp and pageantry ... will bring to your students the feel of that remarkable period in English history ... come to life on the screen."<sup>47</sup> As can be seen, *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* gains an "authenticity" because of the way the film references historical sources and relates itself to a representation of national identity.

In this respect, it is worth looking at how the extra features of the DVD stimulate a newly formed "authenticity" for *Elizabeth*. DVD extra features are generally regarded as informative functions that enable viewers to become more actively involved in the text. In terms of the heritage film, this function can be discussed in the light of film history rather than history depicted on the screen.

Released in May 1999, the DVD of *Elizabeth*<sup>48</sup> includes three extras: 'Interviews with the cast and crew,' 'Making of Elizabeth' and 'Behind the scenes.' In the interviews, the main cast explain their own interpretation of their characters and of the film itself. Cate Blanchett, who plays Elizabeth, discusses the Queen's "instability" saying "we know about the absolute stability of the monarch but we don't know about her. It's extremely contemporary." Geoffrey Rush who plays Sir Robert Walsingham, says that *Elizabeth* is "aiming to show the spirit of a kind young woman [and that the film is] very moving, so much about love, very contemporary." Christopher Eccleston, who plays the Duke of Norfolk, says that "the script explores more the human, rather than the icon [of Elizabeth]." As for the production crew, the producer Tim Bevan calls the Elizabethan regime "conspiracy time," while the director Kapur says that this film is about a "human being."<sup>49</sup> While they all give suggestions to how the film could be read, their comments acknowledge what they understand about Elizabeth the person rather than the iconic figure of Elizabeth or the Elizabethan era. The interview scenes demonstrate how the cast and crew perceive Elizabeth herself and the period she symbolised. In discussing the authenticity of the film rather than the authenticity of the filmic representation of the figure or period, some of the cast are in their costumes (Blanchett and Eccleston) and others are in their contemporary clothes (Rush). Thus, filmmaking itself gains authenticity and the filming of historical reconstruction is validated through the involvement of the crew and details of sets, props, costumes and make-up.<sup>50</sup>

In the 'Making of *Elizabeth*,' the writer Michael Hirst says that "what I wanted to do with *Elizabeth* was to push things for drama. There is no historical evidence [that Elizabeth and Lord Robert had sex]. The point is whether they love or not. Putting them



into bed together didn't change English history."<sup>51</sup> The writer seems to gloss over inconvenient historical facts to create his own imaginative history. In fact, this is true of any heritage film, especially history-based drama. Yet, due to DVD and the extras it provides, the audience is informed of historical inaccuracy. As a result, the audience is invited to engage with the dramatised personal journey of Elizabeth as depicted in the film rather than with the historical period of the Elizabethan era. Thus the authenticity of history is replaced by the dramatization of history. As seen in the case of *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex*, the need for historical accuracy was important to the commercial success of the heritage film. However, the popularity and subsequent production of Hollywood bio-pics declined when television began to project "visual" history through the documentary and the docu-drama. In addition to television programmes that try to present the past in a factual way, there is a more recent phenomenon that has changed our understanding about what represents "reality."

Compared with the intimacy of the factual TV programme and the performances of the reality TV show, contemporary heritage film cannot convey the reality of space and time in the same way. Thus the uniqueness of the narrative time and space and historical time and space no longer achieves authenticity. In this respect, I would argue that *Elizabeth* rather distances itself from creating an idyllic version of the Elizabethan period, and places itself within the text, as Matt Ford comments: "this intelligent period drama skilfully avoids the swamp of nostalgic fantasy."<sup>52</sup> *Elizabeth* does attempt to produce intertextuality within the text rather than within the historical context. In this sense, the intertextuality which *Elizabeth* creates authenticates the film.

The extra features of the DVD contribute to this intertextuality since they provide the "history" of how the film was made. Janet Staiger has suggested that while the

intertextuality in the text attracts audiences' "cognitive reading," it also leads scholars either to "praise the text as art or degrade it as trash."<sup>53</sup> While Staiger recognises how other filmic texts are employed, intertextuality itself can also use other cultural texts as referents. Through this, I would suggest that, while scholars refer to *Elizabeth* as art cinema because of the authenticity of its source (history) and its debt to the conventions of European art cinema, audiences embrace it as popular cinema on the basis of references from popular culture. As an example, there is a scene where Elizabeth (who realises that she is on the verge of disaster) finally orders death to all traitors. When the executions are carried out, Elizabeth is shown to be in emotional pain and choral music is added to enhance the intensity of the moment. This scene, which can be seen as a reference to *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972),<sup>54</sup> shows that the imagery of *Elizabeth* is stepped in popular culture.

To some extent, it is difficult to clarify the authenticity of a text in the modern era. While technological innovation helps to offer diverse ways of watching films by improving the visual and auditory quality of film, it demolishes the way to define the authenticity of a text. The authenticity of a text is subjective and relies on individual tastes. For instance, the video of *Elizabeth* supplies subtitles of English translation for French dialogue and locations such as 'the Vatican,' 'Scotland' or 'the coast of England' but the DVD does not provide these unless the subtitle option is on. Therefore, audiences who view *Elizabeth* on DVD are "denied" access to information which is "necessary" to the narrative process. It is of no consequence to know whether or not DVD audiences can follow the narrative process without subtitles. Rather it is of greater import to note how a variety of materials can provide different types of narrative process. In other words, *Elizabeth* does not exist as a unique text. It is, in fact, a number

of *texts* and *Elizabeth* viewed on video is different from the film viewed on DVD or viewed on TV.

Another example of a film with a number of texts is *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1996). This is the result of technological innovations, which through offering a variety of texts provides numerous discourses about a film. The video of *Trainspotting* contains scenes not seen on its cinema release. It shows Renton and Diane's conversation about Diane's new boyfriend. Through this conversation, Renton's emotional attachment to Diane is more obviously revealed than in the cinema version, and Diane's role in the film is more prominent than in the video. Another example is provided by the director's cut of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (Guy Ritchie, 1998). The video edits in more scenes such as the story about Harry and JD's bar and more images of Eddie playing cards. With this added footage, the tension between Harry and Eddie is heightened and changes the emphasis on the storyline.<sup>55</sup> Thus, viewers are able to obtain different readings of the text according to what version they see.

*Elizabeth* was also released on video, wide-screen format video and on DVD after its theatrical release. The DVD and the video have the same cover which shows four protagonists, Elizabeth, Lord Robert, the Duke of Norfolk and Sir Robert Walsingham with the titles of heretic, lover, traitor and assassin respectively. It emphasises the conflict between the four characters and introduces romance and betrayal, the generic elements of the film. The wide-screen format video has an image that displays Elizabeth (Cate Blanchett) sitting in a chair and looking into the distance with a very powerful stare. Thus, the wide-screen format video appears to highlight both the tragic and some might say, the feminist elements of story.

A film does not have a fixed meaning and can be read through its relation to other versions of the film and other cultural texts. To an extent, this transformation within a film produces more discourses since the modification affects its intertextuality. The transformability is not only imposed in consumption but also in film production. Peter Mullan's claim about the extra materials of his film, *Orphans* (1997) shows the way in which the transformable nature of the text is understood in production. As both writer and director, Mullan has complained that Film Four<sup>56</sup> destroyed all the extra material of the film without any consultation.<sup>57</sup> After pointing out that the extra materials might be needed by the American distributor<sup>58</sup> for commercial reasons to do with the US release of the film, Mullan raised this question: "on the DVD, what do we show people now? A pile of melted celluloid?"<sup>59</sup> In terms of political responsibility, Mullan criticises Film Four for dismissing the duty of using public funding, Scottish lottery funding and insists that the public has a right to know as much about the film as possible: "thus the great beauty of the DVD, where they can see everything that was filmed."<sup>60</sup> Mullan's annoyance about the extra materials is, it would seem, related to his concern about the release of the DVD and the questions of copyright. Yet, it is also worth considering that Mullan wants the extra material in case it is needed to add to or omit from the "completed" film. Instead of insisting on the authenticity of the "completed" film, he considers that any material from filmmaking can be used to create another "completed" film. The authenticity of "a text" is replaced with the notion of "texts of authenticity."

In this respect, films are seen as less textually determined and defining "original" becomes less straightforward than it used to be. Since, as discussed in chapter 5, textual image is transformable due to technical equipment, the interest in the materiality of film becomes increased. Subsequently, the discourse about the text is replaced by the

discourse about the materiality of the text, traditional criteria (the content of the text) become less important and the materiality of the text (spectacular visuals and sounds) formulates the discourse. In the words of Barbara Klinger, the text is "*reread* (my italics) through the ideology of the spectacular and form triumphs over content" in new media technology.<sup>61</sup> The text can be "reread" in the sense that the notion of the text can be "renegotiated." The "spectacular and form" is considered when justifying the value of the text in a cultural context. This implies that either the aesthetics of a film can be re-evaluated or can be reformulated to achieve the freshly established value. For instance, *The Italian Job* (Peter Collinson, 1969) is regarded as a British gangster film. When the video of the film was released in October 1999, it offered an extra 26 minutes of documentary footage about the making of the film that showed all the technical work of the special effects and stunt teams, including interviews with various individuals.<sup>62</sup> These extra features allow *The Italian Job* to be seen in a different light with the footage displaying how expertise and technology aided the impact of the film. In this respect, supplying a documentary for a video helps to re-formulate *The Italian Job's* status as, for its time, a technologically advanced film in which the materiality of the text is more highly considered than the content.

To relate all of this to the subject of the heritage film, I would suggest that "the heritage spectacle" is an element which allows for the heritage film to be integrated into techno culture. As Claire Monk notes, the post-heritage films still "revel in the visual pleasures of heritage."<sup>63</sup> Thus, the spectacle generated through setting, décor and costume plays a significant part. Queen Elizabeth's coronation scene is a case in point. However, what is more is that the post-heritage films rely on visual techniques as well as sumptuous mise-en-scene. For example, there is a sequence that shows Elizabeth

being given the queen's ring after Queen Mary dies. This sequence employs minimal heritage detail (except period costumes) and relies on visual techniques. The film's emphasis on stylistic concerns is accommodated by the increased interest in filmic form in image culture. Furthermore, *Elizabeth's* stylistic concerns enhance the excessiveness of the heritage spectacle. Thus, I would argue that *Elizabeth* demonstrates how technical concerns were combined with the essence of heritage spectacle.

### Conclusion

Pamela Church Gibson argues that *Elizabeth* changes "our perception of heritage films and how they might be made."<sup>64</sup> *Elizabeth* appears to pander to the demand for spectacle in an era of new consumption and allows for the re-examination of debates surrounding the heritage film. As discussed, while pointing out the aesthetic changes in the heritage film, these debates overlook the relationship between the stylistic mode of the genre and changed viewing patterns in multi-media consumption. Since the heritage film debate concerns largely textual implications and stylistic difference from Hollywood popular films, it examines the heritage film within the empirical notion of art cinema style. For instance, Hill argues that the heritage film is "a kind of 'half-way house' between mainstream narrative cinema and earlier European art cinema."<sup>65</sup> This view is further carried forward by Vincendeau. As noted earlier, she asserts that the genre, especially the 90s heritage film, should be seen as "a new type of popular cinema" that has altered drastically long held notions of what popular cinema is.<sup>66</sup> Their views are valid in the sense that they take account of the heritage film's wide popularity and re-read the value of the genre's stylistic concerns. Despite that, this critical attention on the heritage film as art cinema maintains the idea that art cinema is something

artistically "valuable," differing from "unauthorial" popular films. Hence, I would argue that this idea overlooks a need to discuss the complexity beyond textual analysis within the notions of art and popular cinema. This complexity partly results from the contemporary environment of techno culture which transforms the way films are consumed and our perception of visual presentation. In this respect, a question should be raised: rather than "a new type of popular cinema," can the heritage film not be called "a new type of art cinema." This question identifies, as demonstrated through the case study of *Elizabeth*, that the heritage film to a larger extent has combined artistic credentials (the heritage culture) with popular demand.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Sue Harper, "Bonnie Prince Charlie Revisited: British Costume Film in the 1950s," *The British Cinema Book*, ed. Robert Murphy (London: BFI, 1997) 133.
- <sup>2</sup> George F. Custen, *Bio/Pics: How Hollywood Constructed Public History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1992) 5.
- <sup>3</sup> Hill also addresses that art cinema has been predominant in British filmmaking since the 1980s. ("British Cinema as National Cinema: Production, Audience and Representation," Murphy 246).
- <sup>4</sup> Hill 247.
- <sup>5</sup> John Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s: Issues and Themes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999) 78.
- <sup>6</sup> Hill, "British Cinema as National Cinema" 247.
- <sup>7</sup> Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s* 84.
- <sup>8</sup> Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s* 80.
- <sup>9</sup> Andrew Higson, "Re-presenting the National Past: Nostalgia and Pastiche in the Heritage Film," *British Cinema and Thatcherism: Fires Were Started*, ed. Lester Friedman (London: UCL, 1993) 123.
- <sup>10</sup> Andrew Higson, "The Heritage and British Cinema," *Dissolving Views: Key Writings on British Cinema*, ed. Higson (London: Cassell, 1996) 237.
- <sup>11</sup> For the analysis of *Comin' Thro' The Rye*, see his chapter, "The Heritage Film, British Cinema, and the National Past: *Comin' Thro' The Rye*," Higson, *Waving the Flag* 26-97.
- <sup>12</sup> According to Claire Monk, this is due to the intellectual reaction to the Thatcher government and its heritage policy. Claire Monk, "The British 'Heritage Film' and Its Critics," *Critical Survey* 7.2 (1995): 120-21.
- <sup>13</sup> Monk 122.
- <sup>14</sup> Ginette Vincendeau, introduction, *Film/Literature/Heritage: A Sight and Sound Reader*, ed. Vincendeau (London: BFI, 2001) xvii.
- <sup>15</sup> Vincendeau xviii.
- <sup>16</sup> Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s* 80.
- <sup>17</sup> Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s* 81.
- <sup>18</sup> Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s* 81.
- <sup>19</sup> Pamela Church Gibson, "Fewer Weddings and More Funerals: Changes in the Heritage Film," *British Cinema of the 90s*, ed. Robert Murphy (London: BFI, 2000) 120-21.
- In this respect, as Harper points out, Gainsborough costume films of the 1950s show "the contradictions between the verbal level of script and non-verbal discourse of décor and costume," and, as a result, the sensualised-glamorous style and spectacular mise-en-scene exceed narrative. (*Picturing the Past: The Rise and Fall of the British Costume Film* (London: BFI, 1994) 13; 127.
- <sup>20</sup> Harper, "Bonnie Prince Charlie Revisited" 133.
- <sup>21</sup> Sue Harper suggests that audiences in the 1930s "patronized" historical costume drama with three things: visual pleasure, a greater understanding of their heritage and the opportunity to expand their empathy with characters from the past. Among three, visual pleasure was the most preferred. Harper points out that thus setting and costumes in the 1930s historical costume films is deliberately celebrated to satisfy popular taste. ("Studying Popular Taste: British Historical Films in the 1930s," *Popular European Cinema*, ed. Richard Dyer and Ginette Vincendeau (London: Routledge, 1992) 110).
- <sup>22</sup> Pam Cook, *Fashioning the Nation: Costume and Identity in British Cinema* (London: BFI, 1996) 68.
- <sup>23</sup> Critical work on Gainsborough costume drama or wartime films is very much concerned with showing the ways in which the films in question addressed contemporary issues. For instance, Pam Cook argues that the "highly sexualised image [of female characters in Gainsborough period dramas] is not exactly compatible with either wartime masculinised women of post-war projections of good-motherhood." (Cook 79). Thus, this can be seen as the heritage film's response to such sexual repression on women at the time.
- <sup>24</sup> Harper, "Bonnie Prince Charlie Revisited" 141.
- <sup>25</sup> Harper, "Bonnie Prince Charlie Revisited" 135-37.
- <sup>26</sup> I derive this term from Claire Monk's article "the British 'Heritage Film' and Its Critics." Monk refers to anti-heritage critics as those who simply disregard the heritage film for its conservative projection of a national past and glorification of the English upper class.



<sup>27</sup> Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s* 78.

<sup>28</sup> Vincendeau xiv-xvii.

<sup>29</sup> Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s* 85.

<sup>30</sup> Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s* 85.

<sup>31</sup> Vincendeau's limit stems from the fact that her definition of the heritage is largely based on literature adaptation. Even though she seems to consider the heritage film to the extent that is located in past time, her debate looks at post-modern influence in screen adaptation.

<sup>32</sup> The heritage film has been referred to as appealing mostly to females and relatively older groups of people. In contrast to the age group of the average cinemagoer (who is 14-25+) this audience group is considered to be indicative of the long-standing niche market appeal of the heritage film. (Andrew Higson, "Re-presenting the National Past," Friedman 110).

<sup>33</sup> Claire Monk, "Sexuality and Heritage," Vincendeau 6.

<sup>34</sup> Monk, "The British 'Heritage Film' and Its Critics" 120.

<sup>35</sup> Monk, "Sexuality and Heritage" 6-11.

<sup>36</sup> Jill Forbes, and Sarah Street, *European Cinema: An Introduction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000) 38-39.

<sup>37</sup> Monk, "Sexuality and Heritage" 7.

<sup>38</sup> Steve Neale, "Art Cinema as Institution," *Screen* 22.1 (1981): 11-40.

<sup>39</sup> Gibson 116.

<sup>40</sup> Julianne Pidduck, "Elizabeth and Shakespeare in Love: Screening the Elizabethans," Vincendeau 131-32.

<sup>41</sup> Tim Bevan and Eric Feller both are co-producers of *Elizabeth* with Alison Owen. For Kapur, even though he became recognisable after the success of *The Bandit Queen* (1994), he was relatively less-known in Britain at the time he was appointed to the director of *Elizabeth*.

<sup>42</sup> Imogen Edward-Jones, "Notching up Blockbusters," *Times* 14 June 1999: 21.

<sup>43</sup> Matt Ford, rev. of *Elizabeth*, dir. Shekhar Kapur, *BBC Online* 27 Oct. 2000, 3 Aug. 2001 <[http://www.bbc.co.uk/films/2000/10/27/elizabeth\\_1998\\_reviews.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/films/2000/10/27/elizabeth_1998_reviews.shtml)>.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Williams, "Liz the Lionheart," *Guardian Unlimited* 2 Oct. 1998, 23 July 2001 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/article/0,4273,3839676,000.html>>.

<sup>45</sup> *Elizabeth*, dir. Shekhar Kapur, perf. Cate Blanchett, Geoffrey Rush, and Joseph Fiennes, 1998, DVD, PolyGram, 1999.

<sup>46</sup> Custen 35-36.

<sup>47</sup> Pressbook for *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex*, *Cinema Pressbooks from the Original Studio Collections*, Hallward Library, U of Nottingham (1998): reel 014.

<sup>48</sup> The theatrical release was in November 1998.

<sup>49</sup> *Elizabeth* DVD.

<sup>50</sup> Amy Sargeant, "Making and Selling Heritage Culture: Style and Authenticity in Historical Fictions on Film and Television," *British Cinema, Past and Present*, ed. Justin Ashby and Andrew Higson (London: Routledge, 2000) 309-10.

<sup>51</sup> *Elizabeth* DVD.

<sup>52</sup> Ford.

<sup>53</sup> Janet Staiger, *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception* (New York: New York UP, 2000) 186.

<sup>54</sup> Gibson 122.

<sup>55</sup> The film is a revenge type of story in the director's cut (video and DVD, Universal Pictures Video, 1999) while it appears as a bad-man-vs-bad-boy-tricky-game in another video version.

<sup>56</sup> *Orphans* is co-produced by Antoinine Green Bridge, British Screen, Channel Four (Film Four International), National Lottery, the Glasgow Film Fund and the Scottish Arts Council.

<sup>57</sup> Mullan realised that all the extra material - the prints, the negatives and the master soundtrack - had been destroyed when discussing the commentary for the DVD of the film with the executive producer of the film, Paddy Higson.

<sup>58</sup> Shooting Gallery was in charge of the US distribution of the film.

<sup>59</sup> "The Final Cut," *Guardian Unlimited* 10 Dec. 1999, 23 July 2001 <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,3940530,00.html>>.

<sup>60</sup> "The Final Cut."

<sup>61</sup> Barbara Klinger, "The Contemporary Cinephile: Film Collecting in the Post-Video Era," *Hollywood Spectatorship: Changing Perception of Cinema Audiences*, ed. Melvyn Strokes and Richard Maltby (London: BFI, 2001) 141.

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<sup>62</sup> *The Italian Job*, dir. Peter Collinson, perf. Michael Caine and Noel Coward, 1969, video, Paramount Home Entertainment (UK), 1999.

<sup>63</sup> Monk, "Sexuality and Heritage" 8.

<sup>64</sup> Gibson 123.

<sup>65</sup> Hill, *British Cinema in the 1980s* 78.

<sup>66</sup> Vincendeau xxii-xxiii.

## Conclusion

John Hill notes that social art cinema in the 1980s emerged as a new form of British national cinema, as a result of the financial involvement of Channel 4 in the UK film industry.<sup>1</sup> Notably, Hill's approach is one that gives an insight into the contextual aspects of the concept of national cinema which has been much neglected in British national cinema debates. Previous national cinema debates have focused on textual meanings and the representation of national identity,<sup>2</sup> whereas institutional agendas involved in constructing the idea of national cinema have not usually been taken into account. This is not to say that socio-political aspects of national cinema are not important, but this thesis argues that it is also extremely productive to analyse the overlooked institutional agendas that encompass ideas about British national cinema and how it has been conceived. My argument is that examining those institutional agendas allows a better understanding of how the concept of national cinema is understood in public reception. Barbara Klinger contends that contextual aspects, institutional factors as well as socio-political conditions are "not just 'out there,' external to the text and viewer; they actively intersect the text/viewer relation, producing interpretive frames that influence the public consumption of cultural artifacts."<sup>3</sup> Thus, I have intended to explore how audiences responded to the notion of "British" cinema through a case study of social art cinema.

Building upon Hill's approach to social art cinema in the 1980s, but here in the context of the 1990s, I have examined those institutional aspects (production, marketing and consumption patterns) which have resulted in social art cinema being consumed as a form of national cinema. I have not attempted to examine every aspect relating to the

notion of "British" cinema in the 1990s, where these have remained astride the parameters of my thesis. Instead, this thesis has focused on the way in which the sense of national cinema was used in the market place through a case study of social art cinema. It examines how the genre has developed from the 80s and been transformed since, and how institutional issues of the 90s resulted in its appropriation as a national cinema. Social art cinema became a prominent generic style in 90s British cinema with national subject matter and stylisation being emphasised. Through examining the components of this generic style in the 90s, I have sought to engage with institutional issues that have shaped the proliferating form of social art cinema. I have also examined how a particular mode of national cinema was used in 90s British cinema to construct a distinctive sense of cultural identity for British cinema in the (international) marketplace.

Concentrating on three key aspects of the UK film industry relating to social art cinema (its financial structure, marketing strategies and new consumption patterns), it has been my contention that social art cinema was produced during the 1990s as a part of a wider context of British national cinema. In one sense, social art cinema served to come to terms with "living with Hollywood" in what remained a Hollywood-dominated industry.<sup>4</sup> In so doing, social art cinema gained the status of a newly established concept of British national cinema in the international market as well as its home market. The Britishness<sup>5</sup> of social art cinema is achieved through subject matter. The stylistic concerns of social art cinema through both art cinema style and marketing played an important part in its mass appeal. As global conglomeration in the cultural industries expanded in the 1990s, the locality of social art cinema concerned a commercial niche within a globalised market, securing a market share. However, this does not mean that

all local products could secure a market share. The popularity of social art cinema in the 1990s indicates that the deployment of a certain degree of visual excessiveness was a means to gaining a wider mass appeal, a response to the importance of the spectacular in 90s image culture.

What the success of social art cinema of the 1990s suggests is that this generic style played a part in constructing British cinema as *a cultural entity*. The idea of British cinema has been commodified through the concept of national cinema. Since the term national cinema is a contingent and changeable concept, which constructs different cultural discourses over time, it has been used discursively to commodify British cinema during a specific period. In the 1990s, social art cinema was designated for a national cinema in the marketplace through its institutional elements. Therefore, social art cinema in the 1990s was categorised as national cinema due to its commercial potential, while it was regarded as national cinema due to its political implications relating to the Thatcher government of the 1980s. This is partly a result of the fact that the 1990s, as the post-Thatcher era, lacked an apparent political identity compared to the more readily definable doctrinal conservatism of the Thatcher government era.

The popularity of social art cinema in the 1990s should be discussed in relation to changes occurring in the cultural industries throughout the decade. It is related to public and private investors' desire to move towards a global marketplace, to a broader commodification of the image of British national cinema in marketing, and to multi-media innovations in cinema consumption that have made stylistic concerns in film more important in film viewing. These institutional factors encouraged the idea of national cinema to be placed as *a consumable object*. The nature of national cinema as a consumable object has been overlooked because industrial constituents in making the

meaning of national cinema have been largely ignored. As demonstrated throughout this thesis, social art cinema was produced, promoted and consumed as a prominent "British" cultural product. This indicates that the concept of national cinema is contingent and transient. It is an idea that figures and is reconfigured within different socio-historical and institutional contexts. This is clearer when examining the conceptual difference between 80s and 90s social art cinema. I have argued that social art cinema became British national cinema where socio-political encounter was less significant than institutional issues relating to the globalisation of the cultural industries and postmodern practices of visual culture coming into play.

I have taken into account that social art cinema was "commodified" as British national cinema in the 1990s. I have examined how there was an awareness of the function of localised subject matters and visual excessiveness in social art cinema at the level of production, endorsed through marketing and finally accorded the status of multi-media consumption. It helped British cinema to expand its popularity and allowed British cinema to renegotiate its marketability in the marketplace. The commodification of national cinema through the form of social art cinema in the 1990s created a fresh claim about the cultural values of British cinema.<sup>6</sup> I do not intend here to confirm the cultural value of social art cinema as a national cinema. Rather, I would like to suggest that there is a cultural value to the commodification of British cinema. Considering the high popularity of social art cinema in the 1990s, it becomes clearer that the commodification of national cinema has had an impact upon the audience's experience in viewing and consuming British cinema. I would also like to note that the commercial aspect of the idea of national cinema is often critically neglected. As has been demonstrated throughout this research, national cinema can be used as a strategic mode

to create a material identity of British films in order to facilitate a commodity value. What this suggests is that national cinema is not only angled by accounts of socio-political engagements, but also derived from institutional agendas. This research has led me to dissociate with a textually-determined empirical method and engage with a more concrete and explicit approach to British national cinema by looking at institutional agendas in social art cinema in the 1990s. Such an approach, I believe, is also applicable to other genres in relation to the concept of national cinema.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> See John Hill's chapter, "Film and Television: A New Relationship," *British Cinema in the 1980s: Issues and Themes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999) 53-70. Also, see Christopher Williams, "The Social Art Cinema: A Moment in the History of British Film and Television History," *Cinema: The Beginnings and the Future*, ed. Williams (London: U of Westminster P, 1996) 190-200.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, see Jeffrey Richards, *Films and British National Identity: From Dickens to Dad's Army* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1997); Andrew Higson, *Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995); Pam Cook, *Fashioning the Nation: Costume and identity in British Cinema* (London: BFI, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Barbara Klinger, introduction, *Melodrama and Meaning: History, Culture, and the Films of Douglas Sirk* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994) xvi.

<sup>4</sup> John Hill, "Cinema," *The Media in Britain: Current Debates and Developments*, ed. Jane Strokes and Anna Reading (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999) 86.

<sup>5</sup> The Britishness of social art cinema is not primarily concerned with its reflection of national issues or its social and political significance in this thesis. Rather, it is concerned with the demonstration of its specific national origin, Britain through its location, regional dialects, particular regional/national events and British actors. Further, as illustrated in chapter 4 its national origin is frequently emphasised through marketing.

<sup>6</sup> As can be seen from such articles as Nick Roddick, "Show Me the Culture!" *Sight and Sound* 8.12 (1998): 22-26.



Appendix

voyager



Cannes dot  
british films are back

bmi

Fig. 1



Fig. 2

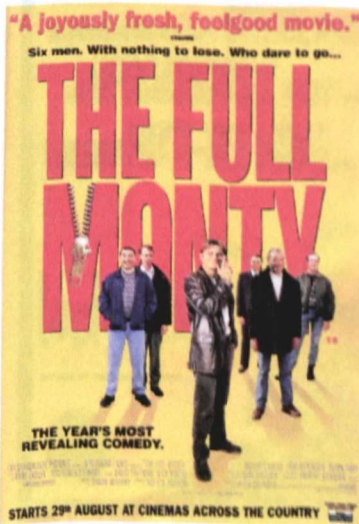


Fig. 3

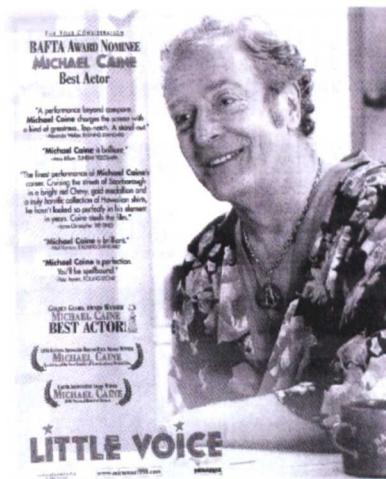


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

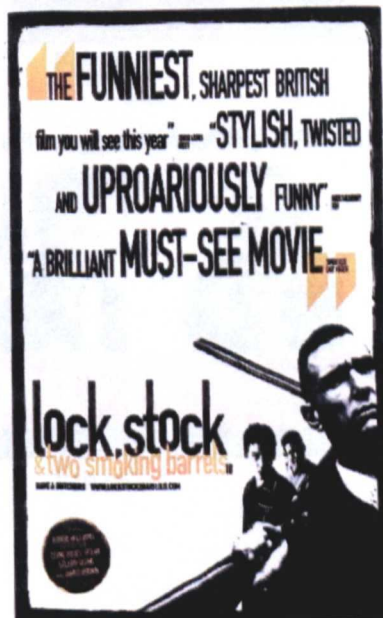


Fig. 6



Fig. 7

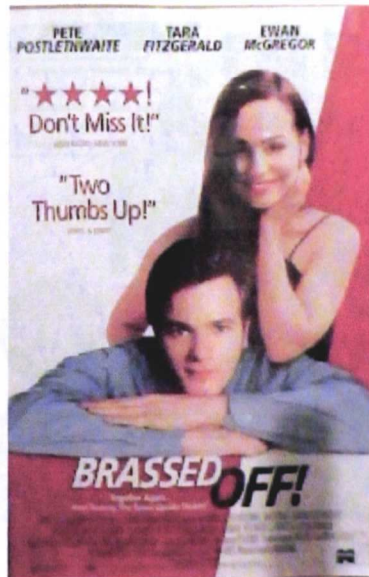


Fig. 8

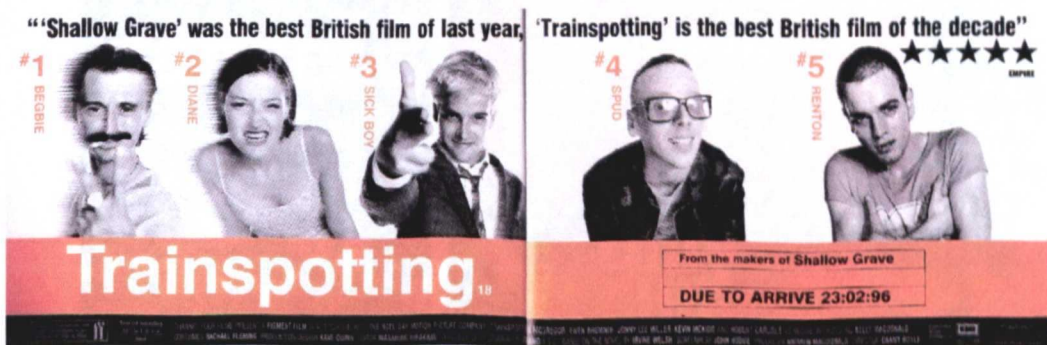


Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

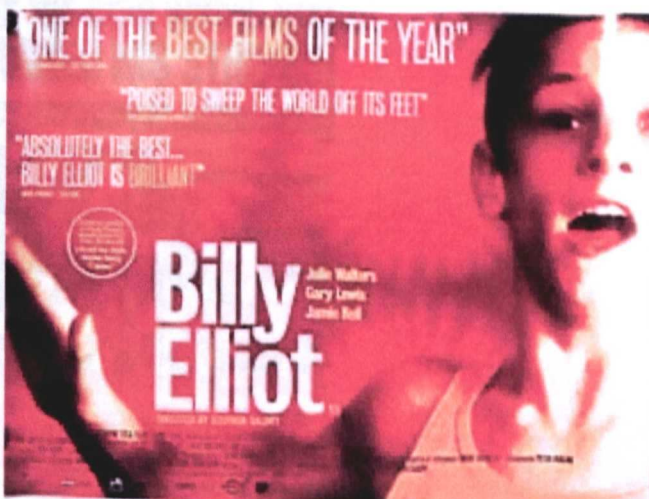


Fig. 12



# THE WINNER BY A LANDSLIDE IS...

'A MOVIE SO DEEPLY CHARMING, SO HEARTFELT, IT'S NOT ONLY POINTLESS TO RESIST, IT'S DAMN NEAR IMPOSSIBLE'

**'WINNIGLY INSPIRATIONAL'**  
**'A SUREFIRE CROWD PLEASER'**  
**'A BRACING TRIUMPH'**  
**THE BEST MOVIE I'VE SEEN THIS YEAR**  
**THIS SEASON'S SURPRISE TREAT**

# Billy Elliot

DIRECTED BY STEPHEN DALDRY  
 JOHN WATERS GUY BEECH JAKE HILL  
**AT CINEMAS EVERYWHERE**  
CHECK LOCAL PRICES FOR DETAILS

Fig. 16

# THE VOTES ARE IN AND THE WINNER IS...

'A MOVIE SO DEEPLY CHARMING, SO HEARTFELT, IT'S NOT ONLY POINTLESS TO RESIST, IT'S DAMN NEAR IMPOSSIBLE'

**'WINNIGLY INSPIRATIONAL'**  
**'A SUREFIRE CROWD PLEASER'**  
**'A BRACING TRIUMPH'**  
**THE BEST MOVIE I'VE SEEN THIS YEAR**  
**THIS SEASON'S SURPRISE TREAT**

# Billy Elliot

DIRECTED BY STEPHEN DALDRY  
 JOHN WATERS GUY BEECH JAKE HILL  
**NOW SHOWING AT CINEMAS**  
CHECK LOCAL PRICES FOR DETAILS

Fig. 17

**NEWSWEEK**

**FALL'S MUST-SEE FILM!**

The lovable "Billy Elliot" about an 11-year-old dancer, launches the film careers of the amazing young actor Jake Hill and celebrated stage director Stephen Daldry. Already a smash in Britain, it may be the biggest sleeper since "The Fall Maiden."

Billy Elliot is an 11-year-old English coal miner's son with an unexpected gift, and parents he looks like a more you will remember, and one just because the movie "Billy Elliot" looks so much as played by a wonderful 11-year-old newcomer named Jake Hill, he may be the most endearing performance here since the charming "British boy in '94" life as it they 11 years ago. And this delightful film, with its surprising depth, changes of scenery, has the feel of a movie that's going to hold itself in the public's attention for a long time to come.

"Now the "Billy Elliot" is a crowd pleaser in all homes, but it doesn't do the movie justice, and it doesn't capture the true joy that the audience take this small English film as to be in Britain, where it was "No. 1" in the charts. It happened for opening weekends of "The Wedding and a Funeral" and "The Road to Mandalay" and "The Fall Maiden" the most successful British films in 2000. London critics have been ecstatic, and even the biggest naysayers have been spared criticism, they even with humor as they watch this little-remembered children's movie. "Billy Elliot" is not only a pleasure to watch, it's also a most responsible choice.

**Billy Elliot**

FROM THE PRODUCERS OF "THE WEDDING AND A FUNERAL," "THE ROAD TO Mandalay" AND "THE FALL MAIDEN"

EXCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENTS START TODAY

Fig. 18

# Billy Elliot

"FINALLY, A MOVIE TO CHEER ABOUT!"

"A GREAT BRACING TRIUMPH!"  
*Look for Billy Elliot to blow off!*  
Chris Thomas, WASHINGTON POST

"A MOVIE SO ARTFULLY made, so tightly controlled, so beautiful, it's not only possible to watch, it's a joy to watch!"  
David Ansen, TIME



"AUDIENCES WILL FALL FOR 'BILLY ELLIOT'."  
Jeff Labrecque, USA TODAY

"TOTALLY CHARMING!"  
*We would love to bring a host of more, or just a few, but we're limited by this technology!*  
Tom Russo, PEOPLE



"FALL'S MUST-SEE FILM!"  
RENOIR/DEK

"JOYOUS!"  
*A warm, wonderful, optimistic, heartfelt, unpretentious musical!*  
Ben Ross, NEW YORK GAZETTE

"TWO THUMBS UP!"  
*Super funny and musical!*  
Mark & Michael, USA TODAY

"ONE OF THE BEST MOVIES OF THE YEAR!"  
Natalie Simon, LIFE + ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

"AN UPLIFTING CROWD-PLEASING FILM!"  
John DeStefano, NEWSWEEK



"WO'D BE HARD-PRESSED TO FIND A Purer EXPRESSION OF RAPTURE IN A FILM THIS YEAR!"  
Tom De Haven, USA TODAY



From the Producers of "Four Weddings and a Funeral," "Elizabeth," and "Notting Hill"

WORKING TITLE FILMS AND BBC FILMS IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE ARTS COUNCIL OF ENGLAND PRESENT  
 A FILM BY STEVEN DALLMEYER  
 BILLY ELLIOT  
 CASTING BY JANE BE: JANE BEYER, ADAM GUYER, ASSISTANT CASTING DIRECTOR PETER GALLAGHER, MUSIC BY PETER DINKlage  
 COSTUME DESIGNER STEPHEN WATSON, EDITOR STEVE WATSON, EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JAMES HAMILTON, PRODUCED BY JAMES HAMILTON  
 PRODUCED BY JAMES HAMILTON, WRITTEN BY STEVEN DALLMEYER, DIRECTED BY STEVEN DALLMEYER  
 EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: JAMES HAMILTON, PRODUCED BY JAMES HAMILTON, WRITTEN BY STEVEN DALLMEYER, DIRECTED BY STEVEN DALLMEYER  
 CASTING BY JANE BE: JANE BEYER, ADAM GUYER, ASSISTANT CASTING DIRECTOR PETER GALLAGHER, MUSIC BY PETER DINKlage  
 COSTUME DESIGNER STEPHEN WATSON, EDITOR STEVE WATSON, EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JAMES HAMILTON, PRODUCED BY JAMES HAMILTON, WRITTEN BY STEVEN DALLMEYER, DIRECTED BY STEVEN DALLMEYER

(OFFICIAL SELECTION TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2000)  
 (DIRECTOR'S FORTNIGHT CANNES INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2000)

SPECIAL ENGAGEMENTS  
 NOW PLAYING IN SELECT CITIES  
 Fig. 19

## AND THE WINNER IS..

# Billy Elliot

<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM CANNES INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2000	<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2000	<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL 2000	<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM LOS ANGELES FILM FESTIVAL 2000
<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM MILWAUKEE FILM FESTIVAL 2000	<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2000	<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM SEATTLE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2000	<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM PHOENIX FILM FESTIVAL 2000
<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM DENVER INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2000	<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM HOUSTON INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2000	<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM PORTLAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2000	<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM MINNEAPOLIS FILM FESTIVAL 2000
<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM SAN ANTONIO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2000	<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM DALLAS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2000	<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM AUSTIN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2000	<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM SAN DIEGO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2000
<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM SAN JOSE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2000	<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM SACRAMENTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2000	<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM SAN LEANDE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2000	<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM SAN JOAQUIN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2000
<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM SAN CARLOS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2000	<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM SAN JOSE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2000	<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM SAN JOAQUIN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2000	<b>WINNER</b> BEST FILM SAN CARLOS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2000

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT US AT WWW.BILLYELLIOT.COM  
 BILLY ELLIOT IS A FILM BY STEVEN DALLMEYER  
 CASTING BY JANE BE: JANE BEYER, ADAM GUYER, ASSISTANT CASTING DIRECTOR PETER GALLAGHER, MUSIC BY PETER DINKlage  
 COSTUME DESIGNER STEPHEN WATSON, EDITOR STEVE WATSON, EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JAMES HAMILTON, PRODUCED BY JAMES HAMILTON, WRITTEN BY STEVEN DALLMEYER, DIRECTED BY STEVEN DALLMEYER

Fig. 20

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