

**Genre and Globalization:
Working Title Films, the British Romantic Comedy
and the Global Film Market**

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to better understand the relationship of film genre to globalization through an examination of the use of the British romantic comedy and other related genres by the production company Working Title Films (WTF) from the 1900s through the 2000s. Because of the sudden and unexpected global success of British romantic comedies by Working Title Films such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Notting Hill*, the 1990s is a significant period for the study of the genre. In this examination the process of globalization is understood as one of complex connectivity postulated by John Tomlinson in *Globalization and Culture* as ‘the rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependences that characterize modern social life’. This theory of globalization is used as a methodological framework to understand the complex network of global and local interconnections that has driven the development of Working Title Films over the past twenty five years to becoming one of the most important British production companies in the international film industry. Through a detailed analysis of the practices of development, production, distribution and exhibition by Working Title Films and the Hollywood dominated global film industry, this thesis seeks to understand the function of genre and genre films as cultural products, economic products and meaningful representations in the global market and to better understand Hollywood, mainstream film and cinema as social institution. The analysis in the following chapters serves as evidence to support the central argument of this thesis that the use of genre in the film industry’s production, distribution and exhibition processes of globalization was the critical area for Working Title Films to master in order to produce value as meaningful audience appeal and connectivity to global audiences for on-going economic success.

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Part I – Methodology

**Chapter 1 Genre and Globalization: The Relationship of Working Title Films, the
 British Romantic Comedy and Genre to the Global Film Market**

**Chapter 2 Hollywood and Globalization: A Context for the Use of Genre by Working
 Title Films**

Chapter 1: Genre and Globalization: The Relationship of Working Title Films, the British Romantic Comedy and Genre to the Global Film Market

Introduction

This thesis aims to examine the relationship of film genre to globalization and the processes in the global film industry of development, production, distribution and exhibition, specifically using the British romantic comedy films and other related genre films made by the production company Working Title Films (WTF) from the 1990s through the 2000s. Although the representative case of this thesis is WTF and its use of genre such as the British romantic comedy, this approach seeks to better understand the economics of genre as marketed cultural product. Through a detailed analysis of these globalizing processes and their practices in the UK and the US by the British film producers of WTF and the Hollywood-dominated global film industry, it examines how they have informed the marketing chain of genre films in the global film industry. It also seeks to examine the function of genre in the global marketplace and the function of the market on genre. By examining these relationships, it seeks to increase an understanding of how genre and the global film market interact and operate in the context of globalization. The aim of this opening chapter is to offer a contextual overview of the development of WTF and to establish a methodological framework that draws on theories of globalization as a means of understanding the complex network of global and local ‘connectivity’ (economic, cultural, industrial, institutional) that has driven the development of WTF. Over the past twenty five years, it changed from a small, London-based producer of film and TV to arguably one of the most important British production companies operating in the

international film industry today. This thesis will examine its critical stages in development from start up, through its transition to a global player with breakthrough market success and integration in a global media conglomerate, to its ongoing success as a British producer in the Hollywood dominated global film market. Key to this examination of WTF will be the question of how the production company has engaged with film genre and, above all, the British romantic comedy as a means of establishing the global reach of WTF, particularly in relation to Hollywood.

British romantic comedies, exemplified by those produced by WTF, are both economic and cultural 'products'. Offering narrative content with selective British representational contexts of place and identity, they have been positioned in a global economy to attract a global audience. Why and how this has taken place for a company such as WTF is the focus of this thesis. In its examination of production, distribution and marketing in the global economy, this thesis uses romantic comedy as a generic vehicle in order to better understand Hollywood, mainstream film and cinema as social institution that 'involves a plurality of operations and processes' (Neale, 1980, p.19). The 1990s is a significant period for the study of the British romantic comedy genre because of its sudden, unexpected global popularity and massive economic success with films such as *Shakespeare in Love* (John Madden, 1998) and *Sliding Doors* (Peter Howitt, 1998). In an attempt to situate the genre of British romantic comedy films during the 1990s and into the 2000s, this thesis will use as reference the specificities and events exemplified by the business structure, WTF, the roles of its key individuals including co-chairmen, Eric Fellner and Tim Bevan, and its genre film productions, most notably but not exclusively, the romantic comedies written by Richard Curtis, *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Mike Newell, 1994), *Notting Hill* (Roger Michell, 1999), and *Love Actually* (Richard Curtis, 2003). As comparative examples in

the examination of this relationship of genre and the function of genre in globalization, this thesis will also use WTF's earlier work *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Stephen Frears, 1985), the WTF genre films of the Coen brothers, the WT2 films of Pegg and Wright, including the 'rom-zom-com' *Shaun of the Dead* (Edgar Wright, 2004), and WTF's heritage-thriller *Elizabeth* (Shekhar Kapur, 1998). The specificities of the above films will be referenced and contextualized in the theoretical and conceptual framing of globalization, the context of a global film economy and the British national context. They emerge from a specific historical timeframe within a political, economic and social dynamic that will be detailed and expanded through the examination in specific chapters of this thesis.

WTF began in the 1980s at a time when Thatcherism was redefining the relationship of government, business and cultural institutions¹. By the end of the 1990s, with Blair and New Labour in power in Britain, WTF had become a producer of globally successful romantic comedy films and was structured within Hollywood's Universal Studios, part of an international global conglomerate. It had also gone from the local context of a fledgling British film production company to become a recognizable global brand. WTF has been selected as the focus of this thesis because it is exceptional when compared to other British production companies for positioning itself successfully within Hollywood and in the global film market. This thesis sets out to understand what has made it exceptional and different for securing and maintaining this position globally as a phenomenon of globalization.

Although the early work of WTF begins with the multicultural *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985)

¹See, for example, Bruce-Gardyne, J. (1984) *Mrs. Thatcher's first administration, the prophets confounded*, London: The Macmillan Press and Evans, E. (1997) *Thatcher and Thatcherism*, London: Routledge

and the company had benefited from the support of Channel 4 with its clear mission for diversity, this thesis seeks to demonstrate that, in the end, WTF promoted a global trend in romantic comedy that focused on the white, privileged sector of the cosmopolitan, yet multi-cultural space of London. As part of this examination, key questions to address are: How is the British romantic comedy valued and how is it marketed in a global economic system? What is being represented by British romantic comedy? What does WTF 'do' as a production company - for example, its approaches to financing and risk reduction - that makes it distinctive and valued for business purposes to the global conglomerates of Hollywood? The intention in examining these questions is not, however, to produce a textual analysis or treatment of narrative themes in the films of WTF, such as that offered by Nigel Mather (2006) in *Tears of laughter: Comedy-drama in 1990s British Cinema*. Neither is it a genre analysis of common traits and structures, the approach to understanding genre film proposed by Rick Altman (1984) in 'A Semantic/syntactic approach to film genre'. Rather, this thesis aims to explore and analyze what is taking place in cultural, economic and industrial terms when a locally-produced British film (genre) product 'goes global'.

The local British cultural environment, the context in which the films of WTF were produced, has undergone considerable change since the 1980s. The ethnic, racial and cultural diversity of today's Britain was the result of a rapid non-white immigration beginning at the end of World War II. This immigration took place in order to meet a post-war need for low skilled and unskilled labour. Immigrants from Commonwealth states could freely enter and work in Britain under a special status established by the 1948 British Nationality Act (Atkinson 2003). Immigrant groups such as Afro-Caribbean, Chinese, Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Asian-African and Romany make up a minority ethnic population of Britain estimated at 7.1% of the

overall population in the 2000s (Katwala 2001; UK in the USA, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 2008). Half of this population is thought to be living in London (Katwala 2001). This change in British demographics and local culture has generated a public debate with questions of national identity and the meaning of the word 'Britishness' (Atkinson 2003). This debate has also included the issue of racism and addressed the representation of the black presence beyond that of victim (Gilroy 1991, p. 11). Confronting the issue of a multi-ethnic yet mono-cultural Britain, Stuart Hall (2000) has voiced a concern asking whether 'Britishness' can accommodate the difference of ethnic minorities for inclusion of representation in a national culture. The British context in which WTF emerged and its role and relationship to this debate will be examined in chapters 3 and 4.

Globalization

In order to better understand how genre functions globally and operates in the global film market, this thesis uses theories of globalization as a conceptual starting point. This conceptualization provides a framework for the analysis of phenomena of the global film industry. It specifically analyses the genre films of British romantic comedy as cultural and economic products in the film industry's global processes of financing, production, distribution, marketing, and exhibition.

There are a multitude of concepts, contexts and theoretical postulations relating to the major concept identified by the word 'globalization'. Although globalization may not be new, as Hall (1991a, p. 173) suggests, it is discussed in generalities with wide variations (Kellner 1997, pp. 1, 4). The increasing trend of financial resources to move more quickly and easily across borders is often cited in the literature as a characteristic of globalization (Reyes 2001). Moreover, the use

of a global media system is identified as promoting a global market and global commercial interests (McChesney 1997). However, the discussion of globalization is not limited to the global marketplace, its economic processes and the relationships to society. Theories of globalization may focus on re-orderings, flows, interconnections, and intensifications in a new global economy with a reformation and change of local, national and global culture. While Hall (2000) has argued that any global ideology framing the processes of globalization has ended with the fall of Communism and the Soviet State, Herman and McChesney (1997, p. 34) suggest that there is now a corporate global ideology at work. This ideological position is fueled by advertising and supported by global media structures (pp. 37-38), which may be a new version of the older, but now unopposed, capitalist ideology that has been globalized and corporatized. Herman and McChesney (pp. 52, 104) delineate a global corporate media elite, small in number, consolidated in ownership and concentrated in economic resource. If ideology could be considered as a set of ideas that support and justify the actions of global business, it is feasible that when motivated by their own interests, business elites may communicate these ideas through advertising and media messages. Depending on their strategic and tactical needs, they could use this corporate global ideology to protect their own corporate, capitalist interests, limit criticism or examination, and, if necessary, influence and control large numbers of population through mass media.

As defined by Phillips (2003, p. 93) an ideological effect of media would be the manipulation of populations (i.e. spectators) 'into an acceptance of specific ways of thinking about and relating to the world'. This could include film representations in romantic comedies as ideological agents and a means by which we 'interpret and make sense of our lives' (p. 93). As explained by Nelmes (2003, p. 256), ideology is 'replicated through cultural institutions, texts and practices'.

Ideology becomes articulated as hegemony in film as an unconscious control by a dominant group for ‘beliefs, practices and attitudes as natural or normal’ (p. 256). It is the media that are used for ‘transmitting cultural values’ and as ‘sites for a struggle over meaning’ (p. 256). What is at stake becomes difficult to discern because ‘the consequences of ongoing globalization of the media are difficult to disentangle from the parallel and related economic and technological changes in national and global economies’ (Herman and McChesney 1997, p. 136).

Globalization and media can be a challenging, yet critical, interdisciplinary area to explore for the film studies scholar. It may be problematic in nature due to a compartmentalization of related disciplines of business studies, the social sciences and other humanities subjects, a lack of prior research in specific interdisciplinary areas and the multiplicity without standardization of meaning for concepts, terms and their applications. However, by starting with the understanding that British romantic comedies, such as those produced by WTF and used as representative genre film, are cultural products as well as economic products, one can examine them in these larger processes of globalization through the economic and cultural theoretical discourses. They are also produced and consumed in a market economy within a series of specific political and ideological contexts at different times and for different audiences. If, as Tomlinson (2008, p. 24) argues, culture is ‘meaning construction’ that informs individual and collective action, the cultural construction such as the British romantic comedy can be analysed and understood from within an ideological political framing. Ideology is at work in the production of culture, created through business industry practices in development, production, distribution, and exhibition for economic gain. Phillips (2003, p. 105) citing Gramsci’s (n.d) reworking of traditional Marxist theory, explains that ‘the concept of hegemony also addressed issues of manipulation’ by dominant groups to retain power. In applying Gramsci’s concept as ‘an *expanded* conception of

‘politics’’, Hall explains its application as a means to ‘rethink the very notion of power itself—its project and its complex ‘conditions of existence’ in modern societies’ (1991b, p.9). Therefore, the means to produce romantic comedy may also be understood as the exercise of cultural and economic power by the dominant power structures of a regional, national or global society. In order to be conceived, developed, produced and marketed, genre film products would arguably have to be compatible and supportive of this power and its ideology. Therefore, through selective representations, narrative form and the ‘psychology of the communication process’ (Phillips 2003, p. 105) film genre may reinforce this power and its ideology as hegemony rather than subvert, confront or oppose it. The popular or mainstream cinema traveling globally may reinforce a ‘conventional way of making sense of their world’ (p. 105), the local, or it may offer new and different ways of understanding or influencing local agency. Not all popular or mainstream cinema of national industries travels globally and Hollywood is the leading global exporter of mainstream product to the global locality. For Hall (1990, p. 225) writing in the early 1990s, the West and its ‘dominant regimes of representation’ exercise their cultural power to make the non-Westerner see ‘ourselves as ‘other’’. What may be significant is how an ideologically framed genre product is used as an economic and cultural commodity product. These uses of WTF genre films will be considered in chapters 7 and 9.

Several key themes or approaches emerge from academic studies of the cultural, economic and political processes of globalization that may be relevant to understanding the relationship of British romantic comedy and genre to globalization. These themes have critical conceptualizations related to culture, economy, media, and the interaction of the local, national, and global. It is thus worth briefly discussing each of these key themes before moving on to the selected theoretical approach and its application with the argument of this thesis.

The first theme is to see in globalization a one-way imposition of cultural and economic power by America or the West on the rest of the world producing a sameness or homogenization to culture (Rothkop 1997; Jameson 1998, pp. 59-68). According to this approach, with a weakening of the nation-state, there is an expansion of the free market across the globe. A standardization of world culture (which might even be described as a form of imperialism) thus occurs, with local popular or traditional forms displaced or eliminated by American products and culture. Such a development is viewed by Jameson (2000, p. 51) as an imposition of globalization to envelop the world as a global society integrated by technological developments and economy. This global expansion and economic domination includes industrial commodity production paired with cultural product consumption such as film 'as the very heart of globalization' (p.51).

The second theme understands globalization as a clash and condensing of cultures on the local level, and as a shared cultural world (Featherstone 1996, p. 350). This understanding moves away from an approach that defines globalization as delineated by nation-states, borders or boundaries. According to Featherstone, globalization involves cultural flows that produce 'diversity, variety and richness of popular and local discourse, codes and practices which resist and play back' (1991, p. 2). His view of culture in the process of globalization is one of an evolving diversity, 'in which cultures are seen as more fluid and recombinant, in which cultural differences are neither made fixed, sacred or threatening' (Featherstone 2004). In this approach to globalization it is understood that local culture formation processes global information. This local culture is contrasted with that of national culture; fluidity versus stasis. This approach has similarities with that of Tomlinson (2008, p. 7) who describes a type of cultural clash from the establishment of globalized spaces in localities around the world. This clash is understood to

occur following a spatial compression and ‘an increasing functional proximity’ of the global with the local. These spaces, such as an airline terminal or international hotel used by the business traveler, are described by Tomlinson as a form of ‘globality’ rather than locality (p. 7). They can be understood as a spatial system running parallel and in tension to the every day life of the local (p.7).

According to Featherstone (1997, p. 6), global culture is conceived as a form, a space or field, where communication brings different cultures together. Culture movement and complexity are aspects of this globalization process of culture. He further argues that rather than a one way process as described by Jameson, globalization is a ‘multi-way’ process in which the local and the global may interact in contradictory ways. The process of globalization may simultaneously be understood as an extension of a culture to its global limits and the compression of culture (Featherstone 2004). In Featherstone’s approach, globalization ‘does not result in the homogenization and unification of culture, but rather in the provision of new spaces for the clash of cultures’ (Featherstone and Lash 1999, p. 1). In applying this understanding, globalized space could be identified as the neighbourhood video rental store or the cinema multiplex where films such as the British romantic comedies of WTF are consumed. In these globalized spaces, the films and the space of London that they represent could be described as a safe and selective representation of white, tension-free, Britishness, a specific national identity sold to the local global market. In contrast, the films of Gurinder Chadha that are globally marketed represent a different London. For example, in *Bend it Like Beckham* (2002), the representation of London is multi-cultural and the heroine confronts cultural tensions in a conflict of identity that is central to the narrative. Released the same year as WTF’s *Love Actually*, the representation of *Bend it Like Beckham* depicts a different reality of London and evidences a contradiction to the selective

representation of the mono-cultural *Love Actually*. This selective representation in the films of WTF will be examined in chapters 7, 8, and 9.

The third key theme of globalization as it relates to this thesis is to understand globalization as a cultural economy with tensions where imagination is the central influence to a newly de-territorialized society (Appadurai 2005, pp. 22, 31, 37). Arjun Appadurai (p. 33) has conceptualized this approach and described it in *Modernity at Large* as continuities and discontinuities of cultural flow. He uses a terminology of ‘-scapes’ as a metaphor for the new global cultural economy and its interactions. The global economy conceptually consists of five dimensions termed *ethnoscapes*, *mediascapes*, *technoscapes*, *financescapes* and *ideoscapes*. This understands globalization as ‘fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture and politics...’ (p. 33). This approach addresses contradictions and ambiguities of globalization as phenomena of traditionally rooted populations that have become displaced. As a perspective on globalization, it has similarities with Kellner’s (2006, p.2) attempt to organize ‘fundamental transformations in the world economy, politics, and culture in a dialectical framework that distinguishes between progressive and emancipatory features and oppressive and negative attributes’. Kellner describes globalization as a ‘product of ...technological revolution and the global restructuring of capitalism in which economic, technological, political, and cultural features are intertwined’ (p. 2). A fundamental force in this economy is understood as the de-territorialization of populations from their home-state (Appadurai 2005, p. 37). These populations with their imagined worlds form the central emphasis in the theoretical framing of globalization as described by Appadurai (p. 33). For the de-territorialized population, the ‘imagined community’ is no longer a nation-state but part of a ‘diasporic public sphere’ (p. 22).

The fourth theme is an understanding of globalization and culture as intrinsically important to each other as a relationship of complex connectivity. This complex connectivity is described by Tomlinson as a 'rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependencies that characterize modern social life' (2008, p.2). Tomlinson (p. 18) explains that using his approach to globalization, 'culture can be understood as the order of life in which human beings construct meaning through practices of symbolic representation'. Central to this understanding is the conceptualization of two critical connectivities. The first is 'connectivity and proximity' and it entails the "'stretching' of social relations across distance' (Giddens 1990 1994 cited in Tomlinson 2008, p. 3). This connectivity and proximity can be understood as a time-space compression with a common conscious appearance of the world in direct local experience. The increased ability to physically or representationally travel globally as a change in proximity to the locality is still understood as a contrast to the local life. Consequently, according to Tomlinson, change to the locality through the relationship of complex connectivity, 'has to be understood in terms of a transformation of practice and experience which is felt acutely within localities as much as in the increasing technological means of access to or egress from them' (p. 9).

The other critical connectivity described by Tomlinson is 'connectivity and global unicity' which is 'a sense that the world is becoming, for the first time in history, a single social and cultural setting with social and cultural processes promoting wholeness and inclusiveness'(p. 10). The concept of global unicity is not the same as that of the cultural imperialist world, but one that Kellner (2006, p. 1) portrays as complexly intertwined practices combined with a sense of the purpose of the cultural, that of making life meaningful. Roland Robertson (1992 cited in Tomlinson 2008, p. 11) describes the function of global unicity in this theoretical thread as a

‘context which increasingly determines social relations and simultaneously a frame of reference within which social agents increasingly figure their existence, identities and actions’. Tomlinson further explains the concept of unicity as an increasing interaction and articulation within a complex social and phenomenological condition globally. This conceptual approach of globalization could be applied to the British romantic comedy as phenomena of cultural product and representations that are used by the audience in their local context for construction of a globally shared meaning. It could be further asked to what extent is WTF required or expected to represent a sanitized, politically correct version of the British culture and the space of London in order to function in this global context described as unicity? These questions will be considered in detail in chapter 7.

At dispute in these discussions is the function of the withering away of the nation state within the context of globalization. Robertson (1987, p. 26) argues that ‘the prevalence of the national society in the twentieth century is an aspect of globalization’. He maintains that the idea of national society accelerated globalization as well as a system of international relations, shifting relationships in making the world as a whole, more complex and richer (p. 26). However, Jameson (1998 cited in Lindeborg 1999) argues that globalization equates with the imposition of American power and a weakening of the nationstate. Ohmae further considers the ‘nation state irrelevant ...from the point of view of the capitalist market’ (1995 cited in Tomlinson 2008, p. 14). The nation state may well be superceded on many levels by a new world state or setting that can be understood in relation to the current phase of globalization. However, Featherstone (1991, p. 1) argues that ‘it is... misleading to conceive a global culture as necessarily entailing a weakening of the sovereignty of nation-states which...will necessarily become absorbed into larger units and eventually a world state which produces cultural homogeneity and integration’.

The clashing and mixing of culture occurs not only across the boundaries of nation state societies but within. Featherstone (2004) describes national culture, as a dominant model of culture, that is 'unchanging cultural difference, coherence and separateness and is often taken as the model for culture in general'. He further qualifies this by suggesting that culture itself is characterized by change and diversity. Differences of the local are being sustained rather than wiped out and local culture is understood as 'always in formation, always processional and recombinant' in contrast to a national culture. Tomlinson (2008, p. 29) explains that globalization promotes more than physical mobility across national borders and that the 'key to its cultural impact is in the transformation of the localities themselves'. He argues that 'complex connectivity weakens the ties of culture to place' and would argue it could weaken the ties to the territory known as nation. Yet, Curran (2002) would argue that 'national governments are still key sites of power' and are central to globalization. As the world has become simultaneously more global and more local, the nation and national borders are understood in this approach to still play ongoing roles in the global film market. Film as import-export product and as intellectual property with rights of ownership have been at the centre of discussions among national governments in major international trade and treaty negotiations such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) (Herman and McChesney 1997, p. 29). National policy, legal processes in contract law, trade and commerce, duty and taxation, border control and oversight of repatriation of corporate profit continue to operate even in a relaxed environment of government deregulation. Complex processes may, according to Tomlinson (2008, p. 16), have 'all sorts of contradictions, resistances and countervailing forces' of the local and the global. They could be understood to have intertwined relationships with the national and as a result, there may be tendencies to reestablish national power.

The nation state may have played a critical role in the development of British romantic comedies. Although for Jameson (1998 cited in Lindeborg 1999), ‘Globalization...is a communicational concept, which alternately masks and transmits cultural or economic meanings’, the economic success of romantic comedy films with representations of Britain may indicate an increase of value and strength globally of the nation. Their representations of a specific national culture are valued at the global box office and WTF is identified as a *British* company. Its relationship with Hollywood may also indicate a specific economic, political and cultural relationship within a broader relationship between the nations of Britain and the United States. As Jameson (2004, pp. xii) explains, the process of globalization is ‘an untotalizable totality which intensifies binary relations between its parts – mostly nations, but also regions and groups, which, however, continue to articulate themselves on the models of ‘national identities...’. He would further argue that the displacement of national film industries by Hollywood is a consequence of globalization (Jameson 1998, pp. 61-64). This thesis argues that the relationship of the British company WTF with Hollywood is more complex and intertwined than simply the imposition of one-sided power or a one way flow of images and capital. In the case of WTF, globalization may occur not as displacement by Hollywood but as a negotiation of a contradictory partnership and competition to Hollywood. This idea will be examined in more detail in chapter 8 where this negotiation in the use of genre for connectivity to global markets will be considered.

Representations of the nation as imagined community in a national cinema may be the site of tensions, a diminishment of the imagination as Higson (2005, pp. 57-60, 66) contends. In British romantic comedies this imagined community is more often than not located in London and its environs. This community could be conceived as an intersection or interconnection of the global and local through the city of London. The people who populate the worlds of *Notting Hill*, *Love*

Actually and *Four Weddings and a Funeral* are white, well-educated, and well-dressed; they are Anglo-Saxons, a protestant, affluent middle-class, often paired with an American love interest. They reflect a particular segment of the cultural landscape of contemporary Britain and a specific type of 'Britishness' - or even Englishness - is, therefore, represented in these films. It is, moreover, packaged and sold to a global market, in particular North America. This imagined community constructed by WTF romantic comedies of the 1990s and 2000s is consequently consumed globally in the marketplace as cultural product. According to Featherstone and Lash (1999, p. 1), as more voices demand to be heard, the assumed uniformity of national cultures begins to be seen as a myth. In this framing, the British romantic comedy produced by WTF could be considered as akin to the selling of a national cultural myth. This myth may represent an affluent, white, Protestant monoculture of what is in reality a multicultural Britain. The narrative of British romantic comedy may be valued and generate meanings that are associated with this selective dimension of the national culture. This idea of a 'national cultural myth' and its filmic representations will be addressed in chapter 7.

In the spheres of the diasporic and de-territorialized populations described by Appadurai (2005, p. 33), Hollywood markets genre film with its representation of violence, love, nation, space and culture. This marketing connects the distant local such as Britain's space of London in a globalized proximity to the global locality and its diasporic sphere. De-territorialized populations negotiate a meaning from this cultural expression and genre may be the platform of expectation, a form for negotiation to the local. This formation of genre and expectation may be ever changing. As a complex connectivity articulated by Tomlinson, genre may be understood to provide a critical connector to the global population, de-territorialized from their origin as well as those firmly rooted to a locality. Genre provides connective flow and continuity from industry

needs as a connection to audience desires. If, according to Tomlinson (2008, p. 29), globalization's cultural impact is through the transformation of the locality, as a psychological de-territorialization, then this connectivity of genre could be described in his conceptualization as the 'penetration of local worlds by distant forces' and 'the dislodging of everyday meanings from their 'anchors' in the local environment' (p. 29). The genre films of WTF and their meaning can be understood as a penetration of the local world by a distant force sourced from both London and Hollywood. This local world can be defined in relation to specific global marketplaces exemplified by Tokyo, New York City, Dubai or Sydney. However, WTF romantic comedies are not the only genre film products to be marketed globally. In both the local and global environment, possibly supported by a corporate global ideology, it is acknowledged that violence and sex sell. They sell to the point that they become an imbalanced trade-off in story development and production, limiting choices and viewpoints. They are deemed the profitable content to be used in the competitive global environment 'irregardless of the social and political consequences' (Hermann and McChesney 1997, p. 137) and they are coupled with a 'decline in a variety of viewpoints with increased protection of establishment interests' (p. 143). What Hollywood with its mainstream western cinema of genre film may also be marketing to a fragmented, de-territorialized nation or a diasporic public sphere is a false sense of stability, continuity, and the comfort of national myth. As such it is a disjuncture with the reality of the audience.

Central to an understanding of culture and globalization may be the concept of a tension produced by processes of homogenization and heterogenization, sameness and difference (Appadurai 2005, p. 32). This globalized cultural dichotomy can be analogized to commodification and its process of standardization with diversification. In a global context,

products of commerce are standardized in production for efficiency and there is a narrowing of difference in these products (Rowbotham 2000, p. 3). Appadurai describes this as a process in which commodity flow forms 'instruments of homogenization' which is replayed as a 'repatriation of difference' after being 'absorbed into local political and cultural economies'(2005, p. 42). While Featherstone (2004) maintains that culture is change and diversity, he explains that globalization has also produced common economic forms, and standardization in doing business and governance Featherstone explains that the global consumer market needs diversification, a type of mass customization in order to market goods and services in a global consumer culture. Thus cultural differences are valued as useful to diversification. This concept may be applied to film genre as an industrial product, driven by a standardization of expectation and variation of story elements. By varying story elements, producers may be creating diversification of product line; yet, they are nonetheless working to a formulaic set of codes and conventions in relation to the given film genre. In this context, the national imagined community (e.g. the 'Britishness' of WTF romantic comedies) could be projected as a global imagination through the business structure and distribution chain of what is called Hollywood. Bibby (2003, p. 3), Kellner (2006, p. 1), and Herman and McChesney (1997, p. 34) characterize globalization as the dominance of a world capitalist economic system, a view that appears to exhibit a concentration of capital resources in small numbers of horizontally and vertically integrated business structures known as conglomerates. These businesses maintain economic growth as their primary objective and global goal. The critical media structure for understanding globalization and its relationship to British romantic comedy is, therefore, Hollywood. Although the term *Hollywood* may reference more than one meaning i.e. the American film industry, a global business structure, in the context of this thesis Hollywood is understood as a grouping of

conglomerates that develop, produce, distribute and exhibit filmed entertainment globally.

Although India can claim its industry, Bollywood, as the largest movie industry producing 800 films a year and 100 million cinema goers a week, Hollywood remains the dominant global cinema power in economic terms².

Connecting WTF and British Romantic Comedy to Globalization

What may be significant and useful for understanding globalization and its relationship with British romantic comedy are what might be termed ‘representative specific genre films’— in other words, films that within their contexts of production and consumption are ‘produced’ in a framing of complex connectivity. By way of an example, British romantic comedies produced by WTF such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral* or *Love Actually* may include connective elements that come from the creative and business contributions of certain individuals. These elements may contain narrative traits that are both local (nationally specific) and global (the ‘universal’ romance narrative exploited so successfully by Hollywood). Such connective elements may emerge through cultural and character representations (such as weddings, funerals, friends and lovers), celebrity (which can function on a local/national and global scale), box office results, creative business strategies, and work processes. There may be key critical moments and events that act as a resolution or points of rest in the dynamic global landscapes of connectivity; frozen moments when and where there are crystallizations of the flow, decisions in genre film

²The *Dodona Research Report* (Grummitt and Write2001, p. 1) asserts that the Indian market is difficult to research and that ‘In terms of production investment and net box office, after taxes deducted, India’s film and cinema exhibition industries are broadly comparable in scale with those of the UK’.

development, production, distribution, or exhibition. These phenomena may exemplify the process of globalization with WTF. WTF may be understood to be functioning within the British film industry and at the same time in the global Hollywood industry.

The dynamic global landscape of the Hollywood film industry in which the British cinema can be positioned both 'within' and 'in relation to' can be broken down into a variety of categories: spaces of development and production; the marketplace for distribution and the territories involved in these distribution deals; the box office for exhibition; the use of advertisement, events and promotion (including genre marketing) and finally the groupings of creative talent, management and stars as well as business arrangements and deals. To borrow the vernacular employed by theorists of globalization such as Tomlinson and Appadurai, this landscape may also be conceived of as a flow of capital in financing film production or a flow of the revenue stream from exhibitors to distributors. There may also be significant moments in production work such as financing arrangements, script completion, negative pick up when a completed film's distribution rights are purchased by a studio, contract reviews and merchandising deals. All of these may happen in the local, national, international or global context. Furthermore, these points or benchmarks may serve as evidence of interconnections, indicating change or intangible forces, powerful cause and effect relationships, even of decisions made behind closed doors when contracts are negotiated and financing deals are structured. Business practices and the decisions of product development, pre-production, principal photography production, post-production, distribution with prints and advertising, and exhibition in the theatre with box office return of revenue are steps in an economic process that is a global process of complex interconnectivity.

In subsequent chapters, with specific reference to WTF and their genre films that include romantic comedies, this thesis will examine these interconnections and interdependencies as a means of better understanding the process of globalization and how it has functioned with genre. The critical process of globalization that this thesis will use to further examine genre and its relationship to globalization is that of complex connectivity. It provides a useful framing for the global and the local landscapes using connectivity to address the function of genre and romantic comedy as cultural products, economic products and meaningful representations. Although this thesis will be predominantly applying Tomlinson's approach to globalization, it will also draw on Appadurai, whose work has played a seminal role in understanding globalization and culture and the role of the imagination as social force. However, in the context of this thesis, Appadurai's approach has disadvantages in comparison with the use of Tomlinson's because it privileges de-territorialized populations and the experience of culture in a diasporic public space over that of the predominant global cultural economy. In contrast WTF tends to market its product through Hollywood business structures to a mainstream audience that forms the economic basis of the global film market.

The key benchmark event for this thesis in establishing the relationship of British romantic comedies to processes of globalization occurred in 1994 when the low budget, home grown British romantic comedy *Four Weddings and a Funeral* was a top grossing film in the global film market. It performed comparably with the American film product, *Sleepless in Seattle* (Nora Ephron, 1993) (Shone 2004, p. 229). Prior to this, American products over the previous decades had consistently been the top grossing films with worldwide distribution (p. 226). *Four Weddings and a Funeral* earned \$245.7 million worldwide with earnings of \$52,700,832 coming from the domestic US market (Shone 2004, p.229; *Box Office Mojo* n.d.a). It had made a

breakthrough, penetrating into the most profitable film market, the US/North American market, with distribution through Gramercy Pictures, a joint venture between PolyGram and Universal Pictures (Kuhn 2002, pp. 52, 174). This also marks a point of connection between WTF and the American independent filmmakers the Coen brothers, who began working directly with WTF from 1994.

A rapid connectivity to the global box office through the inclusion of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* in a limited film product line generated intense earnings. In order for *Four Weddings and a Funeral* to earn this box office gross, it had to be marketed to the global box office, i.e. theatres with exhibition rights negotiated with the distribution company; it had to be distributed as prints to the point of sale, advertised and offered to a global audience consumer in their respective locality; an exchange of money had to take place for the viewing experience, and these revenues had to be collected, accounted for and transferred to the distribution company as repatriation of earnings. Going from small budget investment to generating revenue for massive profit may indicate a function of complex connectivity in relation to business structures, product production, creative cultural representation, and technology. It may also indicate results of strategic timing for film products, being released through globalizing conglomerate business structures.

In the case of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, the conglomerate structures of Philips (the parent company of PolyGram) and Matsushita (the then parent company of MCA/Universal Studios) formed a global economic foundation, which permitted WTF the reach and penetration into local markets of the global film market. This occurred within a broader, corporate global economy. *Four Weddings and a Funeral* thus became the first in a series of successful box office films, many of which are romantic comedies, from the British based company, WTF. These

subsequent films were then marketed globally. How has it happened that a ‘small’ British film, by a small British production company with a limited budget could have such a substantial impact in the global market, out grossing much bigger budgeted films? This question will be addressed in the detailed examinations presented in chapters 6 and 7.

Using the context established by the theorists of globalization such as Tomlinson and Featherstone, it could be said that a cultural and economic film product had entered a process of globalization in a global media system. In this process capital flows from box office to distributor in Hollywood and this takes place at a representative point in time (the 1990s). This may indicate a new phase of globalization for Hollywood in relation to past eras of post-World War I (1920s) and post-World War II (1940s) global expansion and redefinition of Hollywood industry practices. This new phase may be fueled by ‘the goal of US film industry dominance abroad’ (Trumpbour 2002, p. 3). In order to understand this contemporary process, one that could be described as complex connectivity using Tomlinson’s theoretical concept, WTF and its successful romantic comedy product need to be understood in the cultural, political and economic context from which they emerge. They also need to be understood in the context of the global media system known as Hollywood, what Hollywood is and how it operates as a structure of globalization. Because Hollywood is a global industry and has established practices of genre as an industrial process (Neale 1980, p. 51), it also forms a context for the phenomenon of how genre functions in globalization.

It will be argued in chapters 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9 that the use of genre in the film industry’s production, distribution and exhibition processes of globalization was the critical area for WTF to master in order to produce meaningful audience appeal and connectivity to the marketplace for global economic success. This analysis in the following chapters serves as evidence to support

this argument that is central to this thesis. It also serves to better understand Hollywood, mainstream film and cinema as social institution and its relationship to contemporary British cinema. This relationship is understood in the context for what has been referred to as WTF's perceived identity as a producer of 'mid-Atlantic' cinema, defined by Hochscherf and Leggot in the following way:

Rather than seeking to establish a counter-cinema culture in the tradition of art cinema, Working Title has been at the forefront of establishing ways of working with and according to models of major Hollywood studios in order to produce profitable films with high production values aimed at a largely middle-class, affluent audience. As a potpourri of British and American characteristics, its films have repeatedly used an array of American and British performers...often connected with genres such as romantic comedy and horror...some of its most popular films also deal with Anglo-American culture clashes on both an aesthetic and narrative level, thematizing cultural difference whilst adopting a formally populist approach. (Hochscherf and Leggot 2010, pp. 9-10)

Many of the above elements of this mid-Atlantic paradigm will be discussed in detail in the chapters that follow. What is abundantly clear is that in order to understand the function of genre as central to the global success of WTF, genre also needs to be examined in the context of 'global' Hollywood. The next chapter of this thesis examines WTF's relationship with Hollywood, the nature of Hollywood as a global framework for connectivity and the function of genre for WTF as a critical relationship to this framework. It further seeks to understand how WTF became part of Hollywood whilst at the same time retaining an identity as a 'British' production company producing 'British' romantic comedies.

Chapter 2: Hollywood and Globalization: A Context for the Use of Genre by Working

Title Films

Introduction

As the pre-eminent global film industry, in terms of its economic might and global reach, Hollywood can be understood as a specific cultural and economic entity in the multidimensionality of globalization. It can also be understood as a source of connectivity as globalization. As delineated in the previous chapter, this thesis aims to use complex connectivity as formulated by Tomlinson (2008, p. 2) to analyse and understand the relationship of Working Title Films (WTF) and genre to globalization. This chapter seeks to understand the global context of Hollywood for the critical connectivity of WTF to the global film market and the function of genre as a phenomenon in this context. In the early 1990s, change was taking place in the way Hollywood was operating globally and one of its (localized) manifestations was represented by the positioning of a British romantic comedy in the top grossing films of the Hollywood global marketplace. This positioning began when the Dutch-based global conglomerate Philips and its music recording subsidiary PolyGram established PolyGram Filmed Entertainment (PFE), a London-based film studio, in 1992. Anticipating possible changing market conditions and the need to maintain revenue streams, they made the strategic decision to diversify and compete with the Hollywood establishment as a European-based competitor (Kuhn 2002, p. 166; Watson 2005, p.83).

By 1992, with the support of Channel 4 and the Greater London Council, groups of filmmakers, such as the Black Audio Film Collective, had set out to create a more inclusive British cinema. They provided filmmakers with a new framework for reworking British cultural identity in film

(Alexander 2005, p.110) and explored the experiences of a post-colonial, multicultural British society. Although this had been a context for the beginning of WTF, the company was taking a divergent path to inclusion with the global film industry. Already a major player in the global economy with the largest market share of the recording industry (Herman and McChesney 1997, p. 43), PolyGram had available resources for expansion into film production. In executing its new strategy, it became a backer/developer of film companies such as WTF, using its capital and its business culture to promote creative talent in filmmaking (Watson 2005, p. 83). However its strategic business goal was global rather than domestic.

PolyGram, WTF and the Hollywood Connection

Although PolyGram's PFE operated for only six years from 1992 to 1998, it has been described as 'the first attempt at a world-wide Hollywood style, film business based in Europe' (Kuhn 2002, p. ii). When WTF established its business and creative relationship as a subsidiary of PFE (Watson 2005, p. 83; Kuhn 2002, p. 166), it may have adopted new and different business practices to sell its cultural and creative product to a global market. The changed representation of the 'local' and the depiction of Britishness may have met the corporate strategic needs for a global marketplace. PFE was not only a challenger to Hollywood, but may be considered a Hollywood player at the same time. Thus, WTF became positioned both inside and outside of Hollywood in Britain/Europe when it was backed by PolyGram and PFE. Consequently, PFE became the global platform in 1994 for the British company WTF, its talent and one specific breakthrough film, *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Mike Newell, 1994). This platform was successful when distribution was secured into global territories by the sale of distribution rights at industry marketing venues (Roddick 1995, p. 13). Distribution for the British film *Four Weddings and a Funeral* was also secured into the most lucrative global territory, the North

American market. The North American distribution arrangement was through Gramercy Pictures, a joint venture between PFE and Hollywood's Universal Studios. As a result WTF was globalized as part of the PolyGram structure. International financing had created an economic and cultural export product for different markets globally; the product was distributed with advertising into these markets and generated massive revenue that was returned across borders to the investors and the parent conglomerate.

Even as this name represents a global ordering, the nature of Hollywood and how it functions globally needs to be better understood to account for the sudden emergence of a successful British romantic comedy in that global market. It also needs to be better understood with regard to the continued global success of romantic comedies produced by WTF after *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. Rather than as a challenger, WTF had found ways to qualify as a Hollywood British producer.

The Business of Global Hollywood

Although there have been different production bases and manufacturing sources for marketable film product to theatres since the beginning of the industry, the dominant industry that markets its own product across multiple borders to gain the primary global earnings has been Hollywood. By the late 1980s, the global media market had become dominated by ten conglomerated corporations, which had become parent companies as owners of Hollywood studios (Herman and McChesney 1997, pp. 40, 52, 104). The predominant global business structure, the conglomerate, is now the business structure of Hollywood. The traditional Hollywood studio companies, if still in existence, are positioned within the conglomerate as a subsidiary relationship or merged with the parent conglomerate corporation.

Although most of these global media conglomerates are based with corporate headquarters in the United States, others have been situated in a few non-American countries such as Japan, Australia and Britain, as exemplified by PolyGram and its subsidiary, PFE. As a result of the expanding worldwide demand for filmed entertainment from the 1980s and into the 1990s, Hollywood experienced a period of corporate mergers which, according to Tino Balio (2002, p. 165), ‘led to the globalization of Hollywood’ in the 1990s. This wave of globalization was ‘characterized in part by vertical integration’ of production, distribution and exhibition combined with horizontal integration (Balio 1998, p. 61). It was also supported by the Reagan administration’s *laissez-faire* attitude towards anti-trust issues related to the Paramount decrees of 1948 that had previously restructured the American film industry (p. 61). McDonald and Wasko identify the trends shaping Hollywood at this time as:

Conglomeration, diversification, transnationalization of ownership, multiplication of distribution outlets, escalating production budgets, event movie production, exploitation of ancillary markets, the freelance market for creative and craft labor, and the global dispersal of production. (McDonald and Wasko 2008, p. 4)

According to Scott (2002), since the beginning of the 1900s when Hollywood became the ‘world’s major commercial producer of motion pictures’, there has been a ‘steady globalization of Hollywood as an expression of both market forces and US government action on international trade issues’. Although Maltby (1998, p. 23) argues that contemporary Hollywood holds a dominant position in the global market comparable to the one held in the silent era, he nonetheless maintains that in this era of Hollywood globalization, its economics, its audiences and its products are significantly different. Since the 1980s, Hollywood has been characterized by ‘giant media conglomerates and expensive blockbuster attractions’ (King 2002, p. 3).

The majority of Hollywood corporations, but not all, are horizontally integrated with related media subsidiary corporations within their global conglomerate parent company. As subsidiaries, Hollywood studios became profit centres generating roughly a third of conglomerate earnings together with other profit centres (Balio 2002, p. 165). Vertical integration of Hollywood corporations and the studio system was broken down at the end of the 1940s as the result of the court decisions in the *Paramount* case and the United States government's enforcement of American anti-trust laws (Balio 1985a, p. 402). Yet, by the 1990s, as a result of deregulation, globalization and new digital technologies, the conglomerate parent company of the Hollywood studio was able to develop new modes of vertical integration to control product sales from manufacturing through distribution to market (Schatz 2007, p. 14). It did this to reduce risk and maximize profits (p. 14). With the use of entwined joint ventures, strategic alliance, cross ownership and the powers of advertising, the conglomerates operate as an oligopoly and a cartel (Herman and McChesney 1997, pp. 52-58). Operating as an oligopoly the conglomerates jointly influence supply and market prices in exhibition to their advantage (p. 91). Formed in 1992 (Kuhn 2002, p. 166) Gramercy Pictures, the distributor of WTF to North America, is an example of a joint venture of entwined conglomerates, PolyGram and Matsushita.

Hollywood traditionally has been a group of American-based companies that developed, produced, distributed and exhibited movies. They have the resources of distribution profits, enormous film libraries, and capital access (Wasko 2005a, p. 60). Although Hollywood's production/marketing chain was primarily for its domestic market (*domestic distribution* to North America, the countries of the United States and Canada), since the end of World War I as a result of its competitive advantage, Hollywood has dominated the global market. Because the home market of the USA is the largest in the world with 37,000 screens (p. 175), this gives

Hollywood an economic advantage that other countries do not have. Because the size of its domestic market was able to provide a return on its production costs (the product stage with the highest capitalization), Hollywood was able to distribute globally at a relatively lower investment risk and undersell its product in global markets against the local product (Balio 1985b, p. 124). Therefore, domestic release with its advertising and marketing, builds the foundation for Hollywood's foreign release. With minimal costs for export, the foreign market generates significant profits for Hollywood. Hollywood also has an advantage in contrast to smaller foreign operations due, quite simply, to its economies of scale (Wasko 2005a, p.177). This translates into its ability to use high-priced celebrities and create big budget promotion of its big budget blockbuster action films. Moreover, as Wasko (2003, p. 4) argues, Hollywood operates from a profit motive and the commodity nature of film as an economic good that can be bought and sold.

A critical alliance for the global success of Hollywood has been with the American government. Acting with the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), the industry's representative organization, the US State Department and other federal agencies have promoted American film as exports and pressed for an aggressive free trade agenda (Scott, 2002). Yet, at the same time, Hollywood effectively has kept out foreign competition in its domestic market. Thus, the *global export film industry* is considered to be Hollywood; its global market (*foreign distribution*) is everything except North America. Domestic distribution and foreign distribution are identified together as *worldwide distribution*. According to Herman and McChesney (1997, p. 13), 'the film industry was the first media industry to serve a truly global market'. Historically, Hollywood recognized the global significance of distribution and exhibition in order to control profit. Early on it developed its practices from this understanding and Hollywood has a well-

developed and complex international distribution system (Wasko 2005a, p. 179). In 2010, the global film market's worldwide box office was \$31.8 billion (Motion Picture Association of America 2012).

The successful strategies that are the foundation of Hollywood's current global domination were pioneered by Lew Wasserman at Universal (Gomery 2005, p. 219). From 1962 to 1991, as head of MCA Corporation the parent company of Universal, he developed the use of the blockbuster action genre with *Jaws* (1975), he diversified the company's revenue streams with the establishment of the Universal Studios Tour, and he hybridized television and film with othermedia production, distribution and presentation. With a flexible system of production he exploited film and television to increase market share in different global national markets, maintaining a 'stranglehold on international distribution', and adapting to new technologies in order to reach a mass audience. Profits were guaranteed by control of distribution to cinemas and most importantly access to its key global source of profit, its domestic North American market and audience (p. 198). As a result of the success from this approach, his strategies became the model for all the other Hollywood studios.

From a cultural perspective, Hollywood produces and distributes films with content and style that can be described as having 'universal appeal' combined with high production values (Olson1999, p. 114). Olson (p. 114) argues that this 'universal appeal' is Hollywood's competitive advantage with the use of 'transparent narrative'. Thus, Hollywood formulates stories for a worldwide popular taste that can be read by local audiences outside of the United States. According to Balio (2002, p. 165), Hollywood studios rely primarily but not exclusively on the high-concept blockbuster film and star-vehicles for their theatrical releases. They do this in order to reach a corporate goal of \$1 billion annual gross earnings worldwide. However, the

studios will include a few other lower budget films to fill out their release schedules (p. 165).

Balio identifies a threshold of \$80 million in domestic box office as an indicator that a film has performed successfully as a return on investment for 'production costs, distribution fees and marketing expenses' (p. 166).

Shone (2004, pp. 62-63, 100, 312) emphasizes that the success at the box office of films such as *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977) and *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975) was a precursor for the redefinition of Hollywood product production throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s. The intense roller coaster effect of motion and action in *Star Wars* set a path for American film that led not only to the revival and expansion of technology-based special effects, but also to investment in the tools necessary for the blockbuster action film (also known as the action blockbuster). From the 1970s on, the emphasis in Hollywood's production shifted to the blockbuster action genre. The blockbuster emerged as a new paradigm for production, distribution and marketing, shaping film industry practices and generating massive revenue flow from the box office (Balio 1985, p. 442). Although this genre is big budgeted, it is heavily promoted and generates a large return on investment through distribution and marketing to a global rather than the primarily domestic marketplace of Hollywood (Shone 2004, p. 227).

O'Regan (1990, p. 13) portrays Hollywood's international advantage in the marketplace as the control it has over its product and he considers Bollywood, the Indian film industry, as a potential competitor to Hollywood in the global marketplace. However, Bollywood has yet to develop a competitive advantage over Hollywood. Although Bollywood may represent what Scott (2002) identifies as a possible 'competitive pressure' along with other dynamic global production centres that include London, Paris, Beijing, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Mexico City and Sydney, Hollywood is still globally strong. O'Regan's predictions in the early 1990s may have

underestimated the synergistic strength of connectivity and integrative consolidation possible through the global media conglomerates that now own Hollywood. Combined with the historical advantage of global domination by the Hollywood studio, the global media conglomerate of the 1990s can generate a globally accessible narrative, provide economic resources of financing, apply management experience in high value production with a well established global distribution apparatus for diversified theatre and broadcast outlets.

Hollywood and its Strategy for the Changing Global Media Markets

Gomery (1998, p. 51) identifies the late 1970s and early 1980s as a transition period for Hollywood, not only in a production emphasis for the blockbuster genre, but to also develop a strategy in response to the emergence of new media technologies and markets of home video and cable TV. Consequently, Steven J. Ross, who acquired Warner Brothers in 1969, formulated the strategy of the vertically integrated media conglomerate that would become Time Warner (p. 51). It used Hollywood as a base for domination of global media markets that included television, film, home video, cable, publishing and theme parks (p. 52). Balio (1998, p. 61) describes the 1980s as having the first wave of mergers as a response in globalization and this new business structuring was used to maximize profit in new and emerging global markets (Gomery 1998, p. 51). The home video, pay-TV and cable TV also maximized the profits of the action blockbuster after its commercial release in movie theatres (p. 52). According to Balio (1998, p. 64), in the early 1990s, Hollywood then responded to globalization with international partnerships to expand its film financing base. After another wave of substantial mergers Balio (p. 70) argues that ‘During the 1990s, companies merged, partnered and collaborated as never before to tap all the major markets of the world’. As a result, by the end of the 1990s,

Hollywood had developed the blockbuster action genre as its major money maker in the diversified global media marketplace.

According to Barry Langford (2005, p. 233) this genre of action blockbuster is ‘at once the most contemporary, the most visibly relevant to present-day Hollywood film-making, and also the least discussed and least well defined’. As a genre, it is described by ‘excessive scale’ and runaway box office success (p. 234). The action sequence is a genre constant to the exclusion of character development or relationships. Also, this type of genre has traveled well to the global localities and the de-territorialized of Appadurai. Langford (p. 235) calls the action blockbuster the centre of the New Hollywood¹ and considers it the metaphor for the globalization of Hollywood from narrative to distribution as ‘relentless market domination’. Because Hollywood’s core audience is the specific market segment of the ten to twenty-four year old male, this is Hollywood’s target for its project development (Balio 2002, p. 165). Although this segment makes up a quarter of the audience, it produces the largest share of the box office. The other market segment that counts with Hollywood for box office performance is the ‘eight-to-eighty demographic’ of the family, described as ‘boomers with kids’ (p. 165).

Returning, again, to the discussions of globalization discussed in chapter 1, Appadurai (2005, p. 35) might describe these developments in production as a flow between technoscape, mediascape

¹The term ‘New Hollywood’ has been used to describe a distinctively different Hollywood from that of the pre-war ‘classical’ or ‘studio era’ (King 2002, p. 2).

and ideoscape with the use of new technology to generate an intensification of the movie-going experience for those in other localities globally. Tomlinson (2008, p. 18) might argue that a global Hollywood framework to support and sustain processes of globalization had been generated over these decades. He might further theorize that complex connectivity was formed as film generated value and meaning with audiences in the global localities. In this globalized framing and domination of Hollywood as a global context, WTF with its films, beginning with *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, was positioned and became an ongoing player. In this context WTF has at the same time found a position in locations of 'London, Britain' and 'Hollywood, Global'. It has done this not as a producer of blockbuster genre but as a producer of British romantic comedy and other marketable genre. These developments are considered in more detail in the following sections.

The Relationship of Global Hollywood and the British Film Industry

Prior to the fall of the Soviet Union and beginning in the 1960s, 50% of motion picture theatres globally sourced their product from Hollywood. At this point in time, in order to control the local global markets, Hollywood studios expanded ownership of theatres in foreign markets and absorbed their potential major global competitor, the British film industry (Herman and McChesney 1997, p.19). The relationship of the Hollywood film industry with the British film industry may be described as competitive, interdependent and reciprocal (Street 2000, p. 53). This relationship was the result of Britain being America's prime overseas market at the same time that the American market was a source of profit for certain films from the British film production industry. The British industry could not dominate its home market due to film distribution controlled by the American industry. Returning to the terminology applied to debates around globalization explored in chapter 1, this situation vis-à-vis British cinema and

Hollywood could thus be described as a complex connectivity between two intertwined industries. It is formed with economic, political, language and cultural contextual connections. Britain may also be perceived as a platform into the European media market for Hollywood.

Street (p. 54) maintains that, supported by British incentives for production in the UK, American corporate attitudes, from the 1930s onward, have historically favoured distribution arrangements for British films. This corporate position arguably laid a foundation for the 'market space for British films in America' realized in the 1990s. Nevertheless, even with brief periods of prosperity, British film production over the decades had declined from its expansion years of the 1930s (Street 2009, p. 19). Furthermore, its production dropped from 98 films in 1971 to 36 by 1981 (Wood 1983 cited in Street 2009, p. 24). Although there was a small production boom at the beginning of the 1980s, by the end of the decade the British film production industry was in a decline (p. 24). This decline resulted from a lack of audience, lack of government support, competitive American product dominating in the theatres, loss of top directors to Hollywood and competition from domestic subsidized television (Quart, 1993, p.24). Yet, at the same time within this decade, as Hollywood began to shift its production to the action blockbuster, the British film industry went through a dramatic transition from its 'economic precariousness' and decline to one characterized as 'renaissance' (p. 24). Not only was this considered to be a result of Thatcherism, with productions resulting from the new resource of Channel 4, but there was expression and content in these productions that were also a reaction to the policies of Margaret Thatcher.

The Process of Globalization as the Complex Connectivity of Hollywood and WTF

Writing in the early 1990s, O'Regan (1990, p. 2) asserted that Hollywood's overseas export markets are an 'ever changing marketplace...a collection of individual national markets with their own mix of media'. The very nature of Hollywood's international success may be based on a negotiation of cultural differences and local conditions (Wildman and Siwek 1988 cited in O'Regan 1990, p.2). Rather than a stable system, providing product to a stable international market, O'Regan argued that Hollywood by the late 1980s was 'many contradictory and paradoxical things', describing it as 'a collection of tendencies and film making strategies which are constantly renovated and transformed' (p.3).

Despite the fact that by the early 1990s, most Hollywood studios were now owned by international conglomerates, the entertainment industry was still considered America's second largest export industry, the first being aerospace (Shone 2004, p. 227). Herman and McChesney (1997, p. 44) describe the global production and distribution base in the 1990s as 'dominated by the studios owned by Disney, Time Warner, Viacom, Universal (owned by Seagram), Sony, PolyGram (owned by Philips), MGM and News Corporation'. These firms made up 'Hollywood' with its global export market. The major global market regions outside of North America are Europe, the Far East with Australia, and Latin America. Europe represents 25% to 30% of the global market (Skillset n.d.a).

With the global market undersupplied in screens and demand rising, the conglomerates expanded multi-screen theatre complexes, especially in Asia during the 1990s (Herman and McChesney 1997, p. 44). It was at this time of global theatre expansion, PolyGram as a media conglomerate decided to position itself as part of Hollywood. Although each conglomerate had typically diversified their holdings with a range of different media companies that included the movie studios, by the 1990s the primary global cash cow was and is television - a multi-channel

medium that required significant content to fill its programming schedules (p. 44). By this time, the global movie theatre had thus arguably become an advertising platform. It promoted product to be repackaged and consumed over and over again in a variety of distribution market venues to different national market segments throughout the world. Gomery (2005, p. 201) explains that the major Hollywood studios release films in an exclusive marketing sequence to maximize revenue. This sequence consists of theatres, home video and DVD, pay-per-view, pay cable, and broadcast and basic cable television. The Hollywood companies were also building product lines promoted in different media markets and used as merchandising to outlets including their own retail operations (Wasko 2005b, pp. 26 -27). As a result of these diversified revenue streams, the ‘ultra-high-budgeted’ film became a conservative investment. The risk of a return on its costs was reduced by the return of massive profit in ancillary markets such as theme parks and through the use of promotional tie-ins (Balio 1998, p. 59).

At the same time, from 1994 onwards and beginning with *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, reports of top grossing films for the global box office have continued to include British film (Shone 2004, p. 229; *Box Office Mojo* n.d.a; *Worldwide Box Office (in millions of U.S. dollars)* n.d.). The presence of British film in the list of top grossing films may indicate a complex change that was taking place in an expanding globalization of Hollywood. If, as Wasko (2005a, p.178) describes, there are two ‘broad international markets at work’, the mega-budget, mega-stars Hollywood blockbuster, and ‘everything else’, then WTF with its film products may have been able to find a position in the latter. However, Wasko’s description of ‘everything else’ does not adequately describe WTF’s more distinctive position producing successful films for the Hollywood market. Indeed, WTF may not fit exactly into either of these two categories but rather fall between them. Positioned within the globalized structures of Hollywood, it provides

product to this other segment of Hollywood's international marketplace. PolyGram and its film studio subsidiary PFE initially appear to have successfully competed with Hollywood using WTF as one of its production companies to supply products and a presence in the global film market. However, PFE's means for gaining access to Hollywood's primary market of North America was through its distribution relationship with Universal Studios as the joint venture, Gramercy Pictures, a cooperative rather than competitive relationship with Hollywood. As a subsidiary of the media conglomerate PolyGram, PFE also emulated business arrangements and practices that defined itself and WTF in relation to the global film market oligopoly (i.e. Hollywood). Thus, PFE used a range of established film business practices of financing, distribution and exhibition for access to different global markets in order to secure profit. Accordingly, it can be understood as a key Hollywood player, positioned with other studios in the export global market sector as a global distributor. It can also be understood, at the same time, to be a competitor film studio in the context of a global trend described by Scott (2002) as 'enhanced distribution and marketing capacities' based on its synergy with the PolyGram global record distribution platform. But, it can possibly also be defined as a friendly competitor and at times a partner with Hollywood rather than a hostile competitor. Although competing for a global market share, its products did not directly compete with the primary genre of Hollywood, namely, the action blockbuster. Consequently its competitive position may have also acted in a more symbiotic or cooperative market relationship providing product for Hollywood's market demand in its global theatres. WTF could then be understood to supply a product line variation rather than directly displacing Hollywood product in the global marketplace as a competitor. This relationship may also be described as a negotiation with Hollywood for global market access. Its ability to negotiate a friendly competitive relationship with Hollywood and, more

specifically, to negotiate with WTF in relation to the mid-Atlantic paradigm as defined at the end of chapter 1, may also be framed by the historic, political and cultural ‘special relationship’ between Britain and the United States. This negotiation may also be supported by a common language, English.

During the 1990s - and as shall be explored in more detail in chapter 6 - a certain kind of British/English product, that of WTF, had been able to establish itself within the distribution structure of Hollywood through the alliance of PFE with Universal. Indeed, Hollywood domination should not be simplistically equated with total control of a unitary and stable global marketplace. Although PolyGram operated with established entertainment and film industry paradigms as a subsidiary of a global conglomerate, it did find areas for revision in order to be market responsive. The process of vertical integration for WTF and PolyGram was strategically formulated at each stage in order to identify and use advantages, innovations or opportunities for the global marketplace. This marketing chain could also be understood as a benign competitive space with Hollywood. Ironically, the process of vertical integration for WTF’s *Notting Hill* (Roger Michell, 1999) was interrupted by the sale of PolyGram to Universal and its new parent company Seagram. *Notting Hill*’s production and financing occurred prior to the sale but the film’s release and its box office earnings came after the sale. Universal, as the new owner of WTF and *Notting Hill* as assets, received the profit from the film (Kuhn 2002, p. 94). This evidences a complex re-connectivity of WTF via Universal to the global marketplace as shall be seen in chapter 8.

In the specific case of WTF, the British context provided certain resources and a distinctiveness that Hollywood understood as mutually advantageous. Although PolyGram followed a similar strategic imperative of risk reduction for profit maximization in the marketplace, it produced a

different kind of genre product that had market appeal. This would also suggest different and complex interconnections of British talent and personnel for product development, financing and scripting, through a complex manufacturing production process and distribution. It included cultural meaning that can 'travel' from the location of London, e.g. the cultural representations and conventions of the British romantic comedy and its genre, generated through a webbing of connectivity. Culturally, WTF's genre product characteristics were distinctive to the British cultural context yet not so parochial to be inaccessible to audiences in other specific global markets such as North America. PolyGram with PFE and WTF also had a distinctive advantage over other British film producers in its economic independence and initial support from the Philips conglomerate. Its film financing came from its global music industry earnings rather than, compared with other British producers, financing primarily from a British state subsidy or from Hollywood in a co-production arrangement. This process of connectivity will be examined in more detail in chapters 5 and 6.

As Tomlinson (2008, p. 29) points out, powerful forces of new meanings, a 'traveling culture', pass through the global media to possibly transform and impact local cultural meanings that 'define the terms of our existence'. This can be understood as an internal or perceptual/communicative 'de-territorialization' and displacement of the local culture rather than a physical displacement (p. 29). In applying this conceptualization to the case of WTF, local entertainment as exemplified by the movie going experience and its audience would be affected by this displacement. Britain perhaps may travel well as a 'traveling culture' and be able to fit with the local sense of a film audience 'more forcibly in some places than others' (p. 29). Media 'texts' thus produce meaning from within a complex interconnection of economics, culture, and political ideology. To continue with Tomlinson's terminology, cultural products (such as film)

produced by British talent may have a cultural impact of global connectivity as a ‘cultural resource’ and a cultural awareness of the global to the local, bringing other worlds or culturally meaningful worlds to a local population (p. 30). These phenomena may occur through complex connections between the British film industry, the global conglomerates of Hollywood, and the global localities that will be explored in more detail in chapters 7 and 8. These conglomerates provide access through distribution as connectivity to the local film market and its audience. As Tomlinson (p.31) states, globalization brings ‘the negotiation of cultural experience into the centre of strategies for intervention in the other realms of connectivity’. In the case of WTF, the cultural experience of film storytelling was negotiated with the economic goals of the global Hollywood conglomerate for reach into the global localities of the film market.

The relationship of WTF to Hollywood may serve as an example of the complexity of this global connectivity for access to the local audiences. By 1999, as a result of a Philips sell off of PolyGram to Seagram Company Ltd., Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner with WTF became imbedded in the global/Hollywood conglomerate NBC Universal. This sale may have been prompted by a different internal corporate management culture between Philips (the conglomerate parent company) and PolyGram (the conglomerate subsidiary), the former valuing hardware over software combined with a conglomerate strategy to divest software in favour of hardware. The position of WTF with Hollywood as a re-connectivity in globalization from the sudden, unexpected sale of PolyGram will be explored in chapter 8.

Genre and Globalization

What is the function of genre in the complex globalization processes for WTF and its romantic comedy films? If, as Tomlinson argues (and as outlined in some detail earlier in the first

chapter), globalization is a process of complex connectivity, then the function of genre may be a site of connection between, on the one hand, the film industry and on the other, the locality of London and the locality of the global market. This genre site of connectivity may also connect the film industry with the cultural, economic and political/ideological contexts of producers and film audiences. The label of the British romantic comedy genre therefore finds its real meaning and is employed as a marketing tool for the film production financing and investment, the packaging of talent, and the distribution and promotion of WTF films. In a global system described by interconnected complexity that defies quick and easy comprehension, this label's simplicity of comprehension may prove vital for the function and use of genre in the processes of globalization. If this is the case, in order to better understand globalization, the example of WTF and the Hollywood film industry, there is a need to understand and examine what genre is and how genre operates.

The romantic comedy genre exemplified by *Four Weddings and a Funeral* is actually a sub-genre of comedy. With roots in theatre, the genre of romantic comedy became established as screwball comedy in Hollywood films of the 1930s. It was framed in the context of Depression audience tastes and the new sound technology (Mernit 2001, p.33). Billy Mernit, a writer of romantic comedy defines the genre as 'a comedy whose central plot is embodied in a romantic relationship' (p. 12). Love shapes a story that is character driven by internal conflict. Originally coming from literary studies, the conceptualization of genre in its most basic understanding is a category or grouping of films with shared characteristics but still being different from each other. It can function as a shorthand of communication for generating audience expectation. But genre categories can be considered elusive or 'provisional', and there is a shifting of the generic categories in film industry practice as the historical context changes (Neale 1993 cited in

Langford 2005, p. 5). Therefore, it can be argued in this thesis that the *British* romantic comedy has emerged from the changing historical context of the 1990s, a context that can be characterised as one of rapid and intense globalization.

Although the labeling or grouping of films in a genre may be at issue (Bordwell 1989 cited in Chandler 2000, p.1) the phenomenon of film genre in globalization can also be understood to operate in the context of the Hollywood film industry and function through an institutional role for social order. Watson (2003, p. 154) asserts that there are three theoretical threads for understanding genre. The first is *taxonomic*, which is classifying films as groupings that have similar form and content (p. 154). At dispute may be what films fall into what categories and this approach has evolved to examine the question ‘why certain genres are popular at particular times and not at others’ as well as the ‘historical subject, intended effect, formal criteria, subject matter and style’ (p. 155). Neale (1980 cited in Chandler 2000, p. 2) explains that it is the ‘relative prominence, combination and functions’ of specific features that characterise a distinctive genre. The generic category of the British romantic comedy has emerged as a phenomenon from the experience of WTF in the global film industry and the process of globalization. By using WTF films as examples, this taxonomic labeling, its distinctiveness and its usefulness as a specific category of film genre in globalization will be examined in more detail in chapters 6 and 7.

The second thread for understanding genre in the context of this thesis is the economic strategy of organizing production. Citing Steve Neale (1980 1990), Watson (2003, p.158) explains that production is organised by genre to perform ‘two crucial interrelated functions; to guarantee meanings and pleasures to audiences and to offset considerable economic risk of industrial film production by providing ‘cognitive collateral against innovation and difference’’. Neale

maintains (1980, p. 22) that genre functions as ‘difference in repetition’, providing a recognisable framework but still allows for distinctiveness, which is where there is a risk factor. This risk is for the disaffection by the ticket buying audience and a resultant loss of box office revenue for the distributor and investors. Accordingly, it can be understood that genre becomes the basis for standardization and stability in a production process of commodification for the marketplace. In the global marketplace filmed stories are bought and sold for consumption by the audience. This thesis argues that this understanding of genre has been an underlying strategic approach of WTF in the successful development of film product for the global marketplace. This aspect will be examined in subsequent chapters using specific genre film examples. It will also show that a changing business context for WTF resulted in the adoption of a new economic strategy for producing genre films. In the case of the romantic comedies such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Notting Hill* universally recognised codes and conventions of Hollywood were used in their production and marketing strategies as a formula for audience recognition. At the same time these genre films also offered an acceptable difference through a perceived, and some might say ‘packaged’, representation of Britishness-Englishness associated with certain locations, in particular London. This formula for sameness and difference through genre was generated and effectively managed because of the definitive roles and contributions of the writer (i.e. Richard Curtis), and stars (i.e. Hugh Grant). This kind of formula is now being repeated in a more playful way by Simon Pegg and his collaborators in the 2000s with films such as *Shaun of the Dead* (Edgar Wright, 2004) and *Hot Fuzz* (Edgar Wright, 2007) which parody Hollywood genres (the zombie movie, the buddy cop film) by placing them in English locations. Because the settings and cultural context are somewhat incongruous to the genre itself (i.e. the action cop film in a sleepy market town in the south west of England) difference is integrated into the genre

conventions. With this new strategic approach WTF created a different genre film product of the British romantic comedy. This new genre product had different cultural representations and generated massive global profit as economic results.

The third theoretical thread for understanding genre is *cognition*, a mental process between producers and consumers or audience. As Neale (1980 cited in Watson 2003, p. 160) would further argue, genre forms a relationship with the audience for bringing them to the theatre and during viewing. This relationship of cognition forms an expectation for pleasure in the local audience. According to Chandler (2000, p. 9), this pleasure from genre narrative may take the form of empathy or escapism and cognitive satisfactions may be derived from ‘problem-solving, testing hypotheses, making inferences (e.g. about the motivations and goals of characters) and making predictions about events’. In globalization, the phenomena indicated by the theoretical thread of cognition may be understood as framed in cultural practice and occurring as a dimension of globalization. The challenge of how a boy meets a girl for courtship may be globally understood as a universal dilemma but this challenge would be assessed for resolution based on local custom. Therefore, cognition may form a complex internal context within the consciousness of the audience for establishing genre’s connectivity to the global locality. Genre may perform a function of traveling textual meanings, providing a negotiation around an issue (Watson 2003, p. 160) or, in the theoretical context of Tomlinson’s globalization, genre could have a de-territorializing as well as a re-territorializing impact on the global/local sense of the audience. This sense is shaped by how different audiences in global locations re-interpret and negotiate narrative as a response for their own needs and this dynamic may serve as an agent of change in re-shaping the local culture. Thus the condition of *cognition* may align with an interconnectivity of the local world to the global and the global consciousness of unicity.

Conventions of genre can activate something locally as a shared framework of comprehension. This shared meaning can be understood as ‘conceptual constellations’ (p. 160). Thus love in Japan is commonly understood and shared with love in London. Genre forms an internal perceptual and conceptual environment for the audience. The activation of ‘conceptual constellations’ may be the ‘play with genre’ that WTF has used in developing and producing such a large body of successful box office films. Because the products are being consciously developed for export to diverse market audiences, it can be understood that the local film development and production context, e.g. London, is aligned at the same time in a creative global process for global markets. A challenging yet key critical connectivity in the global creative and economic process is that between producers and audience. In this process, encoding of narrative produces genre-based film products that eventually become negotiated and decoded locally by audiences after global distribution. According to Neale (1980, p. 51), genres are not systems. Rather, they are processes of systematization. These processes provide regulation for the industry and variety for audience pleasure. Because the sites of connection in globalization are complex, the process of genre as described by Neale can also be understood to manage the complexity of connectivity as systematization. This becomes a global scale of systemization for WTF and the global Hollywood film industry. The management of these processes by producers such as WTF may provide a means for a more orderly and stable connectivity in global communications and a means for overcoming differences between senders and receivers. The function of genre for connectivity through the communicative process in the audience context will be examined in chapter 7.

In general, Robert Stam (2000 cited in Watson 2003, p. 152) considers genre to be ‘... a negotiated encounter between filmmaker and audience, a way of reconciling the stability of an

industry with the excitement of an evolving popular art'. In understanding the global Hollywood film industry and how genre operates in globalization, Stam's negotiated encounter can be exemplified in the relationship between the producers of WTF and the diverse global film audience. According to Paul Watson (2003, p. 153), the concept of genre can be applied to film in order to understand it as a commodity, more specifically a Hollywood commodity product. In contrast to Neale, he maintains that it acts as a 'system for organizing production as well as groupings of individual films which have collective and singular significance' (p. 153). It is also a concept that indicates mass production and is fundamentally important to Hollywood (Langford 2005, p.11). In the context of Hollywood, it may also indicate a means for achieving corporate strategic goals of risk reduction and maximization of profit for the global conglomerates. This is exemplified by WTF with its string of box-office success after *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. In contrast, prior to this during the late 1980s and early 1990s, WTF and its producers were not engaged in this process of genre systematization or negotiation. Admittedly they can be characterized by relative failure at the box office after the initial success of *My Beautiful Launderette* (Stephen Frears, 1986).

Genre can also be understood in the complexity of globalization as multi-dimensional, serving both industry and audience needs. Watson argues that genre is a useful critical tool for understanding the global mediascape and should not be limited to an understanding of genre as an industrial commodity that is reworked as 'repetition, seriality, cycle, trend and mode' (2003, p. 153). Instead it can (and should) be used to address the functions of the audience, culture and the industry including its organization of output with the minimization of risk (p.152).

Commercial risk in film production is reduced by organising production around genres and release cycles in order to connect with audiences in a consistent way (Langford 2005).

Audiences expect repeated emotional rewards in the viewing experience for the price of a ticket. These functions, paired with the economic structuring of the marketplace, may have provided a set of conditions that pushed Hollywood to a pattern of market response in its development and production of its film products, one of repetition with difference. This may be a characteristic response as a *modus operandi* of Hollywood that has become more recognisable over time. The flexibility of Hollywood to respond to market demand has therefore allowed studios to adjust domestic product for overseas audiences in order to achieve international marketability (O'Regan 1990, pp. 9-10).

In the formulation of narrative for production, genre structure becomes a form of standardization while the changing story and generic elements serve as differentiation. This results in audience comprehension and understanding. Smith (1998, p. 7) points out that genre films while having a formulaic sameness are not identical and exhibit difference. Indeed, Maltby, Gomery and Balio have argued that the 1980s and 1990s essentially supported a vertical re-integration of Hollywood. Therefore, the constraints and controls of the studios are still in place so that Hollywood practices and film products may exemplify what Smith (1998, p. 7) argues is an 'industrial dualism'. Rather than a shift away from 'Fordist mass-production (economies of scale through standardization and a detailed division of labour)' (p. 6), the studios have been able to maintain control of vertical integration through their control of distribution. The organization of production through horizontal integration of the conglomerate is now more flexibly specialized for adapting to shifts in the global market. The function of genre, in this respect, may be critical and can be further described as an analogy of the 'tension between sameness and difference which may help toward the understanding of global capitalism as a constant process of constant conflict and negotiation' (Shiel 2001, p. 14). Shiel contends that the dominance of

Hollywood is challenged by aspiration, a mode of difference that is being played out in urban societies (p. 14). While such aspiration may be seen in the British comedies of Gurinder Chadha (e.g. *Bend it Like Beckham*) that are contemporary to the WTF Romantic comedies of the 1990s and 2000s, WTF has in fact been accused precisely of denying such difference and cosmopolitanism in its portrayal of modern urban British society (most obviously in *Notting Hill*).²

In the use of genre analysis one could understand not only Hollywood and mainstream cinema production but also the broader global economic system within which industrial standardization with differentiation is occurring. As Altman (1997, p. 277) points out, ‘...the Hollywood studio system has exercised world-wide hegemony over genre film production since the 1930s’, and this understanding could also be applied to other dimensions of global production and consumption. This global economic system may further be understood in parallel through Neale’s (1990, p. 56) description of genre as processes dominated not only by repetition but fundamentally possessing difference, variation and change. Altman (1997, p. 277) describes the role of genre in production as a template for production decisions; in distribution it serves as product differentiation and in consumption it describes patterns of involvement by the audience. The patterns for the complex experience of viewing a film are established through genre expectation. He further maintains that the Hollywood cinema industry is based on genre films, not only for maintaining a standardized distribution and exhibition system, but also to

²It should be noted that WTF chose to produce the film *Posse* (Mario Van Peebles, 1993) that was an attempt to show a history of the American Wild West as a black version of the Western genre.

maintain 'a stable, generically trained audience' (p. 277).

The Relationship of Hollywood, Genre and WTF to the Global Film Market

As argued by Herman and McChesney (1997, p. 64), the global media conglomerates use advertising to meet the marketing needs of Hollywood and maintain their hegemonic influence on global audiences in order to serve their own economic interest. These global economic interests are served by Hollywood through its use of genre, specifically by producing the blockbuster (p. 45). As a result Hollywood's forte and area of production specialization has become the action blockbuster genre, fast and easy to produce with its more manageable physical action (p. 45). As a result, Shone (2004, p. 229) explains that Hollywood has become too dependent on the genre of the action blockbuster because of guaranteed return on investment and the economies of scale necessary to reach a global market. Thus the concentration in production of the action blockbuster has also resulted in other tendencies such as the homogenization of content and the use of violence in narrative action (Herman and McChesney 1997, p. 45). Herman and McChesney (p. 45) further attempt to understand this relationship by explaining that 'One entertainment genre that needs little differentiation for global commercial success is violence, and Hollywood has established itself as the pre-eminent producer of 'action' fare'. Yet there seems no concern for the social cost from Hollywood. Violence in action travels globally and international financing is readily available. As explained by Herman and McChesney (p. 45) who equate the action blockbuster with violence, 'The major US studios find violent fare as close to risk-free as anything they produce, and they have little trouble locating non-US interests willing to cover a share of production costs in return for distribution or broadcasting rights in their nation or region'. Therefore, these films do not have to be socially responsible, good, or

likeable, they have to be marketable. Shone (2004, p. 274) believes that the reward in the global market is different from the expectation provided to the audience by genre. Curiosity is generated by the marketing machine of hype and advertising. Consequently a film does not have to be good to make back its costs. By satisfying audience curiosity, the global system can operate profitably (p. 275).

These relational aspects may also indicate the business conditions and positioning for WTF and the globalized success of the British romantic comedy genre. The position adopted by WTF with their genre film products in the global market place in the 1990s is recognisably distinctive and diversified from that of the action blockbuster; nonetheless, it offers a return on investment with lower risk. However, key to maintaining their position in Hollywood for WTF is its ability to produce a genre film that is globally marketable. The use of genre as a form of standardization simplifies decisionmaking and management by producers in the development and production process; at the same time, the specificities of each film narrative allow for product diversification. Furthermore, genre is used to generate recognition and anticipation in marketing films to audiences in the global marketplace. As a result, in a rapidly changing and complex environment, the strategy of reworking of genre acts as a stabilizing compass for producers who use genre as a blueprint for managing production. Therefore, the ability of WTF to rework genre for product diversification is an advantage when competing in the global media marketplace and its ancillary markets. Its diversification could also be considered analogous with hybridization and evolving forms of genre. Consequently, a company like WTF with its medium size production budgets can be absorbed into Hollywood's development, production and marketing structures in order to maximize profit and reduce risk. As a 'research and development' operation it has more flexibility to then move products into a less risky level of production

financing. This results in the production of film products for different segments of the Hollywood conglomerate's diversified global markets of film, video, and television. However, this reworking of genre must use political and ideological meanings that do not disrupt the power elites that benefit from globalization (including, of course, the Hollywood studios).

For WTF, the critical power elite are seen to be the global conglomerates of Hollywood which have also included PolyGram. With their imperative for profit, they seek stability for earnings and they control access to the global market with its profit earnings through their control of distribution to this marketplace (Smith, 1998, p. 9). However, they may reduce their own risk in this marketplace by sharing this risk through the relationship of independent producers who provide greater flexibility in response to a changing market. This type of relationship also may reinforce the power and stability of the global media conglomerate because as Smith (1998, p. 9) asserts the 'independent production companies act at once as 'shock absorbers' and research arms ('pilot fish') for the majors'. In the context of its relationship to Universal Pictures, WTF functioned in precisely this way; acting as an arm of the Hollywood conglomerate to bring in risk capital and 'exploit' creative talent (p. 9). As such, when WTF re-connected to Universal in a pact arrangement, it also brought in a financing and distribution deal with Canal Plus, the French television channel (*The Hollywood Reporter* 1999). This was a 50/50 co-financing arrangement deal that gave Canal Plus European television rights and some theatrical rights to film product without an equity stake in WTF. This financing initially underwrote the Coen brothers' film, *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?* (Joel Coen, 2000). As a result of this arrangement, Universal received foreign film rights for this film (*The Hollywood Reporter* 1999). In this way, independents such as WTF expand the capacity for more manageable risk reduction in the global organization of product production. Furthermore, WTF is an example of a production company

that has become specialized in generating genre films with narrative that are invested with cultural specificities i.e. Britishness or the regional America and quirky nature of the Coen brothers. Moreover, these films are acceptable within the context of the corporate ideological context and, at the same time, marketable to a global audience. However, the cultural representations of WTF's British romantic comedy portray a specific culture of the white, affluent Protestant experience of a life lived in cosmopolitan London. These limited representations are a contrast with those for example of WTF's earlier *My Beautiful Laundrette*, which portray a multi-cultural London. This exclusion in their later films could be considered problematic, serving the needs of the hegemonic context of economic and political power. Rather than an inclusive Britain they support an exclusiveness in which non-white Britain is ignored. It is an exclusiveness that Hollywood global conglomerate interests may find easier to live with and prosper from but may also occur at a cost to those who are under- or un-represented.

The reward for WTF is a sustained corporate life with Hollywood for access to the global market and to a share of its profit and earnings. Therefore, WTF has been able to position itself within the processes of Hollywood globalization. It has been able to do this with its ability to negotiate an economic and cultural global connectivity through its specialization in the function of genre. In order for their films to be marketable they must have an audience appeal and genre cognition in the context of global localities. This results in a shared meaning through genre in a relationship with the audience and its expanding global consciousness.

Conclusion

Employing the language of Tomlinson on globalization, WTF could be described as positioned in a framework of 'complex connectivity' to Hollywood, the British film industry, the European film industry and the local markets of the global film market. The hinge on multiple doors may be its flexibility to manipulate genre and the complexity of interconnections of talent, script development, financing, production and cultural representations. Genre manipulation may be its forte in the context of global Hollywood. Citing Rowe (1995), Nelmes (2003, p. 270) points out that 'From the late 1970s onwards romantic comedy has tapped into an unease about the notions of romance' with discourses formed 'around cultural anxieties concerning romance and masculinity'. As opposed to the classical Hollywood romantic comedy in which the male determines the outcome in a consolidation of their patriarchal position, WTF may have mastered a negotiation for these new discourses after realizing its success with *Four Weddings and a Funeral*.

As complex connectivity in globalization, as evidenced by its global market success, WTF has been able to connect with the local audiences in the global film market. This has occurred with what could be described as 'restitutions' of cultural meanings and identities. It has also occurred in a mutual interdependency across distance between producers and audience. A phenomenon of connectivity that could be described as *genre function in globalization* may have been the critical area for WTF to master in order to produce economic success in the context of the Hollywood global film market. This is not to deny the existence and marketability of other genres in the global marketplace; however, this offers a possible explanation for the predominance and success of British romantic comedy, being reworked and differentiated from the dominant global Hollywood genre of the action blockbuster. The next part of this thesis

examines how WTF emerged as a global player and established its connectivity to the global market. The next chapter seeks to understand its beginnings and the context of its early years.

Part II - The Globalization of Working Title Films and Complex Connectivity of the Company

Chapter 3 Working Title Films - The Early Years, Finding Their Way

Chapter 4 *My Beautiful Laundrette* - The Function of Genre in an Initial Connectivity to Globalization

Chapter 5 Working Title Films - The Transition to Global and the Context for Re-connectivity

Chapter 6 Working Title Films - A New Global Position for Production, Distribution and Marketing

Chapter 3: Working Title Films – The Early Years, Finding Their Way

Introduction

The beginnings of Working Title Films (WTF) as a producer of genre film may best be understood within the context of a changing Britain of the 1980s. Radical socio-economic, political and cultural changes were taking place at the same time an emerging new post-war generation of young artists and production professionals were establishing themselves within the industrial, cultural and artistic sectors. Major political and ideological changes were taking place in the British nation, not only being transformed by Margaret Thatcher's economic policies and free market philosophy, but by the reception and reaction to them. This reaction included a public dialogue on the identity of being British and a re-examination of British multiculturalism (Mitchell 2003, p. 388) prompted by waves of mass migration from Britain's former colonial territories. WTF's first film, *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Stephen Frears, 1985), spoke directly to many of these changes taking place in British society as they related to questions of ethnicity, class, sexuality and 'Britishness'. Moreover, the film's unexpected crossover success with British audiences meant that it would make an important contribution to the wider public dialogue over the changing face of contemporary British national identity. It became 'a landmark in critical thinking about representation and cultural diversity' (Geraghty 2005, p. 5) as well as forming a critical connectivity with Hollywood and the global film market. This thesis argues that this initial, yet intermittent, globalization of WTF occurred with *My Beautiful Laundrette* through the function of genre. The significance of this British context needs to be examined in order to gain a better understanding of WTF's genre products, their representations,

and their connectivity in globalization. This chapter examines the initial, start-up stage of WTF and its relationship to a function of genre. It examines how this relationship emerged and developed and how it functioned in the emerging process of globalization as complex connectivity.

The Changing British Context of Thatcherism and a Redefinition of British Media

During the 1980s the British film and media industries were also going through a redefinition within the cultural, political and economic context of what is now called Thatcherism. Coming to power in 1979 during a British economic crisis, the new conservative Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, set out to reshape the British government, economy and society with a traditional conservative vision. However, Britain as a nation had rapidly become multicultural through an unexpected and largely unwanted post-war Commonwealth migration (Hansen 2000, p. 4). For economic and foreign policy reasons, the door to migration had been left open in order to preserve Britain's international presence. This presence was through the Old Commonwealth network of Canada, Australia and New Zealand (p. 17). Yet this concession for immigration had resulted in a non-white immigration from the New Commonwealth nations that was also coupled with their social and economic marginalization in British society (Ali 2001, p. 2821). Prior to Thatcher's government, a defining political moment had been Enoch Powell's Rivers of Blood speech in 1968. In the speech, Powell criticized the government's immigration policy and crystallized anti-immigrant, racist sentiment. Even as Labour governments had provided some harmonizing race legislation in the 1970s, a climate of racism and economic disadvantage persisted and by the 1980s Britain was experiencing racial disturbances. Rather than address these social issues, Thatcher's political views and policies represented an ideological shift away

from socially responsible government action that supported multiculturalism and anti-racism towards free market economics and a reduced social role for government (Boyson and Martino 1999). To accomplish this, Thatcher supported a government agenda of privatization promoting individual competition (Mitchell 2003, p. 388).

As an ideological positioning, Thatcherism had its own sense and image of community and nation. It has been described as nostalgic, recalling a time when ‘there was a strong sense of national unity based on ethnic oneness, a shared culture and common heritage’ (Curran, Gaber, and Petley 2005, p. 24). Stuart Hall (1988, p. 90) identifies the discourse of the British new right in the 1980s as having ‘a continuous subterranean theme, the restoration of the family, the bulwark of respectable society and conventional sexualities with its fulcrum in the traditional roles for women’. Yet, at the same time British cities had been transformed by mass immigration, so their reality was at odds with this imagined version of Britain offered by the Thatcher government. This ‘British character’ was thus in conflict with the new urban left, Britain’s new multiculturalism and the cosmopolitanism of British cities, especially the global city of London (Curran, Gaber, and Petley 2005, pp. 22-25).

Despite the skepticism towards the value of multiculturalism that characterized the Thatcher government, the 1980s was, ironically, a time when new voices were given the opportunity to speak out on cultural and political issues through new access to the media and the arts. This occurred at the same time that the film and broadcast industries were going through substantial changes as a result of the political and economic relationships with the Thatcher government. Because London was a global city, it provided a space in which immigrant and diasporic communities (as well as the British-born descendants of these migrants) from diverse ethnic

backgrounds, and particularly those from former British colonies could interact. This interaction could be described, in the conceptualization of Tomlinson, as a global connectivity for proximity of the global to the local of London (Tomlinson 2008, p. 3). As such, individuals and groups were practicing their culture in new ways, connecting global spaces with the local space of London. These new connections of culture practice and global interaction were not only in confrontation but also in collaboration. This was exemplified by the relationships that formed during the production of WTF's debut feature, i.e. Tim Bevan as a WTF producer from New Zealand and Hanif Kureishi, a son of a Pakistani father and English mother, as the screenwriter of *My Beautiful Laundrette*. London served as an intersection for processes of globalization within the national and the local contexts of Britain. This thesis argues that in this British context at this particular point in time WTF began making local cultural and economic relationships that eventually expanded as interconnectivities to a global film industry and its marketplace. These relationships can be understood as an initial formation of connectivities as a foundation for global connectivity. The changing national and local contexts, with their transformation of practice and experience in filmmaking, eventually had reciprocal implications in a changing dynamic of relationships for the global connectivity of WTF.

The Economic Base of Production: A Complex Relationship of the British Film Industry, British Broadcast and Hollywood

The industrial and economic context in which WTF began making films was anything but stable. During the 1980s funding for production of feature films in Britain, whether as a government subsidy or commercial investment, became more problematic. The Thatcher government

systematically removed measures that had previously been put into place to promote British film production and bolster a national British film industry against Hollywood competition.

According to Redfern (2007, p. 150) from 1927 until 1984 state film policies were motivated by a reaction to Hollywood's domination of the British market and a need to generate a national cinema. As a form of protectionism, a film quota system was established in 1927 that required a certain number of British films to be distributed and exhibited. At the end of World War II, in order to further protect British film producers from on-going Hollywood competition and assist their production, the Labour government established two schemes for financing, the National Film Finance Corporation (NFFC), in 1949, and the Eady Levy, in 1950 (United Kingdom. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills 2010, p. 26). The NFFC was begun as a government bank to make loans for production and distribution but did not directly fund producers. Funding went through distributors as 'end money'. The Eady Levy, a levy on cinema tickets, was intended for British producers as production funding. Although considered an 'economic stimulant' for the British film industry, as an unintended result, it motivated Hollywood to produce films through its British subsidiaries (Stubbs 2009, p.1). In 1952, the British Film Institute (BFI) created a new source of financing with its Experimental Film Fund as an alternative to mainstream commercial production, (Brooke 2008a). Early recipients of what amounted to a few hundred pounds included Ken Russell, Ridley Scott and Peter Watkins (Brooke 2008a). By the 1960s the Experimental Film Fund became the British Film Institute Production Board and it began to fund low budget non-commercial or avant-garde feature films for independent art house release. This funding resulted in the first Black-British feature film, *Pressure* (Horace Ove, 1975), and the first British-Asian feature film, *A Private Enterprise* (Peter K. Smith, 1974) (Brooke 2008a). Although state policies have played a significant role of

influence and funding for the British film industry, these funding initiatives did not result in stability for the British film industry nor independence from Hollywood (Street 2009, p. 19).

Writing in 1993, Friedman (p. 5) maintains that the very attributes of British cinema, the 'Britishness' of literary history, theatrical traditions, class issues and documentary, made films accessible to a British audience as an internal national and local market but were barriers as export product for the American audience. In contrast, Hill (1999, p. 86) argues that British filmmaking 'has had to develop ways of 'living with Hollywood' which avoid direct competition with it'. In response to the dilemma of direct competition leading to disaster, a negotiation between threats and needs may have resulted. This negotiation may have included strategies of co-production financing, the use of British talent as a craft industry and crossover talent to Hollywood. Moreover, this relationship offered British subsidized, lower budgeted product for Hollywood film distribution and for American public television broadcasting. Furthermore, according to Street (2009, p. 3), 'despite chronic instability of the economic infrastructure the range and diversity of British film indicates a vitality or dynamism rather than stasis'.

State policies affecting the British film industry went through a major shift in the mid-1980s with Thatcher and there were subsequent reconfigurations in the Major and Blair governments. Redfern (2007, p. 150) asserts that the emphasis of policy 'shifted to the commercial and international appeal of British films' and international success became 'the cornerstone of national film policy' (p. 151). Ironically, given that Thatcherism and its free market philosophy was an attempt to remove barriers for market growth and energize the economy, Puttnam (2010) argues that most of Thatcher's policies had been disastrous for the film industry. Reluctant to support film production, she had eliminated most of the government subsidized funding base. By the end of the 1980s, after the abolishment of the Eady Fund and the collapse of the film

production company Goldcrest, there was a decline in investment, in production budgets and in the number of films produced (Puttnam 1999, p. 251). According to Leonard Quart (1993, p. 24), ‘The Thatcher government’s denial of aid for British film production merely compounded the long-term problems of a historically sick industry whose audience continued to decline’. Yet paradoxically, he asserts that despite ‘the industry’s economic precariousness and limited resources, the eighties saw an exciting renaissance of British film’ (p. 24). The context for the British film industry for the decade was also one of a revitalization that took place in unexpected ways. There was a significant shift between films produced earlier in the decade such as *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981) with the later body of film work fueled by Channel 4 by the end of the decade. In this shift, there was an emergence of new black voices and this decade has been described as a watershed for black independent film and video (Pines 1996, p.183). How was this renaissance able to happen? And, how was WTF positioned in this context?

In the beginning of the decade, the production of British films such as *Chariots of Fire*, *Educating Rita* (Lewis Gilbert, 1983) and *Local Hero* (Bill Forsyth, 1983) had been supported by several factors. Firstly, new product was needed for the expanding global market of satellite and cable TV in the United States. Secondly, London’s financial institutions were able to finance production through what is known as leaseback deals (Quart 1993, p. 24; Hill 1996a, p. 104). In this arrangement the producer sells the film to a purchaser who will receive tax relief for their higher tax liability. The sale amount was placed on deposit as security for repayment installments. After 1984 this was a more restricted arrangement. In that same year, the film quota established in 1927 was suspended. Then in 1985 the Eady Levy was abolished. In part this was due to the fact that by the early 1980s these Eady funds were going to distributors rather than producers with little effect on production (Quart 1993, p. 23; Hill 1996a, p. 103).

Until the 1980s the NFFC had been the only direct source of government film financing of feature films. Although initially backed as a transition with a five year government investment of 7.5 million pounds, under Thatcher it was privatized. It went through several transformations for conversion to a private investment structure, becoming first The British Screen Finance Consortium and then The British Screen Finance Limited. Its investors subsequently were Cannon, Rank and Channel 4. Eventually only Channel 4 continued as an investor (Hill 1996a, p. 103). From 1980 to 1985, 17 films had been completed through the original structure. From 1986 to 1989, 44 were produced through British Screen but they did not produce a profit or a return on investment (p.104). By removing the previously established supports for the British film industry, Thatcher destabilized the industry at the same time that she generated support for an alternative broadcast model in the new Channel 4. Inadvertently via this broadcast model, Thatcher shifted the direction of the British film industry.

When Thatcher came to power, Britain had a strong public service television and radio system as well as commercial broadcasting that was heavily regulated. Thatcher perceived communications as a sector that was ‘exhibiting many of the worst of British sins: consensual complacency, excessive trade union power, corporatism, lack of managerial oversight’ (Tunstall 1993, p.241). With her ideological preference for free market economics that supported deregulation, privatization and corporate ownership interests, Thatcher and her government set out to make changes in the media systems. In the spirit of free market media entrepreneurship and competition she set into motion two key developments that redefined the British film and television industries. They were, first, the creation of Channel 4, a fourth television channel; and, second, the use of independent production companies for creating programme content. The latter were out-source suppliers of programming for the channel rather than in-house staff

producers, which would have been decried as government bureaucracy. This resulted in support for new, young, independent film producers such as WTF, minority or black filmmakers coming from an immigrant background such as Gurinder Chadha and for what is now described as the British film renaissance of the 1980s (Quart 1993, p. 24).

By the end of the 1980s, the major source of funding for British film production was Channel 4 and this funding came through its drama programme budget (p. 24). It should also be noted that a significant change had occurred in the early 1980s when the BFI had its first commercial feature success with *The Draughtsman's Contract* (Peter Greenaway, 1982) (Brooke2008a). This film was the first co-production between the BFI and the newly-established Channel 4. Not only did this relationship provide filmmakers access to television broadcast, it also provided additional funding from Channel 4 to the BFI Production Board. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s it continued to provide an alternative source of funding to what became mainstream production. This led to opportunities for new directors and support for British auteurs.

Channel 4: A Context for the Development of an Initial Global Connectivity

The 1980 Broadcasting Act established Channel 4 Television as a company with its ownership held by the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA). The IBA was the regulatory agency for commercial broadcasting and was made up of the ITV network and its companies. Funding for Channel 4's operations and programme production came from the ITV subscriptions to IBA. Rather than a government subsidy, Channel 4's funding was consequently coming from commercial television's advertising revenue. This amounted to '14% to 18% of net advertising revenue of each ITV company in its broadcast region under a broadcast franchise' (Hobson 2007, p. 16). Hill (1996a 106) explains Channel 4's success resulted, in part, from the fact that it

was 'insulated from commercial competition' such as Hollywood or ITV. It would be able to produce profitable films because it did not depend on a financial return from the marketplace to cover production costs. Hill maintains that the percentage of Channel 4's budget allocated for feature film production did not match either the programme hours or the audience ratings. Rather the programme production was budgeted on cultural worth (p. 106).

With a subsequent Act of Parliament in 1982, Channel 4 was put into operation under the leadership of Jeremy Isaacs (Hobson 2008, p. vii). Isaacs served as the founding chief executive between 1981 and 1987 and had the responsibility to realize Channel 4's mission to do something new with broadcast programming in the UK and experiment (p. vii). Channel 4's funding or remit had two key directives or injunctions that established a significant, new direction for the channel (Caughie 1997, p. 33). First, it was to be only a broadcaster rather than functioning as both a broadcaster and an programme producer. This was in contrast to the in-house operations of the established broadcasters, the BBC and ITV. Programming was to come from independent production companies. It was to be commissioned by Channel 4's editors as outsourced programme production. This essentially created a subsidized market for independent production services. Second, its programming was to be different from that of the established broadcasters, offering innovation and reaching out to marginalized audiences. Channel 4 (Channel 4 n.d.a) recounts these conditions as leading 'directly to the creation of the independent television production sector in the 1980s, now one of the powerhouses of the UK creative economy'. Within this context of complicated and connected factors of ideology, politics and economics, Channel 4 laid the initial groundwork for the emergence of production companies such as WTF as a producing entity of British feature films. Even though Channel 4's experiment in production provided independents with limited budgets, this allowed them to produce a

substantial body of work. This work included new voices and changed the cultural landscape of Britain. During the early 1980s after Channel 4 began broadcasting, WTF established its operations and identity as an independent production company for the new channel. As a result, it became positioned in both the British film and television industries.

Although Margaret Thatcher promoted an entrepreneurial culture and a restructuring of broadcasting through the establishment of the new Channel 4, these actions had unexpected outcomes for both the television and film industries. She could not have foreseen the eventual cultural impact that Channel 4 and its independent production would have in the politics of ‘difference’ and multiculturalism. Caughie describes this impact as follows:

The paradox is that a Channel which was seen as unruly, sexually licentious, and unorthodox almost to the point of subversion introduced an economic system which became the orthodoxy...What it did was to transform unruly film producers into small business men and business women, sensitive to the market and responsive to its conditions. (Caughie 1997, p. 35)

Nonetheless, these independent producers then found they could also use this production opportunity to express their criticism against Thatcher’s policies and ideology. Their targets of criticism included what Wollen (1993, p. 35) summarizes as the ‘imposition of market criteria in every sector of society, to political authoritarianism, to the ‘two nations’ project of Thatcherism, and to the leading role of the ‘city’’. Their criticism was also against a polarization within the country of North and South and the centre of London with its margins. Thatcher may have done something right for the British film industry, but it may have been for the wrong reasons. This resulted in films that were created as voices of criticism, opposing what Thatcher represented (Quart 1993, p.17). Caughie (1997, p. 28) asserts that the representation of cultural identities

was not only the result of artistic expression but would be subject to ‘public determinations of law, economy and money...the material conditions which form, transform and sometimes deform them’. This changing context of the local landscape had implications for shaping the economic and cultural product that WTF produced in the 1980s, especially that of the film *My Beautiful Laundrette*. It would also shape the reception and reaction to their product in the local, national and global contexts.

Rather than planned and organised, the Channel 4 experiment in production appears to have become expedient for a range of needs. Channel 4 provided not only the support needed by mainstream British cinema at this time but helped directors that could be called ‘marginal’, ‘eccentric’ or ‘avant-garde’ produce work. For example, John Akomfrah’s film *Handsworth Songs* (John Akomfrah, 1986) was produced with the support of Channel 4 (Ogidi n.d.a) and Derek Jarman’s film *Caravaggio* (Derek Jarman, 1985) was produced with funding from the BFI’s Production Board in association with Channel 4 (Brooke 2008a; Smyth n.d.). Sarah Radclyffe who was also a producing partner of WTF was credited as a producer on *Caravaggio* (IMDb n.d.a). Connected to Jarman earlier in her career when she worked with him on *The Tempest* (Derek Jarman, 1979), Radclyffe’s involvement with this experimentation may indicate a stronger preference for riskier or more diverse projects that could be produced with Channel 4. As a producing partner of WTF, Radclyffe could have influenced the selection and development of productions by the company in the 1980s. These early productions such as *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), *Wish You Were Here* (David Leland, 1987), *For Queen & Country* (Martin Stellman, 1988), *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (Stephen Frears, 1988) and *A World Apart* (Chris Menges, 1988) may reflect more racial or sexual diversity in the content as well as more political

articulation than later WTF productions. *For Queen & Country* is the story of a black British soldier who returns from the Falklands war to poverty and unemployment and *A World Apart*'s story addresses South African apartheid. *Wish You Were Here* presents a story of a young woman's sexual liberty in a 1950s British setting. Central to the narrative of *My Beautiful Laundrette* is a homosexual relationship between a working class, white British man and an Asian-British man. *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* presents an interethnic marriage between a white British woman and an Asian-British man. Radclyffe eventually left WTF to start her own company and so her contribution to the early years of WTF in the partnership with Bevan needs to be clarified. Although cited as an original partner of WTF in research sources, e.g. *Laundrettes and Lovers* (2003)¹, *BFI Screenonline*, there does not seem to be a great deal of information about her contribution to the company in these formative years. There also are no accounts of whether gender played a role either as a barrier or an opportunity for Radclyffe as a producer. There is however interview material from Tim Bevan recounting his early role but he only generally mentions Sarah Radclyffe (Higgins 2005; Channel 4 n.d.b). The following section will attempt to fill in this gap with new source information that gives greater clarity to what her role and contribution may have been. At a time when new, different voices were being heard, she may represent a shift towards diversity that was not only based on ethnicity and race

¹*Laundrettes and Lovers* has been used extensively as a source in the research for this thesis because of a lack of primary research interview material on the history of WTF. It has been noted that the producers keep an atypically low profile (*BBC News* 2004) and, although *Laundrettes and Lovers* is a form of company publicity and may have been written by a ghost writer or company publicist, it is one of the few documented sources other than publicity news interviews that provides a voice of the producers Fellner, Bevan and other key players in the history of WTF.

but on gender.

As older, more established film structures such as Rank, Thorn-EMI and Goldcrest ceased to exist, unable to compete with Hollywood production, (Hill 1996a, p. 106), the new formation of independent production companies, like WTF, as well as more avant-garde oppositional filmmakers such as the seven-person Black Audio Film Collective (BAFC), could be identified with different reasons and needs for production. Emerging as a result of the British film workshop movement (Ogidi n.d.b), groups such as the BAFC formed an influential artistic movement that examined the multicultural reality of Britain and shaped a black film culture (Pines 1996, p. 183; Searle 2007). Channel 4 provided the space to expand a more stable production base for the existence and productivity of independent filmmakers. Caughie explains that:

The aim was that twenty-five per cent of the programme time of Channel 4 was to be taken up by independent production. This was in a context in which the two other sources of indigenous television programmes in the UK, the public service BBC and the commercial television network were almost exclusively the preserve of in-house production. (Caughie 1997, p. 34)

Because the new channel was under the order to experiment with its programming and address under-served audiences, it became a 'unique juncture in the history of the British regulation of culture' (p. 33). An impetus for generating economic and cultural film production by independents such as WTF and those from the workshop movement such as Sakofa, Ceddo, Retake Film and Video and the BAFC came from neither audience market demand for product nor for competition to gain commercial income. Rather, Channel 4's need for new and different

programming combined with the Channel's funding opportunity served as a catalyst for new, alternative and different voices (Caughie 1997, p. 33; Ogidi n.d.b).

The 'Crossover' Relationship in the Formation of Complex Connectivity

As these conditions for the British film industry changed, there was also an increased complexity of the relationship and interaction between British television, the British film industry, the British stage, and Hollywood. Geraghty (2005, p. 5) identifies this relationship as one of 'crossover', where product created for one crosses over to another. Thus a dramatic play could be for the stage, for the movie screen or the television screen, each with their different audience. One such example of this new type of crossover product came in the form of *My Beautiful Laundrette*, the first feature film production of the new producing entity WTF. It was developed as a television play that became an art house movie crossover. Channel 4's approach for product distribution was a marketing innovation that is described by Caughie (1997, p. 34) as: '...the practice of allowing the films in which it invested to have as full a life as possible in the cinema before they were shown on television...built up a larger audience for the television screening than it might otherwise have had'. In this environment Channel 4's financing and marketing may have provided conditions that strengthened less experienced independent producers in terms of their economic stability and sustainability in a risky business.

By the end of the decade, the British feature film industry could be described as a production line crossing over to provide programming for television in addition to the feature film market. Its major source of funding was the broadcast Channel 4 (Pearson, n.d.). In 'The Religion of the Market' (1993), Leonard Quart (p. 22), explains that 'despite the Thatcher government's unwillingness to aid the film industry, it did establish a general mood that encouraged economic

risk-taking and experimentation with new and more innovative business practices'. Thus the production budget of *Film on Four* (1982-2002), the filmed dramatic television programming for Channel 4, was at the same time the biggest investment source for British film production for cinematic release. It financed or co-financed films that became noteworthy during this decade. These included *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) and *A Letter to Breznev* (Chris Bernard, 1985) (Caughie 1997, p. 33). Channel 4's use of the cinema as a platform for introducing films for eventual television broadcast was demonstrated effectively with *My Beautiful Laundrette*. Producing television drama within this new broadcasting context not only was a launch pad for WTF but it also served WTF as an expanding experiential base in producing and distributing feature film. It became the first steps in creating a subsequent track record of productions. However, it was not a standardized industrial process, but rather it was experimental, unpredictable and complex. It could also be understood as a set of interconnectivities to support an eventual initial connectivity to the global landscape and the global film market for WTF.

The Connective Relationships of Channel 4, Working Title Films and Diversity: Formation of a Partnership

When Channel 4 was officially launched and began broadcasting on November 2, 1982 (Hobson 2008, p. vii), the opening night of programming included the drama *Walter* and *The Comic Strip Presents...* (1982-1990). These programmes represent connections to key players who would have significant roles and relationships to WTF. Positioned and imbedded early on in Channel 4's independent production base were the producer and co-founder of WTF, Sarah Radclyffe, the director, Stephen Frears, the cinematographer, Oliver Stapleton and the production manager Jane Fraser. Other than Isaacs and Frears, who later described himself as the oldest person on the set

of *My Beautiful Laundrette*, many of the key players in the start up of Channel 4 and WTF were in their twenties (Culpepper 2008). They were influenced by the (mostly London-based) music and comedy scenes, well-educated and could be described as coming from privileged backgrounds. Having a 'clean slate', they may therefore have felt more confident about taking risks and may have been more open to new types of programme content and production work. Rather than a closed media system, within the national context and the local cosmopolitan London context, Channel 4 opened a cultural space with the potential for the connectivity of globalization. It was providing opportunities for more inclusive social and cultural media practice and for the development of what Tomlinson (2008, p. 1) identifies in globalization as multi-valent connections for practicing culture. These practices can also be understood as the production of filmic stories. Furthermore, the audience was a local transformation of the global audience and Britain could thus be understood as a microcosm of the global population and having tendencies for the global experience of unicity, a global sense of wholeness.

The national film industry in its cultural and economic practices had historically operated as a global hinge, at times 'going global' in creating export product such as *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (Alexander Korda, 1933), *Tom Jones* (Tony Richardson, 1963), or *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981). In producing films for Channel 4, WTF was positioning itself through cultural practice for the transformative potential of globalization. In a short period of time the new talent and human resource from the post-war generation were rapidly becoming interdependent with Channel 4 in the cultural practice of producing filmed stories. They practiced television programme production as access to feature film production. Moreover, they not only were officially sanctioned for producing culture in different and experimental ways but they were

producing new constructions of meaning for consumption by a marginalized, diverse national audience. It could also be argued that the experience they were gaining through Channel 4 may have given them some kind of insight or sensitivity for a diverse audience. However, other than the playwright Caryl Churchill and the director Stephen Frears, there does not seem to be strong evidence during this time that the individuals who became key players with WTF showed a personal commitment to any agenda for the expression of diversity and multiculturalism. Yet, prior to producing for Channel 4, Radclyffe had worked with Derek Jarman (*BFI Screenonline* n.d.).

Eventually dying of AIDS related complications in 1994, Jarman was one of Britain's most controversial filmmakers. With sexuality and homoeroticism central to his work, he changed the portrayal of homosexuality in films in the 1970s offering an alternative vision of history that incorporated the struggle of gay people (Pencak 2002, p. 1). Until then, the portrayal of homosexuality in the cinema had been allusive rather than direct (Benshoff 2004, p. 67) and Jarman's first film, *Sebastiane* (Paul Humfress and Derek Jarman, 1976), a tragic love story, was a cinematic breakthrough for the representation of homosexuality. Following *Sebastiane*, Jarman's early film work was *Jubilee* (Derek Jarman, 1977) and *The Tempest* (1979), considered the most accessible of his first three films (Hoyle 2007). As associate producer to Jarman on *The Tempest*, Radclyffe was working with one of the most overtly homosexual filmmakers in the British independent film industry. His low budget films were noteworthy in presenting positive gay images (Hoyle 2007) as well as displaying the creative, intellectual and philosophical sophistication present in the director's work which marked him out as arguably the leading experimental British *auteur* of his generation. *The Tempest* was produced by Don Boyd and his company BoydsCo which had a clear agenda to promote art cinema and experimental film. This film was radically different from what WTF would eventually produce as British romantic

comedy. Although this connection may have been significant in contributing to Radclyffe's role as a producer for *My Beautiful Laundrette*, which has a homosexual love story, and for other WTF productions that did offer sexual or racial diversity, there is no documentation for this. However, she was clearly not opposed to working with diverse content and she later produced Jarman's *Caravaggio* (1986) (*BFI Screenonline* n.d.a). What may have been significant from the relationship with Jarman for Sarah Radclyffe and Tim Bevan, partners and co-founders of WTF was the entry it provided to a world of creative individuals in the art and music scene of London. After *The Tempest*, music videos were just starting up as a production format and Jarman may have directed a music video that Radclyffe produced. This may also have been the first production of WTF (Boyd, D., interview with author, 8 May 2009). Tim Bevan credits the beginning of music videos as 'a brilliant forum for getting started in the film business' and that he and Radclyffe 'began to get movie people to make videos – Nic Roeg, Derek Jarman and Stephen Frears among others – and our first two WTF productions came from these relationships' (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 11).

In contrast to Radclyffe or Bevan, it was Stephen Frears who showed the stronger connection to a political agenda and diversity. Realizing its mission on its opening night, Channel 4 addressed diversity for a new kind of television representation of disability. *Walter*, described as a social realism drama of a mentally challenged man, was regarded as a new milestone for television programming about disability (Johnson 2008, p. 18). Another Channel 4 programme in the opening night broadcast that connected several key players of WTF including Sarah Radclyffe was *The Comic Strip Presents...* (1982-1990). The comedy group, The Comic Strip, was performing in a club in Soho when it proposed a series of an initial six half hour 'self contained' films to Channel 4 (Brooke 2008b; BBC n.d.). This became *The Comic Strip Presents...* on

Channel 4's lineup. Prior to *The Comic Strip Presents...*, Sarah Radclyffe does not have a strong documented history of production experience. She produced the *Comic Strip* episodes: *Five Go Mad on Mescaline* (1983), *Dirty Movie* (1984), and *Susie* (1984). At the beginning of the 1980s, Bevan, the co-founder of WTF, began working at Video Arts in London. This company was John Cleese's successful corporate training production house that used Monty Python-style humour in its productions. In 1983, at the age of 25, Bevan started Aldabra, the music video production company which evolved into WTF. According to Tim Bevan (*Laundrettes and Lovers*, 2003, p. 11), he met Radclyffe when he tried to get a job on *The Comic Strip Presents...* This led to the start up of their music video business Aldabra. The business partnership of WTF between Radclyffe and Bevan may have been formalized as the result of their work relationship in producing music videos. The term *working title* means a *provisional* or *temporary* name that is given to a film production or project while in production. The *Internet Movie Database (IMDb)* (n.d.b) lists WTF's earliest movie production as *The Man who Shot Christmas* (Diana Patrick, 1984), a 24 minute television drama, funded by the National Film Finance Corporation (NFFC).

When Tim Bevan was asked how he started WTF, he recounted what happened in these words:

I was working on a ghastly pop promo with Stephen Frears and afterwards he rang me up and said I've been sent this script and would you mind reading it and I did and it was called *My Beautiful Laundrette*...So we went in to Channel Four. They liked it and said how much? I thought of the biggest figure I could imagine and said half a million and they said okay and we came out and made it. (Bevan n.d. cited in Channel 4 n.d.b)

Bevan described his office at this time as a small space with one side doing music video production to make enough money to survive while the other side was in preproduction for *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) (Kaleta 1998, p. 42). His version of events is a scenario of an underdog whose career gets a lucky break that leads to success. However, this raises a question of how Bevan and Radclyffe as relatively young and inexperienced producers with a new company were still credible enough to be offered the project of *My Beautiful Laundrette*. One possible interpretation is that, central to the start up and early success of WTF are the relationships of a close knit group of people who knew each other, i.e. Frears with Bevan and Radclyffe, combined with an entrepreneurial spirit that was needed for working as a producer with Channel 4. Channel 4 was looking for young companies to sponsor but they also needed to find production management skills for bringing in a project with the funding that was offered. Director Don Boyd cites the latter as a major strength that Sarah Radclyffe would have contributed to the new company from her work experience with BoydsCo. (Boyd, D., interview with author, 8 May 2009). Although initially not called WTF, the producing partnership of Bevan and Radclyffe had been established around the same time that Hanif Kureishi, the writer of *My Beautiful Laundrette*, became involved with Channel 4. Viewed in this context, the beginning of WTF is the story of the production and distribution of the teleplay/feature film, *My Beautiful Laundrette* for Channel 4.

Connective Relationships of the Film Story and Screenplay *My Beautiful Laundrette*

Although begun as a television film, *My Beautiful Laundrette* was eventually released in 1985 with Channel 4 as WTF's first feature film production. A critical business and cultural relationship had occurred between the WTF producers and the British Asian writer, Hanif

Kureishi. This relationship resulted in what can be understood theoretically as global connectivity using film narrative for audience appeal and valued meaning. At this early stage in the development of WTF, it is Kureishi's role as writer and his contribution of the script of *My Beautiful Laundrette* that eventually generated as a connection with a multicultural, national audience and subsequently with global audiences. In understanding how *My Beautiful Laundrette* was made, Kaleta (1998, p. 42) explains that it 'was unencumbered by the prejudices of a previous generation's thinking as it was unattached to the conventional process of making a movie'. The film's story is about the relationships and conflicts of a young British Pakistani man, Omar, who has ambition and aspires to succeed at business, in this case a laundrette. Central to the story is, on the one hand, the complex relationship with his extended diasporic family and, on the other, the love he has for Johnny, a working-class white Londoner who was formerly a member of a racist gang. Kureishi's screenplay was radical for the way that it placed a homosexual, interethnic romance at the centre of its narrative but also for its portrayal of a heterogeneous and, not entirely sympathetic, Pakistani diasporic community. This complexity is encapsulated in the contrast between the fortunes and attitudes of Omar's uncle – a successful businessman who lives in the suburbs, takes a white-British mistress and describes the host nation of Britain as 'a little piece of heaven on earth' - and Omar's father – a former journalist, widower and alcoholic who lives in squalor in the centre of London and laments that 'this country [Britain] has done us in'. The film's narrative thus foregrounds the intimate drama of human (and familial) relationships against the greater social context of a changing Britain seen through the lens of ethnic, sexual and class difference.

Where the local and the global most strongly connect in *My Beautiful Laundrette* is through the story and cultural representations produced by Kureishi. Described as 'a provocative new

playwright' in the early 1980s (Barron 2007, p. 10), Kureishi addressed the issues of being British Asian in his writings (Barron 2007, p. 10; Moore-Gilbert 2002, p. 43). He was born in 1954 to a white English mother and a Muslim father who had immigrated to Britain. Encouraged to write by his father, he eventually became writer-in-residence at the Royal Court in 1981. In an article he wrote for *The Guardian* in 2006, he recounted the development of his play *Borderline* for the Royal Court in the context of the minority experience:

It was, as far as I knew, the first play by an Asian to be produced on the main stage at the Royal Court, a theatre known for its innovation and daring. The only other black playwright I knew was Mustapha Matura, whose work I'd admired. But his work was poetic; he was no social documentarian... (Kureishi 2006)

Kureishi further credits the rewriting process of *Borderline* as an important process for preparing him for rewrites on the set of *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Kureishi 2006).

In 1985, based on his success with the Royal Court and Royal Shakespeare Warehouse venues, Kureishi caught the attention of Channel 4. According to Kureishi (1986 cited in Geraghty 2005, p. 9), 'The great advantage of TV drama was that people watched it; difficult, challenging things could be said about contemporary life'. Not only had Hollywood films influenced Kureishi's screenplay, he had other motivations for what he wrote. His intent in writing *My Beautiful Laundrette* was 'presenting serious drama about our unhappy democracy' and he explained that his writing was 'in the tradition of political writing... and creating a wider intelligent audience' (Kureishi 1985 cited in Geraghty 2005, p. 9). The screenplay may have been created for Channel 4 before the production company, WTF, was involved in the project. Geraghty (2005, p. 12) explains that British television is perceived as a 'writers' medium so that authorship

provides an explanatory framework' for the initial development of the project. If that were the case, the writer, Kureishi would have influenced the selection of the director, Frears, and actors, playing a role on the set as well as influencing the final cut of the teleplay. The writer's relationship was far more substantial in this context influencing the work in producing and directing the film.

The structuring of story and symbolic representations about the local, British-Asian immigrant experience may eventually have been the critical aspect in establishing an early connectivity of WTF to the processes of globalization and a more global audience. Yet this was not a purposeful intent by Kureishi or other key players in the start-up stage of WTF. Kureishi, in describing his creative process, was inspired by the Hollywood feature film, *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972) as a conceptual model for his teleplay (Moore-Gilbert 2002, p. 8). Rather than Italian immigrants making their way in America, *My Beautiful Laundrette* became the story of Pakistani immigrants making their way in Thatcher's Britain. An implied approach of genre to the story may have inherently defined the project for the theatrical film market rather than the television broadcast originally planned and commissioned by Channel 4. Kureishi's structural approach blended the content of his political criticism of Thatcher's Britain with a representation of a multicultural love story between two men, one Asian British and the other white British. This generated a liberal cultural product. However, this product was still the end result from Thatcher's implementation of a conservative business ideology. Although certain entrepreneurial characters in the story of *My Beautiful Laundrette* embrace this ideology, the irony is that the images and words of the film reflect a Britain at odds with Thatcher's new entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, the project had been selected and approved for production

through the sanctioned commissioning process of Channel 4. Perhaps Channel 4 had no way of predicting internally at the script stage the actual outcome in the changing external context.

In retrospect the film was put in the context of its time by Newsweek's film critic, David Ansen, who explains that:

It's hard to understate how fresh and revolutionary this movie seemed in 1985. It really pushed the envelope of English films, smashing the genteel stereotypes, opening up a whole new range of subject matter. This was not your traditional "liberal" look at race and class and sexuality. Kureishi gave us an inside job, from a point of view that had been excluded from cinema before this moment. (Ansen 2005)

If it was a political drama and gangster genre, it may also have been at the same time a romance. Barron (2007, p. 8) describes the film's story as doing 'more than merely reflect the social and cultural moment out of which it emerges; it constructs the relationship between Omar (Gordon Warnecke) and Johnny (Daniel Day-Lewis) as an allegory through which communities in conflict are united in the figure of a romantic union'. Even with a mixed race, gay relationship at the centre of the film, the film's story does not foreground the difference of homosexuality in contrast to heterosexuality. Central to the story is a love relationship set in the context of the challenges from a changing multicultural society. In the story their sexuality is not initially overt and the internal conflict over being together as Asian British and white British friends supercedes any external action of sex. If examined as a romantic comedy as described by Mernit (2001, p. 171), there are obstacles to their desires and dormant passions which create an erotic subtext. Understood as a film variation of genre romance, *My Beautiful Laundrette* with its genre conventions may have generated a condition of *cognition* with the global audience as an internal

context for connectivity. If genre forms an internal perceptual and conceptual environment for the audience, a 'conceptual constellation' may have been activated from a 'play with genre' by the writer and director. In this way *My Beautiful Laundrette*'s implied genre narrative established a shared framework of comprehension based on romantic love. This framework can also be understood as an intersection of the global with audiences locally. Perhaps representations of its sublimated sex make the foregrounding of its homosexuality less apparent. Later examined as queer text in relation to the New Queer Cinema of the 1990s, it has been a problematic text because it does not 'fit in with preoccupations of queer theory' (Allison n.d.).

The Start Up of Working Title Films: Connectivity to *My Beautiful Laundrette*

WTF began at a critical moment and was facilitated by a series of events that connected various interests together from across the British film industry. Within the context of a British society in the process of significant transformation, its start up occurred at an historical moment when the need to express this changing culture and the diversity of a post-war Britain emerged through the narrative of *My Beautiful Laundrette*. Not only was there a need to voice a reaction to Thatcherism, there was also a need to voice the experience of marginalized or diverse populations within Britain (Hall 1992b, p. 163). These new voices were given the opportunity of articulation through the founding mission of Channel 4. Space had emerged for an open and credible public dialogue and discourse through the mass media. The trigger for this dialogue may have been the emergence of a new communications process intersecting and connecting with a new generation of energetic and creative diverse artists. Channel 4 became the critical connectivity for bringing together human resources, for offering a subsidized economic base of production for generating dramatic story products. Moverover, it distributed them over the television broadcast spectrum or used the platforms of film festivals and cinema houses to reach

an audience. This process could be described in theoretical framing of Tomlinson as the formation of multivalent connections in an emerging globalization process. This process was initially taking place in the national context and intertwined the cultural, the economic and the political.

The start up of WTF appears to have been driven not only by the mission and financial support of the new broadcast entity Channel 4, but by the more complex interdependency of business needs with creative needs. The launch of WTF could thus be described as two partnership relationships that were connected to each other via Channel 4 and its dramatic programme *Film on Four*. The first relationship was the business and management partnership of the company founders and producers Tim Bevan and Sarah Radclyffe. The second relationship was the creative partnership of the director Stephen Frears with the playwright Hanif Kureishi who envisioned and wrote the teleplay/screenplay for the film. These partnerships were intertwined with political and economic threads in the local context. Not only had Thatcherism provided an economic production opportunity through Channel 4 for new, young producers like Bevan and Radclyffe, this opportunity had opened up a space for political dialogue and reaction. Exclusion was shifting to the inclusion of the de-territorialized or alienated voices of minority artists, as exemplified by Kureishi, at a time of growing social unrest and racial violence in Britain. This new inclusion of diverse and diasporic voices could be interpreted as a local connectivity in a process of globalization, as described by Tomlinson (2008, p. 2). If, as Tomlinson argues, modern social life is characterized by interconnections and these linkages exist as different modalities of social-institutional relationships (p. 2), then, these partnerships can be understood to exemplify these relationships.

Kureishi and Frears have further explained that in their working together they were using the story writing process of *My Beautiful Laundrette* to articulate their criticism of Thatcherism. There was an 'explicit attempt to intervene in the contemporary political situation and to contest Thatcher's conservative policies and rhetoric' (Barron 2007, p. 8). This could be further described as a political response through creative expression. It was occurring at a time when 'anxiety was heightened by the Thatcher regime's constant attempts to construct British identity narrowly by excluding both racial and sexual minorities—rhetorically and sometimes legislatively—from its vision of the nation' (p. 8). In contrast to mainstream British cinema, *My Beautiful Laundrette* constructed different representations that addressed the issues of 'unemployment, class tension, and racist violence so prevalent in Thatcher's England' (p. 8). However, it did this metaphorically through story action and the dialogue of characters that personified Thatcherism and its opposition. Bevan and Radclyffe were not involved in this creative and politicized development process. Paradoxically they may have been acting as new Thatcherite entrepreneurs producing anti-Thatcher cultural and political messages. Rather than functioning as creative producers developing a project for expressive needs, they may have functioned initially as production managers providing business and production management services in order to make money for their company. In this capacity, Channel 4 hired them to do the production management for *My Beautiful Laundrette*³. This resulted in a producer credit for the company. It is possible that as a new start up venture in the music video business they may have needed additional work to stay in business. They were also known to Channel 4 as having a capacity in the expertise of Sarah Radclyffe for bringing a project like this in on budget.

³Author's interview with Don Boyd, 8 May 2009

Another project had fallen through and *My Beautiful Laundrette* was a replacement project. Because Channel 4 presented a business opportunity in television, these young ambitious entrepreneurs may have recognized it and acted on it. They managed the manufacturing process of what was originally commissioned as a teleplay and later, after its completion, redefined as a feature film.

Using 16mm as the production format and a budget cited by Geraghty (2005, p. 8) as £600,000 pounds, WTF began production of the script in April of 1985. Described as a television film, it was shot in Stockwell and Kingston and was scheduled for broadcast on Channel 4 in November of that year (p. 8). Bevan recounted (Kaleta 1998, p. 42) that ‘The great thing about *Laundrette* was that no one knew exactly the proper way to do it. It was completely under crewed, it was completely underfunded...’. Although the story used humour and romance to address a range of sensitive issues of sexuality, racism and the economic and political imperatives of Thatcherism, when completed as a film, it generated an unexpected response, reaction and dialogue. Not only was there an impact from the release of the film but it served as a platform to celebrity for the actor Daniel Day-Lewis; it eventually launched the directing career of Stephen Frears to Hollywood; and, it established WTF as independent producers of British feature film. The production project of *My Beautiful Laundrette* was the catalyst and trigger that connected WTF as a business and creative production structure to what was a spontaneous and responsive audience. This audience was first an internal British market but subsequently, it also then became decision makers of the Hollywood film industry and an international, external market. By using an implied genre structure combined with humour and romance to communicate his story, Kureishi may have made the film more accessible than expected. It became marketable as both a television and a cinematic story to reach a wider audience within and outside of Britain.

To explain this accessibility, genre may have performed a function of traveling textual meanings, providing a discursive space for negotiation around the issues raised in the narrative.

Understood in the theoretical context of Tomlinson's globalization, the film's global/local sense was shaped by how different audiences in global locations re-interpreted and negotiated *My Beautiful Laundrette*'s narrative as a response for their own needs. The intentional and implied use of genre elements may have produced the unexpected and unplanned outcome that *My Beautiful Laundrette* could travel and be adapted for global audiences in their local context. As a result, in the case of WTF and *My Beautiful Laundrette*, the cultural experience of film storytelling was also negotiated with the economic goals of the global Hollywood conglomerate. When distribution of the film was secured into the North American market, the flexibility of Hollywood to respond to changing market demand resulted in a connective relationship with the WTF independent producers and the global film market.

The function of genre may have been a site of connection between the film industry and the cultural, economic and political/ideological contexts of producers and audiences. WTF provided an innovative genre product having difference and an audience appeal. Not only were meanings and pleasures created for audiences, this occurred with limited economic risk for distribution to the global marketplace by Hollywood. Genre may have functioned in this unexpected complexity of connectivity as a more manageable dimension of appeal and cognition in the global context. The challenge of how a boy meets a girl for courtship may be globally understood as a universal dilemma. For *My Beautiful Laundrette* this universally understood challenge was how a boy meets a boy for courtship. For the company and its producers, the distribution, marketing and reception of *My Beautiful Laundrette* became an initial education to the global marketplace. The function of genre may have been the critical factor in a process of

globalization to successfully distribute and market *My Beautiful Laundrette* to the global film market. Therefore, the function of genre can be understood to manage this complexity of the connective aspects of globalization.

Unexpected Connectivity from the Distribution and Broadcast of *My Beautiful Laundrette* – a Teleplay is a Cinematic Film

In 1985, the AMC, a North American film exhibitor since the early 1900s, opened The Point cinema in Milton Keynes. This was Britain's first multiplex (Wickham 2003, p. 5). The reaction to this new type of film exhibition theatre resulted in audiences returning to the cinema.

However, Britain had a film market dilemma, based in part because it shared the English language with the United States. Wickham explains that:

Unlike other national cinemas British films are unwittingly forced into competition with Hollywood – a competition in which the muscle of Hollywood will win every time. In addition British audiences are a strange paradox. ... They want to watch British TV programmes... However equally clearly they prefer to go and see American films. (Wickham 2003, p.5).

At the same time that the multiplex was being introduced to Britain and the audience for exhibition was expanding, WTF and Channel 4 would redefine the distribution and marketing of film with *My Beautiful Laundrette*.

Originally written, funded and produced as a dramatic teleplay, *My Beautiful Laundrette* was planned for broadcast over Channel 4, not as a cinematic release. Yet because of its initial public screenings, its intended broadcast was super-ceded by the movie house. *My Beautiful Laundrette*

became a crossover movie; its identity as a media product blurred between cinema and television. In August of 1985 the film was shown publicly at the Edinburgh Film Festival. Although a theatrical release had already been considered, the response to the film at the festival led directly to its distribution to movie theatres. Consequently, Romaine Hart, of Screen Cinemas, a family owned British exhibitor for three generations, distributed the film through her company, Mainline (Geraghty 2005, p. 13). *My Beautiful Laundrette* first opened at two of London's art cinemas, Hart's Screen on the Hill, and Metro. It immediately began to generate commercial success by making money in the theatres (p. 13). Within five days of its opening, *My Beautiful Laundrette* was #4 in the London film market. Described as a '...funny, honest, and entertaining', the film was also understood as an 'original handling of commentary issues' and an 'ironic critique of Thatcherite economics' (p. 13). Its release was gradually expanded with fifteen prints running in movie theatres until June, 1986. Then, its exhibition continued until mid-October as a double billing with *A Letter to Brezhnev* (Chris Bernard, 1985), another Channel 4 funded film (p. 15). If, as conceived by Kureishi, *My Beautiful Laundrette* was based on a genre, through the writing process, it may have become hybridized with elements of the 'streets of the city' gangster genre, blended with romance and comedy genres. The film's genre story structure and elements may have been the critical difference in driving its cinematic release, matching product to market placement, reaching a different type of audience. Audiences continued to respond to the film by going to the theatres and paying money to see it. Its expanded and on-going marketing was supported by the free market ideology of Thatcherism in the national context and in the global marketplace.

The international film festival can be considered a space of globalization where communication brings different cultures together. Using a festival platform, *My Beautiful Laundrette* gained

international recognition. Within the conceptual framing of globalization, *My Beautiful Laundrette* may also have exhibited a contradictory nature as it moved from the national British context to the global. Thus in the global context it could acquire different labels and, at the same time, it was a British product, a European product, an American product, a foreign product or a global product. In September, 1985, *My Beautiful Laundrette*'s screening at The Toronto Film Festival led to its breaking into the North American market, Hollywood's biggest market (p. 15). Buyers from Orion Classics saw it at the festival and signed it for US distribution as an art house film. As such it could be called a Hollywood marketing product because it was not developed as a Hollywood production and was acquired by Hollywood as a 'pick up' to meet a niche market need. It then opened in March on New York City's Upper West Side and it received reviews by Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* and Pauline Kael of the *New Yorker*. The art house could also be considered a space of globalization, providing a local context for a global film product. Described as a success in its release to major art houses in the US, it had grossed \$751,465 by the end of June, 1986 (p. 16). It was finally broadcast on Channel 4 to an audience of four million on February 16, 1987, more than a year after it was first scheduled to be broadcast. Moving from the margins to the centre, it had crossed over from television to feature film and from a British national release to a Hollywood release (p. 16). As a bridge across a divide between cinema and television, *My Beautiful Laundrette* may have served as a test case in distribution and exhibition for the British television and film industry. Albeit for the direct needs of Channel 4, the completion of *My Beautiful Laundrette* came at a pivotal moment for the British film industry. It provided a sustainable British model even as funding sources were being eliminated and British film market access was shifting to Hollywood through the expansion of the multiplex in British exhibition. The experience of the success and market response for *My*

Beautiful Laundrette broke down barriers in Britain for crossover product that could be produced for television but marketed as cinema. Most noteworthy subsequent examples were the films directed by Stephen Frears such as *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987), *Prick up Your Ears* (1987), and *The Snapper* (1993) (Hill 1996b, p.225; Kaleta 1998, p. 50) as well as those by other directors such as *Death and the Maiden* (Roman Polanski, 1994), *Oleanna* (David Mamet, 1994), *Vanya on 42nd St.* (Louis Malle, 1994), and *The Madness of King George* (Nicholas Hytner, 1994) (Hill 1996c, p. 169).

Although fewer people had seen *My Beautiful Laundrette* via the festival circuit and in movie houses, it had generated an excitement and hype that then attracted a much larger television audience. Moreover, it had also gained international success and artistic recognition. As a result, Kureishi was nominated for best screenplay writer in Hollywood's Motion Picture Academy Awards. Not only had the film platformed itself into a much larger arena, it had launched WTF as a producer of a successful feature film and taken it into a global market arena. This global market was primarily North America (*Box Office Mojo* n.d.b). To enter this market, according to Foy (2004) two barriers would have had to be crossed by WTF. The first was securing the funding for the cost of producing a film; this had been supplied by Channel 4 from out of its drama budget. The second was securing the contributions and collaboration of talent and production services. These elements would need specialized production knowledge and experience in order to create what is identified as the 'high quality' characteristics of the film (Foy 2004). The city of London had these resources; the two partnerships had connected and coordinated these resources. Ever changing 'consensually recognized notions of quality' by audiences may be influenced by a mix of factors identified by Foy (2004) as elasticity attributes that include the use of genre, narrative qualities, acting, producing and directing talent and

reviews. WTF served the function of a vehicle of organization for assembling these diverse but necessary elements. These interconnected elements served to overcome the barriers to enter the global marketplace and be recognized by global audiences as film quality in their local context.

Conclusion

WTF began at a critical time and historical moment when there was also a need to express the diversity and multi-culture of post war Britain. As new, young, entrepreneurial filmmakers, the producers of WTF were confronted with a challenging and changing production environment. Although the film industry was destabilized, the alternative broadcast model of new Channel 4 offered stability and opportunity to new independent production companies like WTF. Because London was a global city, it provided a space of connectivity with individuals from other global localities. In this cosmopolitan space, which offered cultural and economic resources such as those of Channel 4, these individuals could interact and practice the production of film and television in new, more inclusive ways. As a result, by producing *My Beautiful Laundrette*, its story and cultural representations of the writer Kureishi, WTF had an unexpected success.

This early success can also be understood to have formed an unexpected connectivity to the globalizing process of Hollywood distribution. Once *My Beautiful Laundrette* had been marketed to North America by Hollywood, WTF had become established as a new, yet inexperienced global player. Furthermore, it had connected to a process of globalization through a story of meaningful representations generated for the local British market. In an ironic intertwining of the cultural, economic and the political, the nation state of Britain in the 1980s was not irrelevant to globalization. In the context of Thatcherism and Channel 4, it had played a substantial role in globalization. It had initiated a process in which home grown product, *My*

Beautiful Laundrette, was generated for free market exportation and distribution by Hollywood into the global film market.

From these changing national and local contexts, WTF had emerged as a business and creative/cultural entity, producing film for the British context and the global Hollywood context.

WTF also became recognized as producers of a film that set off a national debate in a response and reaction to themes of racism, sexuality and politics. However, the new position of WTF in the film industry was still precarious, in part because of the inexperience of its producers but also because of the instability of the British film industry of the 1980s.

Chapter 4: *My Beautiful Laundrette* – The Function of Genre in an Initial Connectivity to Globalization

Introduction

Though firmly established following the success of *My Beautiful Laundrette*, Working Title Films (WTF) and its two partners, Bevan and Radclyffe, still faced the risks and financial insecurities of producing films. As they continued to produce during the 1980s with the support of Channel 4, Bevan (Channel 4 2007) described the instability of their business situation during this time as a: ‘Hit or Miss approach to production but gaining contacts and experience’. London was their base of operations both locally and globally. As a company, critical cultural and economic relationships were expanding and becoming more complex. These relationships had been constructed on the unexpected success and response to *My Beautiful Laundrette*, their ‘hit’ in production with a national and global audience. *My Beautiful Laundrette* can also be understood to have generated an unexpected initial, but limited, connectivity in globalization. This occurred via the Hollywood film industry and its global processes of distribution and exhibition when the film was ‘picked up’ for distribution to its North American art house market. For the new company this experience gave them a growing understanding of the global film industry as well as planting the seeds of ambition for further success. In order to understand WTF’s early, but limited success, this chapter examines one factor in this process: the function of genre in WTF’s changing global position, its relationships with talent and with Hollywood. The aim of this chapter is to understand how WTF initially was valued and became connected to the global film industry through *My Beautiful Laundrette*.

In this examination, the relationship of WTF with the writer Hanif Kureishi is significant as a dimension of how genre functions in and through a process of globalization. The success of *My Beautiful Laundrette* suggests that Kureishi had generated a romantic comedy structure that could intuitively be understood and was meaningful to a range of audiences both national and international. The story included narrative obstacles of ethnic and class difference for its leading characters of Omar and Johnny to overcome in order to realize their love and coupledness. These obstacles generated anticipation and eroticized the setting between the two men. The narrative locates the queer romantic comedy between Omar and Johnny at its core, which is entwined with a broader narrative arc that concerns the transformation of the laundrette as Omar's new business venture (Mernit 2001, p. 12). These representations of a multicultural Britain in *My Beautiful Laundrette* - where ethnic difference collided with questions of class, gender, sexuality and generational difference - generated a debate about national identity in Britain. At the same time they reflected the complexity of what might be termed the global cultural economy in which local cultural changes taking place in Britain became meaningful and had economic value to other global localities. With *My Beautiful Laundrette*, WTF had accordingly connected to this global economy. This chapter further examines the function of genre as exemplified by *My Beautiful Laundrette* in establishing the relationship of WTF to the national and global film markets for audience appeal and for an initial audience connectivity of valued and meaningful representations.

The Critical and Commercial Reception of *My Beautiful Laundrette*: A Response to Change in Representation and Identity

Whereas movies are marketable products with stories that sell, Robertson (1995, pp. 29-30) maintains that global consumption is complex and difficult to analyze because it is not a simplistic action and reaction. Rather than a one-dimensional global capitalist economy, the global economy, including its global film market, is multi-dimensional in nature and is made up of dialectics of 'the local and global, universalism and particularism' (Tomlinson, 2008: 16). There are complex intertwined practices of the cultural, the economic and the political in making life meaningful; a coming together of the economic and the cultural with what can be described as a local and global 'hinge' of interaction between these intertwined dimensions (Robertson, 1995: 31). It could be understood that in the specific context of the experience of *My Beautiful Laundrette*, WTF had served as this 'hinge' by using production resources for cultural and economic purposes in a new British media environment. This local environment had been generated by the political policies of Thatcher. WTF had generated a meaningful and appealing film of a local story that 'hinged' on their role as producers for a swing to a global market context. Although this had occurred in the changing cultural, economic and political context of Britain, yet this same experience had become part of a global dialectic.

Although Kureishi refers to the gangster genre as an influential model for the narrative and aesthetic structuring of *My Beautiful Laundrette*, the film could also be understood as constructed through multiple genres including romance, comedy and even melodrama (Neale 2000, p. 2). Labeling poses problems as Neale asserts (2000 cited in King 2002, p. 144) because genres are not stable but mutable and intertextual in a dynamic recodification (Neale 1990, p. 58). This hybridity may also be understood as a complex process of stabilization and reformation and its 'multi genre brew' may eventually produce a new genre (King 2002, p.141).

For example, Krutnik (2006, p. 130) describes the hybrid romantic comedy as a genre: ‘driven by a process of negotiation between traditionalist conceptions of heterosexual monogamy and an intimate culture that is constantly in flux’ with ‘horizons of amorous possibility’. As examined in the previous chapter, WTF emerged during a period when the understanding of what it meant to be British was undergoing a radical and, at times, fraught transformation to become producers of *My Beautiful Laundrette*.

With *My Beautiful Laundrette* as unlikely as it may have seemed at the outset, WTF had produced a film that had a clear significance for the British nation, its multicultural population and the understanding of the identity of ‘Britishness’. This significance went beyond what was originally envisioned by the filmmakers themselves. Described by Stuart Hall (1992a, p. 450) as ‘one of the most riveting and important films produced by a black writer in recent years’, interest in *My Beautiful Laundrette* went beyond commercial success with British and international audiences. It took on a greater significance in the cultural and political climate of Britain in the 1980s and was ‘positioned in a number of key debates’ in relation to ethnicity, sexuality, class and national identity (Geraghty, 2005, p. 5). It appears that at this point in time there was a dramatic shift in awareness and public dialogue about representation and ethnicity (Hall, 1992b, p. 163). As Hall (p. 183) points out, ‘The most profound cultural revolution in this part of the twentieth century has come about as a consequence of the margins coming into representation – in art...in politics, in social life generally’. Radclyffe and Bevan, as producers and business partners of WTF, were not from the margins that Hall speaks of but rather from privileged, middle-class backgrounds. The film’s director, the Oxbridge educated Frears, could be described as coming from a similar background. However, just because they were privileged does not necessarily mean that they could not identify with the problems of being marginalised.

Rather, they did not have the direct experience of marginalisation for creating a story that offered significant meanings for a multicultural and underrepresented audience. Kureishi, on the other hand, was positioned between the marginalised and the privileged. He was both in a relatively affluent situation due to his family background as well as being from the ethnic margins of British society in that he was British-Asian. As such he was able to be the voice and storyteller for the marginalised. Yet, at the same time he had been able to gain entry to the art worlds of the privileged British to create a breakthrough work of art such as *My Beautiful Laundrette*. As newcomers with very little to lose in terms of industry position or reputation, WTF and its producers formed another bridge in relation to the production of *My Beautiful Laundrette*, between the creative talent and the film's audience. As a credible and necessary organizational component, WTF met the needs of Channel 4 to manufacture a technology-based product for broadcast. It did this using a blueprint, Kureishi's script portraying the margins.

My Beautiful Laundrette served, moreover, as a vehicle for expressing the political viewpoints of Kureishi and Frears. These viewpoints were a reaction against Thatcher's policies and her vision of the nation but they were also a representation of the marginalised moving into centre stage in the manner described by Hall. This movement from the margins to the centre as described by Hall could well explain why *My Beautiful Laundrette*, at the time of its release, generated not only one of Channel 4's biggest financial successes (Geraghty 2005, p. 5) but acted as a major breakthrough for opening a critical debate about representation and cultural diversity. At the moment in time that it was produced and distributed, it articulated a message and representation that was possibly waiting to be expressed and needed to be expressed by a diverse and marginalised population. They had previously not been able to generate their own stories and

representations for production and distribution to a national audience. Once this happened it created a groundswell in response amongst audiences and critics alike.

In these debates, the concept of a 'Regime of Representation' (Hall 2002, pp. vii-ix) could be applied to popular British film and television as produced in the early 1980s. As Barron suggests:

Brideshead Revisited (1981), *Chariots of Fire* (1981), and *A Passage to India* (1984) depicted a particular set of characteristics implicitly defined as British. As Thomas Elsaesser points out, these representations are often focused on the upper classes and set in country homes and public schools...By privileging a particular class, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or even temperament, films create an image of who is British, an image that excludes other subject positions. *My Beautiful Laundrette*, however, constructs a decidedly different picture from mainstream British cinema in the 1980s. (Barron 2007)

The lack of black/queer voices and limited access to expression in the media alluded to by Barron in the above quote was a condition in flux during the 1980s. Prior to this period, there was little opportunity for expression by black filmmakers in the British film industry. Malik (2001, p. 159) describes the period of the 1960s and 1970s, as having only a few 'practising' Black filmmakers. Although they had little public funding and support, they did accomplish the production of certain films that exemplified the 'drama-documentary, realist, social-issue genre' such as Horace Ové's *Pressure* (1976). However, their production work could be understood as a recoding and 'answer back' to an 'official race relations narrative' (p. 159). Their voice and identity were constructed as a response to a social visibility and stereotype, i.e. 'a problem', 'a victim', defined by a predominant white British culture. Yet, as *My Beautiful Laundrette*

showed, these conditions were gradually changing in the 1980s and were seen also in the work of Isaac Julien, John Akomfrah and the Black Audio Film Collective. The presence of these 'Black', diasporic and queer voices therefore became more expressive and they informed the debate and reaction to *My Beautiful Laundrette*. According to Kobena Mercer, in this debate the problematic use of the term 'black' shifted from racial to political:

Throughout the seventies and eighties, the rearticulation of this term as an inclusive political identity based on alliances among Asian, African and Caribbean peoples, brought together in shared struggles against racism in Britain, has helped to challenge and displace common sense assumptions about "blackness" as a fixed or essential identity.

(Mercer 1994, p. 81)

In a transformation of the local cultural practice, this identity changed through the production of films and their representations. London and other British localities had changed because of immigration from the former British colonies and now the representations of these localities were changing to reflect the reality of a new multicultural, pluri-ethnic society. A construction of identity through representations by these 'black' filmmakers can thus be understood as - amongst other things - an interpenetration of the global and the local. Their experiences of immigration, de-territorialization and re-territorialization were played back through new and meaningful expression in film as a redefinition of identity. This is exemplified by Gurinder Chadha's *I'm British But...*, (1990). Her film explores the British-Asian identity through the fusion of music between traditional Punjabi folk music and electronic western music known as Bhangra and Bangla. The music is produced in areas with a large Indian population such as London's Southall. This new expression could be understood as *glocalization*, or what Robertson (1995, pp. 26, 28) describes as the compression of the global and the local together

rather than opposed to each other. Robertson (p. 27) asserts that homogenizing and heterogenizing tendencies in globalization are mutually entwined or implicative rather than opposing or negating each other. As such they are grounded in particularistic frames of reference in the local setting. This type of frame of reference is exemplified by *My Beautiful Laundrette* taking place in the locality of London. Its specific relationships of a traditional Pakistani family marriage are contrasted with the Pakistani-British gay love relationship of Omar and Johnny. Thus, the specificity of the story of *My Beautiful Laundrette* and the work of black filmmakers i.e. *Territories* (Isaac Julien, 1984), *Burning an Illusion* (Menelik Shabazz, 1981), while being local, could be analyzed as what Robertson (p. 27) describes as particularistic frames of reference where the local (i.e. family relationships, sexual identity, jobs, and daily life) at the same time is a manifestation of the global. In this sense, cultural practices from countries of origin are represented and transformed in the new local setting. The representation of displacement and homelessness shown in *My Beautiful Laundrette* could be said to evoke a connection for audiences globally from its particular locality. Not only audiences in different global localities who had emigrated from a home country of origin could relate to this experience; but, also those who were rooted and confronted by new arrivals could understand and feel the story conflict, but possibly in a different way. In Tomlinson's analysis, social and cultural differences may become accentuated in relation to the world as a whole and from this perspective *My Beautiful Laundrette* was a representation and accentuation of the 'world' through the local of London. Consequently, local practices and lifestyle of London were examined and evaluated as the film reached into the global localities via the production, distribution and exhibition processes of the film industry. Tomlinson (2008, p. 10) asserts that as connectivity reaches into localities, it not only transforms the local lived experience but it also

confronts people with a world in which their fates undeniably are bound together in a single global frame. *My Beautiful Laundrette* effectively offered a means of confrontation or connection for different audiences in the global context. The film's narrative offered representations of local conditions of everyday life in its origin of London to the global market, its theatres, and, thus, the daily experience of its audiences. In this glocalization process, *My Beautiful Laundrette* may have mastered a global mode of narrative about the de-territorialized through the practice of generic elements in its storytelling. It could be called an immigrant-in-the-new-land story as a global outlook through the particularistic frame of London and multicultural representations. Through its narrative structuring, representational space may have expanded in which all kinds of narratives of different audiences also could be inserted in the relationship of the local audience and the global setting (understood in the conceptualization of Tomlinson as the life experience from afar). This local representation of London was at the same time a setting for production by WTF and it was a setting for production by new black filmmakers. The effect from audience response in different locations was to give the producers a broader understanding of the global markets and the relationship of Hollywood to a changing global marketplace.

According to Robertson (1995, p. 32), the increasing ability not only to move physically but representationally as a significant mode in globalization underestimates the role of those in the global locality, i.e. the local audience. He maintains the local population can act in the social construction of identity and tradition in a global mass culture. Therefore, this complexity may lead to unexpected results such as the reception and reaction to *My Beautiful Laundrette* when cultural product is marketed globally. It reached different local audiences such as the gay, diasporic, and affluent multicultural North American cosmopolitans. Central to this dialogue of

representation of the marginalised was not only how Kureishi represented British-Asians in *My Beautiful Laundrette*, but their reaction to the film. Their constructions of identity locally from the film representations could also be understood as an interpenetration of the global and the local. This thread in the debates was recounted by Jamal (1988 cited in Barron 2007) as revolving around positive and negative representations. He explains that ‘Some British-Asian activists and filmmakers criticized the film for producing what they saw as negative images of Asians in an already racist culture. In particular they objected to Asian characters who are gay, adulterous, alcoholic, superstitious, and involved in drug dealing’ (Barron 2007). Kureishi not only had argued in response that a gay Pakistani was a positive image but he argued that generating positive images, ‘requires useful lies and cheering fictions: the writer as public relations officer, as hired liar’ (n.d. cited in Barron 2007). On the other hand the film was criticized by Sarita Malik (1996 cited in Barron 2007) for its unrealistic positive portrayal of the British-Asian community, not showing the true economic realities of its members. This contradictory criticism is explained by Barron as arising from the film’s ‘status as one of the few British-Asian films of the time...it was asked to be all things to all people’ (2007).

An Emergence of the Function of Genre with *My Beautiful Laundrette* in Establishing Global Connectivity

With its release and reception by audiences, *My Beautiful Laundrette* as genre film may have functioned for accessibility in globalization in a more targeted way. In retrospect, it could also be described as a hybrid genre of romance with comedy for a gay audience. One response in the debate, from diasporic, gay South Asians, stood out as ‘overwhelmingly positive’ (Barron, 2007) and is evidence of the function of genre with *My Beautiful Laundrette*. As a precursor of the

relationship of romantic comedy for WTF and external markets, this is another example of global connectivity in audience appeal of *My Beautiful Laundrette*. As noted by Barron:

Trikone, a magazine for the South Asian queer diaspora, devoted almost an entire issue to the film in 2001 stating “the kiss between Johnny and Omar has, to many a queer South Asian, become the moment they came out to themselves...Part of this popularity results from the fact that rather than depicting its characters as conflicted over their sexual identities—as, for instance, the British film *Victim* (1961) did—the film shows Johnny and Omar simply as two men in love. (Barron 2007)

Williamson expands on this perspective of *My Beautiful Laundrette* framing the audience reception and response more closely with genre:

...it's been a highly *enjoyed* film. In some ways it's an absolute classic Romance. You're just dying for those people to kiss but they're both men. And one is black and the other is white. And you're sitting there in the role of the classic Hollywood spectator thinking ‘are they going to get off with each other? Is he going to say it? Will he be late?’ The cinematic structures that it employs are completely mainstream, it is not an avant-garde film in its visual form at all...And yet it had this enthusiastic reception just about everywhere except in what you might call the *Screen* world... (Williamson 1988, p. 111)

This structuring of story elements as a playful reworking through genre may have formed an internal platform for emotional connection with diverse audiences. This may also have been the key for the expanded reach of the film to a wider British and international audience. Not only was the impact of the film and its subsequent debate about ethnic representation, it was also about the representation of love and romance. The audience in their local context identified

genre characteristics of the central love relationship as evidenced in the anticipation for the kiss. Kureishi may have intuitively generated a romantic comedy structure that included a specific narrative obstacle, that of ethnicity and class. This obstacle kept the men, Omar and Johnny, apart and generated anticipation as an eroticized narrative context for the coupling of the two men. Its narrative follows a romantic comedy structure of a core love story entwined with an outer story (Mernit 2001, p. 12), the establishment of the laundrette. In the story, the love of Omar and Johnny is consummated on the day of the laundrette's opening and, in the final confrontation, Johnny in defending the laundrette is also defending his love of Omar. If as Krutnik (2006, p. 130) asserts that romantic comedy is a negotiation of traditional heterosexuality and new possibilities, *My Beautiful Laundrette* offered these specifics of the London setting in an example of particularism. Yet, at the same time, it was global in its universalism of possibility. Using Tomlinson and Robertson's conceptualizations of the compression of the world as a single place (1992 cited in Tomlinson 2008, pp. 11-12), the local experience of love and intimacy through genre storytelling is thus raised to the horizon of a single world. The central theme of romantic comedy is coupling (Mernit 2001, p. 12) and it is part of a broader range of family relationships that are global and universally understood. This forms a functional commonality of story logic that can be understood in the global film market and that can appeal to its different local audiences. It could also be said that the film allayed the fear of marginalization. Even though Britain's diasporic were still marginalized after the production of *My Beautiful Laundrette*, they now had an expanded space for talking about their disadvantaged position in British society.

My Beautiful Laundrette could be interpreted as a genre formation shaped by what Krutnik (2006, p. 138) refers to as the contradictions of love. This is a helpful perspective in

understanding how genre functioned in multiple ways. It produced the response and global connectivity for not only a marginalized or diasporic audience and a gay audience but connected to a broader cross-over audience. Each audience found its own relationship of identity in the meaningful representations. Thus, a cultural gender dialogue was opened up and made more accessible. Genre was a conceptual and emotional form for shaping the contradictions of love as well as love's changing possibilities in a culture. It could be argued that globalization had altered the context of meaning construction for *My Beautiful Laundrette* when viewed in different local contexts with different audiences. For example, in the narrative context of the romantic comedy, the laundrette became far more significant than simply the local place for washing clothes. It symbolised the aspirations for success of the new immigrant and the evolving relationship of a 'different' type of love (i.e. homo-, not heterosexual) between Omar and Johnny. Thus, the film offered an identity of the London locality for transformation as meaningful in the global locality and it offered accessibility with different appeals for different audience needs.

This use of genre for different representations of love may also be interpreted as one of theme and variations. Love in the film is not only about homosexual love but about the freedom of a type of love. This type serves as a contrast to the alternative possibilities offered in the story, that of the disciplined love of an arranged marriage to a cousin or the constrained love of the uncle's adulterous relationship. The genre structure frames the narrative for showing how life may be lived with different versions of happiness. The film's romance occurs in a complex assemblage of family relationships. By presenting this assemblage the story broadens its appeal to females as well as males. These family relationships are connected to legitimate and illegitimate business that Neale (2000: 34) might identify as genre elements and understood as influenced by *The*

Godfather (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972). They function as markers for the influence of crime film conventions. However, the family relationships, a dimension of the narrative, serve to deceptively humanise rather than stereotype the gangster characters who are drug dealers as well as family. Another marker is the story context of the (Pakistani) immigrant family that must find their way as the new arrivals in a society. This parallels the portrayal of the Irish Catholic, the Italian and the Cuban immigrant in the Hollywood gangster film.

The use and function of genre may be understood from a film industry approach as well as a theoretical approach. There may be clearly identified patterns of genre that are created by a film industry in the development, production and marketing of film product. These patterns are used to generate audience expectation and produce profit from exhibition. Although blurring the lines between theory and an industrial approach, Rick Altman identifies a processing of genre by Hollywood as 'genrification' in which Hollywood responds in production and marketing to changing audience interests (1999 cited in Anderson and Lupo 2006, p. 91). He further maintains that Hollywood had historically practiced genre mixing to maximize audience appeal (1999 cited in Sandler 2006, p. 202). Yet, an industry process of 'genrification' was not the initial production context for *My Beautiful Laundrette* nor was genre production Channel 4's aim in commissioning the project for television. As *My Beautiful Laundrette* was originally conceived for broadcast television, there existed an institutional mission to reach a different or marginalised audience with new, experimental programming. Furthermore, neither Channel 4, or the film's director, or the newly established producers of WTF set out to directly create a genre product for a profit-based film or television market. Conditions of industry genre formation as identified by Austin (2002, pp. 114-115) were not present in the production process of *My Beautiful Laundrette*. There was no attempt to target an audience as there was no need to

manage demand, or minimize economic risk to secure a market with the guarantee for expectation of pleasure. Hence, casting decisions did not have to appeal to the demands of age, gender and audience tastes in the initial production context of *My Beautiful Laundrette*. Kureishi's contribution creatively appears to be the indirect basis for the genre elements of *My Beautiful Laundrette* and he acknowledges the influence of Hollywood (Kaleta 1998, p. 10; Moore-Gilbert 2002, p.8). If genres can be understood to be inter-texts and mutable with narrative film as a cross-media generic formation (Neale 1990 cited in Hayward 2006, p. 18), then Kureishi's abilities as a playwright may have transposed as a creative crossover to film. The artistic expression of writing a story in narrative structure externalizes meaning as a screenplay. This process became a critical connectivity with the film production processes for generating a mediated text as genre film. These film production processes include pre-production development and planning, production management, production as principal photography (the point in time when the camera is first turned on until it is last turned off) with its performance, direction, cinematography, lighting and sound recording, and post-production editing.

The resultant formation of connectivity of the genre film with an audience could also be described using an analysis explained by Hall (1973, p. 170) as a communication process of encoding and decoding. He argues that decoding cannot be prescribed nor is it equivalent to encoding. Decoding by receivers of communication may operate as a negotiated code with a global dominance. It may also operate as an oppositional code with an alternative frame of reference such as the local context. Therefore genre may act through an encoding and decoding process in which audiences decode it in different ways. Genre's multifunctional capacity with *My Beautiful Laundrette* may explain its success in being received by critics, the British film audience, and audiences in markets in different parts of the world. Genre was a broad stroke of a

painting with the details being worked out in the global locality. The function of genre was successful at a moment in time for the concerns of its audiences. Thus, *My Beautiful Laundrette* told a meaningful story because the story was meaningful for the conditions of the local setting. These meanings derive from the ability of different people to relate from their direct local experience to an experience from a distant locality. This occurs not only as globalizing influences that bring the world to people in the local context but it occurs because genre as a code communicates through a commonality of storytelling possessed by humankind and shared globally. This phenomenon could be described as a broader storytelling framework embedded in unicity. Thus, genre is a connectivity of the particular to the universal experience. It exhibits connectivity with the complexity of its *construction* of meaning and the complexity of its meaningful *consumption* in another global locality.

Hollywood and *My Beautiful Laundrette*

Not only was Kureishi influenced by Hollywood genre film (Kaleta 1998, p. 10), he was possibly speaking a generic vocabulary of political drama, romance and comedy in the scripting process. Thus, the contexts in which genre functioned for *My Beautiful Laundrette* were the initial creative writing stage, the audience reception and reaction to the film, and in its reception by Hollywood. A clearer industrial function of genre as a global connectivity appears to have emerged after the film was produced. This function occurred through the audience response with the film's initial exhibition in Britain and by the response of Hollywood marketing scouts at the Toronto International Film Festival. Hollywood then purchased distribution rights for *My Beautiful Laundrette* as an art house film release and marketed it globally, primarily as a home video product. It had been identified as having the necessary characteristics of story combined with economic factors of low cost – low risk that might produce a profit in global markets. The

Hollywood appraisal of the film as a marketable narrative product to the global marketplace served its own economic purpose. This established the initial global connectivity for a film product by WTF and can be understood as the function of genre in globalization. *My Beautiful Laundrette* was therefore allowed to enter the global distribution and exhibition processes of Hollywood because it met the needs of Hollywood's industrial context.

In the mid-1980s the Hollywood industry was going through a significant and complex economic, industrial and institutional revision. This shift towards a new financial dynamic was a response to a changing marketplace and a changing audience. It also formed a changing context for the distribution and marketing of independently produced film such as *My Beautiful Laundrette*. When Hanif Kureishi was nominated for an Oscar for *My Beautiful Laundrette*, the nomination was in a Hollywood film category of best screenplay, rather than a foreign film category, indicating the Hollywood positioning of the film. According to Harnetz (1987, p. 11) who covered the 1986 Academy Awards as press, the major studios were now focused on producing big budget features and had turned away from producing lower budgeted films. At the same time, they could not produce product fast enough to meet the changing market needs. Market demand had suddenly increased as a result of Hollywood's expansion in theatre exhibition combined with the rapidly expanding ancillary markets of cable and home video. Consequently, films that were produced and financed outside the major studio system were in demand. These conditions created a new space in Hollywood for independent productions and their producers. At that time, a Hollywood studio film on average would have had to generate returns of \$16 million for production costs and \$7 million for marketing in order to show a profit (Harnetz 1987, p. 11). Therefore, *My Beautiful Laundrette* was viewed as appealing, offering

the potential of an easy \$1 million profit for its North American distributor, Orion Classics, the art cinema distribution arm of Orion Pictures.

The pressing need for more film 'product' to satisfy ever-expanding audiovisual markets was not the only change taking place in Hollywood. It was further complicated by the changing tastes of an aging, American, baby boom generation. This more educated audience was targeted by the Hollywood industry with revised production strategies supported by increased and systematic market research (Manchel 2000, p. 754). They were also a growing audience for what the industry characterized as the art cinema type of 'quality' film and described as 'small, serious, risky films, the kind that often win prizes' (Harmetz 1987, p. 11). *My Beautiful Laundrette* met the need for product that could be marketed as a 'quality film' for the art cinema category.

Although the industry considered the marketing of 'quality' film to be complicated, released in a few cities at a time with individualized marketing campaigns, their assessment was that money could be made. This assessment was based on what the audience perceived as a 'quality film'. The word 'quality' was used to 'distinguish and distance' the films from the 'limited-appeal, usually foreign-language 'art' films of a decade ago' (Harmetz 1987, p. 11) and this 'quality' designation was used to market the film to audience expectation. *My Beautiful Laundrette* offered Hollywood distributors a product with an innate accessible narrative structure of genre elements with a variation in content of romance, love and sex. This was in contrast to the mainstream Hollywood production of the blockbuster. In its Hollywood distribution and marketing, Finch (1989, p. 76) argues that Hollywood used 'difference' rather than directly using gay sex to sell *My Beautiful Laundrette*. He maintains that at the same time the film was marketed as a variation or diversity from explicit and boring straight sex. By being different it was an alternative product choice to the more standardized big budget movie product being

produced by Hollywood. Because the only cost for *My Beautiful Laundrette*'s marketing and distribution was prints and advertising, Hollywood considered it a low risk product to promote to small target or niche market audiences in selective American cities. For its changing strategic needs, Hollywood as a distributor may have been redefining the art cinema and the genre 'quality film' to differentiate product in the changing marketplace. Bordwell (1979 cited in Grant 2007, p. 1) argues that the art film is an auteur genre through textual characteristics and its institutional use by Hollywood. *My Beautiful Laundrette* may have served as a genre product not through the concept of auteur discourse but rather as identified and used by the Hollywood industry as art cinema. This took place to shape audience expectation to generate profit. As such this typology of art cinema used by the Hollywood industry functioned as a genre designation for *My Beautiful Laundrette* in the global market place, especially with the new ancillary home video market. With its character driven story and content, the film was different from the emerging Hollywood blockbuster action genre and it came from a country outside the United States. In the North American context the art cinema house may have functioned as a globalized space in the local setting. Rather than a global traveller moving between globally similar international air terminals, the art cinema house became a space in which global film products traveled. They generated symbolic meanings that could be constructed and consumed locally. According to Jameson (1998, p. 55), the communication process (as exemplified by distribution and exhibition in globalization processes of the film industry) may mask and transmit cultural or economic meanings in a new contextual setting of the local. These are understood in different ways from their point of origin. Therefore, the political criticism against Thatcherism that was voiced in the story of *My Beautiful Laundrette* may have been irrelevant to a local American audience and can be understood as being 'masked' or 'uncoded' within the communication process. Alternatively

the romance and gangster story elements may have been more easily transmitted. Thus, *My Beautiful Laundrette* was used by the local babyboomer audience in the USA for construction of meaning in their local context for their own needs. After this theatre exhibition, where *My Beautiful Laundrette* generated box office earnings of \$2,451,545 in North America (*Box Office Mojo* n.d.b), and following two broadcasts with audiences of 4,336,000 and 3,550,000 on Channel 4 in the UK (Geraghty 2005, p. 16), it moved rapidly into globally selective home video markets.

Even though *My Beautiful Laundrette* was distributed by Hollywood, WTF, as a new and unexpected player in the feature film market, may not have been in a position to have owned any distribution rights to *My Beautiful Laundrette* or received any earnings from its distribution. The film's production was originally contracted to them by Channel 4 as television programming and there is no evidence to support their any rights ownership. Thus, the WTF relationship to the Hollywood distribution and marketing process may only have been one of association and recognition as producers of the film, rather than directly being involved with the deal making as owners of distribution rights. However, although there is no specific documentation, the producers of WTF may have been gaining a greater awareness at this time of the business practices of Hollywood for the institutional use of genre with its global market. The success and enduring popularity of *My Beautiful Laundrette* indicate its significance. It is a film that connects in many different ways as a meaningful story for audiences and as a critical text for study and analysis by scholars. Not only is it referential to a specific time and place, it can also be understood as representative of the multi-dimensions of the human condition.

Working Title Films after *My Beautiful Laundrette*

Firmly launched with the production and response to *My Beautiful Laundrette*, WTF and its two founding partners, Bevan and Radclyffe, continued to produce during the second half of the 1980s. However, in an interview, Bevan described the instability of their business situation as independents during this time:

I began my education as a producer by following *Laundrette* around the world. In those days for me, and still now if you are an independent producer, you get a script or project and get a bit of money from the UK and the rest from pre-selling to distributors around the world. This was not a totally satisfactory state of affairs because you have no single strategy for releasing the film and it's very hard to make your money back. By 1990 Sarah and I had been habitually mortgaging our houses against our movies and our films weren't good enough so we thought we were going to go to the wall. (Bevan n.d. cited in Channel 4 n.d.b)

After *My Beautiful Laundrette*, they produced *Caravaggio* (Derek Jarman, 1986) and *Wish You Were Here* (David Leland, 1987), a coming of age story set in the 1940s and 1950s. There does not appear to have been a clear business strategy or vision for the company at this time. Their work may have been on a project-by-project basis using a trial and error approach rather than organized and systematic. Their critical relationship for producing feature film into a local and global marketplace was Channel 4. It provided a connective framework for financing and a distribution outlet to the broadcast market. At the same time it was a safety net for the risk of producing films.

In 1987, the production partnership of Radclyffe and Bevan again joined or *interconnected* with the creative partnership of Frears and Kureishi. Together they produced *Sammy and Rosie Get*

Laid (Stephen Frears, 1987) aka *Sammy and Rosie* in the United States. Returning to similar themes and issues of *My Beautiful Laundrette*, its story is about the relations of a British and Pakistani couple living in a poor section of London. The reviewer Roger Ebert (1987, p. 30) in his review for the *Chicago Sun Times* compared it to ‘not having the universal comic undertones’ of *My Beautiful Laundrette* and describes the film as follows:

Sammy and Rose Get Laid tells the story of all these people in a film that is far from hopeful about the future of London...Sammy and Rosie do get laid - by each other, by various friends and (the movie implies) by the system itself...The movie begins with the voice of Margaret Thatcher, praising prosperity while we see people living rough in an urban wasteland. (Ebert 1987, p. 30)

It was considered a less appealing reworking of story and viewpoints that were expressed via *My Beautiful Laundrette*. Called ‘uneven’ by Hinson (1987, p. 1), the film reviewer of *The Washington Post*, its story suffered from a rambling structure. Although considered a thought provoking film, it did not connect with audiences in the same way as *My Beautiful Laundrette* had previously connected. Its style may have been too polemic, its characters unlikeable. Quite possibly perceived by audiences as a quality, art house film, it still was neither romance nor comedy.

Nonetheless not only had the success of *My Beautiful Laundrette* pulled WTF into the global markets, their production work became more global as they expanded in new directions and new relationships. In 1988, Bevan and Radclyffe produced *A World Apart* (Chris Menges, 1988). This is the story of a girl and her relationship with her anti-apartheid activist mother in South Africa. It was an international co-production with Zimbabwe and was WTF’s first film that

looked beyond Britain. Written by Shawn Slovo and directed by Chris Menges, it was based on the lives of Slovo's parents (*MSN Entertainment* n.d.). It eventually won the Cannes Film Festival Best Actress Award for Barbara Hershey. Yet, the complexity of this type of work was not without its difficulties. When Tim Bevan was asked what was his worst day in the business he responded:

I was in South Africa shooting *A World Apart* and because of a tortuous financial guarantee procedure that existed then which took in several countries and even more banks that would be too boring to explain here, I in short, didn't have the cash-flow to finish the picture. So for a day I thought I was going to go to lose my house and go to prison. Then things somehow got straightened out. (Bevan n.d. cited in Channel 4 n.d.b)

These challenges of international production work may have added to the stresses of being producers in a risky business.

A Transition from an Initial Global Connectivity

In 1991 WTF had what has been described as a critical 'flop' (Armstrong 2009) with the film, *Drop Dead Fred* (Ate de Jong, 1991). Yet, it indicates a transition taking place for WTF. In contrast to *My Beautiful Laundrette*, this fantasy romance comedy was more mainstream in story and more complex in its use of special effects. In comparison to the creative association of WTF with Frears and Kureishi, this production did not use the film story as mouthpiece of political viewpoint and representation of the marginalized. It was produced jointly with PolyGram Filmed Entertainment (PFE) and included American stars and locations. By this time, the very problematic nature of film production with its risks may have affected the work relationship and business partnership between Bevan and Radclyffe. The producers had not been able to repeat

the success of their first feature film, *My Beautiful Laundrette*, and their subsequent productions did not have the same public response, critical acclaim or (crucially in terms for the global reach of their films) value for Hollywood as their initial film. No other WTF films placed in the Academy Awards during the 1980s. Their initial connection to a global market could be understood as limited and unsustainable in globalization. However, it could be observed that perhaps from failure comes a different type of success. Financial instability combined with different production interests of the partners may have been critical factors in determining the next stage of WTF. In order to continue and eventually succeed globally in the 1990s, WTF would become a different organization in terms of its business structure of partner/owners and how it conducted its operations in relationship to film development, production and distribution.

Conclusion

As players in the British film industry, the value of the new and relatively inexperienced WTF producers was based on the response to a story. This story had an ability to connect its representations in a relevant and emotional way to different feature film audiences. *My Beautiful Laundrette* became a cultural space in which conflicts and contradictions were voiced and played out. Its representations could travel to other localities and be understood. However, when WTF was established it did not set out with the intent to create global product for global markets. Because changing conditions in the British context connected with changing conditions in the Hollywood global context, WTF unexpectedly became part of a global media system and a process of globalization. As this chapter has argued, this process of connectivity as globalization took place rapidly and the multifunctional capacity of genre formed the critical relationship of global connectivity. It did this as an expanding connectivity in the shift from the national context to the global context for WTF and their film product. For this relationship to happen in a

process of globalization as described by Tomlinson (2008, p. 13), its economic and cultural product needed to be adaptable as meaningful for the needs of audiences in different local contexts. Hall (1991a, p. 173) would argue that globalization is not new but rather that it occurs in new forms and there are new dialectics of global culture. Although globalization is not new to cinema, these new forms and dialectics could shape or reshape its global connectivity. At this early stage in the history of WTF, their first film *My Beautiful Laundrette* connected to global culture in a new dialectic.

For what may be many complex contextual reasons, WTF's role in connecting to a globalization process and to global markets was neither continuous nor consistent. Having established an unexpected, new position in the context of a global media system, WTF was still primarily functioning in the British national context as a producer of British rather than Hollywood products. As such, the WTF of the 1980s was finding its way through the risks and instability of a fragile British film industry. This process could be described as developmental, educational and experimental for new, young producers and their company. The focus of their work at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s may have emphasized the cultural rather than market economics. Their production approach could be described as *pulled in different directions*. It was independent/individualistic, and artistic. This may have been based on the producers' preferences, the needs of their funding organization and the need for a targeted national audience. This was in contrast to a Hollywood industrial process of globalization offering more standardized, big budget product that was market responsive to a popular mass audience globally.

By the early 1990s, WTF was at a point of transition but had yet to establish itself as a major producer of successful British romantic comedies. Although WTF was exceptional in its survival into the 1990s (Wickham 2003, p. 5), it would have to go through significant internal and external change to re-position itself in a new way and produce a different kind of genre product.

Its initial connectivity to global markets would eventually metamorphose into a very different connectivity within the global conglomerate structures of Hollywood. The next chapter examines the transformation of WTF from a producer of films with limited commercial success for a national market to a producer of commercially successful films and its transition to ongoing global connectivity to Hollywood, the global film market and its audiences.

Chapter 5: Working Title Films – The Transition to Global and the Context for Re-connectivity

Introduction

After establishing itself in the global arena of Hollywood with the unexpected success and acclaim of *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Stephen Frears, 1985), Working Title Films (WTF), as a small, independent British company, now had an identity as producers with a *credit* that was associated with success, albeit in an unstable and risky business. Nevertheless, the company survived in the decade when the two major British film production companies, EMI and Goldcrest, had collapsed. According to Tim Bevan (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 11), looking back, the irony of the British film industry in the 1980s was that, by the end of the decade, the big companies had disappeared but ‘the talent backed by the smaller outfits would form the backbone of British film for the next twenty years’. Yet, by the end of the 1980s, there was little to indicate the sustained and sometimes spectacular commercial success that WTF would enjoy in the 1990s. This chapter aims to address the question of exactly what happened to cause this change in fortune and circumstances that would transform WTF into a global player producing commercially successful global and cultural film products. In addressing this question, this thesis argues that the experience of WTF exemplifies the function of genre in the processes of globalization (production, distribution and exhibition) as a critical and determinant connective relationship of the global film industry with its global audience.

WTF developed a longevity combined with commercial success when it was re-invented to meet the needs of the global player in the media and creative industries: PolyGram. Owned by the

technology and hardware-driven European-based global conglomerate, Philips, PolyGram was a subsidiary that specialized in the distribution and marketing of technology-based entertainment products. Through a process of restructuring and interdependency, WTF became a major provider of creative [cinematic] product for them to the global film market. With distribution and marketing managed by the global conglomerate, PolyGram, their filmed product reached the global marketplace and contributed to a changing global landscape of entertainment culture influenced by cinema. The global success of WTF began with the breakthrough success, *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Mike Newell, 1994), and continued with a subsequent long-running track record of one commercial hit feature film after the other. This transformation of the company in a globalizing process of film production can be described as one of *re-connectivity* in globalization.

To become globalized, WTF had to change in unexpected and sudden ways to meet the needs of an expanding, global complex connectivity as described by Tomlinson (2008, p. 2) in *Globalization and Culture*. As already discussed in chapter 1, Tomlinson's analysis not only describes the main characteristics of the phenomenon understood as globalization, it also explains the critical and central role that culture plays in globalization as a condition of the modern world (p. 2). The study of WTF and its success producing British romantic comedies can also reciprocally shed light on globalization and global culture. WTF's sudden, dramatic change of circumstances in the mid-1990s could be described as an indicator of the 'before' and 'after' of globalization that allows insight as to the cause and effect of identifiable factors such as the use of genre, marketing, and distribution structures. Through major structural shifts in ownership, with a change in corporate culture and management, and with a new imposed sensitivity to the global market place, WTF was essentially 'globalized' in a new configuration

of connections to the global film industry. How this transformation of WTF occurred is the focus of this chapter. How *Four Weddings and a Funeral* established a successful use of genre, defining the business practices for the British romantic comedy genre in production, distribution and exhibition for WTF and Hollywood, is the focus of the next chapter. The significance of genre and how it was expanded in WTF's economic, political and cultural use in globalization will be covered in later chapters.

An External Context for the Transformation of WTF: The Global Media Landscape of the 1980s and Early 1990s

If success can be identified as a function of financial return on investment, *Four Weddings and a Funeral* initially cost \$5 million to produce and then generated a surprisingly large \$250 million gross at the box office (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 16). What was the global context in which WTF became commercially successful and such a small investment could generate such a massive return on investment at this time? During the 1980s and into the 1990s there were significant, dramatic shifts in the economic dynamics of the global landscape and these shifts were not well understood by the established international institutions as they took place.

According to Glenny (2009, p.183), 'The free movement across borders of capital, goods and services lies at the heart of globalization as it has emerged in the last twenty years'. In this turbulent global environment, 'Everybody had to improvise and nobody quite understood the implications of their actions' (p. 5). These actions were connected to rapid changes in markets, technology and cultural consumption. Not only was the global landscape shifting in these different ways, it was experiencing changes that were generated by political and ideological change.

With the end of Communism and the Soviet Union, the reunification of Germany, and the disbanding of the Warsaw Pact, new markets opened up in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union that changed global markets, the global economy and global revenue flow. One further development that influenced the global landscape was the liberalization and de-regulation of international financial and commodity markets. As Glenny (p. 4) explains this change ‘had its roots firmly in America and its primary European ally, Britain’ and was a result of the influence of Reaganism and a Thatcherite ideology. American and European corporations and banks opened up global markets where there had once been strict controls over foreign investment and currency exchange (p. 4). What happened next was a ‘significant worldwide upsurge in trade, investment and the creation of wealth’ (p. 4). This creation of wealth was not distributed evenly and there were great imbalances. Thus, it was possible for a huge wealth to flow and pool in global conglomerate entertainment structures such as PolyGram. With global deregulation came a massive flow of cash moving through the global economy and ‘by the mid 1990s, the foreign exchange markets alone reached a volume of trading that exceeded \$1 trillion *every day*’ (p. 171). This exchange volume was more than 40 times the value of daily global trade (p. 171) and it occurred with very little oversight by any government agency or financial regulatory body.

At the same time that global financial flow was rapidly and massively changing, there were significant changes in the technology used for the transmission and distribution of cultural content (Kuhn 2002, p. 10). At the beginning of the 1980s, global satellite television was established with pioneer broadcasting by CNN for news programming and by MTV for music entertainment programming (Herman and McChesney 1997, p. 38). With the expanding broadcast technology of satellite television and cable television, new global consumer markets

emerged. Satellite and cable were not the only new distribution technologies. Philips and PolyGram, at that time a music recording company, became pioneers in another substantial and related technology shift that connected creative content to global markets: the Compact Disc (CD). Philips and PolyGram were the key global players in a joint venture with Sony for the development and introduction of the CD to the global marketplace. This was an optical digital technology that was developed specifically for the recording industry (Kuhn 2002, p. 5). This industry had been on the verge of collapse at the beginning of the 1980s due to a decline in consumer demand. However, the introduction of this new laser-based technology created a new consumer market of buyers. These buyers were replacing their vinyl recordings with digital CD copies because its sound quality had less noise and static than vinyl (p. 7). As a result, revenues surged. Although this technology became the major format in the distribution of recorded music, it was eventually adapted for storage of text and graphics. It then evolved to the DVD format for storage of moving image and retail filmed entertainment.

These changes in technology distribution generated inclusiveness to global collectivities through a new electronic global reach, bringing the local culture of North America and Europe into the global localities. Global business, as media conglomerates exemplified by PolyGram, understood that they made substantial earnings from creative content. Their subsequent global expansion of marketing film products into the 'global local' was to generate and maximize revenue. The successful results of the multi-market global connectivity generated by PolyGram with *Four Weddings and a Funeral* exemplify the powerful effect of the vertical integration of the global media conglomerate combined with changing global economic, political and ideological conditions. Because of Reagan administration free market economic policies and media deregulation in the United States, there was a relaxation of ownership restrictions that

allowed global ownership of multiple media organizations such as newspaper, studios, satellite, and cable companies with their ‘synergistic reach’. Shone (2004, p. 186) describes this as a condition when the ‘different arms of a large corporation come together to help promote a single ‘entertainment property’’. At the same time this was occurring there was a lack of opposition to any trust activities by the U.S. federal government. Rather than a vertical integration model of film product delivery to theatres, the conglomerate could optimize multiple delivery paths for creative content in order to lower both risk and maximize profit (Schatz 2008, p.22). The Hollywood corporate tools to achieve this synergy were downsizing, merger and the exploitation of the blockbuster (p. 22). According to Herman and McChesney (1997, p. 43) by the beginning of the 1990s, book publishing, recorded music and film production were the media with the most developed, booming and oligopolistic global markets.

At this time the global entertainment conglomerates were financial engines of cultural product and record companies were major profit centres within the huge multinational entertainment conglomerates (Kuhn 2002, p. 7). Quick hits, exemplified by Donna Summer’s hit song and album ‘She Works Hard for the Money’ became the order of the day through a global business interface with global markets that were local. Revenue flow from the local, with hit singles and platinum albums such as Kiss’ ‘Asylum’, ‘Crazy Nights’, ‘Crashes, Thrashes & Hits’, influenced the strategy development and decision making at the global conglomerate level. In this global landscape, PolyGram understood its business challenge as how to continue to make substantial earnings by counter balancing the risk side of creative content production. At risk was investment money if product sales did not generate a necessary level of return on this investment.

The Expansion of PolyGram in the External Context: A Platform for the Global Re-connectivity of WTF

In order to sell discs, Philips needed creative content to fill the disc and PolyGram formed the organizational connectivity to the creative production of content (Kuhn 2002, p. 5). Content was provided by producers of record labels and these were branded production companies under the major label or music group. In this case, PolyGram was the major label, with, for example, a record label company such as A&M records that included artists such as The Carpenters. Each label had a distinctive sound and autonomy in the creative side of production (p. 33). Thus a subsidiary was owned by another subsidiary within the larger global conglomerate framing. PolyGram was a major global music label from 1972 until it was unexpectedly sold in 1998. With a changing vision and direction in Philips' corporate leadership, the conglomerate would eventually sell off its successful subsidiaries in an exercise of corporate power that favored hardware over software.

After the success of the CD, PolyGram knew this rate of revenue growth would plateau. As a result of the new markets from new technologies of satellite, cable, VHS (and eventually DVD) and expanding revenue flows, PolyGram identified new opportunities for business expansion to meet the expectation of shareholders for 'double digit growth in revenue and profit' (p. 7). This expansion would combine its strengths as a global distributor of music entertainment with a systematic and organized strategy for new product production that was combined with risk reduction (p. 33). As their core business was 'entertainment content', PolyGram had decided at an upper management level to expand into 'filmed entertainment', e.g. movies (p. 7), Hollywood's preserve. In this market environment, Hollywood functioned as both a gateway

and a gatekeeper of global market distribution for film products. However, rather than sell/license their filmed products to the global markets through distribution and marketing managed and controlled by Hollywood, PolyGram with board approval from Philips chose an alternative strategy (p. 34). In 1991 PolyGram would set up PolyGram Filmed Entertainment (PFE) as a London-based, movie studio to compete with Hollywood. Although starting as a lawyer for PolyGram, Michael Kuhn subsequently became a dealmaker, a producer and the head of PFE. In order for PFE to compete with Hollywood, it would also need a source of marketable entertainment product for the global marketplace. WTF would eventually be positioned in PFE as a subsidiary production company providing it with film product.

PolyGram could be said to have had an expanding global inclusiveness in its vision. Its leading position in the music recording industry, with a strong global distribution network that produced a massive revenue stream, was a firm platform in the global entertainment market. Herman and McChesney (1997, p. 20) describe this platform as ‘elaborate global distribution, production and promotional networks’ that kept out competition. This evolving dynamic at PolyGram would not only move the company into expansion with film production but also have immense implications for the reshaping and reinventing of WTF. According to Kuhn (2002, p. 10), ‘The movie business had changed significantly since the beginning of the 1980s in that two very significant revenue sources had developed...pay television and home video’. These were to become the ‘fall back’ in revenue for movies that failed at the cinema box office. Thus risk had been reduced for any investment loss through film production. This allowed investment capital to flow from PolyGram for production work by WTF. This business context provided the market opportunity for WTF to reposition itself globally through the conglomerate entertainment

structure of PolyGram. In this changing global economy, Kuhn (p. 9) asserts that although success for creative product was not guaranteed by volume production, cultural product may be stereotyped as too risky by the general public when, on the contrary, it can actually make '*big money*'. This is based on the understanding that to take the risk of creative production, then that risk should then be managed well. How did a relationship and connectivity of PolyGram to WTF begin? The answer may simplistically be stated as the 'Hollywood connection' and 'parallel lives' between Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner and PolyGram's Michael Kuhn.

The Opportunity for Transition: Hollywood and Cannes as Global Locations for Establishing Connectivity between WTF and PolyGram

By 1990 Hollywood was poised for major global conglomerate consolidation to become a new Hollywood, integrated inside of global media giants in an expanding global entertainment industry. According to figures released by *Variety* (1991 cited in Schatz 2008, p. 24), the major studios were releasing 15 to 20 films each per year and by 1990, the majors were producing 90 in-house productions a year. They were distributing an additional 61, out of house, negative pickups from independent producers who had financed their own productions. At this time the overall national production was 438 of which 42% were not released to theatres but in other markets (*Variety* 1991 cited in Schatz 2008, p. 24). Most film revenues ended up in the coffers of the majors and the mini-majors. This did not go unnoticed by PolyGram with insight that the flow of revenue and profit was controlled by the distributor, also known as *the studio* (Kuhn 2002, pp. 33-34).

In 1985 Kuhn had established a film production budget for long-form music videos within PolyGram. Producing the long-form music video was a key step in shifting the company into film production and led to the eventual formation in 1991 of PFE. Backed with a production budget of 1.5 million pounds and based in London, Kuhn (p. 22) nonetheless initially chose to do the actual production work in Hollywood. Cutting his teeth as an executive producer with David Hockman on a film called *Private Investigations* (Nigel Dick, 1987), he hired two young former film school students, Steve Golin and Joni Sighvatsson to do the actual production work. Described as a ‘long form music video ‘with words’’ (p. 21), the film was subsequently picked up by Alan Ladd Jr. and MGM for a distribution deal to the North American home video market. Golin and Sighvatsson then set up Propaganda Films and continued to produce with backing from PolyGram. Although Bevan had approached Kuhn for work in the early 1980s to produce music videos, nothing had come of it.

Kuhn (p. 38) describes the establishment of a working relationship with Bevan and WTF as a suggestion from the Hollywood-based Golin and Sighvatsson who also knew Bevan. Bevan describes WTF at this point in time as lacking a ‘proper infrastructure’ and undercapitalized (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 15). Starting in 1988, WTF and PolyGram established a producing association that would eventually lead to WTF’s position within the conglomerate. During this time, Sarah Radclyffe set up her own company, Sarah Radclyffe Productions. When in 1993 PolyGram purchased 100% ownership of WTF, Radclyffe was effectively replaced by Eric Fellner. As a WTF co-chairman, he became a producing partner with Tim Bevan within the business and financial arrangement between WTF and PolyGram (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 15).

It was not coincidence that the global reach of Hollywood was a draw for an emergent post-war generation of young filmmakers. Although Kuhn who, by the end of the 1980s, was formulating a new film strategy for PolyGram of a London-based film studio, Bevan, in contrast, states that what he learned from the experience of producing *My Beautiful Laundrette* was that ‘pretty much everything in the worldwide film business went back to one place, Hollywood’ (Kuhn 2002, p. 12). Yet, even though Bevan became successful not as a Hollywood producer, but as a British producer for the European/British studio of PFE, he provides an explanation for his desire to work with Hollywood. He described the significance of Hollywood from his perspective as a producer as a centre of finance, distribution and talent, when he stated:

Most film finance comes from Hollywood, most worldwide film distribution is based in Hollywood and most importantly it is where the main talent agencies are. Any director, writer, producer or actor from anywhere in the world who has had any success will be represented by one of the LA talent agencies. (Bevan in *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 13)

During the second half of the 1980s, Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner, who would become his future WTF partner, were both spending time in Hollywood. Separately, they were trying to develop their different film business interests and connect to the Hollywood film industry for production and distribution deals. As small independent producers, they were also struggling to make a place for themselves in the Hollywood film industry.

If globalization describes an increasing interaction of human life (Robertson 1992 cited in Tomlinson 2008, p. 11), this is evidenced by the establishment of these new relationships, in London, in Hollywood and also the global film showcase, the Cannes Film Festival. As Kuhn

relates in *One Hundred Films and a Funeral* (2002, p. 9) and Bevan relates in *Laundrettes and Lovers* (2003, p. 14), they (including Fellner) were expanding their professional relationships by traveling to the industry film markets, most notably Cannes Film Festival. Cannes could be considered a promotional global film industry showcase but it also offers alternative access to foreign sales, distribution and financing. When WTF entered Cannes with the film *A World Apart*, Eric Fellner and Tim Bevan started to develop a relationship that would lead to a new WTF partnership.

The Connectivity of a New WTF Partnership: Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner

Even though an unstable or discontinuous connectivity was established between Bevan and Hollywood with *My Beautiful Laundrette*, it still was a breakthrough connection for him with the Hollywood film industry. At this point, Tim Bevan appears to have wanted to be part of Hollywood. This may have been a relationship that Sarah Radclyffe did not wish to pursue with WTF. Bevan describes the British film community as having an adversarial relationship with Hollywood that he did not buy into. In contrast, his attitude could be described as one of ‘all roads lead to Hollywood’ and he further explains his rationale of connecting to Hollywood:

We (Eric and Tim) both realized that if you are going to work in the film business you have to have an ongoing and solid relationship with Los Angeles. All major decisions in film are made here regardless of where the film is being produced. (Bevan in *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 12)

My Beautiful Laundrette had provided both Bevan and Radclyffe with a *track record* or film credit that could be considered a playing card in the Hollywood film industry. Bevan chose to

use it, but Radclyffe did not. Bevan also chose this path at the same time that Eric Fellner did. There was a commonality of their experiences which may have produced an affinity between them that finally led to the establishment of the new WTF partnership of Bevan and Fellner. Rather than focus their projects and activities as part of a subsidized low budget and smaller British film industry, it appears that Bevan and Fellner had a wish to 'play the Hollywood game'. They became more focused on the commercial, bigger budgeted mainstream Hollywood film industry. This may have been a major reason for the change in partnership relationships.

Fellner began his career producing music videos for a British company, Zoetrope [not associated with the director, Francis Ford Coppola's American Zoetrope Company] with performers that included Duran Duran, Fleetwood Mac, The Rolling Stones, Elton John and Rod Stewart. He subsequently started his own company, Initial Pictures, in 1985 with Scott Millaney. According to the *Internet Movie Database* (n.d.c), Initial Pictures produced four films from 1986 to 1993, *Sid and Nancy* (Alex Cox, 1986), *Straight to Hell* (Alex Cox, 1987), *A Kiss Before Dying* (James Dearden, 1991) and *The Hawk* (David Hayman, 1993). The first, *Sid and Nancy*, was about the music group, the Sex Pistols. In addition to *Sid and Nancy*, *Laundrettes and Lovers* (2003, p. 63) identifies Fellner's films with Initial Pictures as *Pascali's Island* (James Dearden, 1988), a story of spying in the Ottoman Empire, *Hidden Agenda* (Ken Loach, 1990) about the murder of a human rights lawyer in Belfast, and *A Kiss Before Dying* (1991), a crime thriller. Fellner was the executive producer of the latter and also produced *Year of the Gun* (John Frankenheimer, 1991) (*IMDb* n.d.d). After this film he ended his business partnership with Millaney.

Fellner and Bevan initially came to Hollywood as a result of the distribution of their films *Sid and Nancy* and *My Beautiful Laundrette* into the art film market in North America. Fellner and

Bevan's visibility and activities in both Cannes and Hollywood may have also given them more credibility as potentially useful for the business needs of PolyGram and Kuhn. For what may be complex reasons, during the end of the 1980s, Bevan and Fellner would find an affinity for each other that was to become a comfortable and successful alliance in the re-invention of WTF.

Bevan further explained the dynamics of this relationship:

Although complementary in our knowledge of the film business and our ambition, we are different as people – Eric more hesitant, whereas I am impulsive; he is a better 'people person' and I am a big reader. These many differences have somehow meshed to work brilliantly in what we do. I think this is principally because of a mutual respect whereby we know when not to tread on each other's toes. (Bevan in *Laundrettes and Lovers*, 2003, p. 15)

When in 1992 PolyGram purchased WTF, Fellner became a producing partner with Bevan within the business and financial arrangement between WTF and PolyGram (p. 15). If Bevan and Fellner may have also been looking for opportunities for personal and business success, subsequently it was Kuhn and PolyGram that provided the critical connection to global opportunities. The eventual success of WTF was based on the mutual needs of WTF with those of PolyGram.

The Connectivity of Mutual Needs between PolyGram and WTF: Financing and Production

In Britain during the late 1980s, WTF struggled with under-financing and lack of an organizational infrastructure as a threat to its sustainability. To maintain a slate of productions after *My Beautiful Laundrette*, WTF had used an assortment of investments or subsidized

approaches for production financing. These included equity capital, pre-sales to distribution companies and tax advantages (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 13). However, Kuhn describes the internal administration of WTF at this time, as ‘chaotic’ and asserts that it had been mismanaged (Kuhn 2002, p. 38). As Bevan (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 15) recounts, ‘We were spending too much time on trying to keep the whole thing afloat and not nearly enough on the really important thing...the content of the films’. Shortcomings were happening in the management of two complex but integral processes: first, the business and financing of production; and second, the production of creative content for the film product. The latter could more precisely be identified with the development and writing of the screenplay, a stage in the management of creativity understood as a complex process (Wasko 2005a, p. 15). What was the function of the WTF producers in this management? In other words, what does a producer do?

Litwak (1994, pp. 154-155) explains that a producer’s skills and background, the relationships they have and whether they are trying to secure financing and distribution through a Hollywood studio influence how they function. One of the key roles of a producer is to find financing and to locate the required ‘content’ for this financing (i.e. concept, treatment, script draft). Although independents had existed since the early years of the film industry, after the end of World War II, the producer became more prominent as a separate business entity outside the studio, an ‘independent producer’ (Balio 1985, p. 412). The studio acts as a financier and distributor of the independents’ products. The point from which a project or script is approved for production and funds are released by the studio is called ‘green lighting’ (*WordIQ* n.d.; Kuhn 2002, p. 34). If a studio covers the cost of the development and production of a film with the independent producer who has that relationship, the studio owns the distribution rights of the film. However, rather than acting as a studio’s independent producer, the producer may find different solutions

to financing and raising funds for productions (Wasko 2008, p. 52). Independent producers may also get their financing as pre-sale to other distribution outlets of TV networks, pay cable and home video. Grants are another source and this would be the finance category of Channel 4 funding in Britain for WTF. By the late 1980s, as co-productions grew dramatically as creative partnerships, so did a combination of presales and domestic US distribution deals (p. 53). If an independent producer had finished a film without studio financing but the studio wanted to purchase the distribution rights to the film for marketing to the theatres, it would 'pick up the negative' (Foy, 1993). If the studio perceived the film as having a potential for box office success, the independent was in a most advantageous position for the negotiation of the pick up deal because of their ownership of the distribution rights.

With an ambition to stay in the film business, WTF had been motivated to connect to Hollywood and attempt to secure Hollywood's potential to offer British producers financing and distribution for their films. Yet, even fully financed big budgets are not a guarantee of a successful film and, to generate its profits, Hollywood as an industry has adopted certain tendencies and responses to risk that are related to content (Wasko 2005a, p. 3). As film producers, Fellner, Bevan and Radclyffe would have been potential dealmakers in Hollywood. However, Wasko (p. 4) points out that in Hollywood 'one's clout is often determined by one's track record or most recent success... what you have accomplished in the past plays a direct role in what you can negotiate for the future'. Because Hollywood measures accomplishment as box office return for profit, at this time, WTF could not offer Hollywood a track record of successful box office films. Even with a limited track record of completed films and the limited breakthrough success of *My Beautiful Laundrette*, WTF was not in a position of power for deal making with Hollywood.

Even if their films might have critical acclaim, they were not commercial performers at the box office. Accordingly they did not appeal to the audiences that produce Hollywood's profits.

The dual dilemmas for a production company of limited resources and under-budgeted films were not only an issue for WTF but for the British film industry as a whole (Murphy 2000, p. 1).

Kuhn (2002, p. 38) describes his discussions with Bevan by this time, the late 1980s, as assessing the needs of UK producers in general. In order to achieve more marketable films, British producers needed more time to concentrate on the script and actual moviemaking than on trying to get a movie deal, the financing side. WTF's then slate was a group of films consisting of *For Queen & Country* (Martin Stellman, 1988), *Diamond Skulls* (Nick Broomfield, 1991), *Fools of Fortune* (Pat O'Connor, 1990), *London Kills Me* (Hanif Kureishi, 1991) and *Map of the Human Heart* (Vincent Ward, 1993). Films were getting made but they were not successful with either British or international audiences. It could be said that WTF at this stage knew how to secure financing but did not know how to be commercially successful in global markets by appealing to its audience. In other words, WTF did not understand how to be meaningful in the 'global-local' practice of culture.

When in 1990 WTF produced *Map of the Human Heart*, it may have overextended itself. It set out to produce a bigger budgeted film with \$16 million (Kuhn 2002, p.45). In order to have international scope, the production had become more complex and costly (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 82). Its problematic nature may have softened the way for the company to change. Lawyer Billy Hinshelwood who worked on this film considers this to be a turning point or watershed film for WTF (p. 82). Its budget was much bigger than previous films but also the complexity of the financing had magnified. With co-producers from France, England, Canada

and Australia, it also had Japanese equity finance and American pre-sale funding with Miramax. Not only did these complexities exist, the film was also produced through a German tax structure and a Dutch lending bank. In contrast, once WTF became part of PolyGram, rather than arranging its own complicated and fragmented financing, it would secure stable financing. At the same time it would be held accountable to PolyGram's business management and fiscal discipline. It was through a matrix of changing finance variables, market variables and distribution variables that PolyGram gradually tested the viability of a creative and business relationship with WTF for its market need of creative product and content.

From Independent to Interdependent, the Emerging Interface of WTF with PolyGram, 1988 – 1992

In a transitional process leading the independent into interdependency and eventually dependency, WTF was identified, selected and backed financially by PolyGram for the manufacture of creative product. This was accomplished through stages of re-organization and a growing interdependency for WTF, as PolyGram executed its strategy for its new expansion into filmed entertainment. As PolyGram expanded its production base of 'label' companies such as WTF and increased its backing of movie production, it also expanded into film distribution globally. PolyGram would also emerge from this transition period with a European-based movie studio PFE that would be competitive with Hollywood. It considered the transitional years to start from 1988 beginning with a joint venture of 49% ownership with WTF's Working Title Television (Kuhn 2002, p.38). This established a formal business relationship between the two businesses in a co-production with Channel 4 for the television drama *Smack and Thistle* (Yahoo! Movies n.d.). This provided working capital for WTF and a low risk investment for PolyGram.

PolyGram then became a financial backer of WTF's film projects and set up a foreign market film sales company, Manifesto Film Sales, in 1989 as a PolyGram subsidiary and sales agent to distribute the films produced by its 'labels'.

In exchange for stable financing from PolyGram, the production companies of WTF and Propaganda provided a steady supply of feature film product. At this time, WTF had already started work on a number of projects that would be finished and released as PolyGram began to change and reshape their work process. These were the previously mentioned films of *For Queen & Country* (1988), *Diamond Skulls* (1989), *Fools of Fortune* (1990), *London Kills Me* (1991) and *Map of the Human Heart* (1993). After this slate had been produced WTF also went on to produce *Edward II* (1991) with Derek Jarman, *Chicago Joe and the Showgirl* (Bernard Rose, 1990), *The Tall Guy* (Mel Smith, 1989) and *Drop Dead Fred* (Ate de Jong, 1991). *Drop Dead Fred* was produced in Los Angeles and coincided with the opening of WTF's Los Angeles offices with backing from PolyGram (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 86). Although considered a critical failure, *Drop Dead Fred* was a commercial success. It was made with a budget of \$6.4 million and produced US box office earnings of \$13 million (Kuhn 2002, p. 45).

This period was not without difficulties and Kuhn considers the early working relationship between WTF and PolyGram as a joint learning experience for finding a way to make globally competitive film (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 86). He emphasizes that they jointly agreed that the producers' objectives should be that of making a script and film 'work' rather than being distracted by financing (Kuhn 2002, p. 38). He also came to realize WTF and PolyGram could compete in the global film market but that the development of scripts could involve huge

amounts of money and that it was a long process to prepare a script for production. He describes this point in the relationship with WTF and the transition:

‘Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck...’ Hugh Grant said this quite a lot at the beginning of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. Tim, Eric and I said it quite a lot in the early years of Working Title and PolyGram. Before Eric appeared on the scene, Tim and I said nothing else for several years. (Kuhn in *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 86)

At the beginning of 1991, Alain Levy became president of PolyGram. He shared with Michael Kuhn the vision of PolyGram as a producer and distributor of entertainment content that included film (Kuhn 2002, p. 45). With his support Kuhn developed a strategy with plans for establishing over the next five years a European based movie studio. He describes it as ‘a studio without a lot’ (p. 48). This studio would use its production ‘labels’ such as WTF to generate product, projecting eight to 15 movies a year, with marketing and sales centralized. The plan called for eventual distribution of the movies. Thus it would go into global competition with Hollywood. By mid-1991, the boards of PolyGram and the parent corporation Philips had approved the plans and PFE began operations (p. 47). In a re-invention of the old studio system but based in Europe, PFE would integrate WTF into its new global framework and thus establish its connectivity to the global marketplace.

If in some way Fellner brought an internal stabilizing influence to the company, Kuhn was able to provide a financial stability and he continued to finance their box office failures in production. By managing WTF’s product in ancillary non-theatrical markets, he had found some other type of return on investment as a way to ameliorate any potential financial loss to PolyGram. This was done with a corporate management understanding that eventually after the transition period, one of the production source labels backed by PolyGram, WTF, Propaganda,

Egg, and eventually another addition, Interscope Pictures, would produce successful box office films (Kuhn 2002, pp. 38, 46, 52,54). Bevan describes this understanding from his perspective as ‘liberating’ and that:

We were now part of a big structure, so we spent much less time on finding the money and much more on developing decent scripts...It's no surprise that two or three years after [1992] we started to have a considerable amount of commercial success from those movies. (Bevan 2005 cited in Higgins 2005, p. 32)

During this transition stage Kuhn also began to slowly set up different distribution operations under the PolyGram umbrella for marketing their product into different types of entertainment markets. Each of these expanding operations added a new layer of complexity to the connectivity between WTF and the global film industry.

The transitional period for WTF ended in 1992 when PolyGram bought a 100% ownership interest in WTF (Kuhn 2002, pp. 34, 51, 166). By 1992 Stewart Till had joined the newly formed PFE as president of international distribution (p. 166). Till describes WTF at this point as having made a ‘fair share of underperforming films’ and being problematic in not filing year end accounts (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 87). Yet he goes on to explain that on their plus side, WTF had ‘a fiercely loyal, long serving staff, producers that understood and were comfortable in both London and Los Angeles, a company run by two headstrong partners...who had an instinctive ability to discover the sharpest writing and directing talents’ (p. 87). In coming together as a producing partnership, Fellner explains that ‘The timing was perfect...Both

of us wanted to make bigger films with more worldwide access and PolyGram afforded that opportunity' (Toumarkine 2003).

PolyGram and WTF: A New Relationship for Transformation and Global Re-connectivity

As a new subsidiary of PolyGram, WTF was no longer in a position to make strategic decisions within the conglomerate. WTF was, however, able to meet the creative and business requirements needed by PolyGram for its global strategy in relation to film production and global entertainment markets. In what can be described as a gradual and careful construction of connectivity to the global entertainment markets, this formation was based on a management strategy of risk reduction and profit maximization (Kuhn 2002, p. 34). As a change of direction for PolyGram in anticipation of market demand, this strategy exemplified a corporate mindset and mode of operations within a global corporate culture. It directed the work practices, the product development and the critical interface of WTF with PolyGram. Before this strategy could be executed, it had to be reviewed and approved as acceptable to the highest placed global, corporate executives. In this strategic expansion for film production, the cultural product had to meet the needs of marketing and marketing had to meet the needs of the product (p. 80).

PolyGram's strategy thus addressed the question of how to create and use cultural content for making money. As such it shaped the product and acted as a gatekeeper for what was acceptable cultural content to be used to make money.

In searching for a 'winning formula' that would eventually connect WTF (via the global conglomerate of Polygram) to a shifting, massive global entertainment market, Philips and PolyGram needed new creative content for generating revenue. Before this could happen, WTF

would go through a change in its own organizational culture as it adopted the corporate culture of PolyGram. According to Kerr and Slocom (1987, p. 130) ‘a corporation’s culture simultaneously determines and reflects the values, beliefs and attitudes of its members. These values and beliefs foster norms that influence employee behavior’. In order to integrate successfully with PolyGram, WTF would have adopted these norms of corporate culture into their performance. Any significant strategic or structural re-alignment such as the incorporation of WTF into the conglomerate structure also needed to be supported by its organizational values and behavioral norms (p. 130). Denison (2006, p. 20) defines a *corporate culture* as a high level of shared meaning, a common vision, a bonded membership with high integration of acceptable behavior standards and participation by its corporate members. He argues that an operative *corporate culture* will result in a measurable effect on a company’s performance (p. 20). This may describe the internal context of WTF’s new relationship with PolyGram and help explain the changing performance of WTF and its film products as a result of its participation in corporate culture. Cremer (1993, p. 354) also emphasizes that corporate culture internally shares knowledge as an investment and is better able to respond externally to the information it receives. Along these lines, Kuhn (2002, p. 81) maintains that, as a movie studio, PolyGram with its subsidiary PFE eventually created a more effective internal sharing of knowledge that gave it a competitive edge over Hollywood outside of the North American market. It appears that their corporate culture supported an internal connectivity between the producers of WTF and marketing managers during project development. This was critical for developing film products that appealed to audiences in the entertainment markets in order to meet corporate performance goals. If making money and generating revenue streams for profit are identified as the organizational goals of the corporate culture, these would also appear to reflect and be

harmonious with the free market ideology of Thatcherism and Reaganism that developed in the 1980s and set the tone for many years to come. The strategic approach that PolyGram implemented gave creative people such as WTF's producers a certain amount of autonomy to produce content. At the same time they also had to observe corporate financial discipline. Accordingly, this approach resulted in film products that met the needs of PolyGram's parent company Philips and their global business objective of maximization of profitability. This corporate strategy would be the key to setting in motion the substantial transition of the British film producer to a global British film producer.

The Internal Corporate Connectivity of WTF within PolyGram and its External Consequences

As a competitive entertainment conglomerate with Hollywood, PolyGram essentially re-constructed its own connectivity in globalization based on historically successful business models of production and distribution. Driven by what can be described as pragmatic business interests for production of creative content, PolyGram adapted the music label model for its expansion in film production, distribution and marketing globally (Kuhn 2002, p. 33). This specific model had been used as the basis for integrating creative production and artistic work with commerce. As an operational, organization structure established inside entertainment corporate culture, it was a proven methodology for managing risk in the entertainment business. It had emerged from the jazz recording industry in the early 1950s and was then used successfully with Reprise Records at Warner Brothers in the early 1960s. Steve Ross had expanded its use at Warner Communications (p. 33). It had been so successful in combining creative interests with business interests that it became an industry standard and the modus

operandi in the recording business. According to Kuhn (p. 33), PolyGram had successfully copied it in the 1980s with its record labels. PolyGram would then reapply this model to its film subsidiaries for the development of film stories and film production. WTF would effectively become one of the new 'labels'. In this model, creative management by the *label* WTF had autonomy but was also combined with financial discipline for the corporate business management. The business management of PFE was responsible for the marketing and distribution of the filmed entertainment product to global markets.

In PolyGram's label strategy, the subsidiary labels of production were predominantly *global* with a *bi-lateral connectivity* of Hollywood-based companies i.e. Propaganda Films, Jodie Foster's Egg Pictures and its British-based production companies with WTF as a 'cornerstone' (p. 37). As part of this strategy it would also build a new global film distribution operation as an extension of its existing record distribution. By PolyGram constructing its own distribution structures for the global marketplace, a new inclusiveness of market sensitivity to local receptivity of narrative was introduced to product development. This integration of local cultural practice from the global marketplace exemplifies what Tomlinson (2008, p. 19) identifies in generality as evidencing a process of globalization. It provided a 'linkage' for appealing to people's life narratives and sense of identity framed by the local culture. It also combined this creative model with the practices of several successful film studio models, MGM and United Artists, which had balanced talent management with business interests.

WTF was thus recreated within a process of new *connectivity* to the global market that was substantially different from its brief connectivity through the Hollywood distribution of *My Beautiful Laundrette*. Rather than a 'hit or miss' approach to producing independent film

through a producer-centred context by WTF, PolyGram constructed a business model approach for WTF that was market responsive. It combined an organized methodology for global market sensitivity and financial discipline with WTF's creative process of producing feature film. As integrative corporate behavior, PFE imposed on WTF an organized development process with a matrixed planning document for approvals of production expenditures (Kuhn 2002, p. 80). This mode of operations met the needs of the corporate culture and its business goals, while allowing WTF creative license to select and develop projects and talent. What it meant in terms of globalization was the rapid generation of complex interconnections in the local work context that were also connected to the global market. The end result of this re-structuring and re-connection for WTF via PolyGram was stable, on-going connectivity of cultural and creative product being sold to a global market. Using representations of a specific local cultural identity of London in a genre narrative, the globalizing process of PolyGram's marketing and distribution process transformed film products into the entertainment culture of everyday life in global localities. At the same time, this connectivity maximised profitability in the process of globalization. The results of this process would directly affect the performance of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* when it was released to the North American market. This performance took place through an alliance of PolyGram with Universal, as the joint venture Gramercy Pictures. In PolyGram's 'control sheet' analysis of potential revenue from *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and other productions, PolyGram would project earnings from U.S. and non U.S. box office, home video rental and sell-thru, merchandising, pay TV, pay per view, network, basic cable, and syndication television earnings (Kuhn 2002, p. 130). The song 'Love is All Around' by Wet, Wet Wet, from the *Four Weddings and a Funeral* sound track generated additional income as an international success and performed at the top of the British hit charts for 15 weeks (Lewis n.d.). In what

could be identified as characteristics of PolyGram's corporate culture, Kuhn and Bevan jointly understood that the corporate context was supportive of spending money on development, tolerating box office failure for immediate return on investment i.e. 'fast profit' while at the same time emphasizing the 'power of marketing and distribution' (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 86). What was further understood were the direct financial and marketing 'consequences' that could result from the creative decision making by the producers in their choices for 'certain types of projects, certain casts, certain genres' (Kuhn 2002, p. 81).

WTF and its films were repositioned from the margins to the centre of the global cultural economy. WTF learned how to manage talent and creative elements for genre stories in a global business process that generated an effective and stable function in the globalized economy. This function met the commercial needs of a global market that was expanding because of global economic growth, 'the commercialization of state broadcasting systems, and the development of new distribution technologies' (Balio 1998, p. 58). These needs were also those of generating revenue and meeting global audience expectation for symbolic meanings in the consumption of culture. By meeting these needs it met a critical objective of global corporate ideology for 'sustainable economic growth' (Herman and McChesney 1997, p. 36). In this global conglomerate context, the production, marketing and distribution of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* established the specific relationship of genre for the complex connectivity in globalization for WTF. By 2003, as a direct result in creating this connectivity in globalization, WTF would be responsible for a gross of a billion dollars in the worldwide film market with the films: *The Tall Guy* (Mel Smith, 1989), *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Notting Hill*, *Bean* (Mel Smith, 1997) and *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Sharon Macguire, 2001) (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 15). Through the complex process of globalization, WTF expanded with global reach through

the distribution of its films for exhibition to the global localities. As a result, it changed the experience of entertainment culture in the local film markets, most notably those of North America and Europe.

Conclusion

Within a changing global media context, the leadership of the global media conglomerate, PolyGram, identified new market opportunities in the global entertainment markets.

Consequently, it then generated a shared global vision, strategy and operational process that would result in the on-going global success of WTF in the 1990s. Although WTF had briefly connected with global audiences and markets in the 1980s through *My Beautiful Laundrette*, this was a fleeting connectivity to the global film market. Through a re-connectivity of WTF with PolyGram to the global film market, its circumstances suddenly changed. It became a more complex, disciplined organization that was financially stable, being capitalised by the parent corporation. This allowed the WTF producers to concentrate on the development of projects and the creative side of production. The WTF partnership was re-formed from *artistic product-centred* producers to becoming more *market-focused* commercial producers.

In this new global context, WTF changed into a company that was more market sensitive to the global localities – their different film markets and their audiences. Furthermore, it became more effective in its creative development for producing cultural products that also were acceptable within a global corporate culture. PolyGram provided WTF a framework of connectivity between the creative production-side with the commercial, distribution-side. This framework gave them feedback from the local environment. Thus, PolyGram and its marketing apparatus

provided a more realistic appraisal of what would appeal to a global market's audience. As a result, the cultural products of WTF were being developed in a negotiation with the cultural experience of the global audience.

Although PolyGram and WTF could not have predicted the success of the film *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, the conditions for this success had been put into place. By using representations of specific local cultural practices and the identity of London with a genre narrative, WTF would produce a film product that would reach into cultural practice in the global localities. As such, it would transform the experience of falling in love into a global, cultural and economic context and produce a meaningful narrative that could be understood and valued by global audiences. Accordingly, this could be described as contributing to the condition of unicity, or global inclusiveness. The next chapter specifically examines how *Four Weddings and a Funeral* established global connectivity for WTF and how it exemplifies the practice of what might be termed a global culture of entertainment.

Chapter 6: Working Title Films - A New Global Position for Production, Distribution and Marketing

Introduction

Prior to the re-connectivity of Working Title Films (WTF) to the global market environment through PolyGram, the company had struggled to perform with the different stages of the marketing chain. In the film industry, a marketing chain and its work practices have become established over time; and, although these work practices have their stability and standardization, they are not absolutely rigid and can change at a given time in response to global economic, political and market conditions. Each stage of this marketing chain from product development to sales and consumption may have many complex and inter-linking relationships. However, each stage has accepted protocols for day-to-day business, each with its own mode of operation for getting a product to market to secure profits from its sale. These stages are financing, product development, including packaging of talent, production (production is divided into pre-production, production and post-production stages), distribution, marketing and exhibition in theatres or sales in other related media markets. These areas can be horizontally and vertically integrated between and within companies and business structures. After re-connectivity to these global processes via its parent company PolyGram, WTF would function as a successful producer in this complex marketing chain.

During the period of the late 1980s and early 1990s deal-making and methods of film financing had increased in complexity. According to Wasko, these methods included ‘...Wall Street investment schemes, pre-sale deals or foreign co-productions’ (2005a, p. 12). No matter what

the deal structure, if the film were to succeed, it had to find its audience and the film's story needed to offer some kind of appeal for marketability and economic earnings. The distributor provided and controlled this linkage of connectivity globally to various specific local markets in the global marketplace. Therefore, distribution can be understood as a central process in a dimension of globalization by providing 'proximity' (in the terminology of Tomlinson) of the narrative to the global locality, its marketplace and its audience. As this thesis argues, this process further offers connectivity in the function of genre for transforming the local practice of culture and for the inclusion of the local experience into a shared global culture, unicity. As WTF expanded its connectivity in globalization to the global market, its use of genre could also be understood to function in 'unicity', what Robertson (1992 cited in Tomlinson, 2008: 11) describes as a condition of increasing interaction of human life that suggests wholeness rather than uniformity (Tomlinson, 2008, p. 10).

Although a national distributor could distribute to its internal national market, for the global film industry and its global markets, the distributors were and remain to this day the Hollywood studios. However, during the 1990s the global media conglomerate PolyGram and its European-based film studio, PolyGram Filmed Entertainment (PFE) attempted to change the connectivity and global configuration for production and distribution to the global marketplace. Therefore, the experience of PolyGram with the success of WTF may exemplify the potential for transformation of the Hollywood paradigm. This chapter examines the repositioning and re-connectivity of WTF in the global marketing chain and and global film marketplace with the film *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Mike Newell, 1994).

A Connective Strategy for Globalization – Reinvention of a Movie Studio and the Alliance With Working Title Films

The major corporate goal for PolyGram and for its strategy in the operations of its movie studio, PFE, was to maximize profitability (Kuhn 2002, p.34). To do this, its management had assessed a need to be in control of their marketing and worldwide distribution rather than to sell off their distribution rights to a Hollywood studio. By selling off rights they would have covered their upfront risk but it would have been at a loss for maximization of profit. They had come to understand that by controlling distribution and marketing, they would control profitability generated by their marketing effort (p. 34). Their initial investment for the studio was \$200 million (p. 48). They had the advantages of cash flow from the music industry and a diversified revenue base for the movies with a third of this revenue structured to come from home video distribution. They also had a management team that was experienced in worldwide operations. This experience provided guidance for stability in operating in the complex global context and for generating revenue from different global marketplaces. The absorption of WTF into the PolyGram global organization represented a joint understanding for shared corporate culture, strategic goals and corporate ideology. It also gave WTF a new global position in a global media economy.

In order to generate film production for global distribution, PolyGram's strategy for its new film studio included the use of the label concept with its companies, including its film production subsidiary WTF. It considered the label concept, a practice of integrating creative and business management, to have advantages over Hollywood for generating a product with direct appeal for the global marketplace (p.34). It believed that Hollywood was focused more on the North

American market, using it as a global marketing platform, and was not responsive to existing international opportunities. Thus there was a perception of a competitive advantage for PolyGram. For Kuhn (p. 33) in implementing this global strategy, he saw 'the key issues were firstly, how to control a creative company, imposing financial disciplines but not stifling creativity; and secondly, how to squeeze every penny of value out of the product produced, in order to make the numbers work'. Outside of North America PolyGram planned to use its existing national organizations for distribution into the local markets. It also had the added advantage of a global shipping system that Hollywood did not have (p. 46). Moreover, it planned for the possibility of non-English language films that would be targeted to the markets of France, Germany, Spain and Italy (p. 48). The existing PolyGram distribution apparatus would mean control of revenue streams from those markets where it was established and strong. Marketing the films to smaller territories without a PolyGram organization would involve a sale to a third party who would do the internal distribution under a licensing agreement. However, the biggest market, North America, posed a distribution challenge. Because of Hollywood's domination of distribution in North America, it controlled access to the theatres and the revenue stream. In order to enter this market and distribute to it, PolyGram/PFE's operational plan was two-fold. First PFE would market the smaller PFE movies to the video and television markets with a newly formed subsidiary for distribution to these markets. Second, it planned to establish its own Los Angeles based operation to market the bigger budgeted films as theatrical releases (p. 49). However, in order to overcome Hollywood domination and find a way for its product to enter this specific market, it partnered with Hollywood. It set up Gramercy Pictures as its new North American company but structured it as a joint venture with Universal Studios as a 'classics' theatrical distribution operation; this was an art film type of distribution (p. 51). With

distribution to the global market, WTF would now have to ‘connect’ with the audiences of the global market by generating films that would have appeal locally and were valued as meaningful.

After being acquired by PolyGram and PFE and prior to producing *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Mike Newell, 1994), WTF produced several films. Although the assumption in the PFE strategic plan was that the first films coming from PFE would not be successful (p. 54), two early films from WTF made money. They were *Posse* (Mario Van Peebles, 1993), a black western, and *Bob Roberts* (Tim Robbins, 1992), about an arch-conservative American folk singer turned politician. This unexpected early economic success may indicate that WTF had successfully integrated into the corporate culture, changing their methods and operations in a way that improved their performance for producing marketable, creative products with increased audience appeal. How this took place and how it would lead to global connectivity with *Four Weddings and a Funeral* is examined in the following sections.

The Label Strategy Implemented

Within PFE, WTF and its producers, Bevan and Fellner, had become internalized within a corporate business structure that was supportive of creativity. At the same time, they appear to have become more market sensitive and aware of international audience appeal. Bevan describes this restructuring and what it meant to WTF:

The new Working Title was to be part of the PolyGram film strategy. We would be a production label, autonomous in terms of deciding the films that we would make, but tied to PolyGram for distribution and finance – the spirit of independence with the resources of a studio....Eric and myself, decision makers in matters of structure, business and

creative direction...Our strategy was to oversee our films from the first kernel of an idea through to managing and participating in the decisions relating to their marketing and distribution. We wanted the process of getting a film to an audience to begin right at the start. This is not to say that we would restrict ourselves to making commercial films only, but more than a million dollar film needs to find a million dollar audience and a seventy – million – dollar movie a seventy – million dollar audience. We realized that *any* film, because of the capital cost, must have international appeal. (Bevan in *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 15)

To function accordingly, PFE had also provided the company with a stable infrastructure. They now had a development department in Los Angeles and London, a business affairs department for contracting and rights agreements, and a physical production operation that was run by Jane Fraser who had started with the company when it was first set up (p. 16). Their role of producers had become one of making the major decisions of which film projects to develop, what the budget would be, and who would be the director and the cast. Bevan and Fellner split the responsibility of specific films between them. Their process as producers may also have become a process in which they chose to exploit genre for marketing purposes. Through the integration into the PFE studio system, WTF would eventually evolve a systematic development process based on using one of three possible approaches (p.16). First, they would use what they call a third party creative relationship where WTF provides financing, a production structure, with marketing and distribution oversight, and some creative opinion to the external party. This would be the process used with the films of the Coen brothers and their relationship with WTF. Second was the development of a project from a book such as *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Sharon Maguire, 2001). And, third, was the development of a project from an idea. This would mean a

total involvement in all of the filmmaking stages. It would include decisions in the selection of the writer, director, cast, crew, locations, style, shooting, editing, marketing and distribution (p. 17). *Elizabeth* (Shekhar Kapur, 1998) is a film that resulted from this development process. Ironically, in contrast to these different approaches, *Four Weddings and a Funeral* was not initially developed by WTF as it had originally been a project for Channel 4. After Channel 4 decided not to produce it, Richard Curtis, the writer, sent WTF the screenplay.

Establishing a Connectivity of Global Distribution: A New Connected Configuration of Working Title Films, Manifesto Film Sales and Gramercy Pictures

The business process of distribution is the heart of globalization for the film industry. After a film is produced, it is distributed for exhibition in theatres. Access to distribution and the control of this process opens the door to the local markets of the world and their profit. Cinema theatres are the retail outlet to the local environment and box office receipts are the source of revenue for a theatrical release (Wasko 2005a, p.88). Thus, the studio-distributor is the middle-man, the wholesaler to the retailer, and, as such, is the king pin as the supply source of saleable product. It is a system that is critical for getting goods to market in exchange for profitable earnings at the box office that then flow back to the distributor. By managing the marketing and distribution processes as an integrated process, the distributor can maximize return on investment. This return comes from the delineated film markets of territories, regions, nations, and neighbourhoods. Distribution is conducted through an interface of shipment of the film product and an accounting for payments in and out of the local physical sales space, either that of a video rental store or a movie theatre.

The year 1989 became pivotal for an initial trial distribution of WTF products by PolyGram.

The companies together were exploring and testing the waters of global film distribution with the operations of Manifesto Film Sales. This operation was established by PolyGram's Kuhn - with input from Bevan - in order to sell films backed with financing by PolyGram that were produced by the label companies, WTF and Propaganda. This start up of Manifesto occurred prior to the establishment in 1991 of PFE as a studio/distributor and its purchase of WTF. Manifesto was PolyGram's venture into foreign film sales with a company that was 'charged with selling movies in territories outside North America' (Kuhn 2002, p. 34). It was launched with WTF's *Chicago Joe and the Showgirl* and Propaganda's *Wild at Heart* (David Lynch, 1990) (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 84). What was it that Manifesto Films did? Rather than directly distribute a film, it arranged distribution with other distribution companies in specific markets. The film sales agent can represent filmmakers who are looking for distribution deals for their films, and who may not be as established as other directors, or choose to work outside of a studio arrangement (Skillset n.d.b). The agent may also work on the strategy for marketing a film; negotiates the details of the distribution deal for the filmmaker. Upon completion of the agreement, the agent, as the filmmaker's representative, delivers a release print, the inter-negative and inter-positives, sound masters, the script, and legal documents. When a film becomes profitable the film sales agent pays the contracted profit percentage to the filmmaker. An unexpected earnings payment from the agent to Tim Bevan, who as an act of good faith, re-distributed the earnings to talent and sent a check to the writer Richard Curtis (*A Film Producer's Journey* n.d.) resulted in a significant event for WTF. Because of this gesture, Curtis who had finished writing a new script decided to have his agent send Bevan the screenplay. This screenplay was *Four Weddings and a Funeral*.

With the establishment of the film studio PFE as a subsidiary of PolyGram, it managed distribution of its label production companies and continued to also use PolyGram's Manifesto as one of its distribution operations. What is it that a distributor does? According to Wasko (2005a, p. 84), distribution takes place after a producer licenses a film for a specific period of time. The distributor arranges for prints and advertising, arranges for exhibition in theatres and decides on the release schedule. The distributor is also in charge of print and negative duplication, storage, shipping, inspection and accounting of receipts from the exhibitors. The exhibitors and the distributors have a negotiated cut on the box office receipts with a possible minimum of 50% for each. The distributor's share is what is called the film rental and can be as high as 90%, the most common split. These are done as licensing agreements between distributor and exhibitor or bids with individual theatres. However, rather than making profit from ticket receipts, in this marketing chain the theatre exhibitor makes their profit from popcorn, candy and soda sales in addition to on-screen advertising. By the end of the 1990s, eight companies received 95 % of the North American box office revenues for the major global market (p. 60). Universal, a partner in the joint venture of Gramercy Films with PolyGram for North American distribution, was one of these eight.

By selling their company ownership to PFE in exchange for a stable and uncomplicated financing arrangement, WTF had become in-house producers rather than independent producer-contractors. They no longer owned the distribution rights to the films they produced although they could still discuss and give their views on how to market and distribute the films. The distributor, PFE owned the rights of the film and made the final decisions in the complex distribution process. It is also not clear to what degree, if at all, WTF had profit participation

with PFE for their films' performance at the box office. However, there needed to be a mutually acceptable exchange of value with satisfaction for WTF production services to explain the ongoing and stable work relationship between Bevan and Fellner with PFE from 1992 to 1998.

Once Gramercy Pictures became the US marketing and releasing arm of all the PolyGram-owned production companies, Propaganda, Interscope and WTF, a new synergy developed that was atypical of the usual independent producer and studio relationship. Russell Schwartz who was Gramercy's president from 1992 to 1999 explains that, in regards to his work process with the 'labels' and more specifically WTF:

...a relationship that initially had a strong separation as producer vs. studio, suddenly changed dramatically when we were all thrown together at PolyGram. My new role was as 'friendly adversary', where I would query them on their production choices and they in turn would dissect my marketing decisions. (Schwartz in *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 111)

Thus, sensitivity to local conditions had influenced the flow back to the development, production and marketing stages of WTF films. This approach was used at PolyGram from 1993 and would have been employed, for example, with films such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Mike Newell, 1994), *French Kiss* (Lawrence Kasdan, 1995), *Dead Man Walking* (Tim Robbins, 1995), *Bean* (Mel Smith, 1997), *Elizabeth* (Shekhar Kapur, 1998), *The Borrowers* (Peter Hewitt, 1997), *Plunkett and Macleane* (Jake Scott, 1999) and *Notting Hill* (Roger Michell, 1999). What could be understood as an emerging form of connectivity in a matrix-ed work process now integrated the product development within the global business side and interjected more logic in cause and effect of market conditions to the creative process. Although not an absolute guarantee for success, this systematic approach to production reduced risk and had not existed prior in the way

the independent WTF of the 1980s had conducted its operations. Once this overall complex process was established successfully, it provided a controlled framework for cultural production that eventually would allow certain types of diversity and affinity within its constraints, i.e. the film story, casting, direction and production style of *Elizabeth* (1998).

As the primary distributor or 'studio' of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, PolyGram/PFE would then have had tremendous influence for production decisions, financing and marketing decisions (Wasko 2005a, p. 84). In the case of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, the script and its budget had to be reviewed and signed off before production could move forward. In 1992 the Curtis script for *Four Weddings and a Funeral* was not only presented to and reviewed by Kuhn and Stewart Till, president of the international division of PFE, it was also reviewed by Alain Levy president of PolyGram for an approval of financing and for the PFE distributor, Manifesto, to acquire the worldwide rights to the film (Kuhn 2002, p. 58). It received the green light by PolyGram based in part on the justification of a forecast of a 23% return on investment of its \$4.3 production budget (Kuhn 2002, p. 58). This amounted to an earnings expectation after production and distribution costs of between \$1 million to \$2.4 million in profit. This was an amazing under-estimation of the \$245 million gross earnings that it subsequently generated. A careful construction and investment in global connectivity would pay off with an unexpected magnification in global earnings. Although eventually Gramercy Pictures would become a problematic business alliance with Universal, Kuhn had found a way by establishing the joint venture to distribute film in the North American market (p. 52). This would give access to the WTF film *Four Weddings and a Funeral* into the most lucrative global market for generating film revenues. Thus, PolyGram and its distribution system via PFE became an organized and

manageable connectivity of global reach for WTF and its products into the ordinary life of the global locality.

Richard Curtis and *The Tall Guy* (1989) – Prelude to *Four Weddings and a Funeral*

The production of *The Tall Guy* (Mel Smith, 1989) could be considered a dress rehearsal for *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and is significant in establishing a working relationship of creative talent, the writer Richard Curtis, with WTF that would lead to on-going globalization. Symbolic meanings generated by the story of local London by Curtis would have significance for the global reach, the global-local film market and global unicity. *The Tall Guy* would also serve as a genre platform for *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. Although Curtis was already an experienced and successful comedy writer in British television, *The Tall Guy* was his first feature film script. According to Tim Bevan (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 14), Anthony Jones, the literary agent introduced him to Richard Curtis, also originally from New Zealand, and established the initial connection that led to the ‘career changing’ *The Tall Guy*. It brought together many of the elements that would re-form in the production of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. An example of a repeated element in the British environment was having a primary lead role be American. With these elements, the writer Richard Curtis and his scripts would form a constellation of connectivity with WTF, its producers and production team that would become creative blue prints for their successful British romantic comedies.

After a bad experience writing for Hollywood prior to the *The Tall Guy*, Curtis had ‘vowed only to write films that were set somewhere where I knew every single geographical and actual details’. *The Tall Guy* was originally called *Camden Town Boy* and Curtis had lived in Camden

Town. He also had lived in the neighbourhood of London's Notting Hill the setting for his script of *Notting Hill* and was familiar with the London and the Home Counties of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. The use of his own life experience and personal fantasies seems to be a basis for content and dramatic action in his scripts (p. 92). According to Curtis, the three films, *The Tall Guy*, *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Notting Hill*, were all based on 'dream scenarios' as romantic fantasies (p. 166).

As Kuhn (2002, p. 9) had assessed, there was no guarantee in volume production of film product for a guarantee of success in commercial markets. Something else (an 'it' factor) had to occur within a complex relationship of creative variables that would be the basis of that success for a WTF production. The creative ability to translate meaningful life experiences into a story that would appeal to an audience is a function of screenwriting. How broad that appeal would be was still an unanswered question at this time when WTF produced *The Tall Guy*. Furthermore, although WTF had been producing films, its producers may not have fully understood what would appeal to audiences or how to develop narrative storytelling to the best advantage for audience appeal. They were possibly trying different approaches and genres until they found one that worked with an audience. It would take a shift to a new creative source and talent, the television comedy writer Richard Curtis, for WTF to begin to identify what would be most successful for them in the commercial and global marketplace. At this time they appear not to have recognized the possible outcome or the magnitude of impact they could have in their use of genre, their potential relationship to the global market place nor their potential for connecting to audiences in the global local environment. Nor was it understood how fully and to what degree revenue could be produced from milking audience appeal, especially in the context of a

globalizing economy. Subsequently after their many successes together, Bevan recognised the significance of his relationship to Richard Curtis and could describe the role and contribution that Curtis had made in the creative process:

He has also taught me the greatest lesson in film – that of keeping the quality control of a project sharply in focus right until the end of the creative process. Richard has been involved in every stage of all the films that he has worked on with us. As writer of the script he is guardian of the text, but as executive producer on *The Tall Guy*, *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Notting Hill*, director on *Love Actually* and co-writer and executive producer on *Bean* and *Bridget Jones's Diary* he has also worked on the casting, crewing, editing and marketing of the films. (Bevan in *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 15)

The 1985 relationship of WTF producers Bevan and Radclyffe with the writer Kureishi and national British television distribution with David Rose at Channel 4 was no longer a critical configuration. There was now a new alliance in creativity emerging. This was the relationship between WTF producers Bevan and Fellner with writer Curtis, and they were now connected to Kuhn at PolyGram for distribution globally. Because the new and emerging development process had a different writer, Curtis, the end result as written into the scripts and stories was different representations of the world of London. Previously, Kureishi, from a background of theatre drama had written from his reality of multi-culturalism. Now Curtis with a background in television comedy wrote about his privileged middle-class life experiences. The result was *The Tall Guy*, a romantic comedy that starred Jeff Goldblum, Rowan Atkinson and Emma Thompson.

The Tall Guy is about an American actor working in a comedy act in London who falls in love with a British nurse. Once again, the transatlantic (US-UK connection) between the central characters (and the cultural differences this produced which are generated largely for comic affect) are key to the narrative, as it would be in *Four Weddings* and indeed *Notting Hill*. The American female characters act in a more aggressive and unpredictable manner to create a counterpoint to the more reserved and mannered Englishman. This difference in characterization drawn, crudely speaking, from national stereotypes also acted as a narrative device. As exemplified in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, the more unconventional, career driven, and sexually adventurous female character would ‘exit’ from the action, leaving for the USA at different points in the narrative. In contrast to the previous writers that had worked with WTF, Curtis intuitively played the critical role for defining a successful use of genre (and more specifically the romantic comedy). He functioned as a means of securing WTF a greater connectivity to a global film industry that was centred around Hollywood. The North American market was not included in the PolyGram distribution arrangements for *The Tall Guy*, possibly because at that point there was no Gramercy Films for entry into the market. However the film was distributed in the UK and other global markets. It was subsequently distributed to North America by Miramax and earned \$510,712 in the domestic box office (*IMDb* n.d.e).

Four Weddings and a Funeral (1994)

When, in 1992, Bevan sent the Curtis script for *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994) to PFE’s Kuhn and Till for production approval, their response was that ‘it was one of the most promising scripts we had read’ (Kuhn 2002, p. 58). On Dec. 18, 1992, PolyGram’s president Alain Levy gave the project the green light to proceed with production, signing off on the approval of budget

authorization. The sign off memo (p. 58) identified the foreign market as badly needing product and comedy in particular was lacking. This was a further business justification to underwrite the production costs for possible revenue from the global marketplace. Richard Curtis (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 92) relates that he used his own experience of attending seventy two weddings in five years as inspiration for *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and that ‘All my films seem to start with autobiographical romantic moments that I never had the nerve to actually do anything about’. In this romantic comedy, a confirmed bachelor, Charles, played by the British actor Hugh Grant, attends the weddings as members of his circle of friends, tie the knot. The story begins with him racing to a wedding where he meets, tentatively falls for and beds an American woman Carrie, played by the American actress and movie star, Andie MacDowell. Charles’ inner hesitancy is the barrier for him to commit to love and marriage.

Prior to Curtis writing his first screenplays, he was writing comedy but not writing in romantic comedy form. However, he has explained that in starting to write *Four Weddings and a Funeral* ‘structure just popped into my head one day’ (p. 92). At this point, working with genre may have been an intuitive creative process; he also was influenced initially in writing an ending to the story using the end structure of the film *10* (Blake Edwards, 1979). Reviewer Quentin Curtis of the *Independent*, in comparing Richard Curtis’s *The Tall Guy* to *Four Weddings and a Funeral* as ‘good revue sketches’ on the theme of weddings, explains the importance of the narrative structure:

His underrated last movie, *The Tall Guy*, pin-pointed the foibles of the theatrical world in a series of set pieces. Here he does the same for weddings: the over-eager bride, the gaffe-strewn best man's speech...The film's ceremonial settings are not a gimmick. They

hold it together. Structure plays a crucial, undervalued role in screen comedy (think of the perfect symmetry of *Bringing Up Baby*). Without such a tight framework *Four Weddings* might have fallen to pieces. (Curtis 1994)

During the writing of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, Richard Curtis recounts that ‘it never felt particularly like a hit. When I had handed the script in to Tim he probably thought, as did we all, ‘Here’s another one like the last one, let’s hope it does a little bit better than *The Tall Guy*’” (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 92). Curtis spent three weeks searching through various films in order to identify a director for the script. Finally, after seeing *Ready When You Are, Mr McGill* (Mike Newell, 1976), a feature length teleplay made more than ten years earlier, he recommended the director, Mike Newell, who was then hired to direct *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. By then Newell was known for having directed *Dance with a Stranger* (1985) a dark tale of love and obsession about the last woman executed in Britain, and more recently *Enchanted April* (1992), a story of four women in search of renewal and love. Russell Schwartz, of Gramercy Pictures, attributes *Four Weddings and a Funeral*’s eventual success to the creative chemistry of Curtis and Newell (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 100).

Expectations were not high for the film because they had no established way to judge with any certainty its appeal with the local audiences in key global markets. In deciding whether to release the film first in the US or in the UK, the strategy used was based on the assessment that if it was successful in the US, this would platform it for success in the UK. If it was not successful in the US, it still had a chance for success in the UK market. This would not be the case if it opened in the UK and was not well received. Then it would not be able to do well in the US (Kuhn, 2002, p. 60). Once the film was completed it went through two audience previews

before being released in North America. Neither preview indicated the success that it would have. However, the film was chosen to open the Sundance Festival. Yet, even there, the film *Backbeat* (Iain Softley, 1994), picked up for distribution by PFE, appeared to do better (p. 60).

In preparation for the commercial theatre release of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, Kuhn, the PFE marketing team and the marketing consultant Peter Graves came up with a strategy of a slow release (p.61). Thinking that they had a 'little' movie, with limited appeal, in part because they did not have stars other than Andie MacDowell, they considered the opening to be of high risk against the expenditures and resources of the major studios in North America. Limiting the release to a small number of screens in New York City and Los Angeles, they planned to use their marketing resources to produce a 'high per screen average' for the release date weekend. This industry statistic, the total box office for that weekend divided by the number of screens, serves as a benchmark for theatres in other markets to assess their own possible box office revenue and decide whether to support the movie (p. 61). In a gradual roll out of the film to other regional markets in North America, Kuhn could control decisions on expanding the expenditure on prints and advertising if the box office was positive. This plan was a 'limited release with widening out' (p. 62). The marketing plan included TV spot advertising and outdoor advertising using a poster. Kuhn (p. 64) believes that the poster and its artwork were the most effective element in raising awareness of the audience. In addition, the other most important factor was choosing the right weekend to open in order to gain a competitive advantage. They chose the week beginning on March 9. After the initial figures for New York came out unexpectedly low, they discovered that the film was selling out but customers were being turned away. This was the result of the theatre management placing it in the smallest

house of the multi-plex. The limited house size was generating the unexpected small amount of ticket sales. After persuading the theatre to switch houses, the results for the weekend were far ahead of what they had expected based on the preview response.

At the time Kuhn and the marketing team had not fully understood the implications of their global strategy nor could they predict the unexpected results from their successful implementation of its plan. In order to maximize box office earnings, Kuhn responded to the film's unexpected performance with a revised release strategy. By March 17, Levy had agreed to Kuhn's change in marketing strategy and his request for an immediate substantial expenditure of \$15 million. This was to fund a staggered roll out of expansion first to 200 theatres and then to 600 theatres in the North American market. It took full advantage of maximizing the unexpected, successful audience response. One month later *Four Weddings and a Funeral* was No. 1 at the box office in the US with a gross for the weekend of \$4,162,489 (p. 67). Kuhn believed that a major reason for this rapid, huge success with a British film in the North American market had occurred because they had been able to control their own marketing and distribution rather than having it controlled by an American studio (p. 67). Stewart Till led the international release with a May 13 opening in the UK. The film became the biggest grossing British movie with £27,763,000 (p. 68). PolyGram then understood that it had a capacity for successfully releasing movies both in America and worldwide and began to expand its worldwide distribution. At this point, WTF together with PFE had established a pattern for success in the complex process of creative production connected to the complex process of distribution. They continued to expand with the confidence that success breeds.

***The Crying Game* and *Four Weddings and a Funeral*: A Contrast of Global Connectivity and Market Performance in Distribution**

The assessment of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* as a ‘small’ but ‘highly successful’ film was the direct result of its box office performance first in the North American market and then in its worldwide markets, including Britain. This global expansion by PolyGram was occurring at the same time that American investment in British production had been declining from £142 million in 1984 to £ 67.8 million in 1993 (*BFI Handbook* 1994 cited in Street 2009, p. 25). American investment had focused on the expansion of the British multiplex and a strong Hollywood presence within the exhibition sector of the British film industry (p. 21). British private investment in film production had also declined after 1985. However, in 1990 a European Co-production Fund had been established and with additional funding from British Screen and Channel 4, a number of low budget British independent productions were funded in the early 1990s. These films included *The Crying Game* (Neil Jordan, 1992), *Naked* (Mike Leigh, 1993), *Butterfly Kiss* (Michael Winterbottom, 1994) and *Land and Freedom* (Ken Loach, 1995).

The Crying Game, a thriller described as a ‘small’ British film, was picked up by Hollywood’s Miramax for distribution to North America and went to a wider release in 1993 based on its unexpected initial response at the box office of \$5.2 million (Fox 1993). *The Crying Game* and *Four Weddings and a Funeral* had relatively low budgets compared to Hollywood feature budgets, however, when distributed to the North American market, they generated unexpected profits from the box office grosses - *The Crying Game*’s North American box office eventually being \$62,548,947 (*Box Office Mojo* n.d.c) compared to *Four Weddings and a Funeral*’s North American box office of \$52,700,832 (*Box Office Mojo* n.d.a). Yet it appears that Hollywood’s

Miramax did not distribute *The Crying Game* to global markets when it was released. In contrast, PolyGram had strategically structured its business model with *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and its other productions for more control, profit share and return on investment from global distribution. This global marketing was in addition to using the most lucrative global market, North America, as a marketing platform to other global markets. The strategic focus in marketing *Four Weddings and a Funeral* to the ‘foreign’ box office appears to have significantly boosted the film’s earning share to 78.6% in contrast to 21.4% of (North American) domestic earnings (*IMDb* n.d.f). However, marketing and distribution are not the total definers of global success as this would imply that every film distributed globally by Hollywood would be successful. What is successful is combining an appealing product, in this case the genre romantic comedy film of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, with an effective marketing and distribution chain that reaches the marketplace and connects with an audience that values it.

An Understanding of Globalization as Complex Connectivity and Unicity: The Global Breakthrough of Working Title Films and *Four Weddings and a Funeral*

By 1992, WTF was transformed from being a small, independent British company into a creative production unit and business structure within the global conglomerate, PolyGram. According to Tomlinson (2008, p. 1) ‘cultural practices lie at the heart of globalization’, consequently cultural practices represented by the case of WTF, as this thesis argues, reveal globalization and its transformative processes. If the global context can be understood as a unitary nature of globalization (p. 10), WTF evidenced a tendency for this unitary nature with the global box office success of the British romantic comedy *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. It generated an inclusiveness with global collectivities, i.e. different global local audiences, as an

exemplification of the concept of global unicity, a global ‘wholeness’(Robertson, 1992 cited in Tomlinson 2008, pp. 10-11), in the cultural practice of ‘going to the movies’. Accordingly these audiences were still specific to national markets of the global marketplace, especially those of North America, the United Kingdom, Europe (i.e. France, Germany, Spain and Sweden), Japan and other English language-based markets of the Commonwealth countries such as Australia (*IMDb* n.d.g; Kuhn 2002, pp. 54, 167).

In this new global context, WTF became more effective and efficient in producing commercial, cultural products. These products were acceptable to the conglomerate’s corporate business culture with its marketing and distribution processes and also had wider commercial appeal to local audiences globally. These products were better able to reach these audiences through a complex marketing chain of connectivities, managed by the PolyGram conglomerate for its own interests of making money. Through this global corporate context with its own corporate capitalistic ideology and methodology of practice, the identities and representations produced and marketed in a narrative form of genre emerged as different from those of the film products of WTF in the 1980s. The more successful films of WTF such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Mike Newell, 1994), *Love Actually* (Richard Curtis, 2003) and *Notting Hill* (Roger Michell, 1999) offer representations of more privileged protagonists than those found in earlier films such as *My Beautiful Laundrette*. Citing Raymond Williams (1989), Tomlinson (2008, p. 19) explains that culture and the global context of culture are not ‘the exclusive property of the privileged, but inclusive of all manner of everyday practices’. In globalization, it could also be argued that ordinary life does not exclude the privileged, or representations of the privileged. Therefore they can become part of that every day experience. With internal corporate approval as a gatekeeper

for product development and release, WTF's cultural products and their representations of the privileged had attained a greater external global appeal that led to an ongoing presence and impact in global culture. This corporate approval was combined with its financing, distribution resources, and sensitivity in marketing to the complexities of different local audiences and their revenue generating capacity. Although this complexity may be described as multi-valent and dense, it had points or interfaces of less complex and straightforward connectivity, i.e. an audience paying for a ticket as the source of revenue, a clearly identified point of connectivity in the exchange of money for a valued cultural experience. WTF's sudden unexpected and dramatic success with a single film, *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, exemplifies the process of globalization in having rapidly forming global interconnections and interdependencies. With growing experience in managing the complexities of creativity and product production, WTF had exchanged their financial independence in exchange for global resources of the PolyGram conglomerate and its global distribution system. By doing this, their film was constructed with new sensitivity to the global film market, especially for the key Hollywood market of North America as a platform back to the British market, to Europe and to the English-speaking global markets. Because of its genre narrative structure and representations, the film could be understood in a meaningful way by different global audiences and their response was magnified with a massive return of capital flow across unregulated global borders to PolyGram.

As a result of this global response to *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, WTF's producers and the management of their parent company PFE could better assess what would work best in the globalization processes of film production, distribution and exhibition. This assessment continued for reducing their risk in creative production and market distribution in order to meet

the corporate goal of maximization of profit. But they could only do this by also assessing, as Tim Bevan (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 16) commented, that: ‘The world was down and needed cheering up’. The creative process was complex because, rather than being a logical process of manufacture and production, it has a greater intuitive dynamic in its relationships, business judgments and decision-making process. With the relationship and contribution of Richard Curtis, WTF had found a generic formula. This formula combined a Hugh Grant type of middle class, southern English identity with local representations using the Home Counties and London. Grant as an actor continued to use his English identity type as his on-screen star persona for subsequent WTF romantic comedies.

Using the conceptualization of Tomlinson, the globalization process of WTF and *Four Weddings and a Funeral* could be understood as two critical inter-related connectivities. A connectivity of relationships from the creative side of filmmaking and managed by the label WTF could be maximized through an interconnection with the emerging business connectivity, the PolyGram global distribution machine. These connectivities used genre not only as structure for narrative elements but as a marketing genre in audience recognition to exploit the film for maximizing profit. As Bevan describes:

PolyGram needed a hit and spent big monies promoting the film in the US, UK and France in particular ...pushed their international distribution machine to the maximum and reaped the rewards – a \$250 million worldwide gross on a film that had cost under \$5 million to make. (Bevan in *Laundrettes and Lovers*2003, p. 16)

The identification of a successful process in globalization, would become a pattern that WTF and PFE would use to replicate this initial global success. This patterning would create an on-going track record of globally successful British romantic comedies during the 1990s. In looking back

at this formative moment in his career, Bevan came to understand that: ‘We did not realize the true value of being part of a unified international distribution structure until we had our first major hit in 1994 with *Four Weddings and a Funeral*’ (p. 16). In order to connect to the global market, WTF had been required to implement a disciplined work approach by PolyGram through the use of the production control sheet. This integrated their production work with the market realities of projections for international marketing and international sales (Kuhn 2002, p. 81). This process appears to have exploited genre at the expense of an exploration of national identity and difference that was emerging in the more diverse, multicultural work of WTF of the 1980s – specifically *My Beautiful Launderette* and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*. What was valuable and saleable in key global markets, such as North America, France, and, at the same time, acceptable to the culture of the conglomerate, was a romantic fantasy representation of white, thirty-something, and (upper) middle-class, idyllic England, rather than a representation of a changing and more realistic multicultural British identity. The most significant global local relationships were that of Britain to North America and Britain to specific global localities of Europe. In Europe, box-office figures would suggest that the strongest global-local connectivity for *Four Weddings and a Funeral* was primarily France. Rather than engaging with debates around representations of Britishness or cultural identity, the popular and economic global success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* suggested instead the sale of a stereotypical and very narrow band of Britishness (or, indeed Englishness). At the same time – and, in contrast to WTF - other British filmmakers continued to examine representations of diversity and ‘local’ questions of British identity. This group was exemplified on the one hand by Gurinder Chadha, who established herself as a feature film director and more diverse voice in mainstream British cinema with *Bhaji on the Beach* (1994) and, on the other by the more experimental, political and

poetic work of John Akomfrah and the Black Audio Film Collective with *Who Needs a Heart* (1991), *A Touch of the Tar Brush* (1991) and *Seven Songs of Malcolm X* (1993). Unlike WTF, these filmmakers did not have access to the global reach provided by distribution operations of either Hollywood or PolyGram. Their films may also have been either so experimental or so specific in meaning to the local context to have had a limited audience appeal for the commercialized global market relationship cultivated by WTF with *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. The appeal of the film may also reflect a global sensibility and receptivity for British romantic comedy that had not been identified (or understood) by the producers prior to the success *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. Once identified as globally valuable WTF then proceeded to replicate this model based on the genre narrative and its wish fulfillment in romance.

Nonetheless, one of the on-going problems of UK production in general had been its lack of market sensitivity. Projects developed in isolation from market realities could not generate commercial success (Murphy 2000, p. 6). This had been a major problem for the British film industry that was compounded by a lack of financial resources, especially after the Goldcrest collapse. Because WTF had re-formed using a different approach with greater financial resources, it now was generating a much different result from other British films produced in the British film industry. Two complex connectivities, one of creative production and the other of distribution, had more successfully meshed with as an interface within PolyGram. The end effect was a smoother and more results-driven WTF connectivity to the global local marketplace and a WTF that was exceptional in comparison with other British producers.

For PolyGram and WTF, the success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* then led to the financing, development, and production of another Curtis script. In contrast to WTF's experience of *My Beautiful Laundrette*'s follow up, *Sammy and Rosy Get Laid* (Stephen Frears, 1987), WTF produced the commercially successful, British romantic comedy, *Notting Hill*. It paired British actor Hugh Grant, now a celebrity and star following the success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, with American celebrity and A-list movie star Julia Roberts. It did this to generate high global box office earnings (see chapter 7 for a detailed analysis of this film). WTF also had a new creative relationship through Curtis with the comedy actor Rowan Atkinson. He was a long term collaborator with Curtis as a writer and performer on British television and by then was an established comedy star. He had had a cameo as the nervous priest in *Four Wedding and a Funeral*. WTF cultivated this relationship to produce the film *Bean* (Mel Smith, 1997) and later *Johnny English* (Peter Howitt, 2003) in which Atkinson starred. These films became further worldwide hits for WTF. Wayne (2006, pp. 62, 71) argues that the content and cultural values of films produced by WTF and British cinema have been shaped by the economic and cultural dominance of Hollywood. This shaping he identifies as an 'Atlanticist paradigm' of what is acceptable for access to their primary audience and market, North America (p. 62). Wayne (pp. 63-64, 71) further maintains that British films must 'detour' through the North American market in the marketing chain to reach the Hollywood-controlled, British exhibition market. In meeting this paradigm, consideration may also be given to the British film industry's second largest export market of Europe. Looking back almost a decade after *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, Bevan assessed the emerging global success of WTF in the following way:

Our films were European in feel wherever they were made, performing very well at the European box office thanks to the driving force of the PolyGram machine. This level of

success enabled us to take some bigger risks on home-developed material. (Bevan in *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 17)

Though he describes their films as having a ‘European feel’, they were at the same time, British and have also been described as having an American sensibility (Kenworthy n.d.). In attempting to interpret this ‘European feel’, there may even be an implied influence from the idea of European popular cinema, including French comedy films, that according to Vincendeau and Dyer (1992 cited in Hjort and Mackenzie 2000, p. 4), may be overlooked in preference for a nation’s ‘art’ film production. When speaking of a European feel, Bevan may have been referring to textural qualities and distinctiveness resulting from WTF’s creative autonomy in managing the writing, directing, or performance of its films. However, this understanding does not entirely explain the perception by different audiences of one film’s ability to possess varying national or cultural sensibilities. Styles and conventions of national cinemas that describe a national culture may form a context that shapes the way different audiences decode or perceive a film. The film’s cultural representation using a mix of elements or factors such as ‘gestures, words, intonations, attitudes, postures’ may construct what Hayward identifies as ‘gestural codes’ that ‘are deeply rooted in a nation’s culture’ (Hayward 2005, p. 12). The casting of stars from different nations, exemplified by Americans, Andie MacDowell and Julia Roberts, or the British star, Hugh Grant, may also embody cultural representations as a coding. According to Hayward, ‘spectators impose on the stars their own expectations...as mediators between the real and the imagined’ (p. 12). Thus a film, its representations, its actors and its narrative may be imbued with this more specific sensibility based on a cultural projection in the communication process by the audience.

Rather than uniformity, Robertson (1992 cited in Tomlinson 2008, p. 11) describes an increasing interaction of human life that suggests wholeness, or unicity. This involves a local response that includes difference within its interaction to an enlarging, known world. As a result of a new, expanding film distribution by PolyGram, a change in awareness and inclusion of a WTF kind of romantic love, *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, may have been introduced into the global daily life of localities. This introduction took place in the different distribution markets and could be understood as an expanded resource for the local culture. The interaction with the film locally may have changed the possibility in the local daily life for a tendency towards a sense of wholeness with the world. Furthermore, the film industry's processes as a modality of global connectivity had functioned effectively, if understood in the context of the corporate culture and its economic goal for box office performance. A corporate business experiment in executing an untried strategy with filmed entertainment content had paid off. It had succeeded through the establishment of the new, European-based studio of PFE and the new WTF. They had accomplished global success employing a specific type of story, the genre of the romantic comedy. Using an English distinctiveness in product differentiation, their filmed cultural products were labeled and identified as 'British' romantic comedy, not European romantic comedy. Yet, they could be understood and be accessed by a European audience, English speaking audiences and other foreign audiences as their notion of a meaningful 'British' cultural representation.

The strategy for global entertainment success had attained its goal and the plan that Kuhn had formulated had worked. Risk reduction had been well managed by PolyGram to permit the global success of WTF through *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. If measured as box office revenue and popular acclaim, creative production had also been well managed for global success.

In looking back about his experience writing *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and subsequent British romantic comedies, Curtis (2006, p. xiii) speculates against criticism of the romantic comedy. He argues that this type of movie is a celebration and positive contrast to the movies produced about violence and killing. He asserts that the experience of love is more relevant and meaningful to the daily lives of audiences. If the world had needed ‘cheering up’ as Bevan put it, WTF and PFE had certainly achieved this aim with *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. They had found a genre that would work to meet the needs of the producers, the global entertainment conglomerate, the global filmmarket and, as just importantly, its audiences. The next chapter will look more closely at how genre as a modality of the global film industry functioned in this globalization process of complex connectivity for the on-going, consistent global success of WTF and its films.

Part III - Complex Connectivity and Genre

Chapter 7 - Working Title Films and the Modality of Genre: The Reworking, Redefinition and Hybridization of Genre in the 1990s

Chapter 8 - Working Title Films, Hollywood and Complex Re-connectivity

Chapter 9 - Case Studies in Genre Connectivity: Working Title Films' *Fargo*, *Elizabeth*, *Shaun of the Dead*, and *Hot Fuzz*

Chapter 10 –Conclusion: Working Title Films, Genre and Globalization

Chapter 7: Working Title Films and the Modality of Genre: The Reworking, Redefinition and Hybridization of Genre in the 1990s

Introduction

With the global success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Mike Newell, 1994), Working Title Films (WTF) had established a breakthrough in connectivity to processes of globalization. Using business strategies, corporate experience and organization, PolyGram Filmed Entertainment (PFE) and WTF, which was now imbedded within the global conglomerate of PolyGram, had generated this connectivity with its creative product through PolyGram's global distribution and marketing apparatus. Nonetheless, the degree of the box office response and the success globally came as a surprise to the talent, the producers, the distributors and the marketers. Other films had been released and marketed by the new film studio and corporate structure but without the same results. Why had this 'small' film performed in such a different way from other films produced and marketed by PFE at this time? The answer to this question may be understood as the function of the film genre romantic comedy.

As story, with generic conventions and combined with specific representations, the romantic comedy *Four Weddings and a Funeral* met a need in the audience of the global market. Its representations of London, a type of British culture and the human dilemma were formulated and generated by creative talent using their previous work and personal experience. Genre, functioning in a global system described by interconnected complexity, was the vehicle for clarity and simplicity of comprehension by the global audience. It formed a connective

relationship to a local fulfillment of expectation in empathetic pleasure. Genre may also perform a function of traveling textual meanings, providing a negotiation process around an issue as a discourse (Watson 2003, p. 160). The local response from audiences in the different global markets, in return, may generate a clearer identification process of a shared global relevancy of its filmed story.

As Neale (2000, p. 31) argues, genre is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that can be understood in different ways. He maintains that genre functions as ‘difference in repetition’, providing a recognizable framework that still allows for distinctiveness although with a risk factor of being too different (p. 232). Another dimension of genre’s multi-dimensionality is its use in the institutional practices of Hollywood (p. 39). As a modality in product development and production, the use of genre within the industrialized process of the Hollywood system of production serves the need for variation of its product lines. Watson (2003, p. 158), citing Steve Neale (1980, 1990), explains that production is organized by genre to perform ‘two crucial interrelated functions; to guarantee meanings and pleasures to audiences and to offset considerable economic risk of industrial film production by providing ‘cognitive collateral against innovation and difference’. Also, after the production process, a critical practice for Hollywood was and is the construction of a ‘narrative image’ using a generic framework to identify and promote its film product in distribution, marketing and exhibition. In the global economy, genre may then become a critical framework of the production and distribution process for standardization of commodification for its cultural products i.e. the films of WTF. Applying these ideas to the object of this thesis’ study, it might be argued that WTF may have either intuitively or consciously also used the understanding of genre and its multi-dimensionality as a strategic approach that resulted in connectivity to the global marketplace and its audience. This

chapter examines how genre functioned for the on-going, consistent global success of WTF and its films.

A Genre Blueprint for On-going Success in Globalization and Connectivity to the Global Film Market

Following the success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* WTF was now connected to a global distribution system that needed more products in its marketing channels to meet market demand. WTF was arguably from the mid-1990s established in a process of what might be termed: on-going connectivity to global markets. Because it better understood what would work in the global environment as a standard operational approach, it could then more consistently replicate this functional global model with its genre films. Development and production strategies, plans and decisions became sensitized to the global economic market in making not only similar genre products but also those with genre variation.

Analyzing their strategy for production, distribution and marketing from the mid-1990s, it could, therefore, be argued that WTF recognized genre as a modality for patterning and managing industrialized storytelling. Thus, genre served as both a connectivity and *function for connectivity* to the global marketplace in a dimension of the process of globalization. This process was one of risk and reward, with a dynamic of unpredictability in outcome. However, with a growing experience in developing and marketing genre film product, WTF with PFE had learned how to negotiate in this globally turbulent environment. It did this by identifying what produced a lower risk and what produced a more successful economic response. This was exemplified with romantic comedies *French Kiss* (Lawrence Kasdan, 1995), *Notting Hill* (Roger Michell, 1999), and *Love, Actually* (Richard Curtis, 2003) and the comedy *Bean* (Mel Smith, 1997). The film *French Kiss* was described by Liza Chasin (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p.

113), President of Production US, WTF, as ‘our first ‘movie star’ movie’ because of casting the lead with the Hollywood movie star, Meg Ryan. This film may also have served as a global strategic transition, understood by WTF as having been built on the success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. It also appears to have been conceived by WTF for greater, targeted audience appeal as a romantic comedy purposely set in Europe (p. 113).

After the defining experience of such immense international success with *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, WTF and PFE had a blueprint for on-going global success. This winning formula was repeated most notably after *Four Weddings and a Funeral* with the romantic comedy, *Notting Hill* (Roger Michell, 1999). According to Bevan (2003 cited in Gardner 2003) this formula had evolved from their relationship with Richard Curtis. Of equal importance was the fact that WTF collaborated with Curtis within the corporate structure of PFE. Furthermore, WTF understood how to use specific genres (above all the romantic comedy) as a means of connecting with audience expectation. It also did this within the ideological framing of the corporate culture and its interests for what was acceptable for production and distribution globally. This corporate culture can be understood as a rationalization of its extremes of growing ‘wealth, income, and power’ and sustained economic growth by its beneficiaries as natural and inevitable. This understanding is based on the ideas of privatization and that the ‘absence of constraints’ and minimal government regulation produces free market efficiency for organizing the economy (Herman and McChesney 1997, p. 35-37). Therefore, it could also be assessed that the corporate culture and the ideology of Thatcherism were in alignment serving as contexts for the on-going success of WTF and its use of genre. Having gained experience in producing a creative product that generated huge economic success in the global marketplace, WTF continued to produce successful films throughout the 1990s.

As a dynamic process, genre can be redefined, blurred, mixed and hybridized (Neale 2000, p. 25; Jaffe 2008, p. 7; Chandler 2000; Staiger 2003 cited in Grant 2007, p. 23). As an example of this genre hybridization being put into practice, WTF and its producers not only redefined the romantic comedy as a sub-genre, the ‘British’ romantic comedy, for Hollywood and the global context, but they appear to have expanded their genre production strategy. They re-visited and reworked genre with film projects and talent through expanded creative relationships in the development of successful productions. Two of their most significant creative relationships for revisiting and reworking genre have been with the writer-director Richard Curtis and the American writer-directors, the Coen brothers. The latter relationship between WTF and the Coen brothers began when PolyGram acquired their film *Barton Fink* (Joel Coen, 1991) as product for its new global distribution operations (Kuhn 2002, p. 47). This led to an on-going collaboration between WTF and the Coen brothers. Known for the reworking of genre as the basis of their films (Levine 2000, p. 13) they expanded the production capacity of WTF and diversified its genre offerings with distinctive American representations. This working relationship resulted in films that include *The Hudsucker Proxy* (Joel Coen, 1994), *Fargo* (Joel Coen, 1996) and *The Big Lebowski* (Joel Coen, 1998).¹

If box office performance is any indicator, once WTF connected to the global marketplace, their productions in the 1990s continued to be valued as meaningful for the local context globally. WTF had a skill or ability to negotiate this complexity of talent and management through the stages of genre script development and production. Genre manipulation may be one of their

¹The Coens’ relationship with WTF and their use of genre will be examined in more detail in chapter 9.

fortes as evidenced by the variation of romantic comedy motifs within one film, *Love, Actually* (Richard Curtis, 2003). During the 1990s, their production titles also included the aforementioned comedy *Bean* (Mel Smith, 1997), the western, *The Hi-lo Country* (Stephen Frears, 1998), the neo-noir, *Fargo* (Joel Coen, 1996), the comedy-crime film, *The Big Lebowski* (Joel Coen, 1998), the crime-drama, *Dead Man Walking* (Tim Robbins, 1995), and the historical drama, *Elizabeth* (Shekhar Kapur, 1998).

***Notting Hill* (1999): Replication of Success**

When the movie *Notting Hill* was released in the United States and the United Kingdom, almost simultaneously, in May, 1999, it produced an immediate and significant impact at the box office, grossing \$21,811,180 its opening weekend (*Box Office Mojo* n.d.d). It made \$262 million worldwide that year, \$5 million more than *Four Weddings and a Funeral* in its release year of 1994 (*BBC News* 1999). Although debatable if *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince* (David Yates, 2009) could be identified as a British film, *Notting Hill* has been considered the biggest grossing British film of all time (*BBC News* 1999b). Its worldwide gross was \$363,889,678 (*Box Office Mojo* n.d.d).

With the release of the film *Notting Hill*, there was now a shift in the perception of WTF and its product as mainstream Hollywood. It also became debatable to identify *Notting Hill* as a British film being generated for a primarily British audience. The identification of the film as British was criticized as a misnomer, being misleading according Ian Nathan, editor of film magazine *Empire* (cited in *BBC News* 1999). The concerns in production may not have been those of selling it to a British audience but rather of selling a British representation to an American

audience. *Notting Hill* could then be considered to function as a star vehicle rather than a local film representation. By this time, Hugh Grant had become a celebrity, as both a British actor and a Hollywood star, and Julia Roberts was a major American and international Hollywood movie star. Although *Notting Hill* repeated the global financial success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, its producer, Duncan Kenworthy (1999 cited in Brook 1999), acknowledged this change in identification at the film's New York premiere, saying: 'I think in many ways we made an American film. I don't think there's any sense in which an audience will look at this and say "oh isn't it a cute British film". It really is an American sensibility that is behind this film'. Although British elements went into the production of the film such as the cast, the crew, and financing, if it were primarily a British film, the cultural representations and identifications of characters, story action and the specificities of its London setting would be more narrowly understood by the British audience but not a greater global audience. Moreover, when it was released, comparisons were made between *Notting Hill* and *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. Kenneth Turan, film critic for the *Los Angeles Times*, summed up this comparison as:

A collateral descendant of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, the film that made Grant an international star, *Notting Hill* is a smartly cast and consistently amusing romantic comedy. As with its predecessor, the key to this film's considerable charm is the script by Richard Curtis, his first solo credit (he collaborated on *Bean*) since *Four Weddings*. (Turan 1999, p. 4)

Sticking broadly to the successful formula 'discovered' in *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (i.e. a representation of a middle class Englishness with Hugh Grant as leading man, grouped with interesting characters and paired with an American star), WTF had again produced another

globally successful romantic comedy film. As part of that success was the contribution of the writer, Richard Curtis. According Curtis:

Four Weddings and The Tall Guy were both based on ‘dream scenarios’, and I was trying to think if I had any other romantic fantasies in the back of my mind. At the time, I used to have dinner every week in Battersea with my friends Piers and Paula and Helen and I suddenly thought – what would happen if I turned up one night with, let’s say, Madonna, in their kitchen. (Curtis in *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 166)

Eventually, the writer’s individual fantasy was a starting point that needed to be expanded and ‘shaped’ into story content and structure that could be filmed. It would also need to be comprehensible both in expectation and in consumption to audiences worldwide. Although Curtis had not understood that he was writing in the genre of romantic comedy when he first wrote *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, by the time he began to write *Notting Hill*, his awareness of his own creative process had changed. He consciously set out to write a romantic comedy as the screenplay (Curtis 2006, p. vii). However, disclaiming *Notting Hill* as a sequel to *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, its producer Duncan Kenworthy stated that:

...(Notting Hill) is another romantic comedy, but very different from *Four Weddings* which was a story of big social events with none of the real life in-between. *Notting Hill* is the complete opposite, the day-to-day details of a love affair. What makes it unusual and special is that it is a love affair between the most famous woman in the world and just an ordinary guy. (Kenworthy 1999 cited in Brook, 1999)

Yet, the story of *Notting Hill* could be described as the classic romantic comedy structure of ‘boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl’. In this case the girl is a famous American movie star,

Anna Scott, who by chance visits a bookstore in the Notting Hill section of London. The bookstore is owned by the recently divorced William Thacker. He intercepts a thief while Anna is on the premises of the store, thus setting off a spark of attraction. They later bump into each other on the street when he accidentally spills orange juice on her. He invites her to clean up at his nearby home where their relationship develops. The movie star with success and the unsuccessful bookseller begin to fall in love, confronting and eventually overcoming the challenges of her celebrity and the very different worlds they live in. Nathan ascribes the success of *Notting Hill* to a number of factors:

It built on the previous success of *Four Weddings*, it was accessible and it was very mainstream, appealing from kids through to grannies... There was also that element of wish-fulfillment, with the ordinary guy meeting a movie star. (Nathan 1999 cited in *BBC News* 1999)

If accessibility and appeal were part of its global success, these qualities were also directly related to the function of its genre. As Kapsis (1991 cited in Neale 2000, p. 216) points out, genre films are made through a complex network of inter-organizational relationships with gatekeepers at the various stages of film production. Thus, PFE and WTF had become more experienced in negotiating this complexity for success. As gatekeepers they had also become more experienced in choosing which projects to develop, to produce and to market for global box office success. *Notting Hill* was the result.

After the initial success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, Kuhn provides an explanation for the on-going success of what he then describes as the ‘mainstream’ films of the European-based PFE

exemplified by *Notting Hill* and its labels such as WTF. For him, this success was the direct result of having a worldwide distribution operation:

Now, we could take on a purely British project as *Bean* and, by focusing all our efforts, make it into a world-wide success... We had the ability to ‘make the numbers work’ in the film business. In addition, I felt that particularly in our film selection procedure and our international marketing, we were better in many respects than the Hollywood studios and more talent friendly. (Kuhn 2002, p. 88)

Even if the PFE marketing operation had been fine tuned to maximize profit, it needed a certain type of acceptable product to market which matched its marketing parameters. In order to maintain this global connectivity and produce global financial success, WTF used the *Four Weddings and a Funeral* experience in scripting, casting, production and marketing to develop and produce *Notting Hill*. However, though it repeated financial success it was (perhaps inevitably) negatively criticized in comparison to *Four Weddings and a Funeral* as being formulaic, ‘an effort to reproduce *Four Weddings* on a much grander scale’, and with ‘an irritatingly fake feel to it because it is a British film designed for the American market’ (Brook 1999). This statement may have been a criticism that perceived the film from a narrow national perspective without insight for its global accessibility and positioning in the global market. *Notting Hill* now had a much bigger budget of \$45 million (compared to *Four Weddings and a Funeral*’s \$6 million budget) and Hollywood’s best-paid actress, Julia Roberts who had starred in successful Hollywood romantic comedies. However, the increased budget was inflated by meeting the salary demands of \$12 million for the globally recognized Hollywood name star.

Although *Notting Hill* was developed and produced by WTF within the PFE corporate and marketing structures, just as it was ready to be released for distribution, PolyGram with PFE was sold and integrated into Hollywood's Universal Studios as its assets. PFE ceased to exist and the film profits for *Notting Hill* went to Universal Studios (Kuhn 2002, pp. 88, 94). The continuity of global connectivity for WTF in film distribution had shifted to Hollywood. Even as WTF would be disconnected from PolyGram and reconnected to Universal as its new Hollywood parent company, it sustained its global success by generating new and globally appealing film products through its use of genre. In order to understand this sustained global connectivity and the function of genre in globalization, this thesis argues that the contribution and the role of the writer are critical in the construction of this connectivity.

The Screenwriter's Relationship to Genre: Richard Curtis

One of the most critical relationships for WTF that contributed to its global success in the 1990s and 2000s was that of the writer, Richard Curtis. This thesis argues that, in the case of WTF, Curtis played a significant role in generating genre narrative that had global appeal and valued meaning for connectivity to the audience. By examining his role and how it operated, one can better understand how genre functioned as a modality in globalization. The contribution and role of the screenwriter is a challenging area to understand because of the internal and individual creative dimension of the writing process. However, in the dimension of globalization exemplified by the film industry and the experience of WTF, it is also a critical and decisive relationship to the global market. The writer is the storyteller who generates a story that may become a relevant, cultural product for audience comprehension, enjoyment and symbolic meaning. Through the writing process, Curtis's romantic fantasies about the difficulties of

falling in love were externalized in a story formulation of genre and what is now identified as the British romantic comedy. His individual and expressive creative process incorporated his own specificity of background, culture and life experience within structurally disciplined content for industrial-based storytelling. At the same time he worked from specific life experiences, he constructed them with a story logic of genre conventions that he had subconsciously integrated (Curtis 2006, p. vii). Neale (2000, p. 228) points out that there is almost no extensive research in detail other than that of Kapsis on 'the relationship between generic production, box-office success, audience preference and industrial practice' at a given point in time. However, this thesis argues that, in the case of WTF, these elements were connected as cause and effect relationships in which the role of the writer was critical for generic production as industrial practice for audience preference. These relationships, of which the writer was central, led to box office success. It can be further understood that the stories written by Curtis had to be relevant, appealing, and meaningful for the local audiences of the global market in order to generate box office. Curtis's working relationship with WTF was considered successful based on the eventual box office for movies made from his screenplays. Their global appeal would also sustain the ongoing business relationship of Curtis and WTF. Commenting on the immense and immediate box office success of *Notting Hill* in its first 14 weeks of release, WTF producer Eric Fellner said: 'It is marvelous news. The writer Richard Curtis is a genius. You've only got to look at a list of the top British films over the last five years and three of those are his - *Four Weddings*, *Bean: The Ultimate Disaster Movie* and now this one' (BBC News 1999).

The use of genre as structured, emotional communication, transformed Curtis's specificities into a form of meaningful content that produced box office response. This box office response came from ticket sales in exchange for story enjoyment by the global audience. This is exemplified

most notably in specific global markets i.e. France, Germany, Spain, USA and Canada, Brazil, Japan. The romantic comedy structure of story functioned to connect the writer's individual specific experiences as the framing for a shared and universal human condition for needs of love, friendship and 'cheering up'. These can be identified in globalization theory as a dimension of unicity, the feeling or sense of the world as '...a single social and cultural setting' (Tomlinson 2008, p. 10). However, there is no guarantee that every writer's story will meaningfully engage and connect to an audience as a shared emotional experience. In the dimension of globalization exemplified by the film industry, story selection, development and writing become not only a complex process but an area of risk for connectivity.

Constructing the Romantic Comedy: *Notting Hill*

Although Curtis was using the romantic comedy genre as a vehicle of meanings from his own world, the re-telling of his fantasies and life experience needed to be packaged and presented in a narrative form and with content that was ideologically acceptable to business in order to be marketable to global audiences. According to Neale (2000, p. 225), three different genres deal with the ideological issues of courtship, coupledness and community: the musical, romantic drama, and romantic comedy. He explains that 'While aesthetic forms and fantasies always draw on and interact with ideological material, they also always possess their own specificity' and though a story may be ideologically acceptable for production, it does not follow that this is the ideological preference of the audience (p. 225). In the case of *Notting Hill*, when Curtis presented the idea of the story to Fellner and Bevan, he recounts that they 'didn't balk about really going for it' (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p.166). Furthermore, there was a shift in their perspective as producers. According to Curtis, 'When I said, 'it's got to be someone like Julia

Roberts', they said 'well that's definitely who we'll go for'... I think they knew it would automatically be an expensive film and it didn't matter to them' (p. 166). WTF had realized that they were in a new and different arena, producing mainstream films for a global audience with a potential for generating large revenue flow. They now needed connective elements such as the Hollywood star, Julia Roberts, in the production. Accordingly these elements were also ideologically compatible with their corporate-conglomerate context.

As Marshall explains, stars act as a 'form of insurance in Hollywood, a kind of guaranteed return on investment' based on their ability to create 'box office draw' and connect with the audience for spectator identification and pleasure (2004, pp. 12-13). They are used to pre-sell the film's concept (pp. 12-13), in this case, possibly being used also to establish an internal connectivity within PolyGram's corporate culture and its upper management to obtain the 'greenlight', the approval to proceed to production with the proposed budget. Starting with *Pretty Woman* (Garry Marshall, 1990), Roberts had become the 'queen' of Hollywood romantic comedies. WTF's casting challenge at this time was whether she would choose them (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 167). She accepted the part and her association with the romantic comedy project may have raised their stature, legitimizing WTF and PolyGram with the Hollywood film industry as serious contenders in the same league as American-based producers. Eventually the box office profit generated by the film may also have resulted in an easier transition of WTF with its re-negotiated ownership relationship to Universal in 1999. The new relationship with Roberts also indicated a change globally by providing WTF an emergent connective relationship with star power as agency for global recognition to their film product. The casting of Hugh Grant in the role of William Thacker had also posed considerations for the writer, director and producer because Grant had now achieved global celebrity through *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. In

their thinking, this newly achieved personal celebrity might play against the story theme of celebrity and the role of the Thacker character, who was identified specifically as a non-celebrity. Curtis described this dilemma in the following way: ‘We actually talked a lot about the casting of Hugh as our ‘not famous’ bookseller, because he had become a huge star in real life – but finally we saw sense and cast him anyway’ (p. 167).

Frye (1966 cited in Collins 2002) argues that comedy develops in two main directions: romantic comedy where the focus is on ‘discovery and reconciliation’; and savage comedy where the focus is on the conflict with the ‘heavy father’. In both cases, Frye points out that ‘Happy endings do not impress us as true, but as desirable, and they are brought about by manipulation’ (1966 cited in Collins 2002). This manipulation is what the writer provides through his/her craft. As the writer generating the stories of the romantic comedies *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Notting Hill* and later *Love Actually*, Curtis worked from his inner psyche, personal identity and psychology as well as from his direct cultural setting. He used these perspectives to generate a working blueprint used in the industrial process of producing these films. When Curtis first thought about writing a film, he did not consider love as the subject and it had not been part of his previous television comedy writing for ‘Not The Nine O’Clock News’ and ‘Blackadder’ (Curtis 2006, p. viii). In trying to understand his success as a writer of romantic comedy films, he references the following films of *Diner* (Barry Levinson, 1982), *Annie Hall* (Woody Allen, 1977), *Manhattan* (Woody Allen, 1979), *Gregory’s Girl* (Bill Forsyth, 1981), and *Breaking Away* (Peter Yates, 1979) as models for the initial writing of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. Because genre films use repetition and variation to tell familiar stories (Grant 2007, p. 1), the patterns of genre may become reinforced in the viewer. Through his own preferences, Curtis

may have intuitively integrated genre conventions and structures with his creativity. He explains that, for his writing needs:

Friendship is often as big a subject as love...It was a film like these that I meant to write when I wrote *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. As it turned out, though - for all the stuff about friends and funerals – it does feel as though I had stumbled on romantic comedy and putting these three films together [*Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Notting Hill*, *Love, Actually*] I think I can now see the progress. (Curtis 2006, p. viii)

It also repeated an ensemble cast for a ‘circle of friends’ set of relationships in the film stories as well as an American female lead paired with a British male lead. Furthermore, for Curtis, writing *Notting Hill* could not simply be a case of reproducing the ‘blueprint’ used for *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. His role as writer was changing with his own increasing status, celebrity and industry stature. Curtis (p. viii) recounted his understanding of this change in his creative work, genre and the marketplace by describing a progression from film to film: ‘At its most simple, *Four Weddings and a Funeral* was an unintentional romantic comedy. Our commercial expectations of success were extremely slight. I clearly remember seeing the producers’ piece of paper about expected international earnings – next to ‘USA’ they had written \$0’. After the massive global success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, he intentionally set out to write a romantic comedy and continued: ‘I knew what I was trying to do – it was definitely a romantic comedy. Although, once again, the issue of friendship was very important to me, I wanted to write a bit about fame as well...’ (p. xi). With a conscious objective to write romantic comedy, Curtis nonetheless was still finding his way with *Notting Hill*. His writing evolution through the different romantic comedies of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Notting Hill* and *Love Actually* may reflect an expanding local-global dialectic in which, as Giddens (1990 cited in

Tomlinson 2008, p. 25) explains theoretically, ‘local lifestyle habits’ such as attending weddings had become ‘globally consequential’. After generating global box office (a reflection of cultural choice by the audience) and the attention of the British and Hollywood film industry with the film *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, Curtis had become more attuned to the choices of the global audience and the problematic nature of film celebrity. Therefore, this reflexivity in globalization may have manifested itself within his creative approach to *Notting Hill* and subsequent films.

According to Mernit (2001, p. 13) the central question posed by a romantic comedy is: ‘Will these two individuals become a couple?’ In the case of *Notting Hill* the two individuals come from different worlds, personified in Anna Scott the celebrity and Hollywood movie star, and William Thacker, the non-entity, Notting Hill book seller. Their question is answered through the major action stages of ‘The Meet, the Lose and the Get’ (p. 11). The climactic moment of the genre is one of reconciliation as the ending; this ending satisfies story expectations for bringing the movie to a close (p. 13). Even with his new awareness of the romantic comedy genre as a type of story that he could successfully write as a screenplay, Curtis found the writing to be a challenging experience. When asked how the idea of *Notting Hill* became a script, Curtis replied:

...it was actually a very hard film to write, probably because it was fundamentally so simple and so little happened. Any time I tried to expand the canvas a little, and go outside W11 into areas I didn’t know about –scenes with Anna Scott’s agent , or what it’s like living in Hollywood – my writing became false.(Curtis in *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 166)

Mernit (2001, p. 14) maintains that because the audience already knows the ending before it starts, the challenge of the romantic comedy 'lies in raising a huge doubt in the audience's mind about how the hell these two made-for-each-others are ever going to end up together'. The story is one of strong desires confronting 'formidable obstacles' (p. 14) and that this is represented by an A subplot, the romance, and a B-subplot, the challenge (p. 12). In the case of *Notting Hill* the obstacle is Anna Scott's celebrity versus Thacker's non-entity and his every day normality. The core issue of the story could be described as a clash of cultures, celebrity culture versus anonymity. This cultural clash could also be understood as a clash between a US culture in the form of Los Angeles/Hollywood and embodied by Robert's character with a UK culture in the form of a middle-class, professional London as embodied by Grant. The scenes are constructed in tandem, moving back and forth between Thatcher's local London neighbourhood and village-like reality of Notting Hill to a city overlap into a global London in which the Hollywood reality of Anna Scott operates. The film's narrative could further be understood as representative of a global and local dialectic. In this discourse, tensions between these two embodiments are eventually resolved as a stable, on-going union of marriage and family in the neighbourhood. It could also be understood as a local intervention in globality for a more routine, lifestyle choice by the celebrity. Although this romantic comedy narrative may have posed writing challenges to Curtis because of the internalised quality and nature of the obstacle, i.e. celebrity, at the same time, by addressing this obstacle, the film's narrative offered a specific appeal to audiences. This appeal was in identification with the characters for their own ongoing life narratives and cultural significance locally. In addition, the narrative's resolution may have offered audiences a resolution of tension for cultural displacement locally of mixed love relationships.

McDonald asserts that the romantic comedy genre has not been given the critical attention that it deserves and, as a result, it is not well defined nor well understood (2007, pp. 8, 10). She maintains that its ideology is that of support for the primacy of 'coupledom', which is the desired outcome by the audience for the genre's narrative (p. 13). In comparing the contemporary Hollywood romantic comedy with the British romantic comedies of Curtis she argues that the Hollywood romantic comedy de-emphasizes the importance of sex in its narrative in contrast to Curtis's emphasis of sex using a sexually aggressive, American female character in the narrative (p. 3). Mernit (2001, p. 17) however argues that 'In romantic comedies, the real subject matter is the *power* of love' and that it shapes the story through its effect on the central character. This is what drives the story forward to its conclusion. The challenges presented to the characters create a crisis in which they must either accept or deny their love. By resolving this conflict, love transforms them as characters. In writing the story of *Notting Hill*, Curtis created a point of view (POV) for the story. According to Mernit (p. 9), the POV answers the question 'whose story is it?' and 'through whose psychology are we participating in the events of the story'. Through POV the writer creates story accessibility for the audience who identify themselves with the character POV thus seeing the story action through the eyes of the character. In the case of Curtis, the audience participates in the story of *Notting Hill* through his psychological fantasy with his point of view represented on screen through the character William Thacker. It is Curtis's fantasy within an imagined world that is further shaped through the lens of genre. It becomes written as screenplay form for the eventual identification and participation in a shared POV by the audience in the global marketplace. Mernit explains how this process operates by describing that:

Romantic comedy often offers dual points of view...but the choice and maintenance of a POV is a potent component that all successful screenplays utilize...it's the necessary glue that attaches us to the protagonist and gets us involved in the story (Mernit 2001, p. 9).

In writing the screenplay, Curtis then became focused on what is happening back and forth between Julia Roberts /Anna Scott and Hugh Grant/William Thacker, writing a POV through Thacker as well as a duality of POV's between Thacker and Scott. It could be described as controlled and disciplined story complexity.

This duality of POVs is also framed in a clash of their worlds, represented by the different cultural worlds that each character inhabited. As the critic Clinton (1999) points out 'At the heart of the story is what happens when a regular person gets involved with a famous person and how their lives collide'. It can also be said that their worlds collide. Thus, according to Clinton, 'William is lost in Anna's world and she causes a huge sensation in his' (1999). These worlds became a mythic reality in external representations of the story as well as an internal collision of these worlds between the characters. Curtis describes this writing construction as also related to the film's direction:

Once I had eventually finished writing, Duncan Kenworthy read it and we asked Roger Michell to direct it. On *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Roger had done this remarkable trick of bringing two extraordinarily different worlds together in a convincing way and this movie was also about a culture clash of sorts. Roger's also exactly the kind of director I like, finding truth in a situation is always his primary interest. (Curtis in *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 167)

If understood in the theoretical terms of reference used by Tomlinson (2008, p. 26), these worlds are representations that are able to globally ‘travel’. Although created by Curtis in his role of the writer as ‘individual actions’ within his own culturally meaningful context, these story representations are phenomena in the cultural dimension of globalization. As a result of the global distribution of film product, these representations become co-existent with the every day life and local cultural experience. Therefore, they may be understood in the conceptualization of Tomlinson to impact its global-local sense through the viewing experience with the audience (p. 29).

London as Global City: Representations that Travel

Curtis claimed to have chosen the London neighbourhood Notting Hill as the setting for the story of *Notting Hill* for the simple reasons that he lived there, knew the area well and felt that he needed this type of ‘grounding’ to feel more secure in his writing (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2002, p. 58). Not only did he choose this setting, but the specific house used in the film for the home of William Thacker had also belonged to Curtis (Anon. n.d.r). The environment that he used as a source of his creativity may also have contributed to the success and receptivity to his genre stories. According to Mernit (2001, p. 9), ‘a distinctive, vividly realized world can be a key factor in a movie’s success’. The city of London with its neighbourhoods such as Notting Hill serves this function as a representation in the WTF romantic comedies. It can be argued that, by the 1990s, London as a global city played a key role in globalization. Moreover it functioned as a key site of cultural representation and for the production of this representation. In the early 1900s, London was the global capital of the British Empire and served as the centre of world finance (Puttnam 1999, p. 72). Although this global position declined as the result of changing global conditions and two world wars, London had gone through significant changes since the

1960s to again become a major economic global centre and a world city (Friedmann 1986, p. 226; Hamnett 2003, p. 2). With economic change had come social change and one third of London's population was now of ethnic minority origin. As a result of an expansion in high earners in business, finance and the creative economy there was a greater income inequality with other workers and an urban gentrification fueled higher priced housing and a housing shortage. Notting Hill was a prime example of this process of gentrification: a district which in the 1960s and 1970s was dominated by run down tenements with a large immigrant population had, by the end of the 1990s, become one of the most expensive and desirable residential neighbourhoods within London (Hamnett 2003, p.1).

As Hamnett (p. 23) suggests, the designation of London as a world city or global city indicates its special status in having global political and economic power. The new global cities are centres of 'control and command' for global capitalism in which this world economy is articulated. The global reach of transnational or multi-national companies has become centralized to key cities that include New York, London and Tokyo (Sassen 1994 cited in Hamnett 2003, p. 27). London now controlled flow in global trade and finance. This was based on related changes in its economic base from an industrial, manufacturing economy to one based in financial and business services. Hamnett (p. 24), citing Peter Hall (1966), explains that a global city such as London can also be understood as a centre for information professions where information is 'gathered and disseminated' globally. In this more integrated, interconnected and interdependent global environment London had become an intersection of the nation with the globe (Friedmann and Wolff 1982 cited in Hamnett 2003, p. 20). At the same time, Thrift (1994 cited in Hamnett 2003, p. 24) argues that the City of London had increasingly become a centre of cultural authority that included dealmaking. He maintains that its creative and cultural industries

are also characteristic of a global city. WTF exemplifies this condition being a London-based producer and at the same time producing representations of a particular kind of London for global consumption.

As London had changed, its perceptions and its representations had changed. According to Stryker McGuire (2009, p. 8) the American journalist that set off the use of the term 'Cool Britannia' for marketing Britain, London by the mid-1990s had a new kind of cultural energy and prosperity. Although the use of this term was associated with the election of New Labour and Tony Blair becoming prime minister, it was a cultural designation for London as an up and coming fashionable, trendy place to be. Hamnett (2003, p. 2) points out the significant difference in representations between the gritty, crime film, *The Long Good Friday* (John Mackenzie, 1980), as a contrast of London in the 1970s with the London in *Notting Hill* and *Sliding Doors* (Peter Howitt, 1998) as a representational shift. And yet, as one knows, representations are not necessarily realistic and they can form and inform mis-representations. Accordingly, the type of representation of London as a location constructed for the action of a film's narrative would be expected to fit with the genre of the story. It would inherently act as coding for the genre and function in support of the integration of the film's different elements i.e. lighting, sound, performance. Aitkin and Zonn (1994a, p. 8), citing Hopkins (1994), argue that the function of location, a traveled landscape, for the audience is for suspension of disbelief. However, at the same time it is a simulated construction of reality for viewer participation in an imaginary wholeness (Lacan 1978 in Aitkin and Zonn 1994a, p. 14). Representations of London have served this function in the romantic comedy films of WTF. The church locations for each of the four weddings and the funeral in *Four Weddings and a Funeral* were in actuality either London or the surrounding Home Counties and formed this 'imaginary wholeness' for audience

engagement as the story action progressed from church to church. Similarly, the park in the Notting Hill neighbourhood becomes a magical and romantic location for William and Anna in the film *Notting Hill*. The ending of the film shows the couple again in the park, having settled down together and expecting a baby as the completion of the wholeness of this romantic comedy.

Representations of London may not 'travel' evenly or be equally accessible for audience participation in the global market. Within the cultural dimension of globalization, representations of London may also exhibit what Tomlinson identifies as a recursive nature of culturally informed 'local' actions, 'the various ways in which social entities may be said to act 'back upon' themselves' (2008, p. 25). This may be evidenced by the representations of London within the WTF romantic comedies as well as representations of other places within these representations, forming another layer of complexity. Because of language, family ties and an intertwined cultural, economic and political history between North America and the United Kingdom, London is a comfortable and accessible city for North Americans. As a result of the unique transatlantic relationship between the two countries of the United States and the United Kingdom as global business and political allies, Americans travel, work or study in Britain. This may result in a stronger relatability and film accessibility for representations of this relationship. They repeatedly occur in the romantic comedies of WTF and are most notably exemplified in the love interests pairing American Andie McDowell with Englishman Hugh Grant in *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and again with Julia Roberts and Hugh Grant in *Notting Hill*.

If *Notting Hill* represents a collision of the differing worlds of the characters, the American celebrity, Anna Scott, and the British bookseller, William Thacker, the audience experiences this collision in a landscape formed through William's POV as a constructed world of London's Notting Hill section. In the film's screenplay this is clearly delineated for the audience with the

story opening. It first introduces the love interests of Anna and William through William's POV and his voiceover that describe her and her un-attainability in his world. He then describes his world, introducing the setting with the details of his neighbourhood:

NOTTING HILL (*Notting Hill*, 1999)

Title

EXT. VARIOUS DAYS

'She' plays through the credits.

Exquisite footage of Anna Scott -- the great movie star of our time -- an ideal -- the perfect star and woman -- her life full of glamour and sophistication and mystery.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Mix through to William, 35, relaxed, pleasant, informal. We follow him as he walks down Portobello Road, carrying a loaf of bread. It is spring.

WILLIAM (V.O.)

Of course, I've seen her films and
always thought she was, well,
fabulous -- but, you know,
million miles from the world I live
in. Which is here -- Notting Hill
-- not a bad place to be...

The film begins with an introductory montage of Anna, as the celebrity movie star. One sees her on the cover of magazines, on the set and attending glamorous events as static shots, the camera lingering on only her. The final shots of the montage show her against a wall of paparazzi, their cameras flashing with the sounds of the crowd while the song 'She' plays in the background. The song's lyrics reinforce the image of Anna as an extraordinary and unattainable star, a special being. The last shot of the montage, a CU of Anna looking to the left is superimposed as a long dissolve to a tight medium head shot of William walking towards her as she fades away and the film moves from a POV of a glamorous world to the mundane. At this point, William continues walking along the street in a tracking shot that then booms up, pulling back to a revealing and sweeping establishing long shot of the busy market on Portabello Road. He walks into it and begins his voiceover, 'but, you know, a [sic] million miles from the world I live in'. The road is filled with an abundance of details of the house exteriors, the market stalls and different types of people, old, young, black, white, some dressed traditionally and others more offbeat with colourful, dyed hair. This shot is the audience's entry for William's world and for sharing his POV for this representation of London. It moves the narrative from his internal POV of Anna Scott as a daydream to his external POV of the neighbourhood of Notting Hill. This establishing shot then dissolves to a tighter tracking shot of a customer purchasing vegetables at a market stand along the road. The action in the shot matches William's voiceover. The POV of his world continues to be constructed for the audience through this sequence of shots in which itsvisual action matches his voiceover description.

If the representation of this London can also be understood as a representation in which space and place are integrated with social, cultural and political dynamics, the impact of this space and place can shape the audience response (Aitken and Zonn 1994a, p. 5). This representation serves

to make sense to the audiences of their own surroundings as they define and locate themselves to these local surroundings (p. 6). Thus the practice of everyday experience in a global locality where this film was viewed is altered by the representation of London being defined by the audience into their everyday experience. This produces simultaneous identities of the global and the local where the local real is being judged against the cinematic (p. 7). According to Frederic Jameson (1992 cited in Aitken and Zonn 1994b, p. ix), a social totality can be sensed from the outside, the outside being understood as the global locality. Thus, if one cannot physically travel to London, London can travel to the locality through a representation of cinematic images and as an active reconstruction when viewed by the local audience. Each local audience will also interpret the representation of London that they find on the movie screen but in different ways. These representations help them understand their own place in a local response to the global. The continuing excerpt from the opening of *Notting Hill* forms impressions of a practice of everyday life for London that can be understood by the local audience as a reconstruction that makes sense in (relation to) their surroundings:

EXT. PORTOBELLO ROAD - DAY

It's a full fruit market day.

WILLIAM (V.O.)

There's the market on weekdays,
selling every fruit and vegetable
known to man...

EXT. PORTOBELLO ROAD - DAY

A man in denims exits the tattoo studio.

WILLIAM (V.O.)

The tattoo parlour -- with a guy
outside who got drunk and now can't
remember why he chose 'I Love Ken'...

EXT. PORTOBELLO ROAD – DAY

WILLIAM (V.O.)

The racial² hair-dressers where
everyone comes out looking like the
Cookie Monster, whether they like
it or not...

Sure enough, a girl exits with a huge threaded blue bouffant.

EXT. PORTOBELLO ROAD – SATURDAY

WILLIAM (V.O.)

Then suddenly it's the weekend, and
from break of day, hundreds of stall
appears out of nowhere, filling
Portobello Road right up to Notting

² It should be noted that the word 'racial' from the screenplay's voiceover is the word 'radical' in the voiceover of the copy of *Notting Hill* that was reviewed, and perhaps may be a misprint in the screenplay or a change in the film's voiceover to a less negatively charged word for the audience

Hill Gate...

A frantic crowded Portobello market.

WILLIAM (V.O.)

... and thousands of people buy
millions of antiques, some genuine...

The camera finally settles on a stall selling beautiful stainedglass windows of various sizes, some featuring biblical scenesand saints.

WILLIAM (V.O.)

... and some not so genuine.

The construction of this last exterior shot is a fluid montage from a sweeping long shot of Portobello road that pans and tightens to a closer image of a stall of stained glass. It reveals that the 'not so genuine' stained glass are images of the obnoxious characters of Beavis and Butt-Head from the American animated television series; they are portrayed as angels. This visual reference to American culture as well as the subsequent voiceover references to 'Cookie Monster' or to the American movie star, Harrison Ford, may be incidental in the film as a result of the pervasiveness of American media globally. However, they may also be understood as the recursive nature of local culture 'acting back' to an American culture through the global media industry.

This opening section produces an impression of reality, communicating what Aitkin and Zonn identify as ‘cultural norms, ethical mores, societal structures and ideologies’ as representations of everyday life (1994, p.5). However, this is not to say that what the audience is given in the opening sequence of *Notting Hill* is an authentic or pseudo-documentary representation of everyday life in this particular part of London. This cinematic landscape, Hopkins (1994, p. 47) argues, is where ‘meanings of place and society are made, legitimized contested and obscured’. *Notting Hill* and other romantic comedies of the 1990s have been described as representations of London that evoke an ‘atmosphere of untroubled contentment’ transforming the city into a ‘fairy-tale’, ‘city of delights’, and ‘enchanted village’ (Dave 2006, p. 45). This is in contrast to ‘the landscapes of the ‘underclass’, decay and de-industrialisation’ that exist in the real London. These were represented as a contrasting and multicultural landscape in *My Beautiful Laundrette* alongside the homes of the entrepreneurial Thatcherites i.e. the home of Omar’s father and the home of Omar’s more affluent uncle (p. 46). Martin (2005, p. 4) argues that a social and spatial restructuring of neighbourhoods such as Notting Hill reflect a process of gentrification or de-territorialization amplified by globalization. Not only are the neighbourhoods gentrified, this process also involves a cultural re-imagining of London as a global and local space. In the Curtis screenplay and the film’s images this gentrification process is referenced through the description of William’s friends’ relocation and the analogy of the visual neighbourhood to a village in the following next section of the opening:

EXT. GOLBORNE ROAD - DAY

WILLIAM (V.O.)

And what's great is that lots of

friends have ended up in this part of
London -- that's Tony, architect
turned chef, who recently invested
all the money he ever earned in a new
restaurant...

Shot of Tony proudly setting out a board outside his
restaurant, the sign still being painted. He receives and
approves a huge fresh salmon.

EXT. PORTOBELLO ROAD - DAY

WILLIAM (V.O.)

So this is where I spend my days
and years -- in this small village in
the middle of a city -- in a house
with a blue door that my wife and I
bought together... before she left
me for a man who looked like Harrison
Ford, only even handsomer...

We arrive outside his blue-doored house just off Portobello.

One sees in this section of the film William's POV of action that is representative of
gentrification as personal fulfillment and the context of friendship. Its visualization consists of a
long shot exterior of the restaurant, another, but more limited view of the neighbourhood, as his
friend Tony adjusts the restaurant sign. This shot dissolves into a static two-shot of Tony

sniffing and then accepting a fish from a vendor. The shot then dissolves to a tracking shot of William, as he crosses the street and goes to the distinctive house, standing out from the others because of the blue door. As he approaches his door, the visual sequence ends with his reference, in the voiceover, to the Harrison Ford look-alike as the new coupling of his former wife. This also communicates William's own unattached status. With this representation of London now defined as William's world and constructed for the audience through his POV, the film's narrative moves to the introduction to William's male roommate who is actively looking for a mate and to William's chance encounter at his bookstore with the 'real' movie star, Anna Scott, for a romance that will eventually lead to marriage.

For *Notting Hill*, this realized world is a representation of London that travels globally and is central to the action of its romantic comedy story. However, the film has been criticized for its lack of authenticity in representing cultural diversity and re-imagining the neighbourhood in an unrealistic way (Martin 2005, p. 5). But there is also a power of film in its misrepresentation of reality (Aitken and Zonn 1994, p. 60). For the needs of audience appeal, the locality of London as a global city is meaningful symbolically and culturally for global audience accessibility. Its portrayal in the British romantic comedy may need to be a fantasy world for the genre to function globally. The fantasy world provides a framing for narrative action to meet the audience expectation for the genre of romantic comedy. As a fantasy world for the genre, the representation of London may need to reflect rather than diverge too greatly from a 'sense' of its meaning in the local context. Although its audience members may have never directly experienced London, they may have what Wegner refers to as a 'cultural imaginary' (2005, p. 311), an imagined understanding of the London that they see on the screen in *Notting Hill*. If the representation of the location is too different from their expectation, it may become a distraction

from the pleasure of viewing and from audience participation in the action of the story. As a result, this story action may seem too implausible to take place in the portrayal of a more realistic setting.

Mernit (2001, p. 126) explains that a film's reality is a world that as a construction includes 'location, time, season, atmosphere, cultural/sociopolitical context, and tone', and it must be plausible and logical for its story. In order to establish credibility for a romantic comedy's story action of two people ending up together, this action takes place in what can be called the film's specific 'reality'. For the film *Notting Hill*, its reality is not only based on a version and vision of London where an American movie star might be working, but more specifically on the Notting Hill neighbourhood of London. Mernit (p. 128) points out that 'The beautiful private park at night that is enjoyed by Grant and Roberts in *Notting Hill* doesn't arise from nowhere but from the specifics of that geographical area'. However, with this representation London's real world does not intrude on the constructed reality of *Notting Hill*'s fairy tale - fantasy version of London. Yet in contrast, Mernit (p. 126) further argues that the romantic comedy genre is 'often close to fairy-tale fantasy – yet has to appear grounded in reality to win audience involvement issues of logic and plausibility are particularly significant'. The specificity of London is the mythic setting that creates the genre story's reality. Therefore, the distinctiveness of London and its Notting Hill neighbourhood evoke a specific sensibility to create a world that makes sense for the story action and conventions of the romantic comedy genre. This opening provides what Mernit (p. 127) refers to as a 'contrivance on screen' to engage the audience for story action credibility. He argues that 'We accept the contrivance on screen (grudgingly or happily) because the setting, time period, and sociopolitical context are firmly established' (p. 127). This credibility is established as the audience is able to suspend their disbelief for story enjoyment. In

this opening, Curtis as the writer has established the rules for this suspension of disbelief through the clarity of description of this fantasy world through the eyes of William Thacker. As such it presents a connection in the story between the location and Thacker's romantic dilemma. This clarity of genred storytelling must also generate expectation, engagement and pleasure for the global market and its local audiences. *Notting Hill* needs to operate in this way to combine cultural expression as marketable representations. These representations play a critical role in *Notting Hill* and other WTF romantic comedies, i.e. *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Love Actually*, *Bridget Jones Diary* (Sharon Maguire, 2001), *Wimbledon* (Richard Loncraine, 2004), for creating a coherent cultural product of genre storytelling, on the one hand, and an economic product, on the other. As the latter, it has core characteristics of an 'essential quality' as an exchange of value for the price of a ticket at the local movie theatre.

Another critical element and representation that supports the function of the romantic comedy genre for connectivity with the audience is its leading character. In the re-workings of the genre by WTF, the actor Hugh Grant has become established as an embodiment of its hero. Through his repeated and consistent performances, as exemplified by *Notting Hill* and *Love Actually*, his POV allows for audience participation in the story through spectator identification and pleasure. As a result, Hugh Grant as an actor and movie star has become synonymous with the British romantic comedy (Hogsett 2009; Farley 2010).

Hugh Grant as Cary Grant

The actor Hugh Grant became a movie star and rose to global celebrity with the success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. If 'love's effect on the central character is what drives the story'

(Mernit 2001, p. 17), Hugh Grant as the central character of *Notting Hill* continued to embody this story process for narrative action that involves the audience. Therefore, Hugh Grant's performance in the WTF romantic comedies can be understood as a critical relationship to the global marketplace. It forms a connectivity between the writer, his imagination and his screenplay with the audience globally. This connectivity may also be modulated by the star phenomenon and, as Dyer points out, there are different ways to view this complex phenomenon (2004, p. 2). Stars can be 'read' by the audience and 'they can select from the complexity of the image the meanings and feelings, the variations, inflections and contradictions, that work for them' (p. 4). According to Phillips and Vincendeau (2006, pp. 13, 276), Grant in his WTF starring roles may also have represented a type of national stereotype of 'the handsome, bumbling middle-class fool' that has been effective with American audiences. Within the contemporary context, Grant has now become identified in global mainstream film as a movie star and *romantic comedy lead*. This is similar in identification to the historic position of another British actor, Cary Grant, during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. In the specific case of WTF's romantic comedies, Hugh Grant also became an alter ego for Richard Curtis, the writer. Tim Bevan (2003 cited in Lyall 2003, p. 3) explains that 'The central character in Richard's films is always Richard himself...In finding Hugh, Richard found the alter ego who could play him. There's no one better who can carry a Curtis gag with timing and polish than Hugh Grant, and they're very lucky they found each other'.

As an actor during the 1980s and into the 1990s, Grant became associated with 'prissy upper-class roles in British period dramas' and had one of the lead roles in *Maurice* (James Ivory, 1987), the film adaptation of the E. M. Forster story of about homosexual love (Phillips and Vincendeau, 2006, p. 276). Rather than upper class, Grant and Curtis both come from the same

‘middle-class English milieu’ that Curtis presents through his scripting (Lyall 2003, p. 3). The relationship between writer Curtis and actor Grant has become complicated and can be described as a situation of alter egos. They mutually recognize this connection in which Grant is acknowledged as a personification and projection of Curtis in the stories on the screen (Lyall 2003, p. 3). Grant explains that he did not fully understand the character of Charles in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, ‘the slightly bumbling, altogether sweet Englishman’ until he got a better sense of Mr. Curtis (p. 3). He further states, ‘... as soon as I started rehearsing and Richard was there, I thought, ‘I see -- it’s him,’’ adding: ‘The joke was that I played Richard in the film, and then for years afterwards everyone said, ‘You’re such a nice person, Hugh’’ (p. 3). If Curtis and Grant have a relationship of alter egos, it could also be said that Hugh Grant and Cary Grant form a dual relationship historically as connective agents and consistent types of leading men in the romantic comedy genre.

Much has been written about the career and celebrity of Cary Grant compared to that of Hugh Grant. Over a 34 year film career (ending in 1966) and 72 films (Eliot 2004, p. 13), Cary Grant as an actor and Hollywood movie star presented a carefully constructed persona of ‘the handsome devil every man dreamed of being and the devastatingly handsome lover every woman dreamed of being with’ (p. 2). Grant himself was very much aware of this projected image, stating, ‘I pretended to be somebody I wanted to be, and, finally, I became that person. Or he became me’ (n.d.cited in Schickel 2007). In contrast to the privileged background of Hugh Grant, he came from an impoverished and problematic home in Bristol (Eliot 2004, p. 16). Under contract at Hollywood’s Paramount Studios by the age of 28, his performance in the romantic comedy *Sylvia Scarlett* (George Cukor, 1936) established what McKelvey (1984) describes as Grant’s successful formula of ‘Zany, lightweight comedy with a strong female star as his foil’.

After this film, Grant starred in a series of films referred to as ‘screwball comedies’ and exemplified by *The Awful Truth* (Leo McCarey, 1937), *Bringing Up Baby* (Howard Hawks, 1938), *His Girl Friday* (Howard Hawks, 1940) and *The Philadelphia Story* (George Cukor, 1940). The term ‘screwball’ is derived from the baseball term for an unexpected pitch. First identified as a genre with the film *It Happened One Night* (Frank Capra, 1934), the screwball comedy became a successful genre in Hollywood films of the 1930s. Characterized by ‘a strong, unconventional female who dominates her male counterpart’, slapstick and fast dialogue (Mernit 2001, pp. 34-36), it is an early film genre designation of romantic comedy and precursor for later romantic comedies. As Abele (2005, p. 4) points out, this type of romantic comedy offered possibilities for female pleasure and power through the female POV and ‘women in this genre were pretty effective in getting what they wanted, including the man that they desired’. The most popular leading man of these screwball comedies as noted earlier was Cary Grant. According to McKelvey (1984), Cary Grant put his ‘personal stamp on the screwball comedy genre’ contributing the mix of sophistication and slapstick. He may have also created a new type of comedic leading man, what Schwarz (2007) argues was ‘a new hybrid, combining qualities that hadn’t before mixed in the movies. He was oddly unplaceable: both American and quintessentially English’. An analysis of this duality of cultural representations offered by Pauline Kael (1975 cited in Schwarz 2007) is that his ‘romantic elegance is wrapped around the resilient, tough core of a mutt, and Americans dream of thoroughbreds while identifying with mutts’.

Although it is a coincidence that the two actors, Hugh Grant and Cary Grant, who have notably served the function of leads in filmed romantic comedies, share the same last name, they have, arguably, more in common than just that. They have both been successful in long running box

office appeal as a result of their performances in romantic comedies. Hugh Grant has been described as having consistent box office appeal (Street 2002, p. 206) and Cary Grant was top box office for 34 years (Eliot 2004, p. 3). Making an analogy between the two actor movie stars, Turan points out in regard to *Notting Hill*:

It also helps to have the right actors delivering those lines, and Grant especially has a delightful time with Curtis' arch dialogue. Convincing as a bumbling sophisticate, a hangdog Cary Grant, this Grant has such an expert way with words that it's no surprise that Anna is taken with him despite herself. (Turan 1999, p. 4)

Character is a fundamental element of storytelling. Through performance by actors in production, this element is transferred and transformed from its written conceptualization of the writer's internal fantasies and disciplined imagination to image and embodiment on the screen. Identified by Mernit (2001, p. 4) as possibly the most important element in storytelling, the manufacture of character in a genre film is a critical and complex stage that embodies the genre and supports its function for audience connectivity. It results in audience appeal, engagement and identification through the character's POV of the story action. If the story POV is the agent for accessibility with the audience, this POV is through the embodiment of the actor who plays the character having the POV. In *Notting Hill*, through William Thacker's POV and his reactions to the action, the audience experiences its reversals, at times pulled to Anna Scott, at other times pushed away. In describing the rapid stardom of Hugh Grant, Svetkey identifies character qualities in his performance that produced appeal for the audience:

If there's any formula to Grant's work, it's that his good guys are heartbreakers even when they're the opposite of suave-you never like Grant more than when he's blundering through a confession of love... (Svetkey 1994)

According to Mernit (2001, p. 60), 'For nearly four decades, Cary Grant was to the romantic comedy what John Wayne was to the Western – the embodiment of the genre'. It could be argued that Hugh Grant has now become the embodiment of the British romantic comedy. What is distinctive to this genre for this embodiment?

Hugh Grant as the Male Lead of British Romantic Comedy

With roots of romantic comedy film going back to Noel Coward's early film adaptation of *Private Lives* (Sidney Franklin, 1931) described as 'imported aristocratic sensibility' the romantic comedy evolved into screwball comedies in which the male romantic lead meets the new woman of the 1930s (Mernit 2001, p. 36). In what is described as a defining film in the development of the genre, *The Awful Truth* (Leo McCarey, 1937), a strong unconventional female, played by Irene Dunne, dominates the male counterpart, played by Cary Grant (p. 36). Mernit (p. 39) asserts that there is a unique and distinctive combination of qualities that are suitable for the male lead of romantic comedy and, as such, he is an audience surrogate. In general a critical quality of the leading male in romantic comedy, embodied by both Cary Grant and Hugh Grant, is the ability of the character to be able to 'laugh at themselves' to earn the respect of the female (p. 61). Spicer maintains that the stereotypical portrayal in Hollywood films of the 'diffident, repressed middle-class Englishman' lends itself to 'a sense of wry self-mockery' as exemplified and embodied by Hugh Grant (2006, p. 141). Mernit (2001, p. 61) argues that this quality for laughing at oneself implies a 'humility of innate decency', which can

also be described as ‘positive intimacy’. This is observed in *Notting Hill* when Anna laughs at William’s use of the word ‘whoopsidaisies’ as he awkwardly attempts to climb the locked gate at the garden park. He reveals this ‘lovable’ quality in this scene not as an overt gesture but rather as hesitancy and thoughtfulness in smiling, as an internal laughter of character. This is indicated from the way the mouth and the eyes work together in his reaction shot to her teasing. This lovable quality is also identified by Hunter (1999, p. 1) who describes Hugh Grant in the following way: ‘his utter, milky cuddlesomeness is a subject upon which most women will yap and coo for hours. He’s a beloved teddy bear in human flesh. He’s Hugh-the-Pooh’. This ‘cuddlesome’ quality was addressed by Grant himself (Llyall 2003, p. 3) in an interview for *The New York Times*. He emphasized that “The key is generally not to be too cuddly’, and he personally had a greater affinity with Daniel Cleaver, ‘the slightly wicked, slightly kinky editor’ he played in *'Bridget Jones's Diary'*". Communicating character qualities may also have more to do with Grant’s own acting ability to project qualities that fit the male character, of cheerful and sunny or cheerful and dark, that may inhabit the romantic comedy story. It may also be difficult to separate out the role as written by the screenwriter, the actor’s performance and the persona of the movie star that is perceived by the audience from the acted role.

The identification of the audience with the movie star becomes more complex because of the star’s nature as a construction of a public and private self (Dyer 2004, p. 10; Marshall 2004, p. 18). In 1995, between the release of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Notting Hill*, Hugh Grant was faced with the need for a ‘reconstruction’ of his star image after he was arrested and charged with lewd conduct with a prostitute on Hollywood’s Sunset Strip. Already scheduled to promote his new film *Nine Months* (Chris Columbus, 1995), Grant successfully managed this crisis of his private self-image by publicly apologising for his bad behavior in television

interviews (*CNN Showbiz News* 1995). His response could be understood as a necessary management of his off-screen star image and its qualities in order to support on-going audience appeal for his future films and the continuing success of his career. Identified by Spicer (2006, p. 143) as one of several specific representations of British masculinity constructed in Hollywood cinema that can be easily identified by audiences, ‘the damaged man is psychologically scarred either by his past or his failure to live up to expectations’. According to Dyer (2004, p. 11), ‘The phenomenon of the star as a private person is not always represented as good, safe or positive’ and Hugh Grant found a way to modulate this negative representation with his established positive representation from the romantic comedy genre. Thus, his off screen star image and on-screen persona may have evolved to include a blend of stereotypical elements that could include those of the ‘damaged man’. This complicated relationship of a star’s public and private self was also examined through the narrative and story action of *Notting Hill*. In the story, Anna the movie star seeks refuge with William after scandalous images of her past are released into the press. At the end of this sequence their growing intimate relationship is destroyed by the arrival of the paparazzi outside of William’s house. This representation of press scrutiny may have been a subtextual play and mea culpa by Curtis for Grant’s past scandal.

Although, as Mernit (2001, p. 9) argues, the romantic comedy often offers dual points of view, he still maintains that ‘the choice and maintenance of a POV is a potent component that all successful screenplays utilize...it’s the necessary glue that attaches us to the protagonist and gets us involved in the story’. Thus Hugh Grant’s appeal offering the POV within the genre engages audiences in different global localities and then sustains their expectation for repeated viewing pleasure. His appeal provides the means in which the genre involves the audience and his POV involves the audience as the path into the story. Therefore, it can be understood that the

audience in different international markets must relate to him in order to relate to the genre story. Although his international appeal has been described (McFarlane 2010) as ‘his timing, his way of testing and savouring dialogue, particularly Richard Curtis's, ... and his obvious good looks,’ it may also be his function as the POV of a comic everyman, providing ‘an interesting tension between his propensity for anarchy and the conformist narratives into which he is inserted’ (Spicer 2001, p. 4).

Using the right actor for the right role produces a combination of ‘cuddlesome cuteness’, the ability to laugh at oneself, and the decency and positivity of Curtis. It also projects qualities of identity for audience recognition, namely those of optimism, good manners and respect. This identity may also align with what Spicer (2006, p. 144) asserts is another recognizable cultural typology that American audiences recognize for British masculinity. Described as the ‘fool’, this particular stereotype consists of a ‘diffident, emotionally repressed, well-bred Englishman’ who is ‘affable and self-deprecating’ (p. 144). These qualities contribute to the representation of a character as a potential lover. Furthermore, this potential relationship is one of true love in which love conquers all challenges. This identification experience of audiences in the different global markets plays the key role with the function of genre as a modality of globalization and is significant for making globalization possible with this type of cultural product.

Why have British actors and a specific sub-genre of romantic comedy identified as ‘British romantic comedy’ emerged as successful globally? The specificity of the British male character can travel globally; it serves a purpose for economic value as a love appeal combined with a positive outlook. These qualities, as personified by the actor Hugh Grant in his acting roles, may have formed from something inherent in the British culture. Both Cary Grant and Hugh Grant can be described as having a perceived romantic charm of the dream male with a British accent.

However, they also have their differences. Cary Grant is often described as urbane, sophisticated and debonair (Kael 1975). This is in contrast to the cuddlesome, uncertain and self-deprecating qualities projected by Hugh Grant. Cary Grant's characters remain aloof towards the women chasing after him, as he operates with an 'artful dodge' (Kael 1975). Yet, in contrast, Hugh Grant's character and his qualities are 'hesitant' and reflect insecurity for the chase. The character of William Thacker in *Notting Hill* appears as a 'weenie', a weak and ineffectual man. Though good-natured, he is resigned to an unsuccessful business and a failed marriage. As the climax of the film, he finally hesitates no longer and 'chases' across London after Anna Scott. Mernit (n.d.) argues that the qualities of the genre's leading man change to reflect the cultural moment and to speak to their audience demographic. He asserts that there is a 'basic given of the genre: it was founded on a reversal (i.e. the screwball comedy's at-the-time novel and amusing notion of *woman chasing man*) and has always thrived on reversal variations to stay fresh...In other words, whatever the current norm seems to be in terms of gender role tendency, the romantic comedy will turn it on its head for a laugh' (Mernit n.d.). Therefore, the more 'manly' Cary Grant and the more 'boyish' Hugh Grant may have both served the function of the leading man in the genre; yet, in contrast to each other, their differing qualities may reflect changing cultural norms and audience needs for identification through this comedic dynamic of the genre.

If movie stars are the 'magnified external images of society's idealized, dreams, hopes and fantasies' (Eliot 2005, p. 2), the identification on the part of the filmgoer gives them their fantasy through the story POV. Yet what is distinctive about a *British* male POV that offers a pleasure and identification in a globalized setting of cultural consumption and shared meanings? These actors may thus embody *cultural values* such as good manners and politeness, (sometimes

referred to as ‘good breeding’), an aloofness, dignity, respectability and decency, with a good sense of practicality that are rightly or wrongly identified with ‘Britishness’ and that have a global appeal. Within the dynamic context of Hollywood and the function of genre in globalization, there still may be change in this appeal. As a British-born American star, Cary Grant adapted his ‘Britishness’ for greater appeal to audiences of Hollywood’s primary market of North America. However, the difference between the cultural representation embodied by Cary Grant in the 1930s and the recognizably more specifically English representations embodied by Hugh Grant in the 1990s, as a ‘global’ British movie star, may indicate changing needs in representations by a changing global audience and marketplace. For Hollywood, this difference in representations may also indicate a shift in reliance from the North American box office to the global box office for its profit.

The British Romantic Comedy as Global Genre – *Civility and Sensibility*

Henderson (1978, p. 14) maintains that: ‘Romantic comedy is a family of resemblances... a family in itself with diverse sub-branches’. These sub-branches act as agencies of cultural production to meet the liking of ‘particular patterns of fantasy’ (Neale 2000, p. 225). The WTF romantic comedy, with its specificities of story action using British characters in a British setting, is now labeled *British* romantic comedy by film reviewers and academics and can be understood as a sub-genre of romantic comedy. It is difficult to determine the first use of this term as it was not originally in use when the early romantic comedies of WTF were produced in the 1990s. Nonetheless, by the mid-2000s it had become established and prevalent in books and articles. Even though WTF film products are now specifically identified as ‘*British* romantic comedy’ they are also global and mainstream. Not only does Hugh Grant represent certain appealing male qualities as a romantic comedy leading character, he may also represent

appealing qualities distinctive to the English/British cultural context and as a portrayal of its masculinity. It could be argued that a different pleasure and expectation is offered by the British romantic comedy in comparison to other Hollywood or American based romantic comedy. With the repeated global box office success of WTF, what is the fantasy appeal of the *British* romantic comedy for the global? Indeed, the Curtis-scripted rom-coms of the 1990s and 2000s could just as easily be described as specifically *English*?³ Accordingly, their appeal may be for the English/British values and qualities that the characters represent in the genre story action and structure.

If, as Neale (2000, p. 227) asserts, ‘different genres possess their own individual characteristics, their own settings, their own conflicts, and their own ways of resolving ideological issues’, the WTF romantic comedies not only communicate a message of their writer’s own optimism and positivity, but these qualities are framed by his imaginative representation of his British cultural experience and its familiar settings. In examining the realization of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* from script to film, Curtis describes the significance of Hugh Grant:

It’s also interesting to try to read the film and imagine it without Hugh, and we saw a lot of people for the part and, until we met Hugh, it didn’t work at all. Actors can transform screenplays, too. (Curtis 2006, p. ix)

The performance and the persona projected by Grant as transformative to the script, can also be understood as a representation of a kind of *British masculinity* and values or qualities specific to a

³ *Film England: Culturally English Filmmaking Since the 1990s* by Andrew Higson (2010) examines different representations of ‘Englishness’ rather than ‘Britishness’ in contemporary cinema in a change from his earlier work on cinema and national identity

British culture. As such, Hugh Grant has become a hero of the British romantic comedy. In this positioning he has also been described as ‘an icon of Britishness’ in which the traditional comedy of manners has become transferred into romantic comedy in the Austen tradition (Krewani 2004, p. 164). There is a British hegemonic masculinity referred to as the ‘Debonair Gentleman’ (Spicer 2001, p. 8) personified by Robert Donat and Leslie Howard. It had an aristocratic style paired with bourgeois values that formed a counterpoint to the liberated female. It is described as a ‘gentlemanliness...romantic, ethical, and practical’ (p. 8) but could include, as Hunter describes Grant in *Notting Hill*, having a ‘tendency toward the self-destructive, if Divinely inspired, impulse’ (Hunter 1999, p. 1). The stereotype of the ‘fool’ as described by Spicer (2001, p. 144) may be a comedic or exaggerated variation of the ‘debonair gentleman’, falling within ‘an overarching conception of the well-bred, charming, sexy but emotionally inadequate toff’. This recognizable type of British masculinity may meet a need for audience surrogacy and identification through British romantic comedy. This results in what might be described as a connectivity from a specific cultural masculinity that plays well with the female representation and can travel in globalization. Although Cary Grant may have had aspects of this in his persona and was a contemporary of Donat and Howard, he may have constructed a less ‘British’ and more cross-cultural or transnational identity. This identity may have been specifically adapted for American audiences, the American cultural context and suited for the screwball comedy and its historic cultural moment. As part of a national resource of actors that are also a global human resource, Hugh Grant may represent a variation of this type or stereotype of British masculinity that is understood as being within the British cultural context. He may also represent cultural qualities of civility such as respect, deference and good manners and the quality of sensibility, a mental or emotional responsiveness. These qualities can be associated

with the genre as pleasure experienced by the audience. According to Spicer, the selective and repetitive use of British actors, as exemplified by Hugh Grant, also serves the Hollywood film industry in order to reinforce audience recognition of a stereotype for consistent marketing and promotion of its films (p. 142). Brooke provides further insight for this context of connectivity when he describes the type of British hero Grant represents:

Though the British Empire is long gone...Grant has become a major international star by embodying the most appealing (if occasionally infuriating) British virtues: what his characters lack in spontaneity and verve they more than make up for in reliability, solidity and basic decency. (Brooke n.d.)

Therefore, a selective cultural representation may be taking place in the production of the WTF romantic comedy. This selectivity of fantasy becomes part of the process in globalization for appeal to global audiences.

In considering Grant's appeal and the implied appeal of the British romantic comedy, Svetkey (1994) points out a specific aspect that may add appeal globally: 'Maybe it's the accent. Maybe it's the smile. Maybe it's the irresistible British charm and charisma. Nah. It's the accent'. The accent is worth consideration. According to Spicer although a foreign accent in Hollywood can be problematic it can also be considered 'a major job asset and cultural capital' giving cultural distinctiveness to the actor's identity in a film role (2001, p. 12). In England, one accent has traditionally conveyed 'associations of respectable social standing and a good education' (Selwyn-Jones 2003). This accent is the received pronunciation accent, RP. It is the accent that both Hugh Grant and Richard Curtis have although it is not the accent of Cary Grant. This accent symbolizes a high position, authority and power in society and was adopted by the BBC

when it began broadcasting (Selwyn-Jones 2003). When combined with a subliminal recognition of respectable British society, this accent may also form a transatlantic appeal and another dimension of connectivity to the North American market. In contrast, Kael (1975) points out that Cary Grant 'didn't speak in the gentlemanly tones that American moviegoers think of as British' and it may be an aspect of the difference between the related star images of Cary Grant and Hugh Grant. However, as part of Hugh Grant's movie star identity, the RP accent combined with the virtues of his British identity i.e. good manners, may have contributed to audience receptivity for his apology and his on-going appeal as a movie star in *Notting Hill* after his arrest on Sunset Boulevard. If the British male character travels with love appeal and a positive outlook, its cultural framing of values may also be a force that drives the British romantic comedy genre in globalization. In order for these appeals to function with the genre, they must be understood as symbolic meaning and desired by the global audience in the local context.

The Audience and the Box Office Response; Expectation and Decoding

Although there are a variety of reasons why audiences go to the movies, according to Mernit (2001, p. 252), films enable people to fully experience their emotions. As a condition of this experience for a genre such as the British romantic comedy, there is an expectation of pleasure generated from 'repetition and difference' of story elements (Neale 1980 cited in Chandler 2000, p. 9). As exemplified by *Notting Hill*, Mernit maintains that the audience has an emotional need in which 'they want to feel what it's like to love and be loved...without embarrassment' (2001, p. 252). For the audience, this human need and expectation is fulfilled after buying admissions to the theatre and experiencing the film. This experience occurs as catharsis and as a negotiation of meaning for their local cultural context. In the process of globalization, the audience can be

understood to form a complex relationship and response to the film's exhibition at the movie theatre. Representations on the screen, exemplified by the setting of Notting Hill or Hugh Grant, the movie star, as the character in the romantic comedy, become linkages with the emotional desires and communication needs of the local audience. The film industry and its practices act as a modality for this audience connectivity that operates, as argued by this thesis, with the function of genre in globalization.

However, the audience need is different from the need of the Hollywood industry, described by Putnam (1997, p. 267) as 'maximization of profit'. Because of this specific, critical industrial need, Hollywood assesses the local effect and value of a film product by the revenue that its audience generates at the box office. When *Notting Hill* was released in the North American market in May, 1991, one month after its London premiere, it generated \$21,811,180, making it No. 2 that week for the North American box office (*Box Office Mojo* n.d.d). This weekend gross was a *domestic* rather than foreign or worldwide figure as it was generated in the North American market. Although these high figures are used to promote the film as publicity, the opening weekend gross serves a further purpose and is significant to the Hollywood film industry for its approach to its global distribution. It perceives it as an indicator of how well the film will eventually perform in its other markets (Hayes and Bing 2004, p. vii). Whether this assumption is actually true or not has not been well researched.

For its opening weekend in North America, *Notting Hill* had played at 2,747 theatres setting a new benchmark for a romantic comedy opening (*BBC News* 1999). This changed one month later with the release of *Runaway Bride* (Garry Marshall, 1999) (Gray 1999a). According to Brandon Gray (1999b), this distinction is not necessarily as strong as it appears. *Notting Hill* had a narrow margin of earning by only \$132,803 over *My Best Friend's Wedding* (P. J. Hogan,

1997), having played at 613 more theaters but sold fewer tickets. The film made its major earnings in the first few weeks, with box office falling off between 20% to 40% for each subsequent week after the opening. The box office return dropped below a million at the 9th week after opening. By the weekend of September 3, the next four day weekend and the end of the summer season in North America, the film gross was significantly less with only \$351,105 in 336 theatres and then dropped off significantly after a few more weeks. Still, by 2010, the film's total worldwide gross had grown to an estimated \$363,889,678 (*Box Office Mojo* n.d.d). It appears, therefore, that, although *Notting Hill* generated significant revenue in North America, there are other factors (e.g. the number of theatres, number of weeks in release) influencing overall box office performance as an indicator of success in comparison with other films. *Notting Hill* had a high initial level of successful box office in a relatively short period of time with almost 19% of its entire domestic market revenues generated in its opening weekend. With revenue significantly dropping after two months, it had maximized its earnings in its biggest market in this short time. However, these earnings amounted to only 31% of its overall worldwide box office in other smaller global markets. Therefore, although its North American box office performance may have indicated its future performance, it also may have generated foreign audience expectation that resulted in its eventual foreign box office performance of \$247,800,000, 89% of its overall gross. This occurred as the film was gradually released in different global markets over the next 12 months (*Box Office Mojo* n.d.d).

Although the audience response is more narrowly defined by Hollywood as revenue generated at the movie theatre box office, the audience experience can be understood in globalization as multi-dimensional. A condition of this connectivity in the global locality can be described as one of emotional closeness rather than physical closeness. The emotional experience may occur at a

distance from the location of the story representation and the points of origin of its filmed experience and filmic construction in post-production. Yet this experience is accessed and globally shared through the audience's identification with character point of view of story action. This is what Tomlinson (2008, p. 155) refers to more generally in his conceptualization of globalization as the experience of the world in one's living room. This is produced through the interpretation of representations by the audience in the global locality. Not only is this connectivity through the modality of genre, but this connectivity if understood according to Tomlinson, 'furnishes people with a *cultural resource* that they lacked before its expansion: a cultural awareness which is, in various senses, 'global'' (p. 30). With this 'penetration of local worlds by distant forces', there is an impact of transformation in the local culture through a de-territorialization of meanings and meaning construction (p. 29).

Deleuze and Guattari (2004, p. 11) argue that with de-territorialization comes a re-territorialization. This re-territorialization, identified by Tomlinson (2008, p. 30) as reconfiguration or cultural adjustment of the global with the local culture, can be understood as a negotiation of the cultural experience in the construction of meaning. This negotiation may further be understood as a communication process of encoding and decoding. Stuart Hall (1973, p. 166) describes this communication process as a 'complex structure in dominance' of connected practices in discursive rather than commodity production. The mediated product of the process such as a filmed story goes through a passage of forms in its stages of 'production, circulation, distribution/consumption and reproduction' (p. 166). As discursive form, the film product is a communication vehicle of meanings and messages that are organized as codes in a specific organization of meanings and messages. The initial event that generates the discourse, for example the internal fantasy of the writer Curtis, according to Hall must take on the form of

‘story’ in order to be ‘a communicative event’ (p.167). The event could also be understood as a narrative strategy from the writer’s own experiences. This determinate moment encodes the message from a position of dominance for the social relations of the communication. This coding ultimately must be decoded in order to have a meaningful effect or to satisfy a need such as that of feeling loved. The writing and producing of a genre film such as the British romantic comedy can be understood as an encoding process for meaning using a traditional, Western cultural form. Decoding the film is the meaning as interpreted by the audience for inclusiveness in the cultural dimension of the global locality. It does this in order to re-construct meanings for its own understanding and to make life more meaningful with the increased awareness of other global localities and a global totality, unicity. Encoding and decoding are not equivalent and may have degrees of understanding and misunderstanding (p. 169). The degree of misunderstanding of the discursive form in decoding may determine the marketability of the film product in specific global localities. Certain film stories may be more or less successful for being understood as discursive forms and, as a result, they produce different box office responses. The global success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* was represented in higher box office performance by the specific markets of North America with British, European, Japanese, Australian and certain country markets in Asia and South America. *Four Weddings and a Funeral*’s unexpected box office success, however, resulted in a higher expectation of success for *Notting Hill* as a re-formulation of its genre paradigm as romantic comedy in a British context. Although there is a Hollywood understanding that if a film is successful in North America, it will play worldwide, there is a lack of agreement as to how and whether all genres travel (Weinberg 2005, p. 170). In order for British romantic comedy to produce box office, its love and romance must be meaningful for the needs of the audience in different globally local

markets and film territories. The complex process of decoding and negotiation for this meaning may be a phenomenon of global consciousness as a change in the global/local sense in everyday life. The new stories of love in London rapidly become the new stories of love for the global locality, its film market and its culture.

As a 'less definable form of power that operates in contemporary culture' (Dyer 2004, p. ix), the celebrity of movie stars also functions in generating expectation in an audience for a film. The concept of celebrity is defined by Marshall (2004, p. x) as a system for valorizing or giving value to meaning and communication. This occurs in what Dyer (2004, p. 4) describes as a complex image making system. The audience also plays a key role in the making of a star through box office response and the audience research that influences the decisions of producers. For Dyer, the 'power of the celebrity, then, is to represent the active construction of identity in the social world' (p. 4). There is a 'coherent continuousness' in the construction of a star and what they represent in the screen story. This construction can also be considered a code that has been encoded in the production process of the discourse and is decoded by the audience. Stars are 'made for profit' and are part of the way films are sold because they function to produce box office sales from audience expectation. Therefore, a 'star's presence is a promise of a certain kind of thing that you would see if you went to see the film' (p. 5). Star-celebrities such as Julia Roberts and Hugh Grant in *Notting Hill* form an essential core of values and representations with characters that exemplify aspects of living in contemporary Western society (p. 7). Dyer argues that they represent for the audience 'what it is like to be a human being with the promise and the difficulties of the notion of individuality' (p. 7). In *Notting Hill*, the story revolves around the theme of celebrity. As an exploration of film stardom and celebrity, *Notting Hill* examines the dichotomy of the private and public life of the star Anna Scott. This character is a parallel with

the actual celebrity actress Julia Roberts who portrays her. Anna Scott is also similar to the representation of females in screwball comedies who ‘have the uncomfortable sharp quality of people who do survive and succeed in the public world’ but they strive to keep up this appearance with difficulty (p. 13). If the box office of *Notting Hill* acts as a gauge for star appeal and the dimension in global connectivity formed through celebrity identification in the romantic comedy, it could be argued that Hugh Grant and Julia Roberts as movie stars have been critical for its global success. They serve as integrative elements that support the function of genre.

The Love and Romance as Meaningful to Global Audiences

If the genre of romantic comedy is a vehicle of global connectivity, the communication of the experience of love and romance as *locally understood meaning* is what forms the critical connectivity to global audiences. Producers Nick Barton and Suzanne Mackie (n.d. cited in Mitchell 2005, p. 8) maintain that script development is everything for finding the human element that is vital and necessary to reach a broad audience. By the time Curtis wrote *Love Actually*, he could explain this development process with a greater awareness:

I tried to exploit and have fun with the form of romantic film. When I looked around in 2000, I realized that many of my favourite films by then were movies with more than one story – *Smoke*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Nashville*, *Short Cuts* even *Hannah and her Sisters* – and I also realized that on the subject of love, I was now equally interested in love between husband and wife, brother and sister, father and son. So having done a few primarily boy-meets-girl comedies, I thought I’d play around this time, and try to write something about love as a whole. (Curtis 2006, p. viii)

For romantic comedy this human element is communicated to the global audience through an emotional journey of love and romance in representations that are from a distance. It is delivered by the film's protagoniststhrough the story action to the audience. This connectedness occurs with global audiences via a negotiation with these filmic representations in a discourse. For a romantic comedy film to function in the marketing chain at the local exhibition, the specific emotional experience of an audience for feeling love must be generated in the space of the movie theatre. It must also be understood in the local context as a valued and meaningful experience. At the same time it is also a communicative and cultural experience. For without an acceptable negotiation by the audience, there can be no pleasure in the local market. For the Hollywood industry, this impacts revenue flow from the local box office through its distribution and exhibition processes.

In understanding how the romantic comedy genre functions for the film industry in the local film market of the global market, it may be useful to understand it in comparison as a related genre or sub – genre of comedy. Comedy may be challenging to market globally because it cannot be easily negotiated for meaning in the local context. 'Comedy can be a very culturally specific commodity', Richard Napper, managing director of Sony Pictures Releasing International, states in explaining the problem for reaching a foreign audience (n.d. cited in Mitchell 2005, p. 6). The audience may either misunderstand or not understand the story. Napper adds that 'It's about cultural difference and it's also to do with the varying profiles of stars in different territories'. Generating audience expectation is also problematic. According to Christian Grass (n.d. cited in Mitchell 2005, p.8), Executive Vice President of Europe, Middle East and Africa at Twentieth Century Fox International, marketing comedy films globally 'needs to be smart' and adapt locally. He explains that, in promoting a film, different aspects play to different cultures. Robert

Mitchell, senior vice president and managing director of Buena Vista International (UK) explains that ‘US comedies can often work well because they are less based on parochial situations and language. Their themes are more generic’ (p. 6). Because comedy is considered to be dependent on language, an aspect contributing to the global success of the WTF *Bean* (Mel Smith, 1997) is its lack of dependency on language to communicate the comedic story action (p. 6). ‘With comedies in general, it’s all about relatability’, Grass explains. Therefore, Hollywood comedies such as *Meet the Fockers* (Jay Roach, 2004), *Men in Black* (Barry Sonnenfeld, 1997) and *Bruce Almighty* (Tom Shadyac, 2003) work well globally rather than what he refers to as more ‘parochial films’ because they have a big concept and big stars (p. 6). Although WTF films, as exemplified by *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Notting Hill*, may have a parochial local focus, they also transcend this focus and overcome issues associated with marketing comedy. Through the additional narrative dimension of romance in the rom-com genre and connective aspects in the nature of their representations, Curtis’s WTF romantic comedies reference meanings that can be de-coded and understood by audiences in what might be termed the ‘global-local’ context. In *Notting Hill*, for example, the geographical location of Notting Hill (London) as a narrative setting may be specifically local and understood as ‘parochial’ but at the same time it exists in the larger context of the global city of London and its filmic representation. For audiences, this representational context can be understood as inclusive of the local inhabitants of Notting Hill but at the same time inclusive of the worldly and glamorous American movie star Anna Scott as portrayed by the global movie star Julia Roberts. The representational appeal of Hugh Grant, as simultaneously the story’s leading male character, a movie star, and as a portrayal of a specific type of British/English masculinity, also contributes to the ability of these films to be successful and meaningful with audiences outside of the

national context. The representations of American relationships such as the female love interests, Anna Scott in *Notting Hill* and Carrie in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, may also support a particular ‘relatability’ and audience accessibility in the North American market. This supports a strong performance at the North American box office, which may then subsequently act as a marketing gateway for audience recognition and appeal in other global markets. This may communicate product value that generates expectation and appeal in other market localities and contributes to foreign box office performance.

Love Actually: the WTF/Curtis Rom-Com Goes Global

In contrast to the more parochial aspects of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Notting Hill*, the romantic comedy *Love Actually* (2003) appears to have a greater adaptation of the local aspects of the story to the global. This occurs with deliberate inclusion of globally or universally meaningful messages and representations in its narrative. The shift in narrative construction from a more parochial to a more global nature may support audience relatability and accessibility in the global context. At the same time, it is also a Christmas film. This aspect may limit relatability and accessibility in specific global markets which do not celebrate this holiday-but not in its largest market, North America. Written and directed by Richard Curtis, the overall film story is constructed as a ‘theme and variations’, inspired from the *Four Weddings and a Funeral* song, ‘Love is All Around’ and represented by nine different kinds of love relationships threaded together in the narrative.

Rather than set only in the specifically local settings of London as exemplified by the area of Wandsworth, the narrative geography of *Love Actually* has also expanded to include specific localities of the city of Milwaukee in the United States and the town and countryside of France.

Its narrative is framed with beginning and ending sequences in a globalized space - the international airport at Heathrow. It begins with a series of slow motion shots of diverse travelers reuniting with loved ones at the arrival gate. These shots are accompanied by slow, sweet music and a voiceover with Hugh Grant. He begins the film's dialectic and theme with references to the emotional condition of the world and the events of 9/11:

David (V.O.) (*Love Actually*, 2003)

Whenever I get gloomy with the state of the world
I think about the arrivals' gate at Heathrow
Airport. General opinion is starting to make
out that we live in a world of hatred and greed.
But I don't see that. It seems to me that love is
everywhere... When the planes hit the twin
towers, as far as I know, none of the phone calls
from the people on board were messages of hate or
revenge. They were all messages of love. If you
look for it, I've got a sneaky feeling you'll
find that love actually is all around.

These last words of Grant's voiceover also appear as an expanded title on the screen. They are then edited down to form the film's title and thematic connection. The film dissolves to an introduction of story action and credits, as the first story relationship and narrative thread of Billy Mack the aging rock star and his manager in a recording session. Billy Mack sings the old and new versions of the song 'Love is All Around'. This serves as a bridge to a montage of globally

recognizable shots of Central London, i.e. the London Eye, Trafalgar Square, at Christmas and the beginning of each of the different story relationships.

As established in *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Notting Hill*, American relationships are represented in the narrative in various ways. In one of the threads, the character of Colin, a catering assistant, travels to the United States where he picks up three American girlfriends with his British accent. In another thread, the stepson of Daniel, Sam, is enamored with Joanna, an African-American girl who must leave for the Christmas holidays in the United States. Hugh Grant again functions as an appealing representation in his portrayal of David, the British Prime Minister. Rather than an American love interest, in this WTF romantic comedy, Grant/David's rival in love is the American President, played by the American movie star, Billy Bob Thornton. The Prime Minister who lives in the global London is attracted to Natalie, the tea girl, from the more parochial London of Wandsworth, ('...the dodgy end' as Natalie puts it (*Love Actually*, 2003)). The romantic conflict in the film between these national leaders leads to a confrontation over British policy. When the film was exhibited in the local British context, audiences in cinemas apparently cheered in response to the representation of defiance by the Prime Minister as particularly meaningful (Sylvester 2005, p. 20). This occurred at the same time that Prime Minister Tony Blair was seen by many as condescending by trying to ingratiate himself with the Bush administration over the war on terror, Afghanistan and the invasion of Iraq. Other character representations in the film may reflect a tendency towards more global diversification. The narrative framing of *Love Actually* also expanded to include the European context of France and the blossoming of a romance between Jamie (a lovelorn writer played by Colin Firth) and Aurelia, his Portuguese maid (played by Lucia Moniz). This European representation is further evidenced with a cameo by the German model-movie star Claudia Schiffer, who makes a brief

(not to mention implausible) appearance in the film as the new love interest for the recently widowed Daniel (Liam Neeson). The film offers more diversified representations of Joanna, (Olivia Olson), the African-American love interest of Sam and Peter (played by Nigerian born British actor Chiwetel Ejiofor) the newlywed husband of Juliet (Keira Knightley). They are combined with the other variations of relationship situations in *Love Actually*, as outlined above, and would appear to support an attempt in the film for greater relatability and accessibility for a global, rather than specifically national audience. *Love Actually* may exhibit a tendency for connecting with audiences who find its representations of love more meaningful for their specific local context. Thus box office performance was highest in North America, the UK, Europe, Australia and Japan (*Box Office Mojo* n.d.e).

Romantic Comedy as an Emotional Framework for Relatability

In contrast to Hollywood comedy films that may not travel as easily as exported film product globally, Wong (2009, p. 131) states that romantic films are exceptionally popular with audiences around the world, especially in the Western world. This is because the idea of romantic love is part of the culture and in the psyche of the overseas audience. As a result of this circumstance, Napper asserts that one romantic performance, pairing a less recognizable star with a more established international star, can change his or her profile for winning over the international audience (n.d. cited in Mitchell 2005, p. 6). As a hybridization or sub-category of the genre of comedy, romantic comedy may form a larger emotional framework for relatability. This relatability comes from the film story being ‘rooted’ in the kind of life experience that an audience remembers from their own past lives and experience (Mernit 2001, p. 251). Mernit (p. 251) maintains that the audience as a shared human consciousness wants to believe in love and its transformative power. Through stories of love and romance, romantic comedies explore

complexities and ambiguities of human relationships (Wong, 2009, p. 131). This provides a greater accessibility for meaning construction in the local context with representations of authentic experience for which people will respond (Mernit 2001, p. 252). Roger Ebert explains that: ‘Romantic comedies travel most easily, especially in Asian territories such as Korea and Japan, because all cultures recognize romantic situations’ (n.d. in Mitchell 2005, p. 8). This may provide another dimension of global connectivity for audience appeal and local negotiation in cultural and economic consumption. Citing the examples of Hollywood films, *Pretty Woman* (Garry Marshall, 1990) and *Hitch* (Andy Tennant, 2005) as well as Germany’s *Mostly Martha* (Sandra Nettelbeck, 2002), Ebert asserts that this universal appeal of the romantic comedy has helped British comedy ‘especially those of Working Title, find success abroad’ (n.d. cited in Mitchell 2005, p. 8). The romantic comedy genre should not be understood as a guarantee for international success, however. Rather, as a cultural phenomenon reflecting the locally-lived life, the genre as a story type may have an inherent appeal for audience receptivity and engagement globally. In the case of Richard Curtis, Hugh Grant and WTF, as this chapter has sought to argue, this receptivity and relatability may also be a response to the *British* cultural appeal inherent in *British* romantic comedy. Box office success at the local level is still interdependent with the specificities of this negotiation. Through an understanding of fantasy representations of love and romance as meaningful, the local audience establishes the relationship of connectivity in globalization. This process of communicating meaning begins with the creative writing of the genre story and script. In trying to identify the overall appeal of *Notting Hill*, its producer Kenworthy explains that:

I think one of the great things about Richard’s writing is that it is drawn from a positive view of life. This is a very difficult way to write comedy, which is most often a sort of

ripping-apart of human pretensions...His writing always seems to remind you that people are genuine, vulnerable, special--funny because of how loveable they are, not simply how stupidly they behave. (Kenworthy n.d. cited in *Notting Hill* n.d.)

This distinction may identify a quality that when structured within the romantic comedy genre has made the story more meaningful for audiences to value and to respond in the local context globally.

Conclusion

Although humans have an emotional need for storytelling, this need is no longer met exclusively through local culture or by oral transmission. As Tomlinson (2008, p. 3) argues, the phenomenal world though situated locally has become at the same time global. This has occurred in part through globally interconnected transportation systems, a global de-regulated finance system and global technology-based media systems of production and distribution that would include WTF. The British romantic comedy films of WTF as exemplified by *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Notting Hill*, and *Love Actually* are phenomena that have become global in a process of complex connectivity for audiences in the local context. This connectivity is made up of stages of interconnected complexities in film development and production, distribution, marketing and exhibition. Critical to this successful globalization process is an essential communicative and discursive connectivity with global audiences. This is a formation of an emotional and cultural framing of shared significant meaning between the storytellers from afar with the story audience locally.

Storytelling is not only cultural but has become a globalized market driven by a massive flow of cash revenue with the purchase of a local movie ticket. WTF had been able to continuously

reconnect to this revenue generating market in a number of significant ways as it became more complex as a production company. Its sudden, dramatic change of circumstances with the success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* serves as a benchmark for connectivity in globalization. This also serves for the identification of cause and effect factors for on-going success in a flow of global connectivity. Through the experience of its first global success, WTF had now developed a specific ability to negotiate the complexity of talent and management through the stages of genre script development with production. Their work emphasis had shifted for a stronger value in story development combined with a stronger value for understanding the audience as the critical destination globally. Because the producers and the company had learned how to produce a romantic comedy genre film that was successful globally, they had a globally functional genre model and template to follow. Their template in repetition had now established a sub-genre, the *British* romantic comedy. They used the genre model in the story development and filmic storytelling process for repeating this success with the films *Notting Hill* and *Love Actually*.

Although WTF's film projects involved potential risk as an inability to appeal to global audiences, WTF had been able to reduce the risk. It did this by constructing and encoding films using genre conventions with globally enjoyable appeals, messages, representations and elements such as global celebrities. With commodification of standardization with variation, WTF had achieved a global stability not in a cultural displacement by extreme difference but rather by acceptable difference. The world need for love and positivity was satisfied from a dominant cultural and ideological position by global corporate business, PolyGram, using a British company, WTF. The local culture and the global culture as co-existent cultures (or multi-dimensions of a unicity of shared global relevancy) were transformed in their understanding of

the British culture and Britain's global city London. It could be argued that a British invasive position and ascendant presence had been established globally and locally by PolyGram and WTF within Hollywood and North America through the function of genre. By the end of the 1990s and into the 2000s with films such as *Notting Hill* and *Love Actually*, a predominant, shared understanding of love and romance globally had now become one of British love in a romantic, globalized London forming a dimension of what Tomlinson refers to as 'our sense of what culture actually is in the modern world' (p. 1).

Chapter 8: Working Title Films, Hollywood and Complex Re-connectivity

Introduction

By the end of the 1990s, Working Title Films (WTF) had developed experience and expertise in producing films that were successful in the global marketplace. Their on-going challenge was to continue producing new films that would be competitive and profitable as mainstream films, appealing and meaningful to a global audience. As a business, the goal for their products was to generate global revenue at the box office for a profit return on costs and investment. Eric Fellner describes the challenge faced by WTF in this environment:

The business is an international one and we have to be prepared to travel – for money, distribution, ideas and talent. By remaining insular in an international world we will pay the price of marginalization. Our revenues are a small percentage of the world market and as such we will always be a cottage industry, but we must strive to ensure that we are a thriving one, not a dying one. (Fellner in *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 250)

In order to accomplish this, they were able to successfully negotiate four critical areas of complex connectivities in globalization. Firstly, they had connectivity to a global film distribution and marketing apparatus, initially through PolyGram Filmed Entertainment (PFE), their global parent company, which owned WTF until 1998. This relationship also connected them to the global audience. Secondly they were connected to a flow of working capital as film financing from PolyGram which gave them stability as producers and stability in their production work. Thirdly they had established crucial personal relationships as a negotiated connectivity to business personnel and talent. The different talent employed by WTF contributed to the narrative and production values

that appealed to a global audience. Eric Fellner (p. 249) identifies talent as their ‘magic ingredient’ for consistent production output of diverse, distinctive film. He maintains that ‘the greatest writers, directors, actors and technicians...these people are our lifeblood’ (p. 250). And fourthly, with this talent, they were able to negotiate genre diversification as a complex connectivity in the development and production of their new film products. As Rick Altman (1999 cited in King 2002, p. 116) asserts: ‘The constitution of film cycles and genre is a never-ceasing process, closely tied to the capitalist need for product differentiation’. Genre mixing is also understood as a movie trend that has expanded tremendously since World War II (Mernit 2001, p. 39). Through genre diversification WTF was differentiating film product for a diverse global audience. It was also managing the function of genre in the process of globalization in a connective relationship to the local audiences. In the local global market context, genre was used to generate audience recognition of the film product as relevant cultural meaning. This is exemplified in the marketing of the New York opening of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* using the romantic comedy’s imagery for its film poster. It is also exemplified with the title of *Shaun of the Dead* (Edgar Wright, 2004) playing off the recognition of the zombie film title, *Dawn of the Dead* (George Romero, 1978). As a result of this genre recognition, it could be argued that an expectation of viewing pleasure sold movie theatre tickets. This pleasure was the value offered to the audience in exchange for the price of a theatre ticket in the function of genre in globalization.

The On-going Negotiation of Genre and Global Re-Connectivity

In order to sustain their position as competitive, global producers and stay in business, WTF needed to meet global market demand. Through a negotiation of the re-workings and hybridization of genre, they were producing films that were considered as valuable commodities

for their box office appeal but also having differentiation and originality. In describing the (then) current Hollywood studio strategy for attracting different market segments to their dominant, big budget, global box office genres, King explains that:

A mixture of genre conventions is a way of trying to appeal to [a] range of potential audience constituencies, a key requirement of contemporary blockbuster production... contemporary audiences are media-literate, highly aware of genre conventions and as a result receptive to a playful crossing of genre boundaries. (King 2002, p. 139)

In *Genre and Hollywood*, Neale (2000, p. 248) describes the New Hollywood's use of genre as one of hybridity, 'by the mixing and recycling of new and old and low art and high art media products in the modern (or post-modern) world, and by the propensity for allusion and pastiche that is said to characterize contemporary artistic production'. Although 'New Hollywood' can have several meanings, it refers more comprehensively to the post-studio and post-classical style decades from the mid-to late 1960s to the present. Thus it can encompass both individualistic and corporate, contemporary blockbuster approaches in Hollywood filmmaking (King 2002, p. 3).

Through a negotiation of genre re-working, described by King (p. 139) as the 'bending, blending or blurring of genre conventions', WTF and its producers were, from the mid-1990s, using a similar strategy to the Hollywood studios but they were applying it to genres with different specificities. Thus, genre negotiation can also be understood as a distinctive dimension in the multidimensionality of WTF and its operations. It can also be understood as a negotiation for re-connectivity to the global marketplace. Not only did WTF rework the romantic comedy genre after *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, but they also expanded their negotiation of genre. This

expansion is exemplified by the films, *Fargo* (Joel Coen, 1996), *Elizabeth* (Shekhar Kapur, 1998), *Shaun of the Dead* (Edgar Wright, 2004) and *Hot Fuzz* (Edgar Wright, 2007)¹.

To expand their capacity in production for this negotiation of genre, WTF had established an internal producing partnership with the American director-writers, the Coen brothers. In partnership with WTF, the Coen brothers created *Fargo* (Joel Coen, 1996) and other WTF films such as *The Hudsucker Proxy* (Joel Coen, 1994), *The Big Lebowski* (Joel Coen, 1998), *O, Brother Where Art Thou?* (Joel Coen, 2000) and *The Ladykillers* (Ethan and Joel Coen, 2004). Through this partnership, WTF also expanded its 'complex connectivity', diversification and resources for developing new films. As a new and expanded dimension of connectivity for WTF, the relationship with the Coen brothers increased the 'proximity' of the British company with the critical global film market of North America and its cultural context. The films produced by the Coen brothers were noted for re-working Hollywood genres and using representations of regional America in order to create a marketable product for the box office (Luhr 2004a, p. 7). They offered narratives, identities, and human relations that provided different and possibly more relevant representations to the audience that were specific within the American market. At the same time their films could travel and be meaningful and appealing in other global film markets, especially those of Europe. The intertwining relationship of WTF with the Coen brothers not only expanded WTF's resources for securing its on-going success in the marketplace but it also expanded the complexity of its management as a business.

¹In the next chapter these films will be examined in more detail as examples of the reworking and negotiation of genre for its function in the processes of globalized production, distribution and exhibition.

In a turbulent global business environment, the re-working of genre serves as a strategy for lowering risk and providing stability in product development. In order to produce continuous global success with audiences and generate box office revenue, WTF had to anticipate market needs at the same time they were creating product appeal. They did this as they developed approximately fifty different types of projects. This backlog of unfinished projects in development or in production is known in the industry as the 'slate' and it provides product flow to the marketing chain. The slate of fifty projects in development would then lead to the release of five WTF films a year from which anticipated success at the box office should be realized. Eric Fellner describes not only the significance of the slate but summed up the context in which it plays a critical role:

In the fast moving and slate-driven business we find ourselves in today though, success is something we crave yet can't enjoy. As my partner Tim taught me many years ago, if you hang around basking in the glory, your business soon turns to mud, slippery and ultimately useless to build on...so don't enjoy, don't luxuriate, move on, keep moving and don't take no for an answer; that's what I've learnt-and it has taken twenty years. (Fellner in *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 249)

Because their work methods within PolyGram had changed to combine story development with financial accountability and sensitivity to the marketplace, WTF and its producers had acquired a more focused approach to the selection of projects for box office appeal. In addition, they had gained more experience for the development of product diversity using variations and re-workings of genre and what they describe as 'specialist' film (p. 249). This genre variation using ensemble casting, different American Hollywood stars, location selections in London and France, and story action with a range of challenges to love is exemplified with their romantic

comedies of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Mike Newell, 1994), *French Kiss* (Lawrence Kasdan, 1995), *Notting Hill* (Roger Michell, 1999) and *Love Actually* (Richard Curtis, 2003). Not only did the future success of WTF depend on this, their survival and sustainability as producers depended on continuous project development.

By the end of the 1990s, Fellner and Bevan not only had the challenges of product development they also had to negotiate a new position and global re-connectivity for the company within a different entertainment conglomerate as their new ownership. This occurred in 1998 when Seagram bought PolyGram from Philips. PFE (as a subsidiary of PolyGram) was unexpectedly merged into Universal Studios (a subsidiary of Seagram) in the corporate buyout and both PolyGram and PFE quickly ceased to exist as a result of the buyout (Kuhn 2002, p. 95). Rather than being positioned as a competitor with the Hollywood film industry, WTF had then inadvertently become an asset of Universal Studios, and was positioned within the Hollywood film industry. Tim Bevan describes the challenge that confronted them:

At the end of the 1990s the entire PolyGram group was sold to Seagrams. Seagrams were only interested in the music assets, and with no buyer forthcoming for its film assets, Universal (also part of the Seagram group), subsequently took over the film assets of which Working Title was a part. Eric and I needed to ensure that we controlled our future. We decided that the most important thing was to retain creative autonomy while being part of a worldwide distribution structure. We wanted control to make the films that we wanted to as well as being able to continue developing new talent. (Bevan in *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 18)

Although previously connected via PolyGram to global markets and their audiences, WTF then went through a process of re-connectivity to these global markets through Universal and its distribution apparatus. As a result, they attained a unique position for a British production company with autonomy and control over production within the Hollywood film industry. Re-positioned within Universal, the studio that had redefined the action film as the primary genre and blockbuster for the Hollywood industry with *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975) (Gomery 2005, pp. 198-199), WTF negotiated their new corporate-conglomerate position as a continuance of their on-going slate of projects in development and production. They were able to do this based in part on a number of factors. These included the company's past track record of producing global successes such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Bean*, and *French Kiss* and their slate of pictures at the time of the merger, which included the British romantic comedy *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Sharon Maguire, 2001). At the point of being merged, the box office hit *Notting Hill* (1999) had been completed but not yet released. This film produced box office earnings that now belonged to Universal as profit. According to Tim Bevan:

They inherited *Notting Hill* from PolyGram so our relationship started with a \$350 million hit. They like that. The studio business is a hit-driven business and Eric and I realized that in order to preserve our autonomy and to be able to make the smaller movies some of them needed to make good money. (Bevan in *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 18)

WTF therefore needed to produce box office hits to stay in the game. Additionally, in order to maintain control of choosing their projects, WTF used the added leverage of bringing to the table a European financing partnership, France's Canal Plus (p. 18). This was for partial backing of their slate. According to King (2002, p. 119), 'Hollywood has always preferred to invest in

products that can be described largely in terms of others that have proved successful in the past. Genre frameworks provide one source of this kind of replication'. Thus the transition may also have been smoothed because their slate offered a diversification of genre re-workings and hybridization.

Within a year of their new alliance with Universal, WTF expanded its development slate by setting up Working Title 2, (WT2), aka WT², a new subsidiary for producing low budget features. Bevan described it as 'Humour, Horror, Heart' (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 226). It also served as a source of connecting with new talent and, by 2000, WT2 had its first box office success with *Billy Elliot* (Stephen Daldry, 2000). Stephen Brown assesses their strengths and relationship to talent:

A key element in the company's working methods has been its attention to marketing, striking deals with American and European companies, thus ensuring world-wide distribution for its products. A frequent observation of the company's methods is the inordinate amount of time spent on developing scripts and extensively working on re-writes... Working Title is also committed to low-budget films with new writers. Such was the case with *Billy Elliot*. (Brown n.d)

WT2 subsequently went on to produce box office success with *Shaun of the Dead* and *Hot Fuzz* (both films will be looked at in some detail in chapter 9 of this thesis). By maintaining control of a complex inter-relationship of talent and product development, WTF was then able to generate film products in what Buckingham (1993 cited in Chandler, 2000, p. 3) would describe as genre formation, 'a constant process of negotiation and change' in order to produce box office hits. In this dynamic that shapes the final film product and evolves in relation to a specific genre (or

genre hybrid), producers and others (distributors, marketers and talent) made decisions that affected this process and its results. These decisions were made in story development of content and conventions, casting, and production work with consideration of changing market conditions, audience tastes for box office appeal and the current global political, economic and cultural conditions. For genre formation, WTF and its producers understood the need of market sensitivity and the requirement for responsiveness to the changing dynamics of the global market. Although, by adding a new organizational layer, WT2, they increased management complexity, at the same time, they controlled the creative process of script and project development with the boundaries of genre sameness, i.e. the 'Humour, Horror, Heart'.

Starting their third decade, WTF was repositioned within Hollywood at Universal Studios in a unique position. Bevan describes this relationship with Hollywood:

Unlike other Hollywood producers we live in London and make a vast range of films both in origin and scale; however, unlike any other British producers, our larger movies constantly make up part of a major studio's slate. (Bevan in *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 18)

An advantage to their new position in Hollywood was moving films into production more quickly. Bevan cites *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) and *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (John Madden, 2001) as examples of this (p. 18). He also describes them as 'larger scale European content movies made within the Hollywood system' (p. 18). Although the producers of WTF were now essentially Hollywood producers based in London, at the same time they were also identified as 'European' producers on the NBC Universal website (NBC Universal n.d.). No longer identifying themselves as only British, they could also be understood as transnational.

Ezra and Rowden define the term transnational as: 'the global forces that link people or institutions across nations' at a time when national sovereignty is declining as a regulatory force (2006, p. 1). The term may therefore imply a less stable connection with place and more fluid associations within a global rather than national system. Positioned within Universal, WTF may have understood an advantage for this more specific transnational identification. It may have promoted an image making them distinctive or different from other Universal subsidiaries for the financing or distribution and marketing needs of their films.

For WTF, the most significant target audience of the global market is North America. It not only generates the biggest box office returns for Hollywood but because of an historical 'special relationship' of language, culture and politics between Britain and the United States, its audiences may be more receptive to British film product. Although this special relationship is not always an easy relationship as Edwards (1993, p. 209) points out, it is the result of the recognition of mutual interests that coincide. It can be argued that this relationship between the two countries may also indicate an underlying shared emotional and cultural framework. In globalization this framework may support the formation of an essential 'global complex connectivity' in the cultural dimension of filmic storytelling. In comparison to film product sourced from other but more diverse countries or cultures, there may be a stronger receptivity by American audiences for the British genre film story as a result of this 'special relationship'. It can also be argued that this 'special relationship' extends as a context for a 'special relationship' between the American film industry of Hollywood and the British film industry. As a result of a shared language and cultural and economic practices, it forms a specific and complex global connectivity that is multi-dimensional. As Tomlinson (2008, p. 30) points out, de-territorialization is the major cultural impact of global connectivity in which globalization

transforms localities by weakening the connection of culture to locality. Therefore, the de-territorialization experienced by film audiences on both sides of the Atlantic from viewing films may also be perceived, not as a negative, but as a positive and expanded cultural resource. For example, the representation of successful coupling in *Four Weddings and a Funeral* may be understood as a displacement of culturally acceptable partners from within each culture.

However, for British and American audiences, this can also be understood as a transformation to an acceptable cross-cultural Anglo-British coupling. This coupling is between a type of British masculinity represented by Hugh Grant with a type of American femininity represented by Andie McDowell and later Julia Roberts in *Notting Hill*. This Anglo-American dimension of connectivity has formed another layer of complexity as a critical relationship for WTF and its genre films – namely *Fargo*, *Elizabeth*, *Shaun of the Dead*, and *Hot Fuzz* - which shall be considered in detail in the next chapter

The ‘Special Relationship’ of the British Film Industry and Hollywood

After World War I, America’s Hollywood film industry became the predominant global film industry controlling distribution of product to its domestic market and to foreign markets outside of North America (Kindem 2000, p. 2; Street 2002, p. 13; Ulf-Moller 2001, p. xiii). Supported by the American government, the studios’ global distribution operations controlled product flow, thus securing worldwide revenue which re-enforced Hollywood’s dominant position in the global market (Higson 2000, p. 236; Ulf-Moller 2001, p. xvi; King 2002, p. 60). As a result its product came to occupy much of the screens of Britain and by 1926 only 5% of films screened in Britain were British-made (Guback, 1974, p. 2). Moreover, at different times the American film industry was dependent on the British market for much of its overseas revenue (Street 2000, p. 52; King 2002, p. 61). In 1997, films from major US studios accounted for 78% of UK box

office (Thomas 1997, p. 16) and the largest exhibitors in the UK market were US subsidiaries. The highly competitive American film industry has controlled the British film market by monopolising British screens, channeling revenues out of Britain rather than capitalising British production and at the same time denying distribution access for British film product to the American market. However, because of the special relationship between Britain and the United States, there is a greater tendency for inter-connectivity between these mutual film industries as exemplified by the experience of WTF. Therefore, it can be argued that a certain kind of reciprocity and mutuality has existed between the British film industry and Hollywood and they have become entwined in specific ways.

One aspect of this special relationship has been co-production arrangements in film financing. According to Sarah Street (2000, p. 52), ‘after the introduction of sound, access to the American market was held up as the highest ambition of any [British] film company, an ambition that implied financial rewards and approval from audiences whose main preference as in the UK was for Hollywood films. It also implied a degree of Anglo-American cultural rapport ... and Anglo-American cooperation’. Although UK studios have attracted major projects from Hollywood, they have rarely shared in the profits. Dyja (2004, p. 16) asserts that ‘while the American and Europeans are quite happy to pick up the tab for some of the UK’s most successful films, such as *Harry Potter*, they also manage to pocket the profits from these films’. Another aspect of the relationship has been the flow of British talent to work in Hollywood and the flow of Hollywood productions such as *2001: Space Odyssey* (1968) and *Star Wars* (1977) coming to Britain to use British film industry crafts (*The Economist* 2011). Therefore, the relationship is not entirely one of competitive exclusion but selective inclusion. Korda for example was able to link into United Artists for film distribution to North America in the 1930s and Rank was able to secure

distribution for its films in the 1940s and 1950s (Street 2002, pp. 8-9). As a result of arrangements such as these in the 1960s, *Tom Jones* (1963), the Beatles films and the *James Bond* films² were distributed to North America (pp. 8-9). Sarah Street argues that:

...while many British films experienced problems finding distribution outlets and in winning audiences, some did manage to occupy a space in a highly competitive market. They did so for a variety of reasons, often to do with timing and purely economic factors, but also because of their ability to appeal to specific American audiences. (Street 2000, p. 51)

Hence, this contextual relationship may in part explain the ability of WTF to re-position itself within Universal and Hollywood for securing global and North American distribution.

Although Michael Kuhn, the former president of PFE, may disagree, Hill (1999, p. 86) asserts that 'Hollywood-style cinema is simply not feasible for the British film industry...British cinema has had to develop ways of 'living with Hollywood' which avoid direct competition with it'. Yet WTF and its success in the 2000s may challenge Hill's statement. Furthermore, the American Public Broadcast System's (PBS) Masterpiece Theatre, a dramatic series produced by station WGBH Boston for the national public television network, may exemplify another economic model of British access to North American media markets. Through the use of corporate subsidies, the American broadcaster has purchased programming originally produced for the BBC and other British broadcast organizations (Stewart 1997). These programmes include *Upstairs*,

²This British film franchise begins with *Dr. No* (Terence Young, 1962).

Downstairs, The Forsythe Saga, Elizabeth R and *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*. The success of this TV series on PBS also indicates strong audience receptivity for British filmed drama, especially historical drama. This observation is further supported by the success in America of WTF's heritage feature *Elizabeth*.

WTF's relationship with Hollywood is, in many respects, exceptional in comparison to other British production companies for the way that it secures on-going financing, profit participation and global distribution for films with repeated global box office appeal and success. Their appeal to specific American audiences combined with American audience receptivity may underlie their successful market connectivity with North America. This inclusive selectivity of Hollywood for WTF and the distribution of its films may, in fact, occur as a response to the changing dynamic of the global market. This may also be based on particular conditions for WTF in the 2000s. This inclusion can also be understood as WTF and Hollywood relationships that can contribute to the successful production, distribution and reception of films globally. As Tim Bevan points out:

Eric and I have worked with people in Hollywood right from the beginning and made good friends there. The assistants that we got to know in the 1980s, whether in the studios or the agencies, are now senior in their jobs and in some cases running their organizations. There is a way about Hollywood and the way that it does business, some would call it vulgarity that I find exciting and stimulating. (Bevan in *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 13)

As a special relationship of film industries, there may be a synergy, entwinement and cooperation between them that is not comparable for film industries elsewhere in the world. This

special relationship has allowed, conditions for an exchange of creativity between WTF and the American filmmakers, the Coen brothers (Joel and Ethan), and for the creative and business resources of Hollywood. It has also shaped their films with story elements that appeal to North America's film audience.

Globalization or Americanization: A Comparison of Perspectives of Hollywood by Kuhn and O'Regan

By the end of the 1990s, WTF had been absorbed into Hollywood and positioned within Universal Studios. Although Universal had become a subsidiary of Seagram Company, it could still be considered a core entity of the cultural and industrial structure that is known as Hollywood. As a lead organizational model for other Hollywood studios (Gomery 2005, p. 198), Universal represented a strong alliance and association in the global film industry. WTF's new relationship with Hollywood could also be understood as representing a changing process of globalization, a process of Americanization or, indeed, both at the same time.

Just as Tomlinson (2008, p. 2) defines globalization as a complex connectivity, so WTF had formed a new connectivity with the global film market as part of Hollywood production and distribution operations. As a rapidly developing new global connectivity, WTF had re-connected with the global market through Hollywood after dis-connecting from the global media giant, PolyGram. This new connectivity also expanded towards a multiplicity of new linkages for increased access to talent and creative resources, economic resources and the institutional capacity of a Hollywood studio. As O'Regan explains the term, Hollywood has an identity of many things:

There is no better indication of its variable nature than the fluidity of the concept of 'Hollywood'. It designates: a style of film making and a (popular and critical) generic marker; anything fictional produced in the USA; the whole USA film and television drama production and distribution industry; and the handful of multinational studio-distributors, the so-called Hollywood studios or majors, which capture the lion's share of the North American (including Canadian) market and significant portions of individual overseas audio-visual media markets. (O'Regan 1990, p. 3)

Therefore, as a result of its new position within Hollywood, WTF had connected and aligned itself to this multi-faceted identity. Furthermore, WTF's new connectivity for financing, production, distribution and access to global audiences can be understood in complexity as multi-dimensional. This is due to the fact that while WTF is British-based, once part of Hollywood it could now be described as having become 'Americanized' and operating in a process of global Americanization. Alternatively it may have developed 'tendencies' for successful global connectivity that could be described at the same time as global, European, British and American.

Although O'Regan (1990, pp. 28,33) states that Hollywood's international relationship with the global market can be understood as a negotiated process of Americanization, he also argues that this negotiation with the global is not exclusively American in nature and its skills are transferable. Kuhn (2002, p. 81) argues that the success of PFE and its films globally was evidence that their alternative strategic approaches to the production and distribution of films were effective, different, and possibly better than those of Hollywood. This may also evidence O'Regan's assertion that Hollywood does not have an exclusivity to monopolize the global industry and may support Martel's view of multiple and competitive mainstream global cultural industries rather than one exclusively Hollywood global model (Maudave 2010). The experience

of PolyGram and Kuhn would support this transferability to a European and British connectivity for globalization rather than evidence of Americanization.

David Puttnam (1999, p. 164) argues that the difference between Hollywood and other national film industries is that ‘The Americans saw their industry as a totality, in which the glamorous business of production was crucially underpinned by ownership of other aspects of the marketing chain’. The globalization processes for Hollywood in the decade of the 1990s have been described as distinctive for a greater intensification of horizontal and vertical integration because of a non-regulated environment (Balio 1998, p. 58). Thus globalization re-enforces Hollywood’s already established global domination. During the 1990s, according to Balio:

Globalization hastened the concentration of the media by emphasizing economies of scale. Every year a few offbeat pictures and smaller art films produced either by independents or by subsidiaries of the majors win wide critical acclaim and enjoy significant box-office success – witness *Fargo*, *The English Patient* and other Oscar nominees for best picture in 1997. Hollywood, nevertheless, remains committed to megapics and saturation booking, which have the combined effect of dominating most of the important screens around the world to the detriment of national film industries. (Balio 1998, p. 70)

As this thesis argues, WTF may have found ways for global connectivity that can be understood as a negotiation within this industry and the Hollywood dominated global market environment. For WTF to maintain a successful track record of films in the 1990s it had generated a slate of films that as global products generated a connective relationship to global audiences during exhibition. The *selection and development* of projects as genre films were critical, determinant

areas of this negotiation. The connective relationship of WTF with the largest film market, North America, may have been formed with films that were developed with ‘Americanized’ characteristics for receptivity. Although the dominance of Hollywood can be understood as synonymous with the global film industry and market domination of American product to global audiences (Puttnam 1999, p. 277; Balio 1998, p. 70), PFE with WTF had emerged as a global player in the early 1990s by offering alternative products (Kuhn 2002, p. 68). For example, it offered the *British* alternative as a variation to genre product lines with *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Notting Hill* for the romantic comedy genre and *Elizabeth* for the historical drama genre. Prior to the sudden and unexpected sell off by Philips, also as a process in the latest phase of film industry globalization described by Balio, (1998, p. 70), WTF and PFE had been successful in this global film marketplace as non-American competition with Hollywood.

Hollywood’s Global Reach

In 2004 the six Hollywood studios of Paramount, Fox, Warners, Universal, Columbia, and Disney were all now part of diversified media conglomerates. According to Richard Maltby (1998, p. 23), ‘...the major companies, acting primarily as financiers and distributors have gradually come to terms with a fragmentation of the audience, a concern with ideas of demographics and target audiences derived from market research, globalized markets and new delivery systems’. As such they were ‘prospering, and more powerful and profitable than ever in history’ (Gomery 2005, p. 308). According to O’Regan (1990, p. 16), ‘Hollywood’s advantage in international film markets is undoubtedly related to the controlled nature of its product. Its texts are the product of an advanced technological apparatus, industrialized system, and particular organization of production’. He also understands this global advantage as consisting of a ‘systematized’ textual system of ‘recognisable ‘types’ of film, like the suspense thriller, the

horror film, the science fiction film etc' which have contributed to Hollywood's international power. But, O'Regan (p. 3) explains that although the dominance of Hollywood is unquestionable, it can be understood as a collection of 'tendencies and film making strategies which are constantly being renovated and transformed'³.

Until the early 1990s, the entire foreign market represented less than 50% of all film revenue, North America being larger than the other combined markets (Shone 2004, p. 227). The significance of this market is summed up by O'Regan:

No single market is of comparable size nor has any single market (excluding Canada's 10% of US) accounted for a significant percentage of Hollywood's North American box office. Hollywood, whilst being concerned to export programs and films, has never had to be as directly responsive to changes in the media system in other countries as it has had to be to changes in its own market. (O'Regan 1990, p. 9)

Whilst the above remarks may still have a certain relevance, as Shone (2004, p. 227), writing ten years after O'Regan, points out, the overseas markets shifted in importance for Hollywood when they came to represent more than 50% of the global box office. In 2010, Hollywood's global box office receipts were reported by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) at a high of \$31.8 billion (Verrier 2011, p. 3). However, its growth came from a dramatic shift in overseas revenue which was up 13% from the previous year while ticket sales in the North American market were flat (p. 3). By 2011, overseas revenues including an expansion of

³Hollywood's global domination is challenged in certain areas by Bollywood, i.e. volume of films produced per year and number of ticket sales and though much of what O'Regan wrote twenty years ago is still relevant, the landscape of global filmmaking is constantly developing.

markets in Russia and China had come to represent almost 70% of Hollywood's box office revenue. At the same time Hollywood had experienced a shortfall in its DVD ancillary revenue (Verrier, Fritz, and Loiko, 2011, p. 1).

According to Olson (1999, p. 18) although Hollywood does not hold a monopoly in a global ability to generate transparent texts that seem familiar in local cultural contexts, he maintains that it is exceptional in its ability to use the release of a film as exemplified by *Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1993) for the strategic commercial coordination of marketing platforms. These include licensing, spin-offs and product merchandising. Hollywood is also advantaged with the use of the language of English and English speakers are synonymous with global economic wealth (O'Regan 1990, pp. 11, 14). O'Regan (p. 8) further explains that, as Hollywood uses the American political, economic and military position within the world economy to its advantage, internationally its films have resembled a 'brand image' for America. It is an image that has sold American values and American goods. As such it has functioned in globalization in what can be understood as Americanization. However, in the 21st Century, as Hollywood has rapidly become more dependent on its worldwide box office, the major studios are maintaining their global position of domination by using their marketing capacities to coordinate global marketing campaigns and to anticipate global tastes in the development of their films (Anon. 2011).

Americanization and Hollywood's Responsiveness

The international presence of Hollywood is one of being multi-faceted and Hollywood operates in an ever-changing marketplace (O'Regan 1990, p. 23). Thus, it is responsive to change. Balio (1996, p. 21) describes its adjustments to the changing global economy of the 1980s and 1990s

as an expansion horizontally through conglomerate mergers for access into global markets, through alliances with producers for increased product offerings, and through partnering to gain foreign investment. As Hollywood has become more dependent on its overseas markets, its decision-making has been shaped by changing international market conditions (Anon. 2011). Rather than one big overseas markets, Hollywood exports to different individual markets. Writing in 1990, O'Regan understands Hollywood's international popularity and its dominance of the international marketplace as a relationship of Hollywood and the rest of the world. In this relationship, Hollywood's American tradition of democratic values have a tendency for a negotiation with diverse conditions in the global locality (O'Regan 1990, p. 25). Two decades on from O'Regan's polemic, while much of what he argues still remains true, the global context in which Hollywood operates has, inevitably, changed. China is opening up its market to more foreign films and may eventually become the largest global film market (Ho 2011). Hollywood is responding to this changing market by casting films with actors, such as Taiwan's Jay Chou in the *Green Hornet* (Michel Gondry, 2011), who have specific appeal to audiences in China and it is shaping its film stories as exemplified by the remake of *Red Dawn* (Dan Bradley, 2011) to gain market access by avoiding sociopolitical content that would cause problems with Chinese censors (Ho 2011). In this new negotiation with emerging and existing markets across the globe, Hollywood films continue to travel as a result of what O'Regan identifies as:

Hollywood's peculiar ability to lock into particular cultural, aesthetic and social configurations and aspirations that it shares with its non-American audiences. It seems as if here at least the American and international audience are largely interchangeable.

Hollywood is internationally successful because it mobilises its textual protocols at the

service of constructing (internationally) shared cultural, aesthetic and ideological concerns, maps and identities. (O'Regan 1990, p. 26)

This negotiation in diversity can also be understood for non-Americans as a 'Hollywood mindedness' and according to Maltby (2003, p. 2), 'Only by thinking about the way Hollywood movies are used by their audiences can we understand the ways in which movies contrive to be expressive'. O'Regan (1990, p. 25) argues, citing Richard Collins, that historically the American melting pot as Hollywood's home market was reflective of a type of global diversity. This market diversity, primarily European in nature, shaped Hollywood's product as a transnational product. As a result, 'the Hollywood text is formed in such a way as to command the attention of that developed world' (p. 25). The American experience translated by the experience of Hollywood provides international audiences 'not only with shared aesthetic texts, and therefore common cultural and social resources, but also with shared values, interpretations and sensibilities' (p. 25). Maltby (2003, pp. 28-29) maintains that Hollywood has always made films for international audiences as universal product because of market sizes. As a result of the negotiation with diversity, Hollywood has projected through itself 'an imaginary America' as Americanization that supplants the local culture or becomes 'a property of the rest of the world' (p. 27). This latter understanding of Americanization could also be understood as the unicity of Robertson. Maltby describes this as the paradox of American product being part of a shared international mass culture (p. 29). For O'Regan, the process of Americanization for Hollywood as the international film industry can be summed up:

In being identified as American it makes its claim to universality and local resonance...America is known and yet not known through Hollywood...neither

Hollywood, the USA tourist industry, nor USA governments particularly want to point out that these are after all *your* not *their* imaginings. (O'Regan 1990, p. 28)

Because the idea of America is powerful, Hollywood has used this to its advantage in different countries and cultures. Yet its 'Americanness' is not equal in the eyes of all markets and its appeal may be more specifically framed culturally as European or Western. As a result, it circulates in different markets more effectively than others. O'Regan (p. 29) argues that 'Hollywood has always partially defined itself in relation to 'Europe'. The Hollywood text has a broad cultural identity as 'European' product which can be contrasted with other cultural identities within the global system. What is intrinsic to Hollywood for its global negotiation, he argues, are transferable attributes. These attributes are 'textual attributes, its quality of the image, its system, its production in the English language, its commercial media marketplace, its various cultural and social attributes, and its reception and redistribution of texts in diverse locales' (p. 33). If these advantages could be exploited by other producers it would be possible 'for serious contenders to Hollywood to emerge' (p. 33). A.J. Scott (2002) argues that although Hollywood may have a strong hold on global distribution to world markets, this does not mean they are invulnerable to being challenged by competition. He maintains that alternative niche film markets may provide production opportunities that could become strategic platforms of competition with Hollywood. However, as a core to periphery relationship, Hollywood may be acting as a gatekeeper of its North American market to prevent a reverse flow of product and revenue. Yet, it could be understood that the British film industry and its special relationship with Hollywood forms a more centralized periphery and at different times, whether with *The Private Lives of Henry VIII*, *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981) or *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, it has reversed this core to periphery relationship.

Kuhn, PolyGram and Working Title Films - an Alternative to Hollywood Americanization

It can be argued that the global experience and performance of PFE, WTF and its film products evidence a significant shift for a British production company in globalization as a negotiation of connectivity to the global film market. Not only the initial success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* but the subsequent global successes of WTF's film products can be used as a validation in support of the strategy that Michael Kuhn developed to lead PFE. He did this as an emergent competition with Hollywood in a process of globalization that could be understood as alternative to Americanization. He asserts that PFE had accomplished an ability to competitively release movies in America and worldwide. According to Kuhn:

This was the fulfillment of a dream for me, never before had a European based studio had its own US distribution as well as distribution in all major territories of the world. Now, we could take on a purely British project such as *Bean* and by focusing all our efforts, make it into a world-wide success. We were not reliant on whether Miramax liked one of our films and were willing to put their considerable talents and money to work to make it a success. (Kuhn 2002, p. 88)

He argues that Hollywood's methods were not perfect and that they could be improved upon. He identifies PFE's film selection procedures, their international marketing and their 'talent friendly' sensibility as being competitive strengths (p. 88). For each proposed film project, they assessed the viability for a return on cost with estimates from multiple revenue streams. These revenue estimates were based on specific national or territory input from the marketplace. At the same time, there was a more fluid process for creative input and controlled experimentation in development and production through the label concept adopted by PFE. Thus, it can be argued

that not only had they adopted attributes from Hollywood but generated new attributes for global connectivities. In developing a project with the use of a control sheet (similar to a balance sheet), they specifically identified market streams and ancillary markets to the budget as an estimate of projected financial return. This work approach integrated feedback of market conditions as projections from their international sales operations, their international territories and from their American distribution operation with the creative side of the business. Therefore, this process could be understood as their negotiation of the connectivity of globalization and could also be described as a resultant mix of tendencies for market connectivity. The selection of genre played a key role for judging a proposed film project's box office appeal and market performance. Kuhn explains that:

It had always seemed to me that the studio method of deciding which films to make was extremely flawed. In Hollywood, everything is centralized as much as possible and the head of the studio jealously guards the power to decide which movies to make. (Kuhn 2002, p. 79)

Hollywood's corporate culture, with its reliance on producers and studio power alliances, as well as its rationale for production approval of remakes based on another film's box office performance, may be understood to have aspects of risk reduction that may at the same time create limitations for success. One of the critical factors in the success of PolyGram's films was its ability to link the local work of film project development with the global markets and its audiences. Because PolyGram was combining development with market sensitivity from the very beginning of projects, Kuhn explains that this process overcame a key obstacle common to the British film industry where 'projects are often developed in isolation from market realities and the result has been a very disappointing level of success for scripts developed independently

in the UK' (p. 81). Thus, in contrast to other British production companies, WTF developed a slate of films that could be distributed and marketed profitably to a global market, a market whose major consumer was American.

As Sir Alan Parker (2002), chairman of the UK Film Council, points out, international distribution is where the money is made in the film industry and production alone cannot be the basis of a film industry. PFE with WTF were targeting this international market for its films rather than a national market. Within this global market, its non-American overseas markets had developed similar tastes for popular narrative cinema that was genre-based and employed stars as a key strategy for financing and marketing films. As such WTF's negotiation to these different and smaller global, film markets had blended aspects of Americanization. This was accomplished through WTF's partnership with the Coens and an internal development of the British romantic comedy but with aspects of an American sensibility. Eventually this negotiation was expanded through the genre hybridization of American genre combined with British representations created by Pegg and Wright. Their negotiation can be described as a more complex negotiation with the tendencies of Americanization in globalization. Furthermore WTF found ways to negotiate with Americanization in developing their on-going slate of products. They did this in order to generate accessibility and box office appeal for audiences in their most important global market, the American market.

Kuhn (2002, p. 81) also believes that WTF and PFE's approach to development was superior to that of the Hollywood majors because there was more clarity between creative decisionmaking in writing and directing and its market effect globally. In this way, 'the financial and marketing consequences were discussed more collectively, each interested group feeling committed to the other' (p. 81). However at the same time individual producers could be more reasonably held

accountable for the success or failure of a film. In other words, though they were emulating the traditional Hollywood operations globally, they made distinctive internal changes in how they operated which were more tailored to marketing a specific film and the specific country for a greater sensitivity to changing market conditions. In contrast to Hollywood, they did this with decentralized production and individualized distribution for their different production companies (Citron 1993). This difference was reflected in the organizational structure of PFE's distribution operations into smaller, specialized units i.e. Manifesto Films. According to Kuhn (2002, p. 84), Hollywood may exhibit complaisance in their established business conventions in film exploitation, and he describes their approach as 'Typically outside the United States, studios tend to divide responsibility for exploiting their films, into divisions linked to the type of exploitation, rather than the country of exploitation'. As a consequence, this structuring produces overheads that reduce returns and a marketing process that outside of the United States pays very little attention to national considerations. Kuhn's position may be difficult to assess because, as Marich asserts, Hollywood is secretive in its marketing practices (2005, p. vi). He further maintains that Hollywood has illogical 'quirks' in its marketing approaches because of studio politics and differing perspectives between generations of its executives (p. 27). Even so, he explains the marketing emphasis is based on identification of a film's primary audience that is analyzed by four groupings, male, female, over and under the age of 25 (pp. 13, 27). By developing a marketing team that was national specific in focus, PFE may have been better able to more fully exploit the films in the video, television or movie markets. Nevertheless, they were still focused on Europe or English speaking Commonwealth countries as a framing and negotiation for the product.

At the same time that PFE was building up their foreign distribution operation, WTF was building their slate as a pipeline of product. They were gaining strength and experience in project selection, production, and distribution and could then break into the most difficult global market. Their key global connectivity was a negotiation with Hollywood for operating in its most important market, North America. O'Regan (1990, p. 10) asserts that Hollywood dominance of North American screens and the size of the North American market is a critical disadvantage for non-Hollywood foreign producers. Because Hollywood supplies enough product for this market, imported product is not needed. Yet Kuhn and PolyGram took on the challenge by doing their own distribution and marketing in the US through Gramercy Pictures. According to Kuhn (2002, p. 86), 'the biggest risk in setting up US distribution in movies...is being 'on the hook' for the American share of the negative cost and the prints and advertising risk'. In a reversal of the imaginative flow, this distribution into the American market allowed for a negotiation for diversity not of the imaginary America but of the *imaginary Britain*, as evidenced by the success of *Notting Hill* and *Elizabeth*. Although the narrative of these films was based in actualities of time and place, the imagined worlds they presented to the audience were a construction of meaning that resulted in WTF's product being more advantaged for offering the imaginary Britain. This advantage may have been strengthened by the 'special relationship' between Britain and the United States. The WTF slate of films provided a pipeline in this negotiated connectivity in globalization because its films offered an accessibility and appeal to the American audiences. Kuhn (p. 88) explains their approach to this slate, '...I like to think we were developing a slate that was a good mixture of big commercial worldwide hits, such as *Bean* and *Notting Hill*, with movies that both did well and received great critical acclaim such as *Fargo*, *Elizabeth*...'. Its genre reworking and hybridization formed a modality that could

be managed in the complexity of the distribution process. Although the slate was British film product, its development can also be described as a negotiation of Britain with tendencies of Americanization in the development of narrative form and elements. Their films used genre conventions and hybridization modeled on Hollywood narrative forms, British/English character types and national stereotypes that appealed to the American audience and representations of a tourist's vision of London for audience recognition and relatability. The relationship of WTF with the Coens was also a negotiation that generated films such as *Fargo* that provided representations of regional America. These were a more specific American dimension in a negotiation for audience accessibility between WTF and the North American market. This negotiation was economically necessary because of the size of the North American market and this audience being globally dominant. The 'Americanized' British romantic comedy of *Notting Hill* with its American movie star, Julia Roberts, coupled with Hugh Grant and his representation of a preferred type of English masculinity, both on and off screen, evidences this Americanizing tendency as negotiation. Even after a re-connectivity to the global when WTF became part of a global Universal, the WT2 slate included hybridized generic formulations such as *Shaun of the Dead* and *Hot Fuzz*. These films mixed British representations with American genre conventions.

Ultimately, PolyGram and Kuhn could not sustain their competitive position with Hollywood because of the conglomerate global strategy of the late 1990s, that of de-coupling content or software with hardware. This strategy was used by Philips to sell off PolyGram to Seagrams in 1998. It emulates the de-coupling of Matsushita earlier with Universal when the Japanese hardware manufacturer could not sustain a working relationship with the Hollywood studio (Gomery 2005, p. 222). With PolyGram's sale to Seagram Company (who by then owned

Universal Studios), its potential on-going connectivity for global distribution was disconnected. However, in assessing how successful they had been in competition with Hollywood, Kuhn (2002, p. 88) points out that from 1991 to 1999 PFE had won 14 Oscars in 8 years. As a demonstration of PFE's short lived achievement, he further asserts that when he departed PolyGram, he left behind productions in development that would eventually be profitable in Hollywood's global market. Although not all of these products were profitable, as mentioned earlier they did include '*Notting Hill* (worldwide box office over US 240 million), and a development slate with *Bridget Jones's Diary*' (p. 88).

A Stable Position of a Globalized WTF in Hollywood

For WTF, this disconnection from PolyGram resulted in their reconnection within Hollywood. Michelle Wright head of production for WTF describes the re-negotiation to the global through Hollywood and the integration of WTF into a new corporate structure and culture:

For me the challenge coming to the UK (from the US) in 1999 was to bridge the gap between an independent production company and the corporate side of things – to convince the corporate world of Universal that we can make films with both tremendous European and American talent and still do it for a price...it's about finding the right balance between the movie 'business' and the very creative aspects of the film making process. (Wright in *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 223)

Hollywood needs profitable product. During the 1990s the slate of WTF continued to generate successful film product at the global box office. This product was valued as meaningful for audiences and also valued as meaningful to Hollywood. Through a globalization process of business connectivity, ownership and de-regulated finance, WTF found itself now globalized

through what is known as Hollywood. Eventually Universal would be sold by Seagram in 2000 to the French global media conglomerate Vivendi. In 2004 it went through a merger and became NBC Universal, 80% owned by General Electric (Levy, 2004). Throughout these sales and mergers WTF had retained a stable position in relation to the global through its negotiated position within Hollywood. Because of its skill in negotiation with Americanization and its experience as a global producer, when PolyGram ceased to exist, WTF was able to transition and thrive in a new position within Hollywood. It continued to form a global connectivity when it re-connected to the global market through the distribution processes of Hollywood. Furthermore, it has maintained a stability of global connectivity during subsequent corporate mergers. Its ongoing success in the film industry may have been based not only on the success of its genre films at the box office but also on its ability in the negotiation of Americanization as a dimension of globalization.

Conclusion

During the late 1990s and 2000s, WTF re-negotiated a global relationship of complex connectivity with Hollywood that was based on mutual interests and reciprocity. Their expansion for the global imagination, a process of creativity that could generate new stories meaningful to global audiences, was through the hybridization process of genre. As Tomlinson (2008, p. 7) asserts that the connectivity of capitalism ‘works towards increasing a functional proximity. It doesn’t make all places the same, but it creates globalized spaces and connecting corridors which ease the flow of capital’, the cultural practices of WTF were more defined by the market feedback from their most important box office revenue, the markets of North America, Britain or Europe. Because of the distance between the makers and the audience in a global to local relationship, there was a negotiation of ‘genre adjustment’ for local conditions. Some

localities are more accepting of American tendencies, British tendencies and the universality of the 'Americanness' of Hollywood. WTF's genre negotiation was not to maintain difference between their locality and global localities but rather to use strategies that may have ameliorated difference. This was evidenced in their partnership with the Coens that generated genre films that were more specifically American, and through the WT2 productions of *Shaun of the Dead* and *Hot Fuzz*, as combinations of British representation with American genres. The next chapter examines in more detail these representative cases with their genre re-working and negotiation.

Using the films created from the talent of writers, directors, actors and other production personnel, WTF expanded a global inclusiveness for certain specificities of the local, such as the *Fargo* of mid-America and the English village in *Hot Fuzz*. It can be concluded that WTF has mastered a range of strategies for negotiation with the use of genre re-workings and hybridization for ongoing, global connectivity. This has been accomplished from a globally connected position outside of Hollywood and a globally re-connected position within Hollywood. The special relationship between Britain and the United States, that bridges their two film industries and their audiences, has given WTF and its producers an added advantage globally. Positioned within Hollywood, they have secured a flexibility for creativity and finance that generates lower risks and stability for the sustainability of the company. This may also indicate their ability to negotiate Americanization within globalization. The significance of WTF as a global company and its use of genre in globalization is its contribution to the shaping of a global consciousness.

Chapter 9: Case Studies in Genre Connectivity: Working Title Films' *Fargo*, *Elizabeth*, *Shaun of the Dead*, and *Hot Fuzz*

Introduction

This chapter examines in more detail representative cases of genre re-working and negotiation by Working Title Films (WTF). As shall be argued in this chapter, in their increasing, on-going interaction globally, WTF had expanded different negotiations and the complexity in the use of genre for connectivity with the global film market and its audiences. The cases of *Fargo*, *Elizabeth*, *Shaun of the Dead* and *Hot Fuzz* exemplify how genre was strategically used to function as an example of 'complex connectivity' in globalization – as the idea has been developed across this thesis. This genre negotiation results in an inclusiveness and expansion of a global, cultural consciousness that is, at the same time, integrated with the economic global film market and audience demand for product. As a phenomenon of the cultural dimension in globalization, the 'complex connectivity' thus emerges in the sense that WTF's genre films 'travel' representationally to global localities in a meaningful negotiation with the local audience. This negotiation of their textual specificities is through a communication process of decoding for symbolic meaning by the audience.

In the case studies the conceptual framework of genre is used to understand the complex and contradictory phenomena of globalization and the film market. Genre, through its re-working and hybridization, is a specific dimension of culture for what Tomlinson identifies as the purpose of culture—the ordering of life and the construction of meaning (2008, p. 14). The development of these genre films can also be understood as a social practice of storytelling. Writers, directors,

producers and other talent such as production designers and costume designers contribute to the meaning construction in this re-working of genre. This practice can be understood as occurring in a local-global dialect and a changing global-local sense. As a consequence of globalization, genre film production is subject to transformation. The cases of these films provide a further means to understand 'how globalization alters the context of meaning construction' for the producers and also for the audience (p. 20). They examine how these cultural experiences are articulated and mediated on the screen in making sense of the locally situated life and the every day experience of the audience (p. 20). As exemplified by these cases, their re-working of genre may provide a greater functionality for audience appeal, relatability and accessibility.

Consequently, as conceptualized by Tomlinson and applied to these cases, this may result in a sense of global proximity between representational Britain and America and the specific global locality of the audience (p. 30). These examples show an expansion of diverse representations and offer a contrast to the enchanted, white, affluent world found in *Notting Hill*. They include the sinister North American hinterland of *Fargo*, and the catastrophic cityscape of London (that is at once alienating and familiar) found in *Shaun of the Dead*. It will be argued in this chapter that this shift away from the London of *Four Weddings* and *Notting Hill* represents for WTF an ongoing negotiation and reconfiguration of the cultural experience of what Tomlinson refers to as 'strategies for intervention in the other realms of connectivity: the political, the environmental and the economic' (p. 30).

The Interconnected Relationship of Genre, the Box Office and Audience Response: A Comparative Gauge for Film Market Performance

In order to better understand the relationship of these genre films to their development process and the global-local marketplace, global box office reports of earnings are provided in Appendix

B. Box office figures offer a comparative industry standard as a gauge for a film's success and value. The global economic performance reflected in these reports includes, for comparison, that of WTF with other films from the Hollywood and the British industry. Although they may indicate global receptivity and appeal, these figures vary in market response and this variance may indicate *acceptance for difference* for the filmic representations and textual content in the locality of the global film marketplace.

Appendix B also provides the *percentage* of box office earnings compared to production budget costs (if budget figures were available). It is significant to note that the global breakthrough film of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* produced a dramatically higher *cost to box office percentage*, earning back almost 56 times its production cost, i.e. 5584%. This is in comparison with other related American comedy films marketed to global audiences such as *Sleepless in Seattle* (1993) with 1084% and *Pretty Woman* (1990) with 3310%. By establishing a connective relationship to the global market as a culturally meaningful experience for its audiences, WTF's lower budgeted film produced a massive global flow of capital back to its distributors. This flow was not only massive high gross earnings but also massive profit: e.g. *Notting Hill*'s worldwide gross for its Hollywood distributor, Universal, was \$363, 889, 678 (*Box Office Mojo* n.d.d). The percentages represent high profit margins of *return on cost investment* for the production budgets of each film. It should be noted that the distribution costs of prints, advertising and marketing are deducted with production costs against the gross box office earnings to determine net profit. Because the distribution costs may have wide variations in spending levels depending on the type of release, they have not been used for this comparative analysis. However, the *cost to box office percentage* can also be used to identify the comparative global commercial success or failure of

specific films with other films or types of films. It can also be used to compare commercially successful films with those described as critically successful.

These breakthrough films, exemplified by *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, and their high percentages are not exceptions nor reflective of anomalies in film market performance. Rather, their performance is a phenomenon of globalization in which there is a rapid, intense development of interconnectedness between the film story, the audience and the box office. This performance of films such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Fargo* and *Shaun of the Dead*, in generating massive box office revenue, in comparison to low cost, provides further evidence in support of genre's function in globalization. Thus, story that is meaningful communication produces massive earnings in a global film market. As this chapter seeks to demonstrate, once these film breakthroughs had occurred, the producers established an ongoing connectivity through the reworking of genre for audience appeal within the context of a dynamic and changing global marketplace. The Coen brothers' Oscar winning film *Fargo*, produced by WTF with a budget of \$6,500,000, also stands out as a breakthrough film and benchmark for its performance in the global marketplace. It had a significantly high percentage return and is a commercial contrast to their earlier, bigger budgeted films. The relationships of WTF with talent, as exemplified by the Coen brothers and their specific creative interests in re-working genre, formed and expanded the interconnections and interdependencies at work within this global dynamic. These resulted in a transformation of filmmaking practice that produced successful genre films for global connectivity.

Working Title Films and the Coen Brothers: A Relationship of Genre –*Fargo* (1996)

The working relationship of the American Coen brothers within the British WTF is not typical for the British film industry of the 1990s. Considered somewhat unique in the film industry because the brothers write, produce and direct as a duo, the Coens were not mainstream Hollywood but rather independent producer-directors working on the margins of the industry. Thus, at first glance this WTF relationship of talent appears unusual and one can wonder how this has taken place. Nonetheless the corporate context may offer an understanding of the initial development of their relationship.

As part of a global media conglomerate, PolyGram Filmed Entertainment (PFE) was developed in a way that overcame inherent structural problems of the British film industry for financing, development and dealmaking. In contrast to government-based resources and support for producers, it provided financing for larger production budgets for its independent labels; it developed projects with market sensitivity; and, it structured distribution into the production planning. This allowed for the negotiation of a different type of creative and business relationship between WTF and the Coen brothers. Because of PolyGram's need for distribution product and the need for WTF to generate more projects and diversity in their slate, a partnership was established. When considered in more detail, the partnership was understandable as good business practice, the recognition of mutual interests, and a personal affinity among the partners. With the Coens' films, WTF and PolyGram became more diverse, adding a distinctive (if somewhat quirky) American flavour to a company that until this point had been strongly identifiable as 'British'. Their partnership with WTF has resulted in what has most arguably become the Coens' most noteworthy production, *Fargo*.

The partnership relationship with WTF initially grew out of a distribution relationship that Michael Kuhn and PFE had established with the Coens. In 1991 PolyGram picked up the Coen's

neo-noir *Barton Fink* (Joel Coen, 1991) for distribution in selected international markets (Hibbs, 2007, p. 146). Set in 1941, it is the story written by the Coen brothers about a New York playwright, Barton Fink, who moves to Hollywood to write a Wallace Beery wrestling picture. Kempley points out the distinctiveness of the film:

The winner of an unprecedented three prizes at the Cannes Film Festival this year, "Barton Fink" is certainly one of the year's best and most intriguing films. Though it defies genre, it seems to work best as a tart self-portrait, a screwball film noir that expresses the Coens' own alienation from Hollywood. (Kempley 1991, p. 1)

The Coens' may have had an uneasy relationship with Hollywood and as New York based independent filmmakers, they did not easily connect to the more commercially driven Hollywood. They also understood themselves as a certain kind of independent filmmaker and their approach to film work may have been more relevant to the method used by PolyGram and WTF based on the label concept. Rather than working from an avant garde or experimental tradition, their reference model was the American independent horror film *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) (Luhr 2004, p. 5). Because they wanted to work without interference PolyGram's label concept provided a space for the negotiation of connectivity with their creativity.

The Coens are known for referencing past films, mixing and re-working genre conventions and using character and genre types in unexpected ways (p. 4). This approach characterizes the work that has been produced through their relationship with WTF and more specifically *Fargo*. Ethan Coen (n.d. cited in Hajari 1994) explains that 'We exploit (older conventions) because for whatever reasons they appeal to us more, or come more naturally, than more contemporary ones. That remove from everyday reality is somehow liberating for us'. The Coen brothers approach

the writing of a film as a 'complex game rather than an attempt to draw painful person truths from one's inner soul' (Levine 2000, p. 13). Joel Coen (n.d. cited in Russell 2001, p. 6) summarizes their genre re-workings thus: 'You start with things that are incredibly recognizable in one form and then you start to play with them'. Their work could therefore be described as the encoding of meaning in relation to other texts within a genre rather than in relation to lived experience. As such the audience makes sense of their texts as a decoding through a process of intertextuality.

For the Coens, working with WTF provided a more disciplined process for their creative efforts. In effect they became a label within a label for the PolyGram corporate structure and they synergized their strengths. Bevan describes what this has meant:

The job of the production company is one of creation-enabling a film to come to life.

This largely depends on who else is involved and where the idea originally came from. It can be a third party creative relationship where Working Title provides finance, production structure, marketing and distribution oversight and some creative opinion – the films of the Coen Brothers, with whom we have made a number of pictures, would fall into this category. (Bevan in *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 16)

Although not re-creations, their films are sometimes referred to as 'pastiche' in imitation of older Hollywood styles of genre (Hall 2004, p. 14), especially that of film noir, and they have been strongly associated with a revival of film noir, referred to as 'neo-noir' (Schwartz 2005, p. 41; Palmer 2007, p. 158).

According to Neale (2000, p. 174) 'neo-noir is now the most widely accepted term for those films which, from the mid-1960s on, relate to or draw upon the notion, the image and the

putative conventions of film noir...on some of the films featuring centrally within most versions of the basic noir canon'. Levine (2000, p. 13) points out the Coen's rationale for their use of genre when deciding to make their first feature: 'Joel and Ethan knew that a genre film would be the easiest to sell to a distributor, and besides they had always thought in genres'. The Coen brother's first feature film *Blood Simple* (Joel Coen, 1984) is noted as being 'neo-noir' (Palmer 2007, p. 158) and they acknowledge a debt to the crime genre literature of Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler and James M. Cain (Levine 2000, p. 14). They were also influenced by the work of Alfred Hitchcock (Coughlin 2010). *Blood Simple* is the story of a murder for hire when a nightclub owner hires a detective to kill his wife and her lover. It can be considered a precursor to both *Barton Fink* and *Fargo*.

When PolyGram distributed the Coens' film *Barton Fink*, it was not a box office success. With only a domestic gross of \$6,153,939, it did not make back its production costs (*Box Office Mojo* n.d.f; Appendix B). However, such was the growing critical appreciation of the Coens' work that their next film, *The Hudsucker Proxy* (Joel Coen, 1994) a feature with a (then) substantial \$25 million budget, was produced with the partnership arrangement of WTF and also with Warner Brothers. Yet, in spite of the investment faith shown by Warners, *The Hudsucker Proxy* only made \$3 million back (Robson 2008, p. 73). One possible explanation for the commercial failure of the film was its more superficial use of genre hybridization. Visual genre conventions and stylistic detail were emphasized over variations in story development and genre conventions of character and plot. Therefore, without significant meaning of story within its genre hybridization of the screwball comedy and fantasy, *The Hudsucker Proxy* could not connect with an audience. Thus, by the release of their third feature film, the Coens' re-working of genre was not only a source of creativity but it may also have become a barrier for audience receptivity as

monotonous in its genre *sameness*. Yet, this was to change when their regional roots eventually became a major source of material they mixed with their genre re-workings as filmic storytelling. Joel and Ethan Coen grew up in Minnesota (Levine 2000, pp. 4, 6; Russell 2001, p. 4) – the area of the United States that they used for their setting of the film *Fargo*.

The Re-working of Genre in *Fargo* and its Function in the Global Film Market

In a turnaround through their relationship to WTF, their next production was *Fargo*, a major box office success. Within the partnership arrangement and no longer operating entirely as independents, the Coen brothers were now more accountable to WTF. Although financial support for production from Warner Brothers fell through, Bevan and Fellner decided to stay committed to the project because they ‘were attracted by the 6.5 budget, a modest but realistic figure’ (Sterritt 2004, p. 13). This understanding of its attractive budget may be directly related to an assessment of risk reduction for return on investment. This return would be from box office earnings combined with ancillary markets of television and video (Appendix B).

WTF was also taking on a greater risk because of the Coens’ track record of substantial commercial failure with Hollywood at this point in time. However, because of the disciplined development process of PolyGram combined with a much lower production budget investment, WTF and PolyGram may have understood that their talent could be managed for financial return. By integrating them into the label work process, WTF may have brought a new discipline to their project development. The goal of this discipline and oversight to the production work was to generate a *profitable* as well as creative product. Also, Fellner’s approach to monitoring script development consisted of heavy, multiple rewrites and may have also influenced the Coens’ final product of *Fargo*. The Coen brothers were also creatively using these conventions rather than

only re-working established conventions. They expanded their use of genre conventions by combining them with a strong sense of their own regional American culture. Described in its marketing poster as a 'home-spun murder story', *Fargo*'s story is about a car salesman (Jerry Lundegaard) with money problems, who hires two men to kidnap his wife for a ransom from her wealthy father. The scheme goes out of control when the kidnappers start murdering people. This leads to a murder investigation by Marge Gunderson, a pregnant local policewoman, and the eventual capture of the criminals.

A broad generic classification of this film would be crime film or detective film but it mixes elements of other genres. Also associated with it are dark comedy, horror, film noir and the thriller. Because much of the action of *Fargo* takes place in a snowbound landscape, it has also been described as 'white noir' (Luhr 2004, p. 93). Although most film noir and crime stories are set in major cities, the Coens decided to play with the form, relocating the story setting to regional and small town America. They also introduced an oppositional lighting from white snow. The film's tagline is *Fargo: 'A Lot Can Happen In The Middle Of Nowhere'* (Sterritt 2004, p. 10). Shot in Minnesota, the film's title *Fargo* is the name of a small city in nearby North Dakota.

Genres can be seen as frameworks within which films return repeatedly to the same underlying patterns, issues, questions and themes, '...to bring about such imaginary resolutions of real problems' (King 2002, p. 127). Within generic framings of recognition and cognition of the detective crime story, the specificity of place, character and the juxtaposition of comedic elements with the horrific may have also made *Fargo* more accessible for the audience. In describing the film, Maslin sees the film as having brought out 'uncharacteristic warmth in these

coolly cerebral film makers' and 'the familiarity with small town life'. Its humanizing aspects for relatability also emerge through the lead character of the pregnant female detective, detailed by her regional accent and phrase 'Oh, ya betcha, yah!'. She also represents the film's playfulness with gender identity.

By returning to the world of their own lives, the Coens were able to use reality and genre hybridization for a more meaningful film for digesting the horror that can occur in everyday life. If, as Neale (2000, p. 84) asserts, the basic issue of the thriller is 'What is going to happen?', then the menace and the victim need to be obvious to the audience in the storytelling process. The detective story asks the question 'What really did happen?'. In *Fargo* both questions are the basis of the story. There is the detective story investigating the first three murders and there is the story of an out of control menace who is unpredictable. From the beginning of *Fargo*, the audience knows the motive for the kidnapping and who is responsible. The unpredictability of the murderer Gaer character makes it a thriller. It also can be understood as a black comedy; in which death is treated with humour that appeals to an audience. As Tudor (1989 cited in Neale 2000, p. 97) argues, an operating model of horror narratives is when 'a monstrous threat is introduced into a stable situation; the monster rampages in the face of attempts to combat it'. The character of Gaer is more of the Frankenstein monster, possibly an oblique reference to the horror genre, set loose to murder in the framing of the crime deal. His horror and actions, symbolized by the most vivid image of the film, that of the white socked leg sticking out of the wood chopper, become the story's wild card. He is a violent and out of control killer until he is captured by Marge. In Marge, the film also subverts the standard character of the world-weary male detective associated with the thriller or detective genre. Carlson (1993, p. 12) suggests that subversion of conventional generic coding is used to fulfill a detective genre's 'conventional

goal of shocking and surprising the audience by unconventional means'. Marge serves as a POV and as an expectant mother she offers at the film's end an affirmation of life in contrast to the film's carnage (Hibbs 2007, p. 147). Jaffe maintains that the significance of *Fargo* is in addressing its real subject, the human condition, in which the message of the film is that 'humanness, or human wholeness, cannot be taken for granted' (Jaffe 2008, p. 61). This message may be one that is accessible and comprehensible for the global local audience.

Because of its low budget of 6.5 million dollar, *Fargo*, became highly profitable when it grossed \$24,567,751 domestically in the United States (*Box Office Mojo* n.d.g; Appendix B). Its worldwide gross was \$60,611,975 – thus providing the financial reward for both the Coens and WTF. After the success of *Fargo*, the Coen brothers and WTF continued their partnership and their next Coen film was *The Big Lebowski* (Joel Coen, 1998). With the alternative film industry context for global market connectivity provided by PolyGram and WTF, the Coen brothers were able to continue to create genred films with a distinctive regional America specificity. However, rather than seeking acceptance to Hollywood, the Coens may have felt a stronger connection to the European critical experience as a better understanding of their work and their creative mindset. Their partnership with WTF was also for providing a connectivity to the European market. Bevan explains:

By working in America with the Coen brothers on the *Hudsucker Proxy*, *Fargo* and *The Big Lebowski* and with Tim Robbins on the *Bob Roberts* and *Dead Man Walking*...we were able to combine quality with commercial success. Our films were European in feel wherever they were made, performing very well at the European box office thanks to the

driving force of the PolyGram machine. This level of success enabled us to take some bigger risks on home-developed material. (Bevan in *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 17)

As a result, WTF had expanded its genre film production for greater audience appeal in global markets. WTF also had a stronger global reach in a combination with a European sensitivity in these films that offered appeal to receptive European audiences. This European feel which may typify the Coens' films can be understood as an audience's affinity for 'intense drama about the human condition' in contrast to Hollywood action stories that offer answers, optimism and emulate an amusement park ride (Nilsen 2011). Although not denying the popularity of Hollywood films in Europe or globally, Paul Schrader, an American writer and director who is considered to have a 'European sensibility' offers an explanation of this quality for European appeal: 'American movies are based on the assumption that life presents you with problems, while European films are based on the conviction that life confronts you with dilemmas - and while problems are something you solve, dilemmas cannot be solved; they're merely probed' (n.d. cited in Nilsen 2011). Based on this explanation, the film *Fargo* could be understood to examine the dilemma of horror in every day life and be more receptive to European film audiences. Because WTF was connected to the PolyGram distribution apparatus it could penetrate the European market to maximize return on investment with these more globally specific appealing products.

Following the success of *Fargo*, WTF was confident enough to take on the risk of the internal development of a film with a much bigger budget and higher production values, *Elizabeth* (Shekhar Kapur, 1998). *Elizabeth* is a mix of genre conventions and imagery as a post-modern synthesis that creates a distinctive historical English specificity. This specificity in a meaningful

and structured narrative is the creative and cultural representations of people, their actions and events at a given time and place of English history.

Working Title Films' Internal Development of *Elizabeth* (1998)

If the goal of WTF was to combine quality with commercial success (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003 p. 17), their strategy to meet this goal was the re-working of genre in their internal development of the film *Elizabeth*. Rather than using a book as the basis for a film or a partnership that provided a project for development, they developed *Elizabeth* 'as an idea from scratch' (p. 16). However, their idea used the thriller genre, modeled on *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972), and combined it with British history as the jumping off point for their internal development process. Tim Bevan describes their work process:

Elizabeth was a classic Working Title Production...not in the tradition of British 'frock flicks' but something altogether grittier. We decided that Elizabeth's reign had great elements of the thriller about it. We screened my favourite film *The Godfather* to look at its structure...Michael Hirst, an old friend, came up with a great take and wrote a cracking first draft. (Bevan in *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p.17)

Although WTF and its producers had developed their own production, *Elizabeth*, as a thriller, the film was also a representation of British history. As such it became labeled an 'historic thriller', which was the genre created as a marketing acronym (p. 150). *Elizabeth* could be characterized more accurately in the mixing of genre as a hybridization of the *thriller* with the *period* film. Its development and production also exemplify a trait that WTF has become known for, that of taking chances on new talent.

The Art and Popular Culture Encyclopedia (n.d.) defines thrillers as ‘characterized by fast pacing, frequent action, and resourceful heroes who must thwart the plans of more-powerful and better-equipped villains’. Their primary mood is that of excitement and they include stories about murder, conspiracies, violence, or mentally unstable characters. Derry (1988 cited in Neale 2000, p. 82), identifies six major sub-types. *Elizabeth* seems closest to ‘the political thriller’ which according to Derry is:

...organized around a plot to assassinate a political figure or a revelation of the essential conspiratorial nature of governments and their crimes against the people. These films generally document and dramatize the acts of assassins, conspirators, or criminal governments, as well as the oppositional acts of victim-societies, countercultures, or martyrs. (Derry 1988 cited in Neale 2000, p. 82)

Understood as a thriller, *Elizabeth* reflects characteristics of this genre typology. The story is one of conspiracy, assassinations and scheming. At the start of the film (the year is 1554) Elizabeth has been jailed for an alleged conspiracy against her half sister, Queen Mary. Upon Mary’s death she becomes queen. The film shows Elizabeth being courted and urged to marry in order to secure her throne. However, she is caught up in a secret love affair as she deals with various threats to her reign, including those who conspire to murder her and conspire against her reign in order to attack England. Although great license was taken with historic facts (for example the romantic relationship with Robert Dudley and the conspiracy of the Duke of Norfolk), the narrative does mix specific factual and historic action. *Elizabeth* was filmed in various historic locations. The shooting locations of Leeds Castle and Lady Chapel, Whitehall Palace provide a specificity of place and thriller atmosphere for representations in the film of the English past and its historic culture.

WTF used conventions from the ‘frock flick’ or heritage film with a new twist of the thriller as a genre hybridity to create a more distinctive film product. Although the British past had successfully appealed to international audiences as far back as Korda and *The Private Life of Henry the VIII* (1933), Harper explains the difficulties posed by attempting a precise definition of the genre of films with historical content:

Very generally, one can distinguish between the history film, which although not a blueprint for historical accuracy, is concerned with actual historical figures, and the costume film which set in a recognizable historical period, but with fictional characters. The international success of the so-called ‘heritage film’ (films representing the historical and the literary past) has prompted a re-examination of the aesthetics and politics of historical representation in contemporary cinema. (Harper 1994 cited in McKechnie 2002, p. 217)

Nevertheless, in re-working genre, WTF could be understood to use a specific British history with appealing qualities of the ‘frock flick’ combined or hybridized with conventions modeled on *The Godfather*. It did this in order to appeal to a global audience. Mick LaSalle (1998, p. 1), the *Chronicle* staff critic, describes this resemblance in the film as:

Elizabeth starts off a fresh-faced innocent, smiling and happy. All she wants is not to get sucked down into the family business. But gradually, it pulls her right in. Like “The Godfather”, “Elizabeth” is about how an intelligent and fairly sensitive individual achieves security and ultimately greatness by learning to become a murderer. (LaSalle, 1998, p. 1)

At the same time that *Elizabeth* was in development and production with WTF, a successful production trend was emerging in British period films. The Austen films *Sense and Sensibility* (Ang Lee, 1995), *Persuasion* (Roger Michell, 1995), *Emma* (Douglas McGrath, 1996) and *Mansfield Park* (Patricia Rozema, 1999) were being produced and released (Higson 2004, p. 38). As an Anglo-Hollywood costume drama trend, Austen films are considered variants of the English heritage film that has consisted of ‘tasteful costume dramas, historical films and period literary adaptations of the last two decades’ (p. 39). Although Bevan (*Laundrettes and Lovers*, 2003, p. 17) claimed that in the development of *Elizabeth* they had not wanted to ‘fall into the British ‘period film’ groove’ associated with slower paced, less appealing and possibly less commercial British films of the past, WTF and its producers, nonetheless, may still have capitalized on what was then a successful trend in the film industry in producing *Elizabeth*. It may not have been a coincidence that the romantic comedy *Shakespeare in Love* (John Madden, 1998), referenced to *Romeo and Juliet*, and produced as an Anglo-Hollywood production by Miramax, was released the same year as the historic thriller *Elizabeth*.

These historic British films may represent an industry strategy using a trend’s generation of market demand and audience expectation as risk reduction. To develop and produce the film *Elizabeth* (1998), WTF had weighed the risk of using PolyGram’s money for a much greater production budget of \$30 million (Appendix B). Its producers wanted their film to be different enough to be competitive, possibly appealing to an audience from a younger, more media-literate generation, an audience with an affinity for films by the Coen brothers or Quentin Tarantino. According to Bevan, *Elizabeth* had been developed as a genre vehicle of the thriller for differentiation from other period drama films (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 17). By using a thriller genre they were distancing it from the more sedate and ‘polite’ period films such as those

of Merchant Ivory in the 1980s and 1990s. Fellner (in Ellison, 1999, p. 5) states, ‘Elizabeth was a tough movie to get made, any period of English history is tough to get made. It was a gamble and it's paid off... This is a real British film, financed, produced, written and shot in Britain. It's not just a stodgy period drama, it's a bit of a thriller as well’. Its approach emphasized visual texture, a playful structural fragmentation that mixed modern cinematic style with conventional style. Moreover, its storytelling had greater flexibility by mixing modern conventions of behavior with the historical events. According to Higson, the theme of female empowerment in *Elizabeth* was used to market the film and generated coverage in women’s magazines (2004, pp. 217-218). Although the film’s strong female lead character is atypical for the thriller genre, he explains that its marketing strategy maximized its appeal to a female audience while using its thriller elements to generate appeal to a male audience (pp. 217-218).

With the development of *Elizabeth*, WTF was confronted with creative challenges in a negotiation with new talent. Not only were the producers taking risks with story development and budget, they were also taking chances in hiring a new director and the actress for the part of Elizabeth. Bevan recounts:

We could not find our Elizabeth, the big names turned it down and the right actress seemed to be eluding us. Then we met Cate Blanchett and our prayers seemed to have been answered. As she was then unknown we had to screen test her – she shone, and the rest is history...when looking for directors we made a list of non-obvious choices. Shekhar Kapur’s *Bandit Queen* had impressed us all. He knew nothing about English history – brilliant- his journey of discovery would be the film’s journey. (Bevan in *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 17)

Alexandra Byrne the costume designer on the film gained insight on the relationship and negotiation of WTF with the creative talent, describing a production meeting of department heads to present progress reports as follows:

It was here that I really became aware of the ‘workings’ of Working Title – to give support and artistic nurture...I was part of an organic process where the creative team was both protected and supported – free to focus and deliver Shekhar’s vision. (Byrne in *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 145)

The result of Kapur’s direction was its visual and stylistic distinctiveness; a look that could be described as more complex, intense and dense in production design and production values. This look, as exemplified in the scene between Elizabeth and Walsingham after her defeat in Scotland, was created with heavy looking stone interiors of Durham Cathedral, rich orange and red fabrics from India, a moving camera and low key lighting. These technical elements of production, such as the lighting, décor, or sound, are often enhanced to increase audience appeal, while also raising the costs and the production budget. According to Bevan, (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 18) ‘...we were able to push the budget and put the money into the sets and wardrobe that gave the film a larger feel’. Costume and make up were symbolically used by Kapur to represent the transformation in seven stages of Elizabeth into the iconic ‘the Virgin Queen’ (Borstler 2010, p. 3). Chapman argues that the film’s visual style makes it distinctive from other British heritage films of the 1980s and 1990s as having a radically different aesthetic in which the rapid editing and the camerawork of overhead and angle shots are more obtrusive for narrative action (2005, p. 306).

While being unconventional and risky in some areas – e.g. the hiring Kapur as director, identifying the film as both period drama and political thriller - these creative risks may have been balanced by the use of genre in the development and marketing of the film product. The film was creative in spectacle and production design through the vision of its director yet offered audience recognition as a period of British history, with the historic figure of Queen Elizabeth, a promotion identity as ‘historical thriller’ (Higson 2004, p. 217) and a story referential to *The Godfather*. It used a mixture of genre conventions in the film that would appeal to both males and female spectators, with the aim of creating a more inclusive genre film and thus greater returns at the box office. It was this use of genre, combined with new talent that allowed WTF to produce a film with both distinctiveness and originality that made *Elizabeth* stand out in the market place from other period films and thrillers. Consequently *Elizabeth* as an historical thriller was able to engage a global audience. The economic result was a box office worldwide gross of \$82,150,642 as a return on the investment of its \$30 million production budget (*Box Office Mojo* n.d.h; Appendix B). Its success eventually led to the sequel *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007), which was also directed by Shekhar Kapur. *Elizabeth* exemplifies WTF’s ability to expand its global connectivity using a strategy that was a re-definition and re-working of genre. It did this through a negotiation with financing, talent, the intensification of production values, and the use of representations of British history that could be ‘sold’ to a British and international audience.

Through the internal development of its genre films, WTF had produced representations of Britain’s past (*Elizabeth*; *Sense and Sensibility* (Ang Lee, 1995)) and its romantic present (*Notting Hill*; *Love Actually*). Moreover, through a partnership with the Coen brothers, WTF had also integrated into its production slate the re-working and hybridization of genre with

representations of regional America. With further expansion, through its new low budget label, WT2, WTF established another means of negotiation with new talent for films with British representations to distribute to the global film market. Tim Bevan (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 18) describes WT2 as ‘specifically designed to make first films by first time directors, writers and other talent’. As a result, WT2 generated two comedy films *Shaun of the Dead* (2004) and *Hot Fuzz* (2007) that are now noteworthy as successful English or British re-workings of American genre films. It is to these two films that the final part of this chapter turns its attention.

Case Studies of *Shaun of the Dead* (2004) and *Hot Fuzz* (2007) – English Reworking of US Genres

Shaun of the Dead and *Hot Fuzz* were produced by the creative team of Simon Pegg, writer-actor, and Edgar Wright, writer-director. They evolved their work from creating television parodies of film genres and progressed to making genre films. These films mixed comedy with a variety of genre conventions. They also used intertextual references to films that are well-known and, in some cases, iconic in relation to their respective genres. In an interview that coincided with the release of *Shaun of the Dead*, Pegg stated ‘We never set out to make a spoof. We didn't want to lampoon zombie films. This *is* a zombie film. And it just happens to be a comedy as well’ (Alter, 2004).

In his review of *Shaun of the Dead*, Peter Bradshaw (2004) points out, ‘The spoof genre is usually so tricky but this brings it off: it's spirited, good-natured, likable and funny... If it sometimes looks like a feature-length episode of *Spaced*, well that's a good thing’. In 1999, Pegg had developed and co-wrote the low budget sitcom *Spaced* with Stevenson and Wright for Channel 4 (Dawson 2007). *Spaced*, a ‘Surreal cult sitcom with more pop culture references than

you can shake a light sabre at' (Channel 4 n.d.c), ran from 1999 to 2001 as two series of seven episodes. Its segments portrayed young people living in the Tufnell Park area of London and it rapidly acquired cult status amongst young audiences (Dawson 2007). In addition to referencing sci-fi and pop culture movies, its off-beat comedy was noted for rapid-fire editing, sight gags, the use of surrealism and non-sequitur humour – thus setting the blueprint for the quirky, affectionate exploration of US cult and genre cinema that would continue in *Shaun of the Dead* and *Hot Fuzz*. Pegg also brought in his best friend, Nick Frost, as an actor in the *Spaced* segments. Frost has continued to play his buddy-friend in both *Shaun of the Dead* and *Hot Fuzz*. The television series gave Pegg and Wright more experience in developing audience appeal and connecting with an audience. It subsequently also became a spring board to WTF's WT2.

Pegg, who identifies himself as a 'geek' and likes sci-fi, horror, and comic books (Villareal 2009) has a creative approach similar to the Coen brothers for re-working and playing with generic conventions. Built on the successful track record of WTF, the low-budget comedy films of *Shaun of the Dead* and *Hot Fuzz* are essentially genre hybrids as parody. The conventions and representations in their films have been transposed from American stories to English or British settings. They replay or rework quintessentially American genres (the zombie film, the action buddy movie) through an identifiably English sensibility in terms of location, cultural references and humour.

These films have produced an unexpected audience appeal and success in generating strong box office earnings, especially in the key markets of Britain and the United States. *Shaun of the Dead* was produced with a \$6,000,000 budget and has to date grossed \$30,039,392 worldwide. Its domestic gross in North America was \$13,542,874, or 45.1% of its worldwide earnings (*Box*

Office Mojo n.d.i; Appendix B). As a result of the success of *Shaun of the Dead*, *Hot Fuzz*'s production budget was doubled to \$12 million. This budget increase in *Hot Fuzz* can be explained by the more expensive spectacle of action and its complicated shooting. The elements and genre conventions of the action film were constructed into the film in order to meet audience expectation. The increased budget was eventually justified by a worldwide gross for the film of \$80,573,774. Although *Hot Fuzz* made \$23,637,265 or 29.3% of its box office earnings in the US, its foreign earnings outside the US represented 70.7 % of its overall gross, while the UK box office gross of \$41,212,142 represented half of its gross. This is a significant figure and indicates a strong accessibility, affinity and box office appeal of the film as specific to a British audience. Australia also generated \$4,855,773 of these earnings and the film did well in Germany, other markets of Europe and Russia (*Box Office Mojo* n.d.j; Appendix B). These figures indicate the growing importance of the global markets outside of the North American market and the shift in the importance of foreign markets to Hollywood. They may also indicate the ability of WTF to negotiate genre appeal with strengths in connecting to audiences in the American market, the British market and Europe.

Shaun of the Dead (2004) – ‘Richard Curtis shot through the head by George Romero’

Shaun of the Dead premiered in London in March of 2004 and was released in September in the United States. On its official Universal Studios website (Universal Studios n.d.) it is described as a horror comedy ‘When flesh-eating zombies are on the hunt for a bite to eat, it's up to slacker Shaun (Simon Pegg) and his best pal (Nick Frost) to save their friends and family from becoming the next entrée’. Although what was ostensibly a low budget British comedy with British actors known only to a British audience, the relationship of WTF with its parent company of Universal allowed it to readily crossover to mainstream audiences in the US and the UK. It was distributed

via Universal's Focus Features division, a specialized distribution arm of the studio. Focus Features, which was partially formed from PolyGram's Gramercy Pictures as well as mergers with other corporate acquisitions, operated with a sister unit Rogue Pictures. Rogue was established to release genre films, one of its first being *Shaun of the Dead* (Reference for *Business: Company History Index* n.d.).

Shaun of the Dead is a re-working of the American horror films of George Romero exemplified by *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and *Dawn of the Dead* (2004). As genre film it is an example of the 'local' humour of *Spaced* going global via homage to zombie horror. Initially pitched to WTF by Edgar Wright as 'Richard Curtis shot in the head by George Romero' (Ward 2004), it also combined elements of the romantic comedy and was eventually marketed as 'A romantic comedy with zombies'. In the film, Shaun's life is going nowhere whether at work or in his personal relationships. When he finally makes a decision to sort out his life, the zombies begin to appear. Shaun and his friend Ed collect their friends and family then head for what they think is safe refuge, the local pub. After fighting off the zombies, Shaun and Liz, his girlfriend, escape and are saved by 'boots on the ground' that will take them to a safer place. A reason that the film was so exportable is that it plays with recognizable genres and film references for an American and thus global audience. For Universal and for WTF, it made financial sense to produce and distribute the film because the production costs were so low and their risk exposure was limited – and, when a film such as *Shaun of the Dead* works in global markets, the rewards are significant.

Historically speaking, the pedigree of Universal Studios in the horror genre also made it the obvious 'home' (via WTF) for *Shaun of the Dead*. In the 1930s Universal Studios specialized in the horror genre, producing films that used variation of genre elements and establishing

conventions of cinematic horror (Balio 1993 cited in Neale 2000, p. 95). The zombie film genre is understood to be a sub-genre of the horror genre. In 1932, *White Zombie* (Victor Halperin, 1932) starring Bela Lugosi was released. Its story is set in the voodoo culture of Haiti; its zombies are mindless slaves (Pulliam 2007, pp. 725-726). This is considered the first zombie horror film. Biewdrowski (2004) asserts that George Romero's low budget feature, *Night of the Living Dead*, resulted in the modern zombie genre. Made outside of the Hollywood film industry, *Night of the Living Dead* was independently produced in 1968 with a budget of \$114,000. *Night of the Living Dead* has been interpreted for its societal and cultural significance as a reflection and negotiation in what Harper (2005) identifies as 'the political and social anxieties of the late 1960s in America'.

In redefining the horror zombie film within the British context, *Shaun of the Dead* has also hybridized its story structure, conventions, and characteristics with those of the British romantic comedy of the 1990s. Thus, the success of *Shaun of the Dead* has now led to a new term that refers to a sub-genre of zombie movies known as the 'rom-zom-com' (*Urban Dictionary* n.d.). However, its usage appears to be limited almost exclusively to this film and its publicity – suggesting that the intention of Pegg and Wright was to use the term as a means of marketing the film, rather than making any serious statement about taking the horror genre in a new direction. According to reviewer Richard Corliss (2007) in describing *Shaun of the Dead*, 'That film was a Molotov cocktail of genres: an Anglo-American combustion of romantic Brit comedies like *Notting Hill* (1999) and the U.S. zombie genre so robustly exhumed in *Night of the Living Dead*'. WTF was able to manage a relationship of talent to generate film products in what Buckingham (1993 cited in Chandler 2000, p. 7) describes as a 'constant process of negotiation and change'.

By mixing the romantic comedy and zombie genres, *Shaun of the Dead* became multi-dimensional for presenting story elements and conventions of comedy and horror with the issues of personal relationships. The English/British flavour of the urban setting of London with its representations of work, family, friendship and community changed the film's genre paradigm. This paradigm is shaped by the story action and events, point of view and cultural representations of the film. In using representations from their own lives, Pegg and Wright were re-working the genre's conventions as a parallel for genre sameness in its zombie conventions but also using British specificities for difference. Wright expands on this:

One of the things about the film is that it takes place completely in George Romero's universe. One of the ideas is that if "Dawn of the Dead" is happening in Pittsburgh, this is what's happening in North London. In terms of like the rules, the folklore, we worked completely within George Romero's universe...staying within the genre conventions that were set up by Romero. (Wright 2004 cited in *About.com*. n.d.)

The area of North London in the film is more specifically Crouch End and this is also the neighbourhood where Simon Pegg lives (*BBC Online* 2004). In contrast to the setting of *Night of the Living Dead*, an isolated rural area of the United States and *Dawn of the Dead*, the American regional city of Pittsburgh, this setting is a neighbourhood of the global city London. Although in reality similar to Notting Hill in terms of the area's recent gentrification, the Crouch End section of London portrayed in the film contrasts to that of the more affluent London neighbourhoods shown in *Notting Hill* or *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. The film's opening does not produce an impression of an enchanted village¹ or affluent neighbourhood but of an

¹See discussion of Notting Hill in the previous chapter.

atmosphere of ennui and discontentment in everyday life. Shaun's girlfriend is not happy with the monotony of meeting at the Winchester Arms pub, his work place offers nothing but a dead end job and his roommates fight in the flat they share. As Mernit (2001, p. 126) points out, the construction of a film's reality must be plausible and logical for its story. *Shaun of the Dead's* setting thus presents a variation of London that fits with its genre hybridization. It evokes a different sensibility for the story action and conventions of the genre for horror combined with romantic comedy and comedy. In the film's very British cultural re-imaging of the generic landscape of the zombie movie, the British pub - rather than an American farmhouse - is the place of safety and sanctuary. For the needs of global audience appeal, the locality of London may still be meaningful symbolically and culturally for audience accessibility as a 'known' location, one that may have cultural and historic ties to the local context of the audience or represent a desired tourist destination.

As discussed below, the film re-works elements of the Curtis British romantic comedy into its story. These elements also contribute to genre recognition in the global market. Shaun's world, the neighbourhood and his POV are established at the very start of the film. Wright considers the beginning of the film a new and different approach to the re-working of the zombie genre. He explains:

...the difference was the idea of having a horror comedy which doesn't really feature any horror until like minute 30... It's actually kind of nice watching it with audiences, because they get into it almost to the point where they've forgotten that there are zombies about to come. (*About.com* n.d.)

They wanted the audience to get to know the characters first so that the comedy and the drama could emerge from a core concept used with the zombie attack. Wright explains that this idea is ‘not how much things change but how little things change. That’s kind of the joke and the central conceit’ (*About.com* n.d.). Not only were they playing with the horror comedy genre, they used the beginning to play with the conventions of British romantic comedy. Pegg states, ‘we wanted to take a very sort of British style of romantic comedy, in the vein of Richard Curtis and stuff and people in London – and then subvert it. In that respect, it was a kind of first’ (*About.com* n.d.).

The power of love is addressed as a response to the central issue of the zombie genre, which is the insecurity of everyday life and societal fear as ‘monstrous threat’ (Tudor cited in Neale 2000, p. 97). Shaun addresses the challenge of his romantic problems by proving himself by saving his girlfriend from the zombies. It is through the character of Shaun and his POV that the audience experiences the story. Rather than an exact replication of a Hugh Grant hero, the character played by Pegg is appropriate as a believable character representation in the film’s imaginary world. Rather than the mannered and somewhat elegant demeanor of Grant who had floppy hair as a key part of his image in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, Pegg in comparison with much less hair and a receding hairline, is more feisty and appears a more everyday working-class character. Their different accents reflect their different classes and social circles. While Grant as William in *Notting Hill* owns his own business and socializes with successful professionals, Shaun in contrast works as a salesman in a dead end job and socializes at the local pub with his friend whose source of income is selling marijuana. In *Shaun of the Dead*’s promotional material, Pegg is identified as an ‘everyman’ type, he describes himself as ‘a regular sort of person’ and sells himself as ‘down to earth, a genre junkie –a fanboy even’(Ryzik 2008). Nevertheless, Grant and

Pegg may also share similarities in their representations. The British civility and sensibility of his character Shaun and that of a Curtis romantic comedy hero do offer a comedic seriousness as counterpoint for earning the respect of the female and saving his friends and family from the zombies. This sense of British decency and positivity may also be represented in his defense of his best friend and his attempts to resolve the problems in his family relationships. Shaun's good intentions may project appealing qualities of British identity that may travel and connect to the global audience

By mixing romantic comedy with horror, Wright and Pegg may have also overcome problematic aspects of audience appeal of the horror genre for certain market segments. According to Wood (1979 cited by Gledhill in Neale 2000, p. 93) in *Hollywood and Genre*, the horror film has a low cultural status. Wood ascribes a distinctive audience issue related to the horror genre film:

The horror film has consistently been one of the most popular and, at the same time, the most disreputable of Hollywood genres. The popularity itself has a peculiar characteristic that sets the horror film apart from other genres: it is restricted to aficionados and complemented by total rejection, people tending to go to horror films either obsessively or not at all. (p. 93)

And yet, when promoting the film, Wright observed the phenomenon of a more diverse appeal and inclusiveness for *Shaun of the Dead* (Wright in Alter 2004). On the one hand, horror fans enjoy the film as an homage to the (sub-) genre and will pick up on the references, in-jokes and iconography of the zombie film. On the other, *Shaun of the Dead* also appeals to those who may never have seen a zombie film. This is largely due to the film's elements of romance and comedy/parody, which may expand its appeal resulting in a broader audience, especially in terms

of including both male and female. This mixing of elements may generate a curiosity as well as expectation for an audience that has not seen this mix previously. An explanation of this appeal is thus found in the film's hybridization of genre aimed to appeal to a crossover audience.

Wolshi's (2004) review provides further insight for *Shaun of the Dead* as part of a trend but with a newness in audience expectation from genre:

...It's both a smart satire and a scary zombie movie in its own right. It's also something completely new at the same time—a romantic comedy with a horror twist... This is probably the first horror movie in history that almost demands bringing a date to. (Wolshi 2004)

This mixing of genre expanded the story potential for expectation, relatability, and pleasurable meaning that resulted in a greater receptivity to as wide an audience as possible.

In 2004 Universal Studios produced and released a remake of *Dawn of the Dead*. This occurred at the same time that its subsidiary Rogue Pictures distributed *Shaun of the Dead*. This intertwined business relationship resulted in a friendship between Romero, Pegg and Wright. In an interview for *Time Out London* (Walters 2008) that Pegg conducted with Romero, they discussed the stories and social significance of their films. Romero commented that 'I didn't think of them as zombies. It was the '60s, man, we were just smoking and talking about politics. It was about revolution' (in Walters 2008). In response, Pegg places *Shaun of the Dead* within a comparative and meaningful social context for their films:

Your 'Dead' movies are always from the point of view of a group of people who really don't know what the hell's going on. They're in a small environment...September 11 happened when we were writing [*Shaun of the Dead*] and it informed our writing process.

We suddenly saw how people reacted in the event of massive social upheaval, and the way that the little problems in your life don't go away. (Pegg in Walters 2008)

In his analysis of these genre films, Pegg may have pinpointed how this specific new sub-genre functions as a kind of global connectivity. Its communication of meaning can be applied as an analogy to any major disruption that threatens the order of everyday life for the global audience locally. In this hybrid genre, then, there is a complex intertwining of the political, economic and cultural in its representations. The zombie and the rom-zom-com films are specific ways to describe a condition of fear and disorder that may be occurring as a condition of an increasing global interconnectedness. Catastrophic events such as 9/11 may occur locally but they have a global impact. They can be understood within the global context and inclusiveness of unicity (to borrow Tomlinson's terms) as a globally known event. The genre film may provide a space of cultural adjustment for understanding the local everyday life in relationship to such a social upheaval that is at once global and local. Although the rom-zom-com of *Shaun of the Dead* is about everyday life in London with its British specificities, the global event of 9/11 is metaphorically experienced in this representational context. Its zombies are in the place of terrorists and also as a self-reflexive aspect of the 'self' that could become a terrorist. The film's genre based narrative therefore becomes a means of understanding the distant experience and connects it to the direct local experience of the audience. Representations of life's frustrations, its external threats and underlying fears are de-coded by the local audience for meaning in the local context. With this specific genre hybridization, its connectivity with audience receptivity provides an orderliness of meaning for understanding external disorder.

Hot Fuzz—'Lethal Weapon meets Miss Marple'

In 2006, Pegg and Wright completed their second film for WT2, *Hot Fuzz*, which was released in February 2007. Pegg again starred with Nick Frost, who played his cop buddy. With *Hot Fuzz*, Wright and Pegg continued to re-work and hybridize genre, this time with reference to the Hollywood action-cop-comedy film re-set within the specificity of English village life. Therefore, in marketing the film, they referred to its generic mixed identity in promotional interviews as ‘Lethal Weapon meets Miss Marple’ (Cadwalladr 2007, p.10). Rather than a setting of urban action of the United States, it is a quiet English rural village. In an interview with Paul Fischer (2007), Wright explains why they had chosen this genre, stating: ‘...we kind of make films that you just don’t see in the UK...Obviously there’s a great tradition of British horror films in the 50s, 60s and 70s, but there’s actually no kind of cop films at all’. For his part, Pegg described the film as re-working of the British cop identity:

We started thinking about the cop genre and the whole notion of investing the British police service with some sort of cool because it just seems that the British cops are up against it in some ways - they wear jumpers, they don't have guns. (Cadwalladr 2007:10)

The re-working of genre in *Hot Fuzz* therefore gave Wright and Pegg (as writers) and Pegg (as an actor) the creative space to generate new cultural representations of archetypal ‘British’ figures (i.e. the rural villager, the local policeman).

In the story, Nicholas Angel, an overachieving London policeman is reassigned to the fictitious rural village of Sandford. Once there, he is teamed up with Danny, the dysfunctional son of the local police chief. The two police officers set out to solve a series of mysterious deaths in the small village. The final bloodbath in the market square has a richness of detail specific to its British context. Cadwalladr (p. 10) describes this scene as ‘a host of Great British character

actors are dispatched in very Great British ways: decapitated by hanging baskets, garrotted by brass knick-knacks, splatted by beer barrels, gunned down by the Somerfield's meat counter'. Wright and Pegg had also made a point of populating the village by casting the film with British actors who had played bad characters in Hollywood films (p. 10) – a further intertextual reference to the 'special relationship' between British screen actors and Hollywood. According to Pegg (in Cadwalladr 2007, p.10), 'More than anything else though, there's a very British sensibility at its heart - the am-dram society, the floral arrangement competitions, the Village of the Year contest. His [Wright's] mum is in the film as one of the judges, and she is still a leading light of the am-dram scene in Gloucestershire'.

Hot Fuzz has been described by Wright as a police-action movie homage especially related to the film *Bad Boys II* (2003) (Fischer 2007). *Bad Boys II* can be identified within the larger generic category of the action film. In its story, two detectives investigate the drug world of Miami. Wright and Pegg reviewed more than 100 action films for a better understanding of the genre in pre-production. The film is also referenced to other Jerry Bruckheimer productions (Cadwalladr, 2007:10). Bruckheimer's work includes a mix of detective and action stories such as the television programmes *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (2000-present) and *CSI: Miami* (2002-present) and the films *Beverly Hills Cop* (Martin Brest, 1984), *Top Gun* (Tony Scott, 1986), *Armageddon* (Michael Bay, 1998), *Enemy of the State* (Tony Scott, 1998), *Black Hawk Down* (Ridley Scott, 2001) and the *National Treasure* (Jon Turteltaub, 2004) franchise. Related films that typify the 'buddy cop' plot would be *48 Hrs.* (Walter Hill, 1982), *Beverly Hills Cop* (Martin Brest, 1984) and *Lethal Weapon* (Richard Donner, 1987). According to Neale (2000, p. 52) the term 'action-adventure' designation is used to describe a trend in Hollywood's output during the 1980s and 1990s. It is characterized by Hollywood using 'generic hybridity and overlap' as well

as characteristics common to related genres such as the thriller. These characteristics include ‘a propensity for spectacular physical action, a narrative structure involving fights, chases and explosions, and in addition to the deployment of state-of-the-art special effects, an emphasis in performance on athletic feats and stunts’ (p. 52). These films could also be described as having a style of ‘action speaks louder than words’ and they can also be located as part of an older Hollywood action adventure tradition going back to the work of Douglas Fairbanks (p. 55).

In the re-working of genre with *Hot Fuzz*, mimicry of the American genre’s visual characteristics was achieved with image construction from its camerawork and sequencing in the editing process. Even with a budget that was double the money of *Shaun of the Dead*, Wright felt challenged in re-creating the visual conventions of the Hollywood action film. When interviewed by Fischer (2007), Wright explains that they were able to pull it off and ‘we did do it all in one shot but I couldn’t resist kind of going so crazy with the edit’. Although using American conventions and re-working them with British representations, Wright points out that there is a difference between *Shaun of the Dead* and *Hot Fuzz* that has influenced its reception. In reference to *Hot Fuzz*, Wright (in Fischer 2007) explains that: ‘I suppose the joke is on one hand it’s very, very British, and then in the last half it starts to become really American and that was kind of the joke. The further it goes along, the more it starts to mutate...’. He believes that this aspect had added freshness to the film that makes audiences both in Britain and in the United States receptive to it. However, this shift in content and stylistic visualization may actually be a structural weakness affecting pacing for an American audience. It may create a dichotomy of receptivity between two different yet more closely related audiences. The American audience may be more receptive to the first half because of its difference created through the use of specific English cultural references; but, less receptive to the second half which could be seen to

offer too much genre sameness for an American audience. Thus, the British audience may have found more pleasure in a representation of British cops behaving in an American cultural style than Americans.

By hybridizing genre and mixing the conventions of different genres with the British setting in the two films Pegg and Wright had used the function of genre to connect with Hollywood, American culture and different audiences globally. The successful recognition of genre framing of the horror film or the action cop film with its principal characteristics is also based on audience knowledge and expectation (Ryall 1975 cited in Neale 2000, p. 17). It can be argued, then, that the films of Wright and Pegg exemplify the interplay between British and American culture, their audiences and their films. As evidenced with a new genre designation of the *rom zom com* or *rom com zom*, their mixing of the American characteristics and conventions with British representations resulted in a new genre expression that cannot be identified just by one specific genre classification. As a result of this genre re-working, their films appealed to the American audience who responded by generating box office revenue. In commenting on this aspect of *Shaun of the Dead*, Pegg is quoted in an article by Monica Ayres (2007) stating: ‘The film is a kind of love letter to American cinema in a way...American audiences seem to get it better, even than the British audiences, because the source material is essentially American, so what they’re seeing is a version of their own culture that’s thrown up, repackaged and given back’.

Since *Shaun of the Dead*, Pegg has been in demand in Hollywood (Mitchell 2007) and has gone on to have success as a screen actor with roles in *Star Trek* (J.J. Abrams, 2009) and *Mission: Impossible III* (J.J. Abrams, 2006) (*IMDb* n.d.g). Pegg and his acting partner Nick Frost have

also written and recently completed a third film *Paul* (Greg Mottola , 2011) a comedy adventure about two British sci-fi geeks who go on a road trip across America with an alien, Paul, who has escaped from a top-secret military base (*IMDb* n.d.h). Wright has also been offered work in the Hollywood film industry. This transition to Hollywood may have been eased by the ‘special relationship’² between the two countries and their film industries. Their global success in connecting to audiences with their genre films has also contributed to the on-going success of WTF and its positioning within Hollywood.

Conclusion

Through the use of a strategy of genre re-working, hybridization and negotiation, WTF generated film product that resulted in successful ongoing connectivity with the global marketplace. The cases of *Fargo*, *Elizabeth*, *Shaun of the Dead* and *Hot Fuzz* exemplify how genre functions in this process. As phenomena of the cultural dimension in globalization, WTF genre films have negotiated a space for inclusiveness and expansion of a global, cultural consciousness and globalized social existence. These cultural phenomena are also entwined with the global economy as a condition of complex connectivity in globalization. WTF and its producers understood that creativity was critical for constructing a global connectedness that could be

² In June, 2004, the Communications Committee of Parliament questioned Lord David Puttnam and Michael Kuhn on the current status of the British film industry and asked them if a ‘special relationship’ existed with Hollywood. According to Lord Puttnam, it exists as a paradoxical relationship in which the film industry has become a service industry for Hollywood. He explained that language does not act as a protective barrier for Britain as it does for other European film industries. Rather it eases the transition of highly marketable British talent to work with Hollywood where they are ‘the actor and technician of choice’ for American directors like Steven Spielberg (United Kingdom. Parliament. The House of Lords, 2004).

structured and shaped with genre at its centre. This connectivity functioned successfully as long as the genre re-working had *acceptable* difference. As part of their genre strategy they had to make decisions for balancing risk with the capacity for box office return. Thus, they used talent to accomplish a specific diversity in the negotiation that would be acceptable for audiences and for generating box office revenue. As a study of alienation of modern life in *Shaun of the Dead*, authority and corruption in *Hot Fuzz*, the exercise of power in *Elizabeth*, or the value attached to money in *Fargo*, these films gave meaningful purpose to the re-working of their genres and offered relatability to audiences, for what can be understood in the conceptualization of Tomlinson, as a global connectivity to local conditions and their ordinary every day experience (Tomlinson 2008, p. 19). Thus, for the film audience, each person's on-going 'life narrative' with its 'sense of identity, experience of place, of values, desires, myths, hopes and fears' (p. 20) can be experienced in a negotiation of connectivity with the genred films produced by WTF. Furthermore, it can be understood that this negotiation can result in meaning construction for culturally informing actions (p. 24). Representations of gender, such as a pregnant female detective, of location such as empty fields of snow or the details of an English village, of relationships between buddies, lovers or the government, can be understood to provide the possibility of a re-orientation by film spectators towards their actions. In this negotiation for connectedness, genre functions as agency for the transformation of people's local phenomenal world by offering new understandings of experience in what Tomlinson identifies as *wider, global terms* (p. 30). It is a negotiation, not only with local audience connectivity as cultural entertainment, but also as a negotiation of connectivity with the concentrations of global power, global capital, and globally inclusive politics.

Chapter 10: Conclusion –Working Title Films, Genre and Globalization

Introduction

In the previous chapters, using the case study of the British film company Working Title Films (WTF) as a successful global producer, this thesis has argued that film genre functions in globalization as part of an intrinsic relationship between the global film industry, its market and global cultural practices. It is a relationship in which culture is central to an understanding of the process of globalization. As a result of the cultural practice of genre film production within this globalizing relationship, WTF progressed through different development stages: from its start up as a small and inexperienced British film production company, through a transition and transformation as part of the global media conglomerate PolyGram, to become globally successful with its breakthrough film of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and to continue to replicate this success in Hollywood's global film market, eventually repositioned as a British-Hollywood producer with Universal Studios.

As exemplified in this thesis by the practices of WTF and the film industry, modern culture is no longer based only in the locality for local use; rather, it has become inherently part of the process of globalization. In this argument, the process of globalization is understood as one of complex connectivity postulated by John Tomlinson in *Globalization and Culture*. In other words, complex connectivity as 'the rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependences that characterize modern social life' (Tomlinson 2008, p. 2) can also be said to characterize the development of WTF as a global player in the Hollywood film industry. As globalizing connectivities, WTF developed and/or expanded its relationships with talent,

production personnel, and entertainment industry management; in production financing and distribution structures; and, in the use and negotiation of genre for valued and meaningful stories. The performance of WTF in generating globally successful film products serves as an example to better understand the process of globalization that has affected the global film market since the 1980s. It also identifies the condition of the Hollywood/global film industry as a specific example of how culture and commerce function in the current phase of globalization in the modern world. This thesis has also aimed to show how genre feature films are valued as meaningful by the global film audience in the box office response and how genre films operate in the globalization processes of film production, distribution and exhibition for a global film industry.

Another aim of this thesis has been to understand social-institutional relationships between WTF and the global film industry. The current phase of globalization (as identified in this thesis as complex connectivity) has transformed the performance of WTF and the production of its film products. This transformation has resulted in the continued production, distribution and reception of WTF film 'product' globally. Therefore, the case study of WTF applied through this thesis has examined how the practice of genre film as a cultural and cinematic process becomes marketable in the global film market and how this global market operates in shaping genre filmmaking. It provides evidence of this condition of complex connectivity and the transformative aspect for sustaining an on-going connectivity to the global film market and its audience. As such this evidence supports the argument that the function of genre has been a critical relationship in globalization to explain the on-going global success of WTF. Its function has generated cultural and market value, audience appeal and receptivity. Moreover, WTF's

global success has subsequently had implications for the British film industry, its relationship with the British government and the relationship of WTF to the British film industry itself.

The Alignment of British Government Policy and the British Film Industry with Global Film Interests

During the early 1990s, the conservative government of John Major took actions to re-stabilize the struggling British film industry from the damaging effects of Thatcher's policies that had eliminated support for film financing. Accordingly, it established the British Film Commission, a £5 million European Co-Production Fund and a dedicated tax break. It also decided to use National Lottery funds to support the British film industry and its film production (Puttnam 1999, p. 251). In the second half of the 1990s, the Arts Council of England (ACE) directed £67 million of the lottery funding into 79 features and invested £95 million in three UK production franchise awards (Macnab 2010). Although this public funding combined with New Labour tax breaks generated what has been described as a production boom in the late 1990s, very few of these films were commercially successful at the box office (Puttnam 1999, p.251). The ongoing challenge faced by indigenous British production was how to achieve a profitable relationship to the film marketplace and its audience. Without government provided subsidy, the industry was unstable and was not able to earn back production costs or generate profit from the commercial market. In contrast, by the mid-1990s, after the global commercial success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, WTF as a subsidiary of PolyGram Filmed Entertainment (PFE) had become an exception to the general condition of the indigenous British film industry within this context.

As Thatcherism and then the Tory party lost its appeal, 'New' Labour was voted into power in 1997. However, 'the perception that we live in a globalized world' (Driver and Martell 1998, p. 4) was a justification for New Labour turning away from Keynesian macro-economics and the collectivist approach to government as an alternative to Thatcherism. With capital globally mobile, the position of New Labour can be described as supporting 'capacities of labour, supply side education and training to attract investment and ensure competitiveness, skilled workforce, service orientation to consumers' (p. 42). It could then be argued that from the Blair years on, there has been neither a substantial structural nor ideological change from Thatcherism. Rather, a more socially friendly version, in support of providing a capacity of labour, educated and trained for the interests of global corporate capital, has developed (p. 53).

At the same time, a new awareness emerged on the part of the British government and its policy makers of the global film industry and the need to secure international distribution for British film (Redfern 2007, p. 152). A changing policy position appeared to align British film industry interests with global film interests (p. 152). As such this shift supported an inter-connectivity of the British film industry with a globalized film market that was dominated by Hollywood. Nick Redfern describes two entwined, yet contradictory, strands of the UK policy for the British film industry that emerge as identifiable trends in the 1990s: the transnational and the territorial (p. 150). The transnational strand consists of the 'selling of the UK as a 'film hub'' to the international film industry by offering locations, skills and services. Parker also identifies this 'film hub' as a destination for international investment (2002, p.9). The territorial is what Redfern identifies as 'institutional intervention' that has resulted in the establishment of nine regional screen agencies (RSA). They support the use of public funds and private investment for the regional film industries and regional film cultures of Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and

England (Redfern 2007, p. 152). WTF could be understood to operate across and within these two seemingly contradictory strands. Because of its connectivity to Hollywood, it was positioned within the transnational strand to offer its services as a British 'independent' producer to Hollywood and could benefit from policies supporting international investment. At the same time it also benefited from the territorial development which offered expanded production resources, capacity and access to localities that could be used as needed by WTF for its development and production of films. WTF used the regional organizations such as Screen South as recruitment ground for possible new talent in its training program, Action (Screen South n.d.). Furthermore, this positioning of WTF and its operations within these two trends could also be understood as a dimension of the context Hochscherf and Leggot have described as the mid-Atlantic paradigm (2010, pp. 9-10). In this paradigm, WTF, as a British producer, has found ways to accommodate and work with Hollywood. It uses Hollywood models and mixes American and British characteristics and elements in its films to produce films that are profitable for Hollywood. This paradigm could also be understood as a context for WTF's use of genre.

A British Context for Global Film Market Connectivity and Disconnectivity

Under New Labour, Redfern argues that the British film industry has become a 'hybrid space' of interactions between the two trends of the transnational and the more territorial of 'particular places' (Redfern 2007, p. 163). Accordingly, by 2002, Sir Alan Parker argued for the repositioning of the British film industry as part of global capitalism (2002 cited in Redfern 2007, p. 152). This was the environment in which WTF has continued to produce British romantic comedies, as well as a line of other feature films that have been successful at the global box office. As this thesis has argued, the use of genre by WTF has been the critical process in

globalization for generating audience appeal and market performance for global box office earnings.

The ability of WTF to negotiate genre appeal with meaningful representations in film narrative has functioned as a decisive factor for securing global distribution and global commercial success in a system of global capitalism. This is in contrast to many, although not all, British producers, for example, British Screen Productions, a producer of *Butterfly Kiss* (Michael Winterbottom, 1995), Ken Loach (Street 2009, p. 27) and those funded by the lottery, Pathe Productions, DNA Films and The Film Consortium (Anon. 2001). It also appears that the exceptional success of WTF and PFE, and later WTF with Hollywood, may have influenced and led to a new, global awareness that has been shaping the thinking of policy makers of the UK film industry since the 1990s.

In chapter 7 it was argued that genre film development and production is a modality for genre negotiation between producers in the global locality of production and audiences in the global localities of consumption. The re-working and hybridization of genre by WTF, for audience appeal, identification and relatability as a negotiation with the global marketplace and its audiences, have resulted in its successful, on-going connectivity as globalization. This negotiation can also be understood as functioning for unicity, the sense in the modern world of a shared global culture and wholeness (Robertson 1992, p.306; Tomlinson 2008, p. 11).

Examples of WTF genre films which employ this strategy of genre re-working and hybridization as a function of genre in globalization are: *Notting Hill* (Roger Michell, 1999), *Fargo* (Joel Coen, 1996), *Elizabeth* (Shekar Kapur, 1998), and *Shaun of the Dead* (Edgar Wright, 2004). Their specificity and particularism become universal as representations that can travel in the global

marketplace. Furthermore, the decoding of genre films for valued meaning by local audiences in the global market results in connectivity and becomes a transformative process in global culture. These representations also can be understood in globalization as a global wholeness of shared meanings about the human experience i.e. the challenges of falling in love from *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Mike Newell, 1994), *Notting Hill* and *Love Actually* (Richard Curtis, 2003) or the fear of an unknown threat in *Shaun of the Dead*.

The complex linkages in the marketing chain between the source of production and the audience in the global locality also results in a reflexivity from the locality back to the source. Although not all WTF films have been global successes, films such as *Elizabeth* and *Hot Fuzz* (Edgar Wright, 2007) intertwine cultural and economic dimensions of connectivity. These films had a more specific appeal and value locally in Britain; yet, at the same time their global appeal could generate massive revenue flow from the global localities to the source of production in London (and Hollywood). By the 2000s, these rapidly expanding interconnectivities have led to WTF's track record of global box office success and to their global presence as British producers with British products for a global marketplace. They have also led to their position within the global Hollywood and its conglomerates.

Increasing interactions for an initial connectivity of WTF and the global marketplace began with the film, *My Beautiful Laundrette*, as described in chapters 3 and 4. Complex connectivity was subsequently reestablished as a means for WTF to later *re-connect* to the global marketplace with the romantic comedy *Four Weddings and a Funeral* as described in chapter 6. This connective relationship was sustained as a repeated genre pattern of the romantic comedy with the films *Notting Hill* and *Love Actually* described in chapter 7. The specific case studies of *Fargo*, *Elizabeth*, *Shaun of the Dead*, and *Hot Fuzz*, in chapter 9, have shown how the re-

working and hybridization of genre evidence a continued pattern of successful functionality for genre in the global context.

As described in chapters 1 and 3, the role of the nation state can be understood as complex and contradictory in the events of the case study of WTF, notably to Thatcherism and New Labour, and the processes of film production and distribution in globalization. It has functioned in a national and ideological context to generate policies that have at specific times supported global connectivity and dis-connectivity for the British film industry, the global film business, the flows of finance and market revenues, and for the re-allocation of media resources exemplified by the establishment of Channel 4. The latter became a potential platform for connectivity to the global film market and its audiences. This is evidenced by the experience of WTF and the social significance of *My Beautiful Laundrette* (Stephen Frears, 1986) in a national debate on identity and multiculturalism. This experience provided opportunities for more inclusive social and cultural media practice and for the development of multi-valent connections for practicing culture. The British nation was re-imagined through WTF genre films generated from scripts by writers such as Kureishi, Curtis, Pegg and Wright. In these re-imaginings it has become represented by the global/local space of London, an intersection of the nation with the globe. Both the nation and the city of London have been re-imagined as the de-territorialized, multi-cultural, and diasporic space of London as exemplified through the work of Kureishi in the late 1980s. Yet, they have also been re-imagined as the white, privileged world of *Notting Hill* and other British romantic comedies from the imagination of Richard Curtis from the mid-1990s.

At a time in which national and global film market conditions were changing, WTF had begun to expand a complexity of connective relationships with the global apparatus of the film industry.

These conditions and aspects of globalization have been described and analyzed in chapters 2

and 4. WTF experienced transformation in globalization from its relationship to PolyGram and became more sensitive to the global local markets and their audiences. This transformation was a process that can be described as one of *re-connectivity* in globalization since 1994. It occurred rapidly, as an ever-densening network of interconnections, when PolyGram as a new competitor to Hollywood created a global film distribution apparatus. This business operation financed the creative development and production of WTF's products. Thus, a more stable set of connective relationships, framed by a corporate economic and ideological culture, was established for WTF to the global setting. The development of this context for global connectivity and the conditions that were established to generate marketable film product to the global marketplace were examined in chapter 5. As described and examined in chapter 6, these layers of complexity and connectivity created favourable conditions for the global expansion of WTF through the film marketing chain. The chain consisted of the complex linkages of film development, production, distribution, marketing and exhibition. In this new global context, the WTF partnership was reformed and transformed to a globally 'market focused', commercial producer. This was a key stage of transformation for the formation of an expanding relationship between WTF and the global film market. As a result, WTF had effectively entered into a new phase of complex connectivity to global audiences, intertwining its cultural production with the economics of the conglomerate and the global market. For WTF, through its integrative relationship to the global conglomerate, its film products were provided the distribution into the global localities for exhibition and box office earnings.

Although WTF and PolyGram could not have predicted the success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, its global performance can be understood as evidence that genre functioned in the formation of a critical connectivity to 'local' film audiences across the world. The romantic

comedy genre conventions in the film were decoded as meaningful representations by audiences in their global locality. Put differently, the WTF genre film as cultural product was valued in the global locality and reflexively generated a massive box office revenue stream for WTF, its parent company, PFE and its global conglomerate PolyGram. This response further validated WTF's use of genre as evidenced with the experience and aftermath of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. Because the film's performance also provided a replicable genre pattern of the British romantic comedy for successful global connectivity, WTF used genre re-working and hybridization to generate continued global box office success. As a result, their films were being generated as economic and cultural products acceptable to global corporate culture and accessible and meaningful to audiences across the globe. It can be further argued that they were using the industry strategy as described by Neale (1980, p. 54) of organizing genre production to guarantee meanings and pleasures to global audiences.

By using representations of specific 'local' cultural practices - namely the identity of London, English cultural sensibilities, and character specificities including the celebrity appeal of a Hugh Grant - WTF combined these elements with genre narrative and POV to produce genre product. This product was distributed to global theatres as marketing 'reach' into the cultural practice of entertainment in the global local context. The analysis of *Notting Hill* in chapter 7 supports this assertion of both an on-going connectivity to the global film market and the way that genre functions as 'difference in repetition' (Neale 2000, p. 232). The chapter examined in some detail how genre functions in the re-working of the romantic comedy genre as *British* romantic comedy and the significance of its representations of London, the British/English movie star Hugh Grant and types of British masculinity such as the 'damaged man' that are easily recognized by global audiences. As previously argued, the appeal of the British romantic comedy may also be for the

values and qualities represented in the genre narrative. Through this negotiation of the function of genre to form a valued meaning in the global marketplace, WTF produced film narratives that re-conceptualized British/English culture in a 'local-global' dialect with global audiences. These narrative stories can be understood to have transformed the meaning of falling in love in the global cultural context as a shared unicity – in other words, a shared understanding of this life experience by different global audiences.

To sustain this on-going global connectivity with a strategy of diversification and differentiation of film product, WTF expanded its development slate. It did this by re-working a variety of different genres in films such as *Fargo*, *Bean* (Mel Smith, 1997), and *Elizabeth*. By 1999, it had also negotiated a new position in Hollywood in a sudden re-connectivity to the global market as the result of a strategic sell-off of PolyGram by its conglomerate owner, Philips. This expanding complexity of WTF for genre hybridization and its special relationship with America and Hollywood is described and analyzed in chapter 8. This complexity of the development of genre film products and the emergent sub-genres such as the rom-zom-com is, moreover, presented in chapter 9. If, as Neale (1990, p. 56) asserts, genre is a process in which its elements and conventions are 'in play', WTF has not simply been re-playing genres for the global market but has, in fact, expanded the global generic corpus.

For audiences in the global film market, genre may be described in globalization as giving a transnational 'agency' to the communicative flow of stories and their (supposedly universal) representations of the human experience. The representation of falling in love in *Notting Hill* or the horror of murder in *Fargo* can thus be seen to shape a global or universal understanding of specific emotional experiences. Their related narrative actions are presented to audiences in association with specific generic codes and conventions. This process emerges as part of what

Tomlinson (2008, p.29) describes as a de-territorialization that dislodges or transforms every day meanings of the local culture. Its function can also be understood to offer a growing resource to audiences in the global locality for comparison in sameness and difference to the local lived life with: the experiences of love in *Love Actually*; the exercise of power in *Elizabeth* and other representations that are expressed in genre films. It could also be understood as shaping a global cultural and emotional condition of audiences in the global film market. However, this condition, understood in globalization as the phenomenon of unicity, may neither be shaped nor shared equally. It is evidenced by variations in box office response in different localities within the global film market.

Although PFE was set up as a studio competitor to Hollywood and distributed its film products to the global market, mainstream film distribution has remained the preserve of the global conglomerates known as Hollywood. WTF's re-connectivity from PolyGram through the Hollywood studio Universal illustrates the primary importance of Hollywood's global distribution for access to the global film market. The global distribution of Hollywood (or a competitor such as PFE) is a necessary connective process in order for genre to operate in the global film market. Genre's function also acts reflexively to generate a flow of box office earnings from global localities to the Hollywood distributor and a response for continued audience appeal. By 2010 this global market produced worldwide box office of \$31.8 billion (Motion Picture Association of America 2012). The establishment of critical connectivities to the global film market with finance, distribution and the function of genre as evidenced with a string of globally successful films such as *Notting Hill*, *Love Actually*, *Shaun of the Dead* and *Hot Fuzz* have arguably set WTF apart from other British film production companies based in

Britain. These examples support the argument being made in this thesis for the critical ‘function’ of genre in a globalized film market.

Genre, Connectivity and Proximity

In the case of WTF, it can be understood that the function of genre becomes the modality for proximity in globalization and the connection that affects the ‘lives lived’ of the audiences in the global film market. In the context of globalization, this increase of global-spatial proximity and the stretching of social relations across distance is described by Tomlinson as an ‘increasing intimacy’ that emerges ‘precisely out of the extension and the elaboration of different modalities of connectivity’ (Tomlinson 2008, p. 3). This is not a proximity based in overcoming distance through communication technology in which places such as Notting Hill of London or Fargo of North America are accessible to global audiences only as physical and spatial representations. For the global film industry, what sells for the price of a ticket is an accessible travelling discourse, offering an internal *emotional experience* that is *meaningful* for the audience in the locality. Although Tim Bevan (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 226) has summed up the new experience for production of WTF’s’ WT2 with the words ‘Heart, Humour and Horror’, this experience is complexly structured and formulated as genre film narrative and encoded through its stories.

In chapters 7, 8, and 9 it was argued that genre film and its function for connectivity should be understood in the context of the local culture of global film audiences. A cultural adjustment takes place with the decoding of the narrative in the place of arrival of the genre film’s discourse and the local practice of culture. Tomlinson (2008, p. 7) points out an ‘intrinsic ‘unevenness’ of globalization’ and this is exemplified by the uneven marketability of the film. The receptivity

and response by the audience in the local film market shifts not only because of differences in population size but through genre appeal, the specificities of genre text construction and its elements, and the local emotional experience. Thus, for WTF, this unevenness is evidenced in the difference of reception and response with North America, the British market, English speaking territories, and Japan. The exercise of local power, local love or local violence does not become standardized as exact replications of the representations of genre films by local audiences. However, if as Tomlinson (p. 30) suggests that globalization can offer new cultural resources to the local populations, then the function of genre can be understood to offer the potential of a new cultural resource. This resource can indeed be valued, enjoyed and acted upon locally. As a result of experiencing genre films, a given film's local audience may change their cultural understanding and consequently may change their behaviour. Mather (2006, p. 194), who frames British romantic comedy as comedy-drama, describes the achievement of these films as celebrating the 'comic' and its qualities of 'spirit, resilience and a belief that mankind will persevere and carry on until the end'. Richard Curtis (2006, p. xiii) argues that the romantic comedy brings love to the world and should be valued for it, rather than placing value on films portraying violence. It can also be concluded that there is a reciprocity of transformation felt within the global source of production. This is evidenced by the ongoing response by WTF as subsequent genre film production.

Genre, Connectivity and Global Unicity

According to Tomlinson, complex connectivity implies 'unicity', 'a sense that the world is becoming...a single social and cultural setting', (Tomlinson 2008, p. 10). This thesis has argued that this tendency to the wholeness and inclusiveness of the global as a totality can be also understood in the context of the global film market and the use of genre film with its audiences.

The distribution of WTF's genre films, their exhibition in the globalized space of multiplexes, and the function of genre for generating valued meaning in the local context of the global audience can be understood as resulting in what Roland Robertson (1992: 8) describes in globalization as the 'compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world into a whole'. Through the function of genre, this consciousness occurs, not as a uniform response but, rather, as an awareness of a global sense of inclusiveness (Robertson 1992 cited in Tomlinson 2008, p. 11). This inclusiveness could be understood as the experience of shared pleasure, meaning and understanding of the genre story and POV, its cultural values, representations and its emotional experience.

If access to the global film market is controlled through Hollywood distribution, unicity is shaped by the limited choices offered by genre films as cultural and economic products.

Whether romantic comedies, zombie horror films or blockbusters, the distribution access of the genre films, with their representations of identity and action, forms a context of determination of social relations and a frame of reference of social agents. A global human condition of cultural meaning is thus summed up with the statement by Bevan (*Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 226) of 'Heart, Humour, and Horror' and this can be understood as a genre articulation of the globalization process towards unicity. In contrast, the genre function for unicity is countered by fragmentation and resistant global complexities. These are evidenced in the fragmentary nature of global film markets that operate as global regions, nations, or territories. They also can be understood as the response in the market segmentation of audience based on gender, age, language as well as political, religious, cultural difference. Other factors such as the domination by North America of the global film market, underdeveloped technological infrastructures, trade protectionism, economic imbalances and the privileged cultures of the special relationship

between Britain and the United States are also in play. It has been argued by this thesis that WTF developed an expertise in negotiation with these resistances in this global process of unicity with the use of genre and genre re-working.

Genre and Globalization as a Multi-dimensional Phenomenon

If globalization is understood in terms of ‘simultaneous, complexly related processes in the realms of economy, politics, culture, technology and so forth’ which can be described as multi-dimensional (Tomlinson 2008, p. 16), then, genre films such as those produced by WTF can also be understood to function as globalizing phenomena that are multi-dimensional. Hence, they are many things at once. They are technology-based products and coded texts. They are agents, not only of corporate ideology and business strategy, but also of cultural and creative expression by talent. They function as economic products, at the same time, they are also an emotional catharsis of shared pleasure by audiences. Furthermore, their genre essence has intrinsic properties of sameness and difference.

Although genre films may form a connectivity with audiences in the construction of meaning for ‘universal’ human experiences, such as falling in love, getting married, or the death of a friend in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, this connectivity can also be multi-dimensional. As evidenced by the audience acceptance and reception to *Shaun of the Dead* or *Hot Fuzz*, genre hybridization offers a multi-dimensional appeal for audience pleasure and experience in decoding of the film. Similarly, the various genre elements at work in *My Beautiful Laundrette* could be read in different ways by different audiences. This aspect of textual multi-dimensionality of genre potentially allows for a greater local acceptance of the suspension of disbelief and audience relatability for characters, POV, story situation, and location. Although this can be said to be true

for film genres, if understood in a global market context, then this multi-dimensional appeal allows for a much greater global accessibility by different audiences and consequently a greater global revenue flow. Therefore, hybridization of genre offers different audience appeals and can also be understood as operating as a multi-dimensional aspect in the formation of audience connectivity in film exhibition.

Genre and the Cultural Dimension

Tomlinson (2008, p. 18) defines the dimension of culture as the ‘order of life in which human beings construct meaning through practices of symbolic representation’. In this context, genre films such as those of WTF can be understood as culturally meaningful accounts of life experiences. They offer the possibility for the construction of valued meaning by audiences from their representations of love, crime, horror and societal fears. In the global consumption of genre films, they serve to inform individual and collective actions. These actions may have consequences, not only for decisions and choices in daily life of the local cultural context, but also for the context of the film industry. These consequences can affect the flow of capital, greenlighting film projects, the practice of love, or making sense of exceptional, traumatic events such as the 9/11 disaster. In this cultural dimension, the institution of the film industry is shaped by the market response as an institutional reflexivity for genre film production. This is evidenced with the experience of WTF. With the sudden, unexpected global success and global re-connectivity of WTF with *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, this recognisable formula was continued as an empowerment in generating specificities of representation and meaning in the cultural dimension. Thus, genre films and their meanings may support an ideological dominance of culture such as the white, privileged, English middle class of the romantic comedies *Notting Hill* and *Love Actually*. However, as Mather points out, certain differences are acceptable within

established conventions in the British romantic comedy (2006, pp. 123,155). In the case of *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, the film's portrayal of the romance between an Anglo-American couple offered a more sexually liberated female American. This represented the changing sexual mores of females and their expression of sexuality. Alternatively, the experience of Channel 4 and *My Beautiful Laundrette* provided a cultural space for diversity. Its representations and narrative of coupledness offered British audiences and global audiences a new cultural resource for understanding their identities, relationships and life experiences in the context of their local cultures.

From Aspiration to Mainstream

London as a global city has provided a space in which individuals from different global localities and diverse, multicultural backgrounds could interact and connect. As such, the global-local space has expanded the cultural dimension. In what could be described as a 'connectivity with proximity' of the global to the local (Tomlinson 2008, p. 3), the global-local space of London became the proximity for what can be described as a space of aspiration to mainstream. This is evidenced by the initial success of an aspiring WTF and *My Beautiful Laundrette* in the 1980s. This space as a global space of production and representation has played a role in their subsequent global box office success as well as the success of diverse, aspiring talent exemplified by Kureishi and Kapur. Although the work of Chadha in the 2000s, that includes *Bend it Like Beckham* (2002), *Bride and Prejudice* (2004), and *It's a Wonderful Afterlife* (2010), portray a different representation of Britain and Britishness from that of WTF, this difference is that of the multicultural that may become mainstream. These films, whether mono-cultural or multi-cultural, point to a shift in globalization for a growing inclusiveness and further evidence the function of genre in globalization. Their re-working of genre in hybridization for a variation

of sameness produces a kind of ‘difference’ that appeals to a range of audiences. As a result, their genre structure allows for recognition and accessibility for global audiences. London as a global, cosmopolitan city has been the space for an initial aspiration that has crossed over to the production of films for the global mainstream.

Genre and an Understanding of Globalization

Genre and genre films can be used to understand, not only Hollywood and mainstream film production, but the process of globalization. As this thesis has argued and evidenced using the case of WTF, genre functions in globalization for the formation of a complex connectivity in the global film market. As such, it may have a transformational effect culturally, ideologically and economically with its film audiences. The cultural signification of genre films and their interpretation orients people, individually and collectively towards actions of love and friendship, diversity, violence and crime, horrific events, corruption, positivity and how to spend their money. Genre is not exclusive to a dominant power and can be used for an expanding inclusiveness of representation for valued meaning by a global audience. Furthermore, in globalization the modality of genre has also functioned for an expansion of the generic corpus through its re-working and hybridization. This is evidenced by the emergence of new generic designations of the British romantic comedy, the rom-zom-com, the historic thriller as *Elizabeth*, and the white noir as *Fargo*.

It has been demonstrated with this case study that WTF has successfully used genre as a negotiation with the global film audience in globalization. As a result, from starting up as a small, struggling, British film production company of the 1980s, it became a global player in the 1990s and into the 2000s, producing ongoing successful films for the global film marketplace.

In addition, it has also negotiated a position with the global distribution power of Hollywood to meet Hollywood's needs for a return on investment and maximization of profits. Within Hollywood's control and exercise of global power, WTF has exercised a shaping role in a shared global culture, contributing to what Tomlinson and Robertson have theorized as unicity. If 'Globalization disturbs the ways we conceptualize 'culture' as an idea of fixed locality' (Tomlinson 2008, p. 27), then the function of genre in globalization also acts as a penetration that breaks the binding of meanings to the global locality. At the same time, these globally produced films as cultural practices can be understood to be coexistent and resonate with local cultural references (p. 29). Thus, the construction of meaning in global localities from the representation of London (*Notting Hill*), a sleepy English village (*Hot Fuzz*) or the small town America of *Fargo* is the practice of both global culture and local culture. Genre films, such as those of WTF, may offer new understandings, for example, of love and courtship as a global consciousness of shared meaning among different global audiences. With these new understandings also comes the implied and subliminal coding of ideology, politics and primacy of values from afar which may be met with more or less resistance of acceptance locally.

In the final analysis, the global-local sense, as evidenced by the international box office success of the films produced by WTF, cannot be summed up or reduced to only 'Heart, Humour and Horror' as Bevan's tagline for WT2 suggests. However, these genre characteristics as designations for romantic comedy, comedy and zombie films can be used as a short hand for genre's critical function in the construction of valued meaning and meaningful communication with the global film market's different local audiences. Furthermore, they represent the generic complexity of this connectivity in globalization for Hollywood's global film industry. It can be concluded that WTF used genre and genre film production as a multi-dimensional practice that

exemplified current practices in the global film industry and its market. These practices include maximizing the audience and earnings with broader appeal as well as responding to the expanding economic importance of overseas markets. In the case of WTF, its use of genre illustrates how globalization transforms local cultural practices and life experiences at the same time as it shapes our collective sense of a 'global' mass culture.

Appendices

Appendix A

Filmography of Working Title Films from the Internet Movie Database (IMDb)

Reference: Anon, n.d.. Working Title Films, *IMDb*, [online]. Available from:

<http://www.imdb.com/company/co0057311> [accessed 22 October 2011].

Production Company - filmography

1. *Rush* (2013) ... *Production Company*
2. *Les Misérables* (2012) ... *Production Company*
3. *Big Miracle* (2012) ... *Production Company*
4. *Contraband* (2012) ... *Production Company*
5. *Anna Karenina* (2012) ... *Production Company*
6. *The History Keepers* (2012) ... *Production Company*
7. *Johnny English Reborn* (2011) ... *Production Company*
8. *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (2011) ... *Production Company (co-producer)*
9. "Love Bites: Modern Plagues (season #1, episode .8)" (2011) ... *Production Company*
10. "Love Bites: Boys to Men (#1.7)" (2011) ... *Production Company*
11. "Love Bites: Too Much Information (#1.6)" (2011) ... *Production Company*
12. "Love Bites: Stand and Deliver (#1.5)" (2011) ... *Production Company*
13. "Love Bites: Sky High (#1.4)" (2011) ... *Production Company*
14. "Love Bites: Keep on Truckin' (#1.3)" (2011) ... *Production Company*
15. "Love Bites: How To... (#1.2)" (2011) ... *Production Company*
16. "Love Bites: Firsts (#1.1)" (2011) ... *Production Company*
17. *Paul* (2011) ... *Production Company (as Working Title)*
18. *The Dangerous Husband* (2011) ... *Production Company*
19. *Senna*(2010) ... *Production Company*
20. "The Tudors: Death of a Monarchy (#4.10)" (2010) ... *Production Company*
21. "The Tudors: Secrets of the Heart (#4.9)" (2010) ... *Production Company*
22. "The Tudors: As It Should Be (#4.8)" (2010) ... *Production Company*
23. "The Tudors: Sixth and the Final Wife (#4.7)" (2010) ... *Production Company*
24. "The Tudors: You Have My Permission (#4.6)" (2010) ... *Production Company*

25. "The Tudors: Natural Ally (#4.4)" (2010) ... *Production Company*
26. "The Tudors: Something for You (#4.3)" (2010) ... *Production Company*
27. "The Tudors: Sister (#4.2)" (2010) ... *Production Company (in association with)*
28. "The Tudors: Moment of Nostalgia (#4.1)" (2010) ... *Production Company (in association with)*
29. *Nanny McPhee Returns* (2010) ... *Production Company*
30. *Green Zone* (2010) ... *Production Company*
31. *Smokin' Aces 2: Assassins' Ball* (2010) (V) ... *Production Company (producer) (as Working Title)*
32. *Hippie Hippie Shake* (2010) ... *Production Company*
33. "Love Bites" (2010) ... *Production Company*
34. *The Continuing and Lamentable Saga of the Suicide Brothers*(2009) ... *Production Company*
35. *A Serious Man* (2009) ... *Production Company (co-production)*
36. "The Tudors: The Undoing of Cromwell (#3.8)" (2009) ... *Production Company*
37. "The Tudors: Protestant Anne of Cleves (#3.7)" (2009) ... *Production Company*
38. "The Tudors: Search for a New Queen (#3.6)" (2009) ... *Production Company*
39. "The Tudors: Problems in the Reformation (#3.5)" (2009) ... *Production Company*
40. "The Tudors: The Death of a Queen (#3.4)" (2009) ... *Production Company*
41. *The Soloist* (2009) ... *Production Company (in association with)*
42. "The Tudors: Dissension and Punishment (#3.3)" (2009) ... *Production Company*
43. *State of Play* (2009) ... *Production Company (present)*
44. "The Tudors: Civil Unrest (#3.1)" (2009) ... *Production Company*
45. *Pirate Radio* (2009) ... *Production Company (as A Working Title Production)*
46. "Scraps" (2009) ... *Production Company*
47. *Gimme Shelter* (2008) (V) ... *Production Company*
48. *Frost/Nixon* (2008) ... *Production Company (presents)*
49. *Burn After Reading* (2008) ... *Production Company (as A Working Title Pproduction)*
50. *Wild Child* (2008) ... *Production Company*
51. "The Tudors: Destiny and Fortune (#2.10)" (2008) ... *Production Company*
52. "The Tudors: The Act of Treason (#2.9)" (2008) ... *Production Company*
53. "The Tudors: Lady in Waiting (#2.8)" (2008) ... *Production Company*
54. "The Tudors: Matters of State (#2.7)" (2008) ... *Production Company*

55. "The Tudors: The Definition of Love (#2.6)" (2008) ... *Production Company*
56. "The Tudors: His Majesty's Pleasure (#2.5)" (2008) ... *Production Company*
57. "The Tudors: Checkmate (#2.3)" (2008) ... *Production Company*
58. "The Tudors: Everything Is Beautiful (#2.1)" (2008) ... *Production Company*
59. *Definitely, Maybe* (2008) ... *Production Company (as a Working Title production)*
60. *Below the Fold* (2007) ... *Production Company*
61. *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007) ... *Production Company (in association with)*
62. *Atonement* (2007) ... *Production Company*
63. "The Tudors: Wolsey, Wolsey, Wolsey! (#1.3)" (2007) ... *Production Company*
64. "The Tudors: Simply Henry (#1.2)" (2007) ... *Production Company*
65. "The Tudors: In Cold Blood (#1.1)" (2007) ... *Production Company*
66. *Mr. Bean's Vacation* (2007) ... *Production Company*
67. *Bean: Scenes Unseen* (2007) (V) ... *Production Company*
68. *Gone* (2007/III) ... *Production Company (presents)*
69. *Hot Fuzz* (2007) ... *Production Company (as Working Title)*
70. "The Tudors" (2007) ... *Production Company (in association with)*
71. *Smokin' Aces* (2006) ... *Production Company (producer)*
72. *Sixty Six* (2006) ... *Production Company (present)*
73. *Chasing Planes: Witnesses to 9/11* (2006) (V) ... *Production Company*
74. *Catch a Fire* (2006) ... *Production Company (as Working Title)*
75. *United 93: The Families and the Film*(2006) (V) ... *Production Company*
76. *United 93* (2006) ... *Production Company*
77. *Nanny McPhee* (2005) ... *Production Company (as a Working Title production)*
78. *Pride & Prejudice* (2005) ... *Production Company (as Working Title)*
79. *The Interpreter* (2005) ... *Production Company*
80. *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (2004) ... *Production Company (as Working Title)*
81. *The Answer* (2004) ... *Production Company*
82. *Rory O'Shea Was Here* (2004) ... *Production Company*
83. *Wimbledon* (2004) ... *Production Company*
84. *Mickybo and Me* (2004) ... *Production Company (presents)*
85. *Thunderbirds* (2004) ... *Production Company (presents)*
86. *The Calcium Kid* (2004) ... *Production Company (presents)*
87. *Shaun of the Dead* (2004) ... *Production Company (present)*

88. *A Tale of Two Wives* (2003) (TV) ... *Production Company*
89. *Love Actually* (2003) ... *Production Company (producer) (as Working Title)*
90. *Johnny English* (2003) ... *Production Company*
91. *Ned Kelly* (2003) ... *Production Company*
92. *The Shape of Things* (2003) ... *Production Company*
93. *Thirteen* (2003) ... *Production Company (in association with)*
94. *My Little Eye* (2002) ... *Production Company*
95. *The Guru* (2002) ... *Production Company*
96. *About a Boy*(2002) ... *Production Company*
97. *Ali G Indahouse* (2002) ... *Production Company*
98. *40 Days and 40 Nights* (2002) ... *Production Company*
99. *Long Time Dead* (2002) ... *Production Company*
100. *The Man Who Wasn't There* (2001) ... *Production Company*
101. *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (2001) ... *Production Company*
102. *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) ... *Production Company*
103. *The Man Who Cried* (2000) ... *Production Company*
104. *Billy Elliot* (2000) ... *Production Company (presents)*
105. *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*(2000)... *Production Company (as Working Title)*
106. *High Fidelity* (2000) ... *Production Company*
107. *Notting Hill* (1999) ... *Production Company*
108. *Plunkett & Macleane* (1999) ... *Production Company*
109. *The Hi-Lo Country* (1998) ... *Production Company*
110. *Elizabeth* (1998) ... *Production Company*
111. *What Rats Won't Do* (1998) ... *Production Company*
112. "More Tales of the City" (1998) ... *Production Company*
113. *The Big Lebowski* (1998) ... *Production Company*
114. *Eight* (1998) ... *Production Company*
115. *The Borrowers* (1997) ... *Production Company*
116. *The MatchMaker* (1997) ... *Production Company*
117. *Bean* (1997) ... *Production Company (in association with)*
118. *The Eighth Day* (1996) ... *Production Company*
119. "Zig and Zag's Dirty Deeds" (1996) ... *Production Company*
120. *Fargo* (1996) ... *Production Company (in association with)*

121. *Loch Ness* (1996) ... *Production Company*
122. *Dead Man Walking* (1995) ... *Production Company*
123. *Moonlight and Valentino* (1995) ... *Production Company*
124. *French Kiss* (1995) ... *Production Company*
125. *Panther* (1995/I) ... *Production Company*
126. *Land and Freedom* (1995) ... *Production Company* (developed with the support of) (as Working Title)
127. *That Eye, the Sky* (1994) ... *Production Company*
128. *The Hudsucker Proxy* (1994) ... *Production Company*
129. *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994) ... *Production Company* (as A Working Title Production)
130. "The Return of the Borrowers" (1993) ... *Production Company*
131. *The Young Americans* (1993) ... *Production Company*
132. *Romeo Is Bleeding* (1993) ... *Production Company*
133. *Posse* (1993) ... *Production Company*
134. "Tales of the City" (1993) ... *Production Company*
135. *Map of the Human Heart* (1993) ... *Production Company*
136. *Bob Roberts* (1992) ... *Production Company*
137. *Dakota Road* (1992) ... *Production Company*
138. "The Comic Strip Presents...Red Nose of Courage (#6.1)" (1992) ... *Production Company*
139. *London Kills Me* (1991) ... *Production Company*
140. *Edward II* (1991) ... *Production Company*
141. *Rubin and Ed* (1991) ... *Production Company*
142. *Barton Fink* (1991) ... *Production Company*
143. *Smack and Thistle* (1991) (TV) ... *Production Company*
144. *Robin Hood* (1991/I) (TV) ... *Production Company* (as A Working Title Production)
145. *Drop Dead Fred* (1991) ... *Production Company*
146. *Fools of Fortune* (1990) ... *Production Company*
147. *Chicago Joe and the Showgirl* (1990) ... *Production Company*
148. *Arcadia* (1990) ... *Production Company*
149. *Dark Obsession* (1989) ... *Production Company*
150. *The Tall Guy* (1989) ... *Production Company*

151. *Paperhouse* (1988) ... *Production Company*
152. *A World Apart* (1988) ... *Production Company*
153. "Echoes" (1988) ... *Production Company*
154. *For Queen & Country* (1988) ... *Production Company*
155. *Elphida* (1987) (TV) ... *Production Company*
156. *Tears, Laughter, Fear and Rage: Tears* (1987) (TV) ... *Production Company*
157. *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987) ... *Production Company*
158. *Wish You Were Here* (1987) ... *Production Company*
159. *Vardo* (1986) ... *Production Company*
160. *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) ... *Production Company*
161. *The Man Who Shot Christmas* (1984) ... *Production Company (as Big Science Ltd.)*

Appendix B

Box Office Earnings Data

Box office figures are from the Box Office Mojo website (*Box Office Mojo*, n.d.. *Film title*.

Available from: <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/>) unless otherwise noted.

Not all information is complete. The completeness of the information may depend on the year it was gathered by Box Office Mojo or on the distributor's accounting practices for that year.

The following data includes a Production Budget to Box Office Gross Ratio and Percentage Comparison (Budget/Gross Earnings) prepared by the author. This is the *budget divided by the gross earnings* that results in *earnings as a percentage of return on budget costs*. The percentage represents the return on production costs. It can be used as a comparison between films as an indicator of box office success. It does not include marketing and distribution expenses as a cost.

Films listed are Working Title Films productions or related films, top grossing films in the global market, and genre related film.

Section I - Examples of films produced by Working Title Films

A. Before *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994)

Budget/Gross Earnings

1. *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985, UK; 1986, USA)

1/ 2.4 240%

Production Budget: \$1,000,000¹

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$2,451,545

2. *Wish You Were Here* (1987)

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$3,283,832

3. *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987)

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$1,196,336

4. *A World Apart* (1988)

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$2,326,860

5. *For Queen and Country* (1988)

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$191,051

6. *The Tall Guy* (1989)

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$510,712

7. *Fools of Fortune* (1990)

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$83,490

8. *Chicago Joe and the Showgirl* (1990)

¹budget source *Laundrettes and Lovers* 2003, p. 12

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$85,395

9. *Edward II* (1991)

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$694,438

10. *Drop Dead Fred* (1991)

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$13,878,334

11. *London Kills Me* (1991)

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$170,667

12. *Bob Roberts* (1992)

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$4,479,470

14. *Map of the Human Heart* (1993)

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$2,806,881

15. *Posse* (1993)

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$18,289,763

16. *Romeo is Bleeding* (1993)

Total Lifetime Grosses: \$3,275,585

19. *Bean* (1997) 1/ 13.95 1395%

Production Budget: \$18 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$45,319,423 18.0%

+ Foreign \$205,893,247 82.0%

= Worldwide: \$251,212,670

20. *Elizabeth* (1998) 1/ 2.73 273%

Production Budget: \$30 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$30,082,699 36.6%

+ Foreign \$52,067,943 63.4%

= Worldwide \$82,150,642

21. *Notting Hill* (1999) 1/ 8.66 866%

Production Budget: \$42 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$116,089,678 31.9%

+ Foreign \$247,800,000 68.1%

= Worldwide \$363,889,678

22. *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) 1/ 11.27 1127%

Production Budget: \$25 million

26. *Shaun of the Dead* (2004)⁴ 1/ 5.00 500%

Production budget: \$6,000,000

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$13,542,874 45.1%

+ Foreign \$16,496,518 54.9%

= Worldwide \$30,039,392

27. *Elizabeth: the Golden Age* (2007) 1/ 1.34 134%

Production budget: \$50 – 60 million⁵

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$16,383,509 22.1%

+ Foreign \$57,854,054 77.9%

= Worldwide \$74,237,563

⁴Note: Its genre model was *Night of the Living Dead*, produced with \$114,000. By the year 2000, *Night of the Living Dead* had generated \$30,000,000 as a worldwide box office gross. Its production budget to gross earnings ratios: 1/ 263.15 or 26,315%

⁵Reference source: *IMDb*, n.d.i. *Elizabeth: the Golden Age*, *IMDb*. Available from: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0414055/> [accessed 20 November 2011]

28. *Hot Fuzz* (2007)⁶ 1/ 6.74 674%

Production budget: \$12 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$23,637,265 29.3%

+ Foreign \$56,936,509 70.7%

= Worldwide \$80,573,774

29. *The Boat that Rocked* aka *Pirate Radio* (2009) 1/ 0.72 72%

Production Budget: \$50 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$8,017,917 22.1%

+ Foreign \$28,330,867 77.9%

= Worldwide \$36,348,784

C. The Coen Brothers Films Produced by Working Title Films (or distributed by PolyGram
Filmed Entertainment*):

30. *Barton Fink* (1991)* 1/ 0.68 68%

⁶ Note: Foreign earnings of *Hot Fuzz* outside the US represented 70.7 % of its overall gross. The UK box office gross of \$41,212,142 represented half of its gross. Australia generated \$4,855,773 of these earnings and *Hot Fuzz* did well in Germany Europe and Russia

Production Budget: \$9 million costs (estimated)⁷

Domestic \$6,153,939

31. *The Hudsucker Proxy* (1994) 1/ 0.07 7%

Production budget: \$40 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$2,816,518

32. *Fargo* (1996) 1/ 8.66 866%

Production budget: \$7 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$24,611,975 40.6%

+Foreign \$36,000,000 59.4%

=Worldwide \$60,611,975

⁷Reference source: *IMDb.*, n.d.j. Barton Fink (1991). *IMDb*. Available from: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0101410/>

[accessed 21 November 2011]

33. *The Big Lebowski* (1998) 1/ 3.25 325%

Production Budget \$15 million⁸

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$17,498,804

+Foreign \$28,690,764

=Worldwide \$46,189,568

Section II - Examples of Films Produced by Sarah Radclyffe after Leaving Working Title Films

34. *Sirens* (1993)

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$7,770,731

35. *Ratcatcher* (1999)

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$217,244

36. *Bent* (2000)

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$496,059

Section III - Films Produced by Eric Fellner before Becoming a Working Title Films Partner (figures are incomplete)

37. *Sid and Nancy* (1986) 1/ .70 70%

Production Budget: \$4 million

⁸ Reference source: *Box Office Mojo*, n.d.m. *The Big Lebowski*. *Box Office Mojo*. Available from:

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0118715/> [accessed 20 November 2011]

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$2,826,523

38. *Pascali's Island* (1988)

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$1,451,857

39. *Hidden Agenda* (1990)

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$1,030,938

Section IV - Examples of 1990s Hollywood/American Romantic Comedy Genre Movies

40. *Pretty Woman* (1990) 1/ 33.10 3310%

Production Budget: \$14 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$178,406,268 38.5%
+ Foreign \$285,000,000 61.5%
= Worldwide \$463,406,268

41. *Sleepless in Seattle* (1993) 1/ 10.84 1084%

Production Budget: \$21 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$126,680,884 55.6%
+ Foreign \$101,119,000 44.4%
= Worldwide: \$227,799,884

42. *You've Got Mail* (1998) 1/ 3.85 385%

Production Budget: \$65 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$115,821,495 46.2%
+ Foreign \$135,000,000 53.8%
= Worldwide: \$250,821,495

43. *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002)

Production Budget: \$5 million 1/73.74 7373%

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic	\$241,438,208	65.5%
+ Foreign	\$127,305,836	34.5%
=Worldwide	\$368,744,044	

Section V - Examples of Movies of the 1980s British Film Industry Globally Distributed (North America – Domestic)

44. *Chariots of Fire* (1981)

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$58,972,904

45. *Educating Rita* (1983)

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$14,648,076

46. *Local Hero* (1983)

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$5,895,761

47. *Revolution* (1985)⁹ 1/ 0.012 1.2%

Production costs: 28 million

Domestic \$358,574

⁹Reference source: Dancis, B., n.d.. 'Revolution Revisited' could use more editing. *Reading Eagle*, 28, May, online reprint. [online]. Available from: <http://readingeagle.com/article.aspx?id=140435> [accessed 19 September 2010]

Section VI - Other Related Movies – Hollywood and PolyGram Co-Development Films

48. *Saturday Night Fever* (1977)¹⁰

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic	\$94,213,184	39.7%
+ Foreign	\$142,900,000	60.3%
= Worldwide	\$237,113,184	

49. *Grease* (1978) 1/ 65.76 6576%

Production Budget: \$6 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic	\$188,389,888	47.7%
+ Foreign	\$206,200,000	52.3%
= Worldwide	\$394,589,888	

50. *Batman* (1989) 1/ 11.75 1175%

Production Budget: \$35 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic	\$251,188,924	61.1%
+ Foreign	\$160,160,000	38.9%
= Worldwide	\$411,348,924	

¹⁰ incomplete data, not tracked or reported to trade publications

Section VII – Selected Hollywood Box Office Films Worldwide

51. *Jaws* (1975) 1/ 67.23 6723%

Production Budget: \$7 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$260,000,000 55.2%

+ Foreign \$210,653,000 44.8%

= Worldwide \$470,653,000

52. *Star Wars* (1977) 1/ 70.49 7049%

Production Budget: \$11 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$460,998,007 59.5%

+ Foreign \$314,400,000 40.5%

= Worldwide \$775,398,007

53. *Top Gun* (1986) 1/23.58 2358%

Production budget: \$15 million¹¹

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$176,786,701 50.0%

+ Foreign \$177,030,000 50.0%

= Worldwide: \$353,816,701

¹¹According to: *IMDb* n.d.k. *Top Gun*. [online]. Available from: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0092099/> [accessed 20 November 2011]

54. *Ghost* (1990) 1/23 2300%

Production budget: \$22 million

Total Lifetime Grosses Domestic \$217,631,306 43.0%

+ Foreign \$288,071,282 57.0%

= Worldwide \$505,702,588

55. *Jurassic Park* (1993) 1/ 14.51 1451%

Production Budget: \$63 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$357,067,947 39.0%

+ Foreign \$557,623,171 61.0%

= Worldwide \$914,691,118

56. *The Lion King* (1994) 1/1741 1741%

Production Budget: \$45 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$328,541,776 41.9%

+ Foreign \$455,300,000 58.1%

= Worldwide \$783,841,776

57. *Die Hard: With a Vengeance* (1995) 1/ 4.06 406%

Production Budget: \$90 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$100,012,499 27.3%
 + Foreign \$266,089,167 72.7%
 = Worldwide \$366,101,666

58. *Independence Day* (1996) 1/10.89 1089%

Production Budget: \$75 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$306,169,268 37.5%
 + Foreign \$511,231,623 62.5%
 = Worldwide \$817,400,891

59. *Titanic* (1997) 1/ 9.21 921%

Production Budget: \$200 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$600,788,188 32.6%
 + Foreign \$1,242,413,080 67.4%
 = Worldwide \$1,843,201,268

60. *Armageddon* (1998) 1/3.95 395%

Production budget: \$140 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$201,578,182 36.4%
 + Foreign \$352,131,606 63.6%
 = Worldwide \$553,709,788

61. *Star Wars: Episode I the phantom menace*, (1999) 1/ 8.03 803%

Production Budget: \$115 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$431,088,301 46.6%
 + Foreign \$493,229,257 53.4%
 = Worldwide \$924,317,558

62. *Mission Impossible* (2000) 1/ 4.37 437%

Production Budget: \$125 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$215,409,889 39.4%
+ Foreign \$330,978,216 60.6%
= Worldwide \$546,388,105

63. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerers Stone* (2001) 1/ 7.79 779%

Production Budget: \$125 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$317,575,550 32.6%
+ Foreign \$657,158,000 67.4%
= Worldwide \$974,733,550

64. *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (2002) 1/9.84 984%

Production Budget: \$94 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$341,786,758 36.9%
+ Foreign \$583,495,746 63.1%
= Worldwide \$925,282,504

65. *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King* (2003) 1/ 11.90 1190%

Production Budget: \$94 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$377,027,325 33.7%
+ Foreign \$742,083,616 66.3%
= Worldwide \$1,119,110,941

66. *Shrek 2* (2004) 1/ 6.13 613%

Production Budget: \$150 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$441,226,247 48.0%
+ Foreign \$478,612,511 52.0%

= Worldwide \$919,838,758

67. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2005) 1/5.97 597%

Production Budget: \$150 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$290,013,036 32.4%

+ Foreign \$605,908,000 67.6%

= Worldwide \$895,921,036

68. *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2006) 1/ 4.73 473%

Production Budget: \$225 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$423,315,812 39.7%

+ Foreign \$642,863,913 60.3%

= Worldwide \$1,066,179,725

69. *Spider Man 3* (2007) 1/ 3.45 345%

Production Budget: \$258 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$336,530,303 37.8%

+ Foreign \$554,341,323 62.2%

= Worldwide \$890,871,626

70. *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* (2007) 1/3.20 320%

Production Budget= \$300 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$309,420,425 32.2%

+ Foreign \$651,576,067 67.8%

= Worldwide \$960,996,492

71. *The Dark Knight* (2008) 1/5.4 540%

Production budget: \$185 million

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$533,345,358 53.2%
+ Foreign \$468,576,467 46.8%
= Worldwide \$1,001,921,825

72. *Avatar* (2009) 1/ 6.8 680%

Production budget: \$300 million to 500 million¹² (\$400 million used for calculation)

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$749,704,539 27.5%
+ Foreign \$1,981,220,328 72.5%
= Worldwide \$2,730,924,867

Section VIII - Selected films by Gurinder Chadha

73. *Bhaji on the Beach* (1993)

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$734,634

74. *Bend it Like Beckham* (2002) 1/ 13.67 1367%

Production costs 5.6 million¹³

Total Lifetime Grosses: Domestic \$32,543,449 42.5%
+ Foreign \$44,039,884 57.5%
= Worldwide \$76,583,333

¹²Reference source: Cieply M.,2009. A Movie's Budget Pops From the Screen, *The New York Times*, 8 November. B1.

¹³Reference source: *IMDb*, n.d.l. *Bend it Like Beckham* (2002), [online]. Available from: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0286499/> [accessed 20 November 2011]

75. *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) 1/ 3.53 353%

Production Budget: \$7 million

Total Lifetime Grosses:	Domestic	\$6,605,592	26.7%
	+ Foreign	\$18,110,848	73.3%
	= Worldwide	\$24,716,440	

76. *It's a Wonderful Afterlife* (2010)

Production Budget: \$10 million ¹⁴	1/.076	7.6%
Total Lifetime Grosses: Worldwide: \$1,321,438 (Britain)		

¹⁴Reference source: *IMDb*, n.d.m. *It's a Wonderful Afterlife* (2010). [online]. Available from: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1319716/> [accessed 20 November 2011]

Section IX - Global Foreign Market Breakdowns for Selected Movies of Working Title Films

Bridget Jones's Diary (2001) – Foreign Total: \$210,386,368

Country	Gross	Release Date
Australia	\$11,353,608	7/26/01
Austria	\$2,602,703	8/24/01
Brazil	\$1,819,409	8/17/01
Bulgaria	\$59,434	8/14/01
Czech Republic	\$954,573	8/9/01
Denmark	\$2,376,704	7/27/01
Finland	\$1,920,141	8/24/01
France and Algeria, Monaco, Morocco and Tunisia	\$17,962,308	10/10/01
Germany	\$22,508,592	8/23/01
Hong Kong	\$905,540	9/6/01
Mexico	\$1,334,294	8/24/01
Netherlands	\$5,512,847	6/7/01
Spain	\$11,830,932	6/8/01
Taiwan	\$453,053	N/A
United Kingdom and Ireland and Malta	\$60,296,418	4/13/01

1. *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* (2004) – Foreign Total:\$222,294,509

Country	Gross	Release Date
Argentina	\$373,476	12/9/04
Australia	\$14,326,857	11/11/04
Austria	\$3,053,427	12/3/04
Belgium and Luxembourg	\$3,123,098	12/8/04
Brazil	\$1,659,294	12/3/04
Bulgaria	\$87,683	2/11/05
Central America and the Greater Antilles (Aruba, Belize, Bolivia, Bonaire, Costa Rica, Curacao, Domi	\$68,178	12/22/04
Chile	\$246,751	2/10/05
Colombia	\$71,871	2/4/05
Croatia	\$288,372	11/11/04
Cyprus	\$120,633	12/3/04
Czech Republic	\$1,382,259	11/18/04

Denmark	\$2,942,343	11/19/04
Ecuador	\$21,306	4/1/05
Egypt	\$32,555	12/29/04
Estonia	\$142,249	11/19/04
Finland	\$2,053,355	12/3/04
France and Algeria, Monaco, Morocco and Tunisia	\$15,552,577	12/8/04
Germany	\$17,871,902	12/2/04
Greece	\$1,098,483	12/17/04
Hong Kong	\$916,019	12/2/04
Hungary	\$1,515,657	11/11/04
Iceland	\$357,107	11/19/04
India	\$132,433	12/3/04
Indonesia	\$181,229	2/8/05
Israel	\$961,890	11/18/04
Italy	\$15,073,062	1/7/05
Japan	\$11,984,086	3/19/05
Kenya	\$39,329	2/11/05
Latvia	\$130,027	11/19/04
Lebanon	\$97,891	12/2/04
Lithuania	\$183,406	11/29/04
Malaysia	\$177,453	1/13/05
Mexico	\$1,201,585	11/26/04
Middle East + United Arab Emirates	\$369,724	11/24/04
Netherlands	\$6,664,870	11/11/04
New Zealand and Fiji	\$2,993,725	11/18/04
Norway	\$3,434,227	11/19/04
Peru	\$205,769	2/17/05
Philippines	\$259,597	12/1/04
Poland	\$4,009,072	11/11/04
Portugal and Angola	\$1,572,481	11/18/04
Romania	\$141,248	1/7/05
Russia	\$2,364,158	11/25/04
Russia – CIS	\$2,059,975	11/22/04
Serbia and Montenegro	\$61,435	1/13/05
Singapore	\$479,353	11/25/04
Slovenia	\$356,831	11/25/04
South Africa (Entire Region)	\$1,585,866	11/19/04
South Korea	\$9,462,984	12/9/04
Spain	\$10,816,242	11/19/04
Sweden	\$4,119,711	11/19/04
Switzerland	\$4,036,712	11/24/04
Taiwan	\$1,465,930	12/4/04
Thailand	\$552,452	12/16/04
Turkey	\$1,313,502	12/3/04
Ukraine	\$236,629	12/9/04

United Arab Emirates	\$220,619	11/24/04
United Kingdom and Ireland and Malta	\$68,224,580	11/12/04
Venezuela	\$99,568	2/25/05

2. *Elizabeth* (1997) -Foreign Total as of March 18, 2007: \$52,067,943

Country	Total Gross	As Of	Release Date
Argentina	\$1,420,142	Final	3/4/99
Australia	\$4,331,238	Final	10/22/98
Austria	\$284,123	Final	10/30/98
Belgium and Luxembourg	\$340,786	Final	10/14/98
Brazil	\$2,087,465	Final	3/5/99
Bulgaria	\$34,978	Final	3/12/99
Central America (Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Paragua	\$18,656	Final	6/25/99
Chile	\$176,805	Final	5/13/99
Colombia	\$345,780	Final	3/5/99
Croatia	\$11,028	Final	2/17/00
Czech Republic	\$42,769	Final	2/18/99
Denmark	\$397,420	Final	1/15/99
Estonia	\$17,809	Final	5/28/99
Finland	\$77,421	Final	3/19/99
France and Algeria, Monaco, Morocco and Tunisia	\$744,813	Final	11/11/98
Germany	\$3,650,035	Final	10/29/98
Greece	\$579,715	Final	1/1/99
Hong Kong	\$225,181	Final	9/16/99
Iceland	\$42,888	Final	1/29/99
Ireland	\$242,727	Final	10/23/98
Israel	\$392,247	Final	2/19/99
Italy	\$3,151,202	Final	10/2/98
Japan	\$15,807,893	Final	8/28/99
Latvia	\$57,182	Final	2/12/99
Lebanon/United Arab Emirates	\$74,137	Final	9/24/99
Lithuania	\$31,700	Final	4/2/99
Mexico	\$1,280,520	Final	3/26/99
Netherlands	\$595,652	Final	10/22/98
New Zealand and Fiji	\$923,080	Final	1/21/99
Norway	\$265,675	Final	12/26/98
Paraguay	\$13,781	Final	3/19/99
Philippines	\$142,192	Final	3/10/99

Poland	\$71,441	Final	11/12/99
Portugal and Angola	\$542,796	Final	1/29/99
Romania	\$19,406	Final	10/12/99
Russia - CIS and Ukraine	\$41,466	Final	10/1/99
Singapore	\$239,805	Final	1/7/99
Slovakia	\$67,456	Final	12/17/98
Slovenia	\$67,456	Final	12/17/98
South Africa (Entire Region)	\$339,888	Final	2/26/99
South Korea	\$361,680	Final	3/20/99
Spain	\$1,145,943	Final	10/23/98
Sweden	\$656,210	Final	3/5/99
Switzerland	\$593,430	Final	10/30/98
Taiwan	\$327,341	Final	4/3/99
Thailand	\$180,503	Final	3/12/99
Turkey	\$257,685	Final	12/11/98
United Kingdom and Ireland and Malta	\$9,083,335	Final	10/2/98
Uruguay	\$93,915	Final	3/5/99
Venezuela	\$171,147	Final	3/17/99

3. *Elizabeth the Golden Age* (2007) -Foreign Total as of February 1, 2009:
\$57,854,054

Country	Total Gross	As Of	Release Date
Argentina	\$108,440	7/31/08	3/13/08
Australia	\$4,413,435	2/20/08	11/15/07
Austria	\$753,485	3/13/08	12/21/07
Belgium and Luxembourg	\$1,033,382	3/18/08	12/12/07
Brazil	\$994,719	7/31/08	2/15/08
Bulgaria	\$64,320	8/3/08	11/30/07
Central America and the Greater Antilles (Aruba, Belize, Bolivia, Bonaire, Costa Rica, Curacao, Domi	\$85,275	2/1/09	7/18/08
Chile	\$48,413	7/31/08	5/15/08
Colombia	\$134,918	12/4/08	5/30/08
Croatia	\$115,412	3/24/08	12/13/07
Cyprus	\$40,247	2/12/08	12/21/07
Czech Republic	\$446,938	1/20/08	11/22/07
Czech Republic/Slovakia	\$437,628	1/2/08	11/22/07
Denmark	\$1,307,335	1/31/08	11/16/07
East Africa (Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda)	\$14,429	3/16/08	12/21/07
Ecuador	\$34,043	11/9/08	10/17/08
Egypt	\$26,964	2/12/08	12/26/07

Estonia	\$52,531	2/12/08	11/23/07
Finland	\$198,469	1/17/08	11/9/07
France and Algeria, Monaco, Morocco and Tunisia	\$1,130,370	2/12/08	12/12/07
Germany	\$4,951,218	4/13/08	12/20/07
Greece	\$662,857	2/20/08	12/6/07
Hong Kong	\$184,570	3/2/08	1/17/08
Hungary	\$321,320	1/30/08	11/22/07
Iceland	\$17,638	2/12/08	11/2/07
India	\$42,444	2/12/08	11/23/07
Israel	\$143,955	12/4/08	12/27/07
Italy	\$6,631,735	3/30/08	10/26/07
Japan	\$6,274,995	3/9/08	2/16/08
Latvia	\$122,686	2/12/08	11/23/07
Lebanon	\$66,829	2/12/08	11/29/07
Lesser Antilles (Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and	\$11,871	2/12/08	12/5/07
Lithuania	\$53,308	2/12/08	12/7/07
Malaysia	\$38,850	3/5/08	1/31/08
Mexico	\$700,324	12/11/08	3/7/08
Middle East Other	\$150,304	2/12/08	12/6/07
Netherlands	\$961,186	1/30/08	12/20/07
New Zealand and Fiji	\$680,288	1/16/08	11/15/07
Nigeria	\$5,063	2/17/08	1/25/08
Norway	\$427,252	1/20/08	11/2/07
Philippines	\$177,176	2/12/08	12/12/07
Poland	\$726,156	7/29/08	1/11/08
Portugal and Angola	\$868,526	1/2/08	11/1/07
Romania	\$121,510	3/9/08	1/4/08
Russia – CIS	\$3,458,575	1/13/08	11/15/07
Serbia and Montenegro	\$49,390	7/27/08	12/20/07
Singapore	\$119,882	2/26/08	12/27/07
Slovakia	\$67,180	1/2/08	11/22/07
Slovenia	\$85,783	1/30/08	11/22/07
South Africa (Entire Region and Nigeria)	\$220,534	12/5/08	1/18/08
South Africa (Entire Region)	\$198,102	3/16/08	1/18/08
South Korea	\$1,274,983	12/20/07	11/22/07
Spain	\$2,469,094	2/27/08	11/9/07
Sweden	\$670,901	1/3/08	11/2/07
Switzerland	\$1,339,842	3/4/08	12/19/07
Taiwan	\$324,248	1/18/08	12/14/07
Thailand	\$195,545	3/5/08	1/3/08
Turkey	\$926,227	1/10/08	11/23/07
Ukraine	\$632,288	2/12/08	11/15/07

United Arab Emirates	\$220,330	2/12/08	12/6/07
United Kingdom and Ireland and Malta	\$10,346,837	2/27/08	11/2/07
Uruguay	\$35,372	3/9/08	1/25/08
Venezuela	\$153,409	12/12/08	7/25/08

5.Hot Fuzz (2007)- Foreign Total as of April 20, 2008: \$56,936,509

Country	Total Gross	As Of	Release Date
Australia	\$4,855,773	10/11/07	3/15/07
Austria	\$218,486	10/11/07	6/15/07
Belgium and Luxembourg	\$166,449	10/30/07	9/26/07
Czech Republic	\$57,616	7/1/07	6/7/07
Czech Republic/Slovakia	\$83,771	12/20/07	6/7/07
Denmark	\$68,337	10/11/07	7/20/07
Ecuador	n/a	n/a	2/8/08
Estonia	\$33,975	2/6/08	5/11/07
Finland	\$31,177	12/7/07	9/28/07
France and Algeria, Monaco, Morocco and Tunisia	\$1,357,802	2/6/08	7/18/07
Germany	\$2,192,727	12/13/07	6/14/07
Greece	\$110,254	11/14/07	10/11/07
Hungary	\$131,856	12/18/07	6/21/07
Iceland	\$94,485	2/6/08	3/30/07
Italy	\$265,800	12/9/07	8/24/07
Latvia	\$67,144	2/6/08	7/20/07
Lebanon	\$10,776	2/6/08	7/26/07
Lithuania	\$41,031	2/6/08	6/15/07
Malaysia	\$60,299	7/11/07	6/21/07
Mexico	\$184,210	5/18/08	10/19/07
Middle East Other	\$122,324	2/6/08	5/16/07
Netherlands	\$630,779	12/13/07	4/5/07
New Zealand and Fiji	\$788,581	12/7/07	3/15/07
Nigeria	\$843	6/17/07	6/15/07
Norway	\$675,111	12/13/07	4/13/07
Poland	\$124,740	10/11/07	6/8/07
Portugal and Angola	\$46,522	1/2/08	11/22/07
Romania	\$10,704	2/6/08	10/26/07
Russia – CIS	\$1,019,478	12/18/07	4/5/07
Singapore	\$115,311	7/11/07	6/21/07
Slovakia	\$12,894	8/19/07	8/9/07
Slovenia	\$47,151	8/8/07	6/28/07
South Africa (Entire Region)	\$269,231	12/13/07	4/20/07

South Korea	\$631,499	12/16/07	6/21/07
Spain	\$376,542	1/31/08	12/5/07
Sweden	\$366,862	10/11/07	4/13/07
Switzerland	\$283,005	12/18/07	9/20/07
Turkey	\$84,825	10/11/07	7/13/07
Ukraine	\$84,411	2/6/08	5/10/07
United Arab Emirates	\$164,509	2/6/08	5/17/07
United Kingdom and Ireland and Malta	\$41,212,142	7/10/07	2/16/07

6. *Love Actually* (2003) - Foreign Total: \$187,245,873

Country	Gross	Release Date
Argentina	\$407,812	12/11/03
Australia	\$13,956,093	12/26/03
Austria	\$2,128,935	11/20/03
Belgium and Luxembourg	\$1,981,140	12/3/03
Brazil	\$3,059,112	12/5/03
Bulgaria	\$79,658	7/2/04
Central America and the Greater Antilles (Aruba, Belize, Bolivia, Bonaire, Costa Rica, Curacao, Domi)	\$250,000	12/19/03
Chile	\$157,787	2/19/04
Colombia	\$196,646	12/19/03
Czech Republic	\$447,928	11/20/03
Czech Republic/Slovakia	\$489,893	11/20/03
Denmark	\$1,918,831	11/21/03
Ecuador	\$71,872	4/8/04
Egypt	\$31,166	4/14/04
Finland	\$916,472	11/21/03
France and Algeria, Monaco, Morocco and Tunisia	\$6,470,401	12/9/03
Germany	\$14,402,665	11/20/03
Greece	\$1,907,964	11/21/03
Hong Kong	\$1,322,540	12/4/03
Hungary	\$940,859	12/4/03
Iceland	\$389,112	12/5/03
India	\$142,846	12/19/03
Indonesia	\$239,196	2/12/04
Israel	\$1,326,926	11/20/03
Italy	\$8,186,390	11/14/03
Japan	\$14,224,088	2/7/04
Kenya	\$47,397	12/12/03

Lebanon	\$89,055	N/A
Mexico	\$1,076,161	12/5/03
Netherlands	\$5,035,140	11/20/03
New Zealand and Fiji	\$1,976,328	11/27/03
Norway	\$2,493,820	11/21/03
Peru	\$201,159	2/5/04
Poland	\$2,655,124	11/21/03
Portugal and Angola	\$2,366,220	11/14/03
Romania	\$77,194	1/16/04
Russia – CIS	\$2,068,143	12/11/03
Serbia and Montenegro	\$79,738	N/A
Singapore	\$795,683	12/4/03
South Africa (Entire Region)	\$1,680,224	11/21/03
South Korea	\$9,128,001	12/5/03
Spain	\$9,096,339	11/21/03
Sweden	\$3,549,311	11/21/03
Switzerland	\$3,527,582	11/20/03
Taiwan	\$846,096	2/14/04
Thailand	\$696,423	12/4/03
Turkey	\$1,352,164	1/23/04
United Arab Emirates	\$165,900	N/A
United Kingdom and Ireland and Malta	\$62,671,632	11/21/03
Venezuela	\$185,794	3/12/04

7. *Shaun of the Dead* (2004)- Foreign Total as of April 9, 2006: \$16,496,518

Country	Total Gross	As Of	Release Date
Argentina	\$1	10/12/04	10/7/04
Australia	\$1,204,034	11/15/04	10/7/04
Belgium and Luxembourg	\$45,314	Final	8/11/04
France and Algeria, Monaco, Morocco and Tunisia	\$812,500	8/16/05	7/27/05
Germany	\$1,126,737	2/24/05	12/30/04
Iceland	\$34,045	Final	7/30/04
Lebanon	\$6,643	Final	6/23/05
Middle East Other	\$60,518	Final	10/13/04
Netherlands	\$158,356	9/15/04	8/12/04
New Zealand and Fiji	\$111,549	12/8/04	11/25/04
Poland	\$96,019	11/11/04	10/29/04
South Korea	\$367,556	7/7/05	N/A
Spain	\$64,240	11/12/04	10/29/04
United Arab Emirates	\$59,518	10/31/04	10/13/04
United Kingdom and Ireland and	\$12,349,489	8/18/04	4/9/04

Malta

8. Wimbledon (2004) -Foreign Total as of Apr. 20, 2005: \$24,510,874

Country	Total Gross	As Of	Release Date
Australia	\$3,957,650	11/10/04	9/30/04
Belgium and Luxembourg	\$444,171	Final	11/10/04
Brazil	\$331,315	Final	10/22/04
Bulgaria	\$4,193	4/10/05	3/11/05
China	\$250,941	Final	2/11/05
Croatia	\$43,997	1/5/05	N/A
Czech Republic	\$100,509	1/23/05	12/30/04
Czech Republic/Slovakia	\$120,448	Final	12/30/04
Denmark	\$163,256	Final	10/22/04
Egypt	\$6,000	6/28/05	6/8/05
Finland	\$144,134	11/25/04	10/29/04
France and Algeria, Monaco, Morocco and Tunisia	\$615,000	11/15/04	10/20/04
Germany	\$200,798	Final	3/24/05
Iceland	\$93,031	10/25/04	10/8/04
Israel	\$286,228	Final	10/28/04
Italy	\$24,065	Final	6/10/05
Japan	\$328,474	Final	4/23/05
Kenya	\$8,973	Final	11/19/04
Lebanon	\$16,397	12/15/04	12/2/04
Mexico	\$428,160	11/18/04	10/29/04
Netherlands	\$504,748	11/17/04	10/21/04
New Zealand and Fiji	\$540,584	11/10/04	9/30/04
Norway	\$271,739	10/31/04	10/8/04
Poland	\$237,056	1/9/05	12/25/04
Portugal and Angola	\$429,717	11/24/04	10/21/04
Romania	\$22,812	Final	11/12/04
Russia – CIS	\$429,722	11/21/04	11/3/04
Serbia and Montenegro	\$1,490	2/5/05	N/A
Singapore	\$241,601	10/18/04	10/7/04
Slovakia	\$21,920	3/6/05	2/3/05
South Korea	\$663,330	3/27/05	3/25/05
Spain	\$159,050	Final	2/25/05
Sweden	\$362,718	10/18/04	9/24/04
Switzerland	\$92,841	Final	11/10/04
Taiwan	\$32,141	1/2/05	12/25/04
Thailand	\$74,511	11/21/04	11/18/04
United Arab Emirates	\$32,917	1/30/05	1/26/05

United Kingdom and Ireland and Malta	\$12,946,666	10/31/04	9/24/04
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Pulp Fiction, 1994. [film]. Directed by Quentin Tarantino. USA. Los Angeles, Miramax Films.

Rambo: First Blood, 1982. [film]. Directed by Ted Kotcheff. USA. Los Angeles, Orion Pictures.

Ready When You Are, Mr. McGill, 1976. [television programme]. Red Letter Day TV Series, London, Granada TV, 11 January.

Red Dawn, 2012, [film]. Directed by Dan Bradley. USA. Los Angeles, Open Road Films.

Romeo is Bleeding, 1993. [film]. Directed by Peter Medak. UK. Working Title Films. Los Angeles, Gramercy Pictures.

Rubin & Ed, 1992. [film]. Directed by Trent Harris. UK, USA. Working Title Films. Los Angeles, Columbia TriStar.

Runaway Bride, 1999. [film]. Directed by Garry Marshall. USA. Los Angeles, Paramount Pictures.

Sammy and Rosie Get Laid, 1987. [film]. Directed by Stephen Frears. UK. Working Title Films. New York, Cinecom Pictures.

Saturday Night Fever, 1977. [film]. Directed by John Badham. USA. Los Angeles, Paramount Pictures.

Sebastiane, 1976. [film]. Directed by Paul Humfress and Derek Jarman. UK. Libra Films International.

Sense and Sensibility, 1995. [film]. Directed by Ang Lee. UK, USA. Los Angeles, Columbia Pictures.

Seven Songs for Malcolm X, 1993. [film]. Directed by John Akomfrah. UK. Black Audio Film Collective. New York, Icarus Films.

Shakespeare in Love, 1998. [film]. Directed by John Madden. UK, USA. Los Angeles, Miramax Films.

Shaun of the Dead, 2004. [film]. Directed by Edgar Wright. UK, USA. Working Title Films. Los Angeles, Focus Features.

Short Cuts, 1993. [film]. Directed by Robert Altman. USA. Los Angeles, Fine Line Features.

Sid and Nancy, 1986. [film]. Directed by Alex Cox. UK. Initial Films. Los Angeles, New Line Cinema.

The Six Wives of Henry VIII, 1970. [television programme]. London, BBC , 1 January – 5 February.

Sleepless in Seattle, 1993. [film]. Directed by Nora Ephron. USA. Los Angeles, TriStar Pictures.

Sliding Doors, 1998, [film]. Directed by Peter Howitt. UK, USA. Los Angeles, Miramax Films.

Smack & Thistle, 1991. [tv film]. Directed by Tunde Ikoli. Channel 4. UK. Working Title Films London, Channel 4.

Small Time Crooks, 2002. [film]. Directed by Woody Allen. USA. Los Angeles, DreamWorks Distribution.

Smoke, 1995. [film]. Directed by Wayne Wang. USA. Los Angeles, Miramax Films.

The Snapper, 1993. [tv film]. Directed by Stephen Frears. BBC. UK. Los Angeles, Miramax Films.

Spaced, 2001. [television Programme] Channel 4, 24 September 1999 – 13 April.

Star Trek, 2009. [film]. Directed by J. J. Abrams. USA. Los Angeles, Paramount Pictures.

Star Wars, 1977. [film]. Directed by George Lucas. USA. Los Angeles, Twentieth Century Fox.

Straight to Hell, 1987. [film]. Directed by Alex Cox. UK. Initial Pictures. Island Pictures.

Sylvia Scarlett, 1936. [film]. Directed by George Cukor. USA. Los Angeles, RKO Radio Pictures.

10, 1979. [film]. Directed by Blake Edwards. USA. Los Angeles, Orion Pictures.

2001: A Space Odyssey, 1968. [film]. Directed by Stanley Kubrick. USA. Los Angeles, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

The Tall Guy, 1989. [film]. Directed by Mel Smith. UK. Working Title Films. London, Virgin Vision.

The Tempest, 1979. [film]. Directed by Derek Jarman. UK. Boyd's Company. Mainline.

Territories, 1984. [film] Directed by Isaac Julien. UK. Sankofa Film and Video.

Tom Jones, 1963. [film]. Directed by Tony Richardson. UK. Los Angeles, United Artists.

Top Gun, 1986. [film]. Directed by Tony Scott. USA. Los Angeles, Paramount Pictures.

A Touch of the Tar Brush, 1991. [film]. Directed by John Akomfrah. UK. Black Audio Film Collective.

Upstairs, Downstairs, 1971-1975. [television programme] London, London Weekend Television, 30 October 1971– 21 December 1975.

Vanya on 42nd St, 1994. [film]. Directed by Louis Malle. UK, USA. Los Angeles, Sony Pictures Classics.

Wimbledon. 2004. [film]. Directed by Richard Loncraine. UK, USA. Working Title Films. Los Angeles, Universal Pictures.

White Zombie, 1932. [film]. Directed by Victor Halperin. USA. Los Angeles, United Artists.

Wish You Were Here, 1987. [film]. Directed by David Leland. UK. Working Title Films. Atlantic Releasing Corporation.

A World Apart, 1988. [film]. Directed by Chris Menges. UK. Working Title Films. Atlantic Releasing Corporation.

Who Needs a Heart. 1991. [film]. Directed by John Akomfrah. UK. London, Black Audio Film Collective.

Wild at Heart, 1990. [film]. Directed by David Lynch. USA. Propaganda Films. Los Angeles, The Samuel Goldwyn Company.

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