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Transforming European Cinema :
Transnational Filmmaking in the Era of Global Conglomerate Hollywood

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Transforming European Cinema :
Transnational Filmmaking in the Era of Global Conglomerate Hollywood

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Dedication

In loving memory of Christa Liebing-Cornely
and Martha and Robert Cornely

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Transforming European Cinema :

Transnational Filmmaking in the Era of Global Conglomerate Hollywood

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The film industries in Europe have undergone a series of fundamental structural and strategic changes during the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. This study looks at the nature of some of these changes, focusing on the Big Five film producing countries in Europe: the U.K., France, West Germany and the reunified Germany, Italy and Spain. It examines how the transformation of the U.S. film industry from “The New Hollywood” of the 1960s and 1970s into “Conglomerate Hollywood” in the 1980s, and into “Global Conglomerate Hollywood” in the 1990s affected the Big Five film industries in Europe. In this context, the question is raised: How have these changes influenced European development strategies and practices, leading to the creation of an increasing number of transnational motion pictures originating in, and produced in collaboration with, these film industries. The study finds that conglomeration and globalization trends within the U.S. entertainment industry have gone hand in hand with the changes observable in the Big Five European film industries in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. These changes include, but are not limited to, an altered definition of talent and the creative process, as well as notions of authorship, in European cinema. They also encompass an increased emphasis on an often neglected phase of film production: the development process, which is typically comprised of the conception of an idea or

the acquisition of an existing fiction or non-fiction property to adapt, the research of potential markets and audiences, the writing and rewriting of a script, the casting of a movie's lead characters, and the raising of production financing.

To examine the nature and extent of the perceived changes, the study relies primarily on academic literature on the U.S. and European film industries; European and U.S. trade publications; as well as observations from several years of attending the Berlinale Co-Production Market and the European Film Market (both part of the Berlin International Film Festival) and the Marché du Film (part of the Cannes Film Festival). It also draws from a number of oral histories of industry professionals from both continents conducted by the author.

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Chapter One: Introduction and Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

The film industries in the U.K., France, West Germany and later the reunified Germany, Italy and Spain—often referred to as the Big Five film industries in Europe—have undergone substantial changes since the 1980s. These were fueled in part by European media deregulation during the 1980s, shrinking cinema audiences and the need to respond to the increasing dominance of U.S. movies on European screens. One of the most significant driving forces towards a pan-European and increasingly international cinema was the founding of the European Union in 1993, resulting in new support structures, funding mechanisms and training opportunities, aimed at increasing the competitiveness of the European audiovisual sector, while also encouraging the creation of a pan-European identity. However, even before the European Union initiatives in the 1990s and 2000s, a number of innovative European producers, writers and directors, were thinking beyond national borders. They responded to the growing Hollywood presence in their respective home countries by creating high-concept, high-profile motion pictures with transnational appeal. The concept of “transnational” films for the purpose of this study will be defined as a film’s potential to succeed outside of its country or countries of origin.¹ “High-profile” films typically have recognizable talent attached and/or stories based on well-known pre-existing properties, and “high-concept” films are based on plots typically condensable into a single catchphrase (See, e.g., Wyatt 1994). Both high-concept and high-profile films in a commercial context tend to aim at having “blockbuster” potential. “Blockbuster potential” refers to potentially high revenues of a film due to its immense popularity at the box office. These developments can be seen as a reflection of—and inspired by— changes in the international marketplace, in particular the transformation of the U.S. film industry

¹ For a broader discussion of the meaning of the term “transnational cinema,” see, e.g., Ezra and Roden (2006).

during the era of the New Hollywood from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s. They were further influenced by the Conglomerate Hollywood era taking shape in the mid-1980s, facilitated by the deregulation of the U.S. media initiated during the Reagan years. The New Hollywood era was thriving on blockbusters with mass audience appeal, beginning with the 1975 release of Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (Schatz 1993). Growing up on American blockbusters led a number of European directors, producers and writers to aspire to the production of similarly popular forms of entertainment. Added to that indirect influence, Hollywood increased its direct influence during the Global Conglomerate era from the 1990s onward. This direct influence materialized in the form of U.S./European co-productions and the establishment of U.S. studio subsidiaries in key European markets. It was fueled by the steadily growing importance of the international marketplace for the Hollywood film industry. As a result of Hollywood's long-standing transnational orientation, the European theatrical market, one of the key markets for U.S. film exports, has been dominated by U.S. motion pictures ever since the end of World War II.² However, while U.S. transnational, mainstream cinema has been able to maintain its dominant position at the European box office, the Big Five European film industries, in the last three decades, have made inroads to recapture some of their domestic box office real estate. The deregulation of the major European television markets in the 1980s not only increased the presence of U.S. motion pictures on European television screens, but also led to fundamental changes in the European film industries, in particular, to increased interdependence of the film and television industries in many European countries.

While U.S. films have continued to dominate the European theatrical market, structural and operational changes within the European film industry over the previous three decades led to a substantial increase in commercially viable national as well as transnational European productions, as covered in Chapters 3 to 7. The nature and

² For an in-depth analysis of the international film industry in the post-WWII era, see Guback (1969, 1982) and Segrave (1997).

extent of these developments show many similarities, but also significant differences within the Big Five European film producing countries.

With the Internet opening new venues of audiovisual media distribution (such as VOD) by the late 1990s, and the rapid rise of online video services by the mid-2000s, both Global Conglomerate Hollywood and film industries around the world had to modify their marketing and distribution strategies in order to effectively address rapidly changing audiovisual consumption patterns. In regards to the Big Five European film industries, both the proliferation of commercial broadcasting and the home video market in the 1980s, the widespread adoption of DVD by the late 1990s, and the rapid growth of Internet distribution as well as a dramatic increase in internet piracy, had a significant impact on the way films have been developed and distributed in Europe. While the focus of this dissertation is on the development and distribution of transnational motion pictures by the Big Five European film industries, the interdependence of the European film and television industries, with various new forms of distribution and consumption venues, has to be kept in mind when looking at this growing industry segment.

There are two core questions addressed in this dissertation. The first question is whether and to what extent the structural and strategic changes in the Hollywood film industry, in particular during the Global Conglomerate era, have affected film production in the Big Five. The second question is, how the structural and strategic changes within the European film industry have affected the development processes and strategies of productions originating in the Big Five European film producing countries that were aimed at the pan-European and global markets.³

Development processes in the Big Five European film industries and Hollywood used to be substantially different. In post-war Europe, influenced by artistic

³ The “development process” in U.S. terms encompasses the activities involved in conceptualizing and materializing a screenplay for a motion picture, the attachment of top talent (stars and director), shopping a project around to potential investors, and making distribution deals and conceiving marketing strategies. It typically ends with the start of “pre-production.” Pre-production entails the securing of shooting locations, the creation of detailed line-budgets as well as crew- and talent hires (See e.g. Finney: 1996).

movements like Italian Neorealism, the French New Wave, and New German Cinema, a substantial share of European films were made using a so-called “auteur-driven” approach, in which the director typically is also the writer or at least a co-author of the script (Finney 1996a). The U.S. majors, on the other hand, have traditionally followed an approach in which the development phase of a film project is subjected to substantial influence from producers, studio executives, and studio heads. Scripts developed under that model typically undergo numerous revisions, incorporating the input of the various parties involved during the development stage. In this often rather complex process, writers are not seldom considered replaceable, and scripts are frequently products of the work of numerous, in many cases uncredited, writers and script doctors. The latter are typically hired towards the end of the development process if studio executives and producers are not convinced of the artistic and economic viability of a script (See, e.g., Hughes 2004).

A noticeably different output of films by the Big Five European film industries, from the 1980s onward, indicates structural and strategic shifts in the development of motion pictures that, by their nature, appear to be substantially influenced by development models typically found in Global Conglomerate Hollywood.

A key working hypothesis of this study is that among the primary factors contributing to the changes in the European film industry since the 1980s—in the growing segments of a) domestic blockbuster and b) transnational cinema production—has been a shift from a writer/director-driven to a more commercially-oriented, development-driven cinema. In a development-driven approach to film production, the role of the producer extends from purely organizational and financial responsibilities to an active role in the creative aspects of the development process. The development process of domestic blockbuster films, as well as of transnational properties with mass appeal, I am arguing, has been heavily influenced, directly as well as indirectly, by U.S. models of motion picture development, characteristic of the Global Conglomerate Hollywood era. While both domestic popular cinema, aimed at the respective box offices of the Big Five European film markets, and transnational popular cinema, aimed

at a pan-European or global market, appear to have been heavily influenced by Global Conglomerate Hollywood, the focus of my study is on the latter.

As will become evident in Chapters 2 to 7, apart from individual initiatives of producers and filmmakers in the 1980s, a framework of European Union measures to support the audiovisual industries—implemented during the 1990s and 2000s and aimed at supporting a pan-European audio-visual landscape—encouraged the adoption of Hollywood-style development strategies and practices. The new regulatory measures were the products of a hybrid of cultural, economic and political factors, and were part of a pan-European response to the rapid changes in the international marketplace for motion pictures. They further constituted efforts to counter U.S. dominance on European movie screens and to build up a sustainable and profitable European film industry as a cultural, as well as economic, backbone of the European Union.

A closer look at the transnational films produced in Europe over the last three decades not only shows that many of them are global hybrids in regards to their stories, but also that the way they are developed, suggests a combination of European and U.S. development strategies and practices. The emergence of this hybrid development model in the Big Five European film industries appears to have helped the Big Five European film industries to augment market shares at their domestic box offices and to increase the output of transnational films. At the same time, however, it has also carried the inherent risk of inefficiency and failure, when not tailored to the particularities of these national film industries and modified sufficiently to serve their specific needs.

A closer look at commercially successful popular transnational films, produced or co-produced by the film industries in the U.K., France, Italy, Spain and Germany from the 1980s onward, shows that a substantial percentage of these films falls into the high-concept and/or high-profile categories. Mirroring transnational blockbusters by the U.S. majors, whose films are often aimed at a young, predominantly male, audience segment, and that are often characterized by extremely high production values, relatively simplistic storylines and a reduced set of culturally specific references, the cultural implications of this trend are far-reaching. Given these attributes, many of

those films hardly reflect the complex, multicultural and multifaceted societies they originate from. With an increasing number of European producers walking in the footsteps of Global Conglomerate Hollywood, the question arises whether a similar disconnect between European culture and society and European transnational cinema has been developing.

The following chapters also address the question of whether, in a rapidly changing European film industry landscape, transnationally-minded producers have been playing an increasingly vital part in the development of movies that are marketable internationally. As a look at individual films suggests, some of the most successful producers of transnational popular cinema, originating in the Big Five European film producing countries, have been applying content and development strategies commonly used by U.S. blockbuster producers, as a strategy to compete with Hollywood both in their respective domestic markets as well as internationally.

As Hollywood's revenue potential from the international market has surpassed revenue potential from the U.S. domestic market in the 1990s, the U.S. studios have increased their focus on catering to transnational audiences. In return, a share of Europe's commercial production entities have extended their focus from producing commercial cinema for their respective domestic markets to transnational properties, marketable on a pan-European and, if feasible, global scale.

Supported by literature review, trade-paper analysis and personal, phone and e-mail interviews with European and U.S. film industry professionals, this study identifies key transnational properties emerging from the Big Five film producing countries in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, examines their international performance, in particular their performance in the U.S. market, and sheds some light on the changing development strategies and practices. As becomes evident in the following chapters: The trend within the European film industry to emulate U.S. development models has multiple origins. Among them are the education of some key writers, directors and producers in the U.S., the use of U.S. development and screenwriting literature in European film schools, and film school exchange programs with the U.S. Other key

factors include U.S./European co-production and co-financing ventures; U.S. runaway productions to Europe; the use of U.S. producing and screenwriting consultants in European productions; and European educational programs to strengthen the domestic and transnational commercial appeal of European productions.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW AND SURVEY OF LITERATURE

In Chapter 1, I present a brief survey of some of the literature on the globalization of film production, as pertinent to the questions raised in this study. Next, I present a survey of the literature on motion picture development in Conglomerate Hollywood, as pertinent to an international context. Subsequently, I look at literature on the European film industries with a focus on the Big Five film producing countries in Europe, followed by a survey of literature dealing specifically with development strategies in these countries. I conclude the chapter by addressing the structure and methodology of the study and the relevance of the research topic. Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of the European film industry, focusing on key industry trends and developments of the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, related to the production of transnational properties. The subsequent chapters deal with the evolving motion picture development strategies in the Big Five European film industries. Chapter 3 is dedicated to the U.K., Chapter 4 to France, Chapter 5 to Germany, Chapter 6 to Italy and Chapter 7 to Spain. In Chapter 8, I present my conclusions and recommendations for future research.

While there are numerous bodies of scholarly literature addressing different aspects of film production in Europe over the past three decades, only a few accounts look closely at development processes within the European film industry. Studies of European cinemas prior to the 1990s have primarily focused on individual countries' "national" cinemas, yet the usefulness of these approaches has been drawn into question after the formation of the European Union and the rapid changes taking place in the global audiovisual marketplace. Increased collaboration between the film industries of multiple European countries in the form of European and other international co-productions has changed the ways many scholars look at these film

industries. These developments have led a growing number of researchers, focusing on cinemas of specific European countries, to analyze these countries' cultural production within a broader European and, even more appropriately, international framework. Various 1990s and 2000s accounts, analyzing "national" film industries within a pan-European and international context, acknowledge the changed realities of the European as well as global film industries. A number of accounts look at international and pan-European film industries from a perspective of examining Hollywood's international dominance in terms of theatrically distributed motion pictures; others examine the so-called "transnational" and "global" cinema, emphasizing the notion that the local is making way for the global in many film industries around the world.

At the same time, the subjects studied have varied over time. Scholars of European film have often favored the study of art or art house cinema, leaving commercial cinema mostly untouched. In the 1990s and 2000s, a number of academic books were published that focused on European popular cinema (e.g. Dyer & Vincendeau 1992). This trend has its roots not only in the rising importance of the international film market, but also in shifting public funding policies with a greater emphasis on the commercial viability of European films.

GLOBAL POLITICAL ECONOMY LITERATURE

Among the scholars that have looked at international film markets are Toby Miller, Nitin Govil, John McMurria, and Richard Maxwell in their book *Global Hollywood* (2001), and Miller, Maxwell, Govil, McMurria and Ting Wang in the updated edition *Global Hollywood 2* (2005). The authors take a combined critical cultural, Marxist and political economy approach in their efforts to assess Hollywood's international dominance. They point out shifts towards transnational ownership structures, the dominance of global capital, and the exploitation of the global film industry workforce, referred to as "the New International Division of Cultural Labour (NICL)," by a culturally insensitive and mostly indifferent capitalist corporate system. They portray the changing strategies of an omnipotent U.S. film industry, which,

backed by support from the U.S. government and following an aggressive policy of flexible expansion, has been able to maintain a predominant position in the international film market. Their study provides a global macro-perspective of the relationship between the Hollywood film industry and film industries around the world. Addressing the question of whether Hollywood can be considered “global” and what the implications for it being global are, Miller et al. (2001) state,

Yes, Hollywood *is* global, in that it sells its wares in every nation, through a global system of copyright, promotion and distribution that uses the NICL to minimise cost and maximise revenue. The implications are that we need to focus on the NICL and the global infrastructure of textual exchange in order to make world film and television more representative, inclusive and multiple in its sources and effects. Knowing more about how Hollywood ‘works’ might not exactly make us free, but it could provoke us to confront the NICL and imagine alternative, more salutary conditions and possibilities for our own cultural labour and for our brothers and sisters in the culture works everywhere. (216)

Miller et al.’s analysis can serve as a valuable framework for this study. While it does not go into details about the actual development and production processes of motion pictures either in the U.S. or overseas, the authors’ analysis of the interactions between “Global Hollywood” and various international film industries is helpful for a better understanding of the complexity of the global media landscape. Miller et al.’s second edition of their book, *Global Hollywood 2*, substantially expands upon the first edition and provides updated information on the evolution of the international film industry and Global Hollywood’s international operations and their effects on the cultural labor force in the U.S. and abroad. Like *Global Hollywood*, it contains a wealth of information about global film markets and is useful as a point of reference for the study at hand.

Criticism of the political economy approach comes from a number of media economists. They, unlike political economists, critical cultural scholars and Marxist media scholars, tend to present a different perspective of the global media landscape. Robert G. Picard (2002), for example, questions the view that globalized U.S. media companies dominate the international image markets, calling it an “erroneous

impression,” caused by a lack of distinction between media ownership, products and content. Closer analysis of U.S.-owned media companies, according to Picard, reveals that very few pursue global ventures (226). Picard points out that U.S. companies in the media field have focused on export, licensing and co-ventures rather than investing directly in foreign markets (ibid.). He further claims that the majority of U.S. media companies primarily rely on the U.S. domestic market, due to its size and revenue potential, and the companies’ insufficient knowledge about the foreign territories (ibid.). Picard further points out that, among U.S.-owned media firms, only a small number, including AOL Time Warner, Walt Disney and Viacom have truly globalized operations (ibid.). However, considering the substantial number of U.S./European co-productions, U.S. studios’ ownership of international distribution networks, and the establishment of studio subsidiaries in a number of European countries, U.S.-owned media conglomerates seem to operate more globally than Picard acknowledges.

Many other scholars challenge the traditional understanding of media globalization. In *The Myth of Media Globalization*, Kai Hafez (2007), for example, sets out to debunk one of the dominant views on media globalization, taking both a critical cultural, as well as a political economy approach. Hafez argues that truly global media do not exist and that a global public sphere has not really manifested itself at this point. Addressing the Hollywood film industry’s dominance of global screens, often used as an argument for the dominance of American culture overseas, Hafez reminds his readers that movie theaters represent only a limited share of the overseas entertainment universe and that the dominance is limited to feature films (89). Addressing the debate on cultural imperialism, he points out that the global popularity of American films is attributable to “their low level of cultural attachment and tremendous potential for universalization.” According to Hafez, “Hollywood films are often structured in a complex and exciting way, but require only a minimum of cultural knowledge” (86) Based on this argument, Hafez asks, “how though, even from a purely theoretical point of view, can a de-cultured film export industry suppress culture in other countries?” He

concludes that “the main effect is not cultural, but the economization and de-differentiation of world-cultures in the process of globalization” (87).

Canadian scholar Charles R. Acland is also critical of sweeping cultural imperialism arguments. In his book *Screen Traffic: Movies, Multiplexes, and Global Culture*, Acland (2003) examines how the U.S. film industry, beginning in the mid-1980s, has changed the global cinema culture and global cinema audiences through its efforts to succeed with its products in an increasingly global marketplace. He describes the experiences of global movie audiences as “felt internationalism,” and considers the film industry as an “international and internationalizing formation,” which “ignites the global circulation of culture” (239). Addressing the nature of globalization in regards to the film industry, Acland points out that the “mobility of culture, capital and people,” often focused on in discussions about globalization, “is just as responsible for new kinds of fixity and exclusion as it is for social and economic movement.” He concludes that, “the industrial will to orchestrate commodities and markets leaves us with a multitiered environment as it unevenly circulates forms and establishes zones of consumption (243-244).

In *American Films Abroad* (1997), Kerry Segrave chronicles the history of the Hollywood film industry’s endeavors, throughout the twentieth century, to reach and maintain its domination of global cinema screens. Among Hollywood’s strategies from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, according to Segrave, were massive publicity and promotion efforts. Segrave points out that marketing strategies in the major European markets during the 1980s and 1990s became increasingly similar to those in the U.S. market, as global satellite services gave audiences access to the latest Hollywood entertainment news (240-241). Modification to international releases tended to be minimal, with the exception of the dubbing of films in the major non-English language markets (Spain, France, Germany and Italy), and the release of subtitled versions in the smaller markets (240). International marketing of blockbuster movies in the 1990s, mirroring the evolution of domestic marketing in the U.S., according to Segrave, relied heavily on licensing partners like the global toy, fast-food as well as video-game

industries for its advertising efforts (242). European multiplex ownership by U.S. companies further tightened the grip of the U.S. conglomerates on the European theatrical market in the 1990s (243). Among other factors ensuring Hollywood's supremacy, according to Segrave, were the "poaching" of some of the best European directors, continuing a long tradition of talent migration to the U.S., and the driving up of production and marketing costs to levels generally unreachable by European single-country productions (*ibid.*).

The developments observed by Segrave are important to keep in mind when looking at the strategic responses of the Big Five European film industries to Hollywood's global operations.

LITERATURE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CONTEMPORARY HOLLYWOOD AND EUROPEAN FILM INDUSTRIES

British film scholar, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, addresses questions about Hollywood's perceived encroachment on European culture by examining the history of interaction between the U.S. and European film industries. Nowell-Smith (1998) notes the longstanding imbalance of audiovisual trade between the U.S. and Europe, but also points out the creative cross-fertilization that has been taking place between Hollywood and Europe over the years. He addresses the opposing arguments used during the Uruguay round of GATT—economic on the U.S. side and predominantly cultural on the European side—and concludes that, despite gains on the European side, the imbalance in film trade between Hollywood and Europe remains. Nowell-Smith talks about a "three-fold dependence" of European cinema up to the late 1990s: 1) television, as producers in most European countries rely heavily on television financing; 2) co-productions between European countries, a practice that from its humble beginnings in the 1950 has turned into "an almost universal norm;" and 3) European cinema's dependence upon Hollywood in the areas of distribution and exhibition (10). He points out that one of the principal factors that made the European film industry less competitive was the lack of popular genre films. This, according to Nowell-Smith, was

partially a result of the various government funding structures that began to be implemented in the major European markets in the 1960s and led to a shift from popular cinema to art cinema (10-11).

Addressing the U.S. side, Nowell-Smith argues that Hollywood's strategy to deal with European competition on its home turf still remains the same: Remaking successful European films as English-language films and hiring successful European talent for Hollywood productions. Nowell-Smith acknowledges another, more recent, yet less pronounced trend: the Hollywood film industry investing into so-called "international" films, meaning foreign films that are considered to have potential in the U.S. market (14).

Some accounts attribute the dominance of U.S. films and television programs around the world to the media texts themselves. In *Hollywood Planet: Global Media and the Competitive Advantage of Narrative Transparency*, Scott Robert Olson (1999), for example, uses postcolonial, postmodern and management theory to analyze the reasons for the international popularity of U.S. media. Olson argues, that among the reasons for Hollywood's global dominance is that its texts are frequently "transparent," meaning that international audiences can read an array of different things into U.S. narratives, making these stories less culturally specific and more easily accessible (Olson 1999).

Achieving "transparency" of media texts, as becomes evident in the following chapters, appears to be on the agenda of European motion picture producers aiming at the pan-European, as well as the global market.

All of the above accounts flesh out the opposing forces to the European film industry, while generally shedding little light on how European producers are affected by the U.S. film industry, they are competing against. Among the industry-focused accounts, examining the contemporary European film industries up to the mid-1990s, is European media consultant Martin Dale's book *The Movie Game* (1997). Dale, drawing from interviews with European film industry professionals, acknowledges the development-related issues of the European film industry. According to Dale, "unlike

the American Majors, most of Europe's media groups traditionally have proved very reluctant to invest development funds, or even take the concept of script development very seriously." Dale points out that this is "changing slowly" (164). Among the changes that Dale observes in the European development area in the 1990s are the practices of some key European players such as Polygram, Cinevox, Neue Constantin and Filmauro, who spent between \$0.5 and \$5 million annually on development (ibid.). Dale also mentions Canal+ development initiative in collaboration with the Equinoxe Script Workshop and Sony, and an increase in development spending by Sogepaq (ibid.). According to Dale, however, the development spending of European media groups amounts to only around 3% of Hollywood's development expenses and the majority of the money flows into developing Hollywood movies (Dale 1997:164). Dale writes:

The inability to produce a high number of popular domestic films creates a tremendous dependence on Hollywood. This is the reason why Europe's media groups invest far more in American production than domestic production. But at the same time they are only accentuating their dependence. It is the Majors which mainly benefit from European investments and use them to cement their staggering superiority in film software. (ibid)

According to Dale, "the competition between European cinema and Hollywood is often portrayed as David vs. Goliath, but in fact, Europe's media groups are just as powerful and wealthy as their American counterparts" (157). Dale states that "the overriding imperative for Europe's media groups is to rejuvenate domestic production, which was once hugely popular in Europe," a challenge considering that "the main players continue to be focused on Hollywood" (Dale 1997:164). Pointing out one of the key issues in European film production, Dale states that "Europe has been unable to nurture substantial production or managerial talent at home, whereas Hollywood, ironically, has proved much more adept at giving Europeans a chance to work in the industry" (ibid.).

Dale takes a critical stance on the European Union's role in film production, which he claims does its share in deepening the crisis of European cinema. He addresses the "cultural and political crisis" in late 20th century Europe, including issues

like terrorism and the war in Bosnia and states that, “one might expect at a moment of such turmoil that the cinema would be enriched with stories that captured the flavour of contemporary life. Instead there is silence, especially when it comes to the mainstream cinema.” According to Dale, “this silence has been furthered by the Union’s MEDIA Programme which has claimed to be ‘shaping the audiovisual arena’ but has been doing so in such a way that makes it very difficult for mainstream voices to appear” (Dale 1997: 116-117). The MEDIA program, having undergone substantial changes over time, is addressed in Chapter 2. Dale also argues that European society itself hinders the progress of the European film industry because of the substantial role class still plays in European society and an outdated belief system when it comes to culture. According to Dale, there is a “strong bias against anything that is not elite culture” in Europe. He says, “the majority of people who try to make films in Europe are made to feel unwelcome—as if they are not worthy to carry the name of their nation” (Dale 1997: 117). Dale calls films made in Europe in the 1990s “increasingly provincial.” According to him, “there has been an almost total destruction of the cultural fabric of the film industry and this has coincided with massive intervention by the state under the guise of defending the cinema” (ibid.). The following chapters examine whether some of the issues Dale addresses in the 1990s have been resolved in the 2000s.

Offering a wide and well-informed picture of the working mechanisms of the European film industry in an international context, is Angus Finney’s book, *The International Film Business: A Market Guide Beyond Hollywood* (2010). The book’s primary focus is on the film value chain. Among the key questions addressed by Finney are how the film value chain is increasingly influenced by new technologies, in particular the Internet, and on strategies for the success of European films in an increasingly global marketplace. According to Finney (2010),

[...] the upheaval of the film value chain, and the shrinking of the exploitation windows are changing the film industry beyond recognition. As technological tipping points arrive—such as the speed and ease of downloading and moving images across a range of household screens—old industry structures will need to be challenged and redrawn. And with the changes in recoupment and

exploitation structures will come significant changes in the way financing structures fund films outside the Hollywood Studio System. (212)

To what extent and how these changes affect the development phase of European productions is explored in more detail in Chapters 3 to 7.

A growing number of scholars and film industry experts have been studying individual European film industries in an international context. The following section looks at academic accounts addressing the interplay between Hollywood and the Big Five European film industries.

LITERATURE ON THE GERMAN FILM INDUSTRY AND HOLLYWOOD

Peter Krämer (2008) explores the interactions between Hollywood and the German film industry since the 1970s. Pointing out the complexity of the relationship between Hollywood and the German film industry at large, Krämer writes that rather than calling it a “competition,” it might be better labeled as a “symbiosis” (246). He points out Hollywood’s increased dependency on both revenue and financing from Germany that already started in the 1970s (245). He notes that, after the mid-1990s, production financing from Germany became more valuable to Hollywood than Germany’s film, TV and ancillary markets. Krämer defends the often criticized practice of German investment in U.S. productions and points out its benefits, among them the exposure of German film industry professionals to transnational productions. Discussing the flow of German direct investments in the U.S. industry from the late 1990s to the mid 2000s, and addressing the issue of creative control in that context, Krämer says, “it is unlikely that German investors were able to exert much control over the choice of Hollywood projects to go into production or over their execution” (244). He notes, however, that “nevertheless, German personnel and German production companies have been involved, with varying degrees of control over the production process, in a wide range of internationally successful films, which combined German and American resources” (245). Krämer addresses three key phenomena involving U.S./German film relations: 1) a growing number of Hollywood films being shot at

German studios and with German funding, both public and private; 2) high-profile English-language films with international stars attached, utilizing international crews, produced by German production companies; and 3) English-language films with "significant organizational and/or creative input from Germans," that "involve Hollywood companies to a greater or lesser extent, with ultimate control of the project in most cases in American hands" (Krämer 2008: 246). All three scenarios, to varying degrees, suggest at least peripheral exposure of German film industry professionals to Hollywood development practices and strategies, and will be explored in more detail in Chapter 5.

Taking a different approach than Krämer, Joseph Garnarcz (1994) looks at Hollywood's influence on German cinema from an audience perspective. In his account *Hollywood in Germany: The Role of American Films in Germany, 1925-1990*, Garnarcz observes a "convergence of European public taste in films," as during the 1980s 30 to 40% of the Top 10 films at the box office in Germany, France and Italy were identical (113). Considering that the most commercial films in these European countries were American and had similar box office successes in the U.S., Garnarcz also points out a "North American/Western European convergence of public taste" (114). He sees this assimilation in public tastes in Western Europe and the U.S. as one of the reasons for a change in production methods in both territories, and he observes a shift from producing films for national audiences to international audiences (ibid.).⁴

Garnarcz states that historically, from the inception of film in Germany to 1971, German audiences preferred German films over their U.S. counterparts. The 1970s, however, according to Garnarcz, saw considerable changes. Not only did German films undergo "a process of Americanization," but also were faced with stiff competition from U.S. imports at the domestic box office, eventually "practically shutting out German films from their own domestic market" (Garnarcz 1994: 95). What had changed, according to Garnarcz, was the "national origin of the conventions used in

⁴ Garnarcz notices a similar shift in European film criticism, pointing to an increasing acceptance of Hollywood narrative conventions within individual European countries' film cultures (114).

films.” Garncarz points out that “the German film industry defined film convention until the beginning of the 1970s, after which the American film industry took over” (95).⁵ He offers two principal reasons for U.S. films outperforming German films at the box office after 1971: A change in the taste of German audiences toward U.S. narratives and a lack of German films to cater to that changing taste (114).⁶

Looking at the most successful films of both the pre-1971 and post-1971 period, Garncarz finds that all of all of them, German or American, share some common traits. He says, “practically all films follow the classical model, incorporating genre conventions, stars, and fictional plots which follow a clear linear narrative” (102). Garncarz furthermore observes that “plots are generally driven by a cause-and-effect chain and generally concentrate on a particular character who sets out to achieve a goal by overcoming obstacles” (ibid.). The post 1971 period’s changes encompassed an increased mirroring of successful U.S. films in Germany.⁷ According to Garncarz, in the 1970s German films began following Hollywood conventions and, as a result, succeeding at the German box office (110). Garncarz points out that the trend to adhere to Hollywood conventions led to an increasing number of English-language productions, as well as films in the action and fantasy genres, such as *Das Boot* (*The*

⁵ Garncarz, basing his findings on German versus U.S. films’ success at the German box office, concludes that between 1925 and 1971 German audiences preferred German films, and between 1972 and 1990 American films (102).

⁶ Garncarz also observes “a new type of film” emerging in the 1970s. What he labels as the “hero/spectacle film,” includes films in the action, science fiction, adventure, catastrophe films and thriller genres. While the U.K., France and Italy, according to Garncarz, have managed to successfully produce hero/spectacle films in the 1970s and 1980s, Germany had a very limited output of these films. Among the reasons for this lack of commercially successful hero/spectacle films in Germany, Garncarz notes an “increasing reliance on publicly-funded film institutions and public television for financial support,” as these funding structures “promote national culture and generally do not follow commercial trends in the entertainment industry” (116).

⁷ Garncarz points out that among the films being equally successful in the U.S. as in Germany were *E.T.* (Steven Spielberg, 1983), *Flashdance* (Adrian Lyne, 1983), *First Blood* (aka *Rambo*, Ted Kotcheff) and *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (George P. Cosmatos, 1985), *Gremlins* (Joe Dante, 1984) and *Gremlins II* (Joe Dante, 1990), *Police Academy I, II and III* (Hugh Wilson, 1984; Jerry Paris, 1985, 1986), *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (Steven Spielberg, 1984, 1989), *Beverly Hills Cop I and II* (Martin Brest, 1985, Tony Scott, 1987), *Back To The Future I and II* (Robert Zemeckis, 1985, 1990) and *Crocodile Dundee I and II* (Peter Faiman, 1987, John Cornell, 1988) (110).

Boat, Wolfgang Petersen, 1981) and *Die Unendliche Geschichte* (*The Neverending Story*, Wolfgang Petersen, 1984) (Garncarz 1994: 111).

While the pursuit of universal narrative conventions, inspired by New Hollywood cinema, was a relatively new trend, the production of genre films in the post-war German film industry had been a familiar practice. As Thomas Elsaesser (1994) points out in an essay on *German Postwar Cinema and Hollywood*, the German post-war film industry successfully produced genre films for the German market featuring German stars up to the late 1960s, when a reorganization of the U.S. majors' distribution networks led to a "large-scale decimation of second run or neighborhood cinemas" (286). Elsaesser notes that consequently "by the mid-1970s only those German directors who had access to the domestic cinemas had an American major company buy their films for international distribution and as it were, re-import them into Germany." Among those directors were Wim Wenders, Werner Herzog, Wolfgang Petersen and Volker Schlöndorff (ibid.). Elsaesser states that subsequently new film subsidy legislation in Germany was passed, focusing on the cultural values of films and leading to "a vast pool of filmmakers, but relatively few directors who could sustain an oeuvre, for the weak link in the chain remained the absence of film exhibition except via television which in many instances acted as co-producer or film-financier" (286-287). During this period, German cinema arguably was predominantly auteur-driven. However, not only was the new wave of films not profitable at the domestic box office, it also had very little international commercial success and was not able to tap into any conventional international distribution structures. According to Elsaesser, "instead of export, the German cultural institutes ('Goethe House') the world over acted as distributors and exhibitors, bringing film and filmmakers to art cinemas and the campus circuits, notably in the U.S.," which "meant that the directors, apart from producing the films, also had to produce the discourses that explained and legitimated them" (287).

The art house cinema of the 1970s and 1980s was decidedly different from the films that German filmmakers, inspired by the New Hollywood, were making from the 1980s onward. In *When Heimat Meets Hollywood: German Filmmakers and America*,

1985-2005, Christine Haase (2007) examines the work of four German filmmakers with strong ties to Hollywood cinema: Wolfgang Petersen, Roland Emmerich, Percy Adlon, and Tom Tykwer. In the process, she examines the internationalization of contemporary German cinema, as well as these directors' ways of dealing with the influence of different production cultures on cinematic output. Haase considers Emmerich's blockbuster successes to be products of a clever strategy to maximize the films' audience appeal. According to Haase, "by offering points of reference to American viewers and by anchoring the productions in America, the filmmakers cover the extensive and profitable U.S. and English-speaking market." However, the appeal of Emmerich's films hasn't been limited to the American market. Haase says, "by adding a multinational or global dimension and by reducing the specificity of national references whose decoding would require knowledge of the United States and its culture, the films stand a much higher chance at transnational success" (112). According to Haase, Tom Tykwer, who received international acclaim with *Lola rennt* (*Run Lola Run*, 1998), has been similarly inspired by the goal to create transnational narratives. Talking about Tykwer's directing efforts on the European co-production *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (2006), she points out that creative choices, like picking an international cast and making it an English-language film, constituted efforts to reach an international audience (168). The production, according to Haase, "underscores the transnational direction into which Tykwer has been moving consistently since he began making films" (ibid). Haase mentions only peripherally the creative influence of the film's producer Bernd Eichinger in her account. Considering Eichinger's hands-on approach to producing, the extent of his creative involvement in transnational properties like *Perfume* will be covered in Chapter 5.

Analyzing Wolfgang Petersen's Hollywood productions *In the Line of Fire* (1993), *Outbreak* (1995), *Air Force One* (1996), *The Perfect Storm* (2000) and *Troy* (2004), Haase says, "throughout his career leading up to these productions Petersen made films that traverse the contiguities and overlaps between Hollywood film traditions and those of Germany and Film Europe" (84) According to Haase, all of

Petersen's U.S. productions share some of their key qualities with Hollywood movies. Among these qualities are "the casting of popular stars," "lavish production values," "generous budgeting," and "extensive advertising." In terms of their narratives, Haase, points out similarities in "their adherence to clearly delineated generic paradigms," "their privileging of action," their "reliance on the emotionalizing of narratives by focusing on the struggles, failures, and triumphs of individuals, personalized fights between good and evil, and man's power to overcome the odds," and finally "by encouraging empathetic viewer identification and by de-emphasizing the need or the desirability of critical distance to and reflection on a given film" (84). Haase argues that, "the films also evidence isolated and systemic influences of Film Europe and manifestations of the national and personal cinematic and cultural traditions from which Petersen emerged, including imprints of the director's overarching impulses toward social and political criticism" (ibid.). As with the other German directors she studied, Haase assumes a wide range of artistic freedom for Petersen when directing these high-budget Hollywood blockbuster movies and calls him a "blockbuster auteur" (96). Petersen's role in transnational filmmaking in Germany, before his departure to Hollywood, will be addressed in Chapter 5.

The scholarship on German national cinema that addresses the increasing internationalization of the German film industry includes *German National Cinema*, the second edition of Sabine Hake's (2008) insightful account of film production in Germany from its inception to 2007. Hake points out substantial changes in film production in Germany, accelerated by German reunification and the founding of the European Union. According to Hake, changing funding structures also led to changes in the production distribution and exhibition areas and ultimately steered the German film industry "towards transnational modes of production" (192). Hake sees German and European production turning into "a transnational affair," making the "definition of what constitutes a German film more and more difficult" (193). Spelling out the very dilemma that the European film industry has found itself in during the 1990s and 2000s, she says, "the preservation of cultural diversity within Europe and the goal of greater

competitiveness on global markets have created their own set of contradictions” (194). Instead of a “self-consciously European cinema modeled on Hollywood but with distinct artistic traditions and regional sensibilities,” she finds that the new German film industry environment has instead “contributed to the reaffirmation and commodification of national identities that, in the German context, is most apparent in the international marketing of films about modern German history” (ibid.). Hake points out that the German film industry’s focus on the promotion of “a consciously popular and commercially viable German film,” combined with a “return to genre cinema,” not only marked an effort to compete with other media and to adopt to new realities of film financing in Germany, but also was a viable response to what she considers a “steady decline of film culture since the early 1980s” (195-196). She further notes that,

[...] the division of labour between global trends and styles propagated by the Hollywood film industry and the local traditions and alternative sensibilities captured by the surprisingly successful but largely non-exportable examples of German humour has left little room for the kind of formal innovation and critical reflection usually identified with art cinema. (Hake 2008: 196)

These new trends in German cinema emerging by the end of the 1980s, according to Hake, have been fostered by a “cultural climate that no longer associates film practices with cultural critique, reassigning this function once again to literature and theatre” (197). Differentiating the trend towards a more commercially viable German cinema, Hake points out that this trend encompasses multifaceted approaches to accomplish audience approval. Hake identifies several different paths that German filmmakers have taken in the 1990s and the early 2000s to make more commercial films. One of them was a purely commercial path with directors “firmly committed to entertainment as the primary function of cinema.” Filmmakers on this path, according to Hake, “enthusiastically and unabashedly emulated concurrent Hollywood trends.” Other filmmakers worked in “the more intimate, smaller German formats as alternatives to the formulaic blockbusters and star vehicles dominating U.S. imports during the 1990s.” A third group of directors, according to Hake, made use of “harmonising effects of genre in the rewriting of the German past and the remapping of the German present within the

changing ethnic, national, and geopolitical topographies of post-Wall Europe” (Hake 2008: 206). Hake points out a shift in post-reunification cinema that was originally described by film scholars as a “cinema of consensus” to a “cinema of dissent” in the new millennium. According to her, this change can be attributed to a number of developments in the German film industry during the 1990s: A transition from “the initial reclamation of nation as an integral part of German identity to the challenges of a distinctly European identity,” and “the experiments with the creative possibilities of a transnational cinema founded on cross-cultural exchanges and creative border-crossings.” Hake considers these developments to be connected with the fall of the Berlin wall and the following immigration of Eastern Europeans to the reunified Germany, the establishment of the European Union and Germany’s subsequent integration into a pan-European labor market (216).⁸

Hake’s account draws a diverse and complex picture of the changes taking place in the German film industry in the 1990s and 2000s. It provides a valuable cultural and historical framework for the further analysis of German film industry strategies and practices in regards to the development of films targeted at the pan-European and international market in Chapter 5.

LITERATURE ON THE CONTEMPORARY U.K. FILM INDUSTRY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH HOLLYWOOD

Among the scholars studying the contemporary U.K. film industry and its relationship with Hollywood is Paul McDonald (2008b). McDonald sees the U.K. film industry as closely connected with Hollywood and as an entity that, considering its industry structure and history, can only be seen within the context of Hollywood. According to McDonald,

⁸ Other contributing factors, according to Hake, are “the centralisation of global capital,” as well as “the disintegration of the nation state,” “the rise of cosmopolitan and international youth cultures and professional elites located in the continent’s metropolitan centres,” and “the increasing visibility and empowerment of first- and second-generation immigrants as active members of German society and public life” (Hake 2008: 216).

Hollywood is internally part of the very substance of the film industry in Britain. So deep and long-standing are the interactions between Britain and Hollywood that any sense of a cinema industry or industries in Britain can only be defined as the collection of commercial actions and reactions by which British producers, distributors, exhibitors, and cinemagoers have embraced, willingly collaborated with, unwillingly collaborated with, or actively resisted the involvement of Hollywood in the film culture of the UK. (220)

McDonald argues that the relationship between Hollywood and the U.K. film industry historically has its roots in the “first decades of the twentieth century as Britain became an attractive operational base and market for American film companies in the international film trade.” The U.K.’s dependence on the U.S. film industry, according to McDonald, is due to “failures to establish a successfully integrated U.K. industry, the skepticism of financial institutions about investing in the film business,” as well as “the reluctance of successive governments to sufficiently aid a sustainable domestic industry” (ibid.).

One of the results of this dependency on Hollywood is what McDonald calls “the British Hollywood Film.” Examples of such “hybrids,” according to McDonald are U.K./ U.S. co-productions *Notting Hill* (Roger Michell, 1999) and the *Harry Potter* franchise (2001-2009). The characteristics of these films, according to McDonald, are that they are “made with a majority of British creative input” while making use of U.S. talent in “leading performance and/or production roles” (McDonald 2008b: 224-225). U.S. studios, which typically also act as distributors on the films, contribute to the funding (ibid.). Since these films make out the majority of “British” successes, McDonald concludes that they delineate British productions both in the U.K. as well as internationally (225).

McDonald cautions, however, that the U.K.’s dependence on the Hollywood film industry is not synonymous with the Americanization of British cinema. Considering Hollywood’s international operations, its global subsidiaries and the studios’s multinational ownership structures, McDonald argues that “Hollywood has basically become too big to be just American.” According to him,

Britain's interactions with Hollywood are therefore a relationship formed not just with an external 'American' cinema industry but with a globally scattered form of popular cinema which is both *in* and *of* the cinema industry in Britain. Hollywood represents a part of the cinema industry in Britain, but at the same time Britain is a part of Hollywood, the operations of which have long ago exceeded local or national contexts. (McDonald 2008b: 230)

McDonald is not alone with his observations about the synergy between Hollywood and the U.K. film industries. U.K. film scholar Sarah Street (2009) also considers the influence of the U.S. film industry on the U.K. film industry as substantial. According to Street, "it is more or less impossible to think of the British cinema without reference to its relationship with Hollywood" (240).

Among the authors writing about U.K. cinema and specifically mentioning the importance of the development process, is James Park (1990). In his book *British Cinema: The Lights That Failed*, about British film from its beginnings to the late 1980s, Park, a former U.K. film industry reporter for *Variety*, stresses the collaborative nature of film and the fragility of the filmmaking process and points out the importance of the development process, calling the development stage the phase in which "the battle for a film is won or lost." Park portrays the U.S. studio system's development structure in a favorable light. According to Park, "laying down norms, establishing disciplines and, most important of all, providing scripts that, while not always particularly imaginative, were at least a sound basis to work from," helped directors "to realize their individual vision" (14). Park, while acknowledging the strong literary heritage of the U.K., states that, "writing *screenplays* is something the British do very badly indeed." Park describes the development activities of the less successful British independent producers in the 1980s as follows:

Outside the script departments of a few studios, too many producers have taken lazy routes to their scripts. They have relied upon the ideas of novelists and playwrights with no deep interest in cinema, or the work of second-raters who might have produced something good if they had worked within a more stimulating environment, but never had the chance. Or worse, they have simply transposed plays and novels to the screen, producing work at so many removes from the original stimulus to creation that the prospect of the finished film

having any appeal to a contemporary audience was almost non-existent. (Park 1990: 14)

Park sees the inadequate governance of film production in the U.K. in the 1980s as a result of U.K. filmmakers's low self esteem when comparing themselves to their colleagues in Hollywood. Park states that "instead of seeing Hollywood as a powerful rival to be confronted and challenged, British producers have too often looked upon the U.S. film industry as a much-wooed lady who will one day fall into their arms" (15). Park points out that the close ties to the U.S. system have also limited British producers' development decisions. According to Park, "too often the choice for the British filmmakers has seemed to lie between critical approval combined with minimal box office or going all-out to emphasize the most garish, flamboyant and parochial aspects of popular cinema" (16).

Park considers the absence of clear production objectives as one of the primary challenges British producers were facing in the late 1980s. According to Park,

[...] too often producers become stuck in the middle of British filmmaking's essential dilemma. If they take seriously those critics who define British cinema as the antithesis of Hollywood, they're forced to reject those elements in cinema that make it possible to address audiences worldwide and secure a measure of financial success. And if they follow the argument that they should be 'projecting' Britain or 'expressing Britain' that doesn't necessarily mean they're going to appeal to youngsters in Palm Springs or Perth. Or they can ignore all these arguments and declare themselves committed to all-out 'entertainment', and end up making films that don't relate to anything of importance at all. (Park 1990: 168-169)

Park paints a rather bleak picture of the typical development environment in the late 1980s U.K. film industry. According to Park,

Most of the energy that writers expend on their projects is simply wasted. There is no focus to what they do, no mechanism to ensure that new ideas grow in the waste of half-good concepts, or that promising ideas become excellent scripts. (Park 1990: 169)

He blames part of the problem on the long periods of time it takes to get movies financed, and on producers holding on to projects that might not be worthwhile simply

because of all the time and money they have invested in them. Park argues, that when the capital for a film is finally raised, producers are often burnt-out, projects are rushed into production, and the film's director is left with having to solve the problems of a weakly developed script on the set, while the producer is already working on the next project to keep financially afloat (171). Park sees the solution to the British development dilemma in production companies combining their efforts to "form script factories that would emulate the working conditions of a studio's script department" (172). In this environment, Park envisions producers playing "an active part with everybody else on the team in generating and nurturing ideas" (ibid.). Park's description of the state of motion picture development in the pre-1990s U.K. film industry can serve as a starting point for the exploration of potential changes in development strategies and practices for transnational motion pictures in the U.K. film industry in the 1990s and 2000s, which are explored in more depth in Chapter 3.

LITERATURE ON THE CONTEMPORARY SPANISH FILM INDUSTRY IN A EUROPEAN AND A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Film scholars studying the Spanish film industry in recent years, have begun to acknowledge transnational influences on film industry professionals and the products they create. They have also started to address the industry within a wider, pan-European and increasingly global framework. In their introduction to the book *Contemporary Spanish Cinema and Genre*, Jay Beck and Vicente Rodríguez Ortega (2008), for example, describe contemporary Spanish cinema as "a product of local, regional, national and global forces operating in diverse contact zones inside and outside of geopolitical borders" (Beck & Rodríguez Ortega 2008: 1). Beck and Rodríguez Ortega point out "a central epochal shift in Spanish cinema" at the beginning of the 1990s in regards to the kinds of genres produced (3). Addressing the changing role of genre filmmaking in Spanish cinema in an increasingly international context, Beck and Rodríguez Ortega note that Spanish production and distribution entities are focused on

films crossing genre boundaries, capable of reaching a mass audience in order to maximize returns (13).

In his essay “*Trailing the Spanish auteur: Almodóvar's, Amenábar's and de la Iglesia's generic routes in the US market,*” Vicente Rodríguez Ortega (2008) looks at the three most prominent Spanish directors in contemporary Spanish cinema, Pedro Almodóvar, Álex de la Iglesia and Alejandro Amenábar, and how their works were marketed and received in the U.S. According to Rodríguez Ortega, these three directors have complete artistic autonomy over all aspects and phases of the films they make, including the producing and marketing aspects (46-47). Rodríguez Ortega attributes the success of Amenábar, internationally best known for *Abre los ojos* (*Open Your Eyes*, 1997), *The Others* (2001) and *Mar adentro* (*The Sea Inside*, 2004), to the fact that “he managed to capitalise on the mainstream appeal of genre films in a country where this tradition was notoriously underexploited within the mainstream arena” (51). Rodríguez Ortega defines Amenábar as “perhaps the ultimate genre filmmaker—one who knows too well the conventions of generic categories to merely repeat them but who is perhaps too calculating to let his oeuvre supersede them and break the illusionist drive that runs across most of commercial cinema worldwide” (Rodríguez Ortega: 46-47). At the same time, according to Rodríguez Ortega, Amenábar’s movies “exemplify the fact that the idea of national cinema has increasingly become a decentred concept, working within a variety of transnational networks of production, distribution and exhibition in the entertainment field” (52). Amenábar’s way of developing films and his collaboration with his producing partner Fernando Bovaira are explored in more detail in Chapter 7.

Tatjana Pavlović et al. (2009) point out the emergence of new structures of film distribution and exhibition in international film markets in the 1990s, depending on film festival exposure, broadcaster funding, growing co-production activity and decreasing differentiation between art house and popular cinema (182). According to the authors, Spain’s film industry reacted to the new environment with “complex cultural and industrial strategies,” which Pavlović et al. consider especially sensitive because of Spain’s role as one of the most important export markets for the U.S. film industry.

Among the reactions to the changes they observed, were film policy revisions and a more forceful market orientation (ibid). Eyeing the new global media environment through a cultural lens, Pavlović et al. conclude that the effects of globalization redefined national cinemas and that the globalized context called for “a creative repackaging of the representation of Spanish national culture for the global audience and the world market” (183). Expanding on these observations, Chapter 7 explores how Spanish transnational movies performed in the international marketplace, and how some of the film industry professionals creating these properties shaped and adapted to the new realities in the Spanish entertainment industry.

LITERATURE ON THE CONTEMPORARY FRENCH FILM INDUSTRY IN A EUROPEAN AND A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Examining key components of the French film industry from 1960 to 2004, Laurent Creton and Anne Jäckel (2004) attribute the strength of French cinema to the film industry’s international connections, the government support structures, and “the balance between a handful of large and well-established players and a myriad of small and medium-sized dynamic companies, largely under independent ownership” (215). The authors point out that the French conglomerates Gaumont, Pathé and UGC, starting in the 1980s have increased their connections to broadcasting and financing entities and “through acquisitions, mergers and alliances [...] have now become global players” (216-217). Creton and Jäckel state that—while French film policy in the 1990s still encouraged the French conglomerates to remain focused on the French market—it shifted towards a policy geared at facilitating the production of motion pictures for the international marketplace (217). According to Creton and Jäckel, one of the strategies emerging in the 1990s has been the production of “ambitious comedies that cross borders” and “lucrative sequels.” They also point out that the French film industry has significantly increased the number of big-budget films and has dramatically increased its emphasis on film promotion and marketing, leading to a recapturing of some of the market share lost to U.S. imports (218). They observe that, in order to maintain its

competitiveness, the French film industry is “openly adopting offensive competitive strategies and creating new synergies” (ibid). They point out the existence of “a new generation of professionals [...] who recognise and integrate the important legacy of the New Wave, but refuse to be limited by it and are prepared to go beyond it to promote superior levels of economic performance” (Creton & Jäckel 2004: 218). Addressing the potential strategies of French producers to succeed in a global environment, Creton and Jäckel lay out three possibilities: “to become an alternative model and to maintain a certain diversity in the world of film-making;” to adopt the strategies of global power-players, which could lead to “standardisation and uniformity rather than diversity;” or to combine these two approaches with the goal of achieving “creativity and diversity,” as well as “financial, industrial and commercial power” (218). The third approach, according to the authors, requires “the retention of a strong regulatory framework that creates and guarantees the necessary conditions for the two models to co-exist” (ibid).

While the first strategy would suggest the maintenance of a more classical auteur-driven development process, the second strategy suggests the adoption of a development process inspired by Global Conglomerate Hollywood. The third approach, could indicate a more flexible development process, possibly a hybrid between U.S. commercial and European auteur models.

An overview of French transnational properties from the 1980s to the present in Chapter 4 reveals some of the emerging similarities and hybridities of transnational films originating in the U.S. and France, as well as the development strategies and practices applied to create them.

LITERATURE ON THE CONTEMPORARY ITALIAN FILM INDUSTRY IN A EUROPEAN AND A GLOBAL CONTEXT

French sociologist and film scholar Pierre Sorlin (1996) reminds us that cinema, from its inception, has been an “international business” and considers it “somehow depressing to see how often it remains narrowly parochial, confined by the limits of one

country, in its sources and perspectives” (1). Addressing the international aspects of Italian cinema, Sorlin explores how international audiences have come to perceive Italian cinema. He points out that of the 2,405 films produced in Italy from 1960 to 1969, 312 were distributed in the U.K. and 280 in the U.S. (7). Where the U.S. is concerned, he considers three titles to encompass American audience interest in Italian films during that period: *Il buono, il brutto, il cattivo* (*The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, Sergio Leone, 1966), as an example for a spaghetti western, *Costantino il grande* (*Constantine and the Cross*, Lionello De Felice, 1961), as an example for a historical epic, and *Il diavolo* (*To Bed... or Not To Bed*, Gian Luigi Polidoro, 1962) as an example for a soft porn movie (ibid.). U.K. audiences, according to Sorlin, were more “eclectic,” as they were interested in comedies and dramas as well as “war stories that take place in the Mediterranean” (ibid.). Sorlin points out that many Italian films “exploit cultural stereotypes (traditions, regional pronunciation) that foreigners cannot understand and, for that reason, it is almost impossible to sell these pictures abroad” (Sorlin 1996: 8). He structures the history of Italian cinema from its inception to the mid-1990s by “five generations of cinema-goers,” characterized by their changing viewing patterns (12). The first generation, according to Solin, is thrilled by the novelty of the medium, and as domestic production does not match demand, audiences are open to foreign films (13). For the second generation movie attendance has become customary, and, due to a shortage of domestic product, film imports dominate the market (ibid.). The structure of third generation audiences changes due to the addition of moviegoers in the suburbs and rural areas. At this point, according to Sorlin, domestic production reaches a market share of more than 50 percent and Italian films also sell abroad (ibid.). The fourth generation of Italian audiences, he considers to have higher expectations due to increased standards of living and to favor television over film. Audiences of the fourth generation are seen to witness Hollywood’s battle to retain market leadership, while the Italian film industry manages to resist, supported by government subsidies (ibid.). The fifth generation of the Italian audience, according to

Sorlin, is wowed by a wealth of commercial television offerings, leading to an environment of decreasing cinema audiences while production soars (13).

Italian film scholar Gian Piero Brunetta (2009) paints a relatively bleak picture of the state of the contemporary Italian film industry. He considers the reasons, for what he calls the “current chaotic state of Italian film production,” to be the demise of Italian film studio Cinecittà and the decentralization of Italian cinema; the advent of low-budget films made outside traditional production structures; cuts in film funding by the Berlusconi government; the relative indifference of the younger generation of Italian movie audiences to Italian films; and changing co-production practices with the intent to “de-provincialize” Italian cinema (Brunetta 2009: 316-317). Brunetta reminds us that, due to the ill effects of the predominance of the U.S. film industry, Italian filmmakers are increasingly forced to enter production environments driven entirely by economic considerations (320). Despite Brunetta’s pessimism about the future of Italian cinema, he acknowledges a renewal trend in the second half of the 2000s, and he believes in the Italian film industry’s ability to “face the challenge of international cinema” (321). While Brunetta’s observations suggest the increasing internationalization of the Italian film industry, his account does not address potential changes in the development processes of the films heading into a more transnational direction.

Peter Bondanella (2001), in his book *Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present*, points out that both film artists and the Italian film industry beginning in the 1990s were facing, what he calls, “a state of perpetual crisis” (425). This crisis, manifested by the dominance of Hollywood product on Italian screens, according to Bondanella, was met in various ways by different groups of Italian film directors. Bondanella calls the first group the “international” directors, which make films in the Hollywood tradition (430). Some of their films are English-language films and some of them are using foreign screenwriters. As examples, Bondanella names Bernardo Bertolucci’s *Il tè nel deserto* (*The Sheltering Sky*, 1990), *Piccolo Buddha* (*Little Buddha*, 1993), *Io ballo da sola* (*Stealing Beauty*, 1996) and *L’assedio* (*Besieged*,

1999), Michael Radford's *Il postino* (*The Postman*, 1994) and Franco Zeffirelli's *Té con Mussolini* (*Tea with Mussolini*, 1999) (ibid). Bondanella describes the second and most prominent category "new directions in film comedy — parody and autobiography." Characteristic of this group is its recognition at major international film festivals and a certain degree of box office success. Among the directors in this category, according to Bondanella, are Nanni Moretti with his films *Pallombella rossa* (*Red Loli*, 1990), *Caro diario* (*Dear Diary*, 1993) and *Aprile* (*April*, 1998); Gabriele Salvatores, with *Mediterraneo* (1991); Maurizio Nichetti, with *Ladri di saponette* (*The Icicle Thief*, 1989), *Volere volare* (*To Wish to Fly*, 1991) and *Stefano Quantestorie* (*Steven Manystories*, 1993), and Roberto Benigni with his films *Johnny Stecchino* (1991), *Il Mostro* (*The Monster*, 1994) and *La vita è bella* (*Life is Beautiful*, 1998) (430-431). Bondanella calls a third group of directors "the neo-realist directors," as their films draw on traditions of the Italian cinema of the 1940s and 1950s. Directors falling under that category are Gianni Amelio with his films *Porte aperte* (*Open Doors*, 1990), *Il ladro di bambini* (*Stolen Children*, 1991), *Lamerica* (*America*, 1994) and *Così ridevano* (*They Laughed Like That*), Ricky Tognazzi with *La scorta* (*The Escort*, 1992) and Carlo Carlei with *La corsa dell'innocente* (*The Flight of the Innocent*, 1992). A fourth category that Bondanella calls "the cinema of nostalgia" is occupied by a single director—Giuseppe Tornatore—with films like *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* (*Cinema Paradiso*, 1988), *Stanno tutti bene* (*Everybody's Fine*, 1990), *Una pura formalità* (*A Pure Formality*, 1994), *L'uomo dalle stelle* (*The Starmaker*, 1995), and *La leggenda del pianista sull'oceano* (*The Legend of 1900*, 1999) (Bondanella 2001: 431).

Bondanella briefly addresses the development and production practices of the films falling into the "international" category. He points out that most Italians would consider these productions as "American," since many of them are English-language productions and often portray cultures beyond the borders of Italy. However, he says that they are predominantly driven by their Italian directors and only "assisted" by producers in charge of putting together international financing for their movies (431).

Bondanella claims that Hollywood's influence on these films is limited to distribution, in particular if the films receive U.S. distribution (ibid.).

Bondanella does not blame Italian filmmakers for the perceived crisis of the Italian film industry, but attributes it to a "structural weakness in the industry itself" (461). He relates the crisis to globalization and subsequently homogenization of popular culture, as well as the decreasing importance of cinema in popular culture around the world due to rise of other forms of entertainment. Addressing the role of Italy's producers, he points out the inability of the Italian film industry to "control its own home market," which he relates to the absence of "a group of ambitious film producers willing to risk their capital in what is always a risky venture" (461). Chapter 6 addresses to what extent the Italian film industry has adopted U.S. development models in an effort to cope with the perceived crisis, and chronicles in more detail the efforts of parts of the Italian film industry to revive the development and production of popular transnational properties.

For a better understanding of the impact of Hollywood's global operations on the European film industry, U.S. film industry studies provide a valuable framework to contextualize the perceived changes in the European film industry.

U.S. FILM INDUSTRY STUDIES PERTAINING TO HOLLYWOOD'S IMPACT ON THE EUROPEAN FILM INDUSTRIES

Among scholarly accounts analyzing the contemporary Hollywood film industry and placing it in an international context, is Thomas Schatz's chapter *The Studio System and Conglomerate Hollywood*, in Paul McDonald and Janet Wasko's book *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry* (2008). Thomas Schatz (2008) analyzes the economic and creative realities of contemporary Hollywood, shedding light on the changing strategies of producers and studios in the conglomerate era, and the differences between mainstream Hollywood's blockbuster-, merchandising- and branding-driven approaches to the more narrative- and art house-driven U.S. independent film industry. Schatz points out the rapid changes that occurred in

Hollywood from 1990 to 1995, when “the new Hollywood rapidly transformed into Conglomerate Hollywood, as a new breed of media giants took command of the U.S. film and television industries and became the dominant powers in the rapidly expanding global entertainment industry” (26). Schatz addresses the merger frenzy in Hollywood during the 1990s that by the early 2000s had substantially changed the U.S. entertainment industry, resulting in the industry being dominated by media giants News Corporation, Time Warner, Viacom, Sony, Disney and General Electric, which attained “oligopoly status” (27). According to Schatz, the studios’ efforts to coordinate their “operations and objectives” with their conglomerate owners relied to a substantial degree on the creation of Hollywood blockbusters, which were “re-engineered to accommodate the changing—and steadily expanding—media landscape” (28). Schatz considers Hollywood’s drive for blockbusters going into another register during the “blockbuster summer of 1989,” when a slate of high-concept films and sequels drove the domestic box office results past the \$ 5 billion mark. The box office successes of films like *Batman*, both domestic and international, as well as their immense tie-in and merchandising potential led to a re-configuration of the big studios’ strategies. According to Schatz, “the studios inexorably turned their attention away from mid-range star-genre projects in favor of event films and ‘tentpole’ pictures — i.e. mega-hits that could carry a studio’s entire production slate and drive the parent company’s far-flung entertainment operations as well” (Schatz 2008: 28). Schatz points out that “this strategy [...] was bolstered enormously by the foreign market surge during the 1990s, as media conglomeration and globalization proved to be mutually reinforcing phenomena, with Hollywood-produced blockbusters as a principal catalyst.” Analyzing the development of the Hollywood film industry in the 1990s and beyond, Schatz also addresses the division of the U.S. domestic market between major studio releases and low-budget independent films (29). The success of independent cinema in turn led to the integration of some of the major independent players, like Miramax and New Line into conglomerate Hollywood in what Schatz calls “one of two key strategies to commandeer the indie movement.” The other strategy, according to Schatz, was the

launch of the studios' own independent film divisions, such as Sony Pictures Classics, Fox Searchlight, Paramount Classics and Universal Focus (later renamed to Focus Features) and Warner Independent Pictures (29-30).

Schatz's observations of the changing nature of the U.S. entertainment industry can help explain the major changes in the European entertainment industry during the 1990s. Arguably, the growing U.S. independent film market in the 1990s and early 2000s not only led to opportunities for U.S. independent producers, but also helped foreign films to become part of the studios' independent pipelines. The latter because consumers of independent cinema, looking for alternatives to mainstream blockbuster fare, were more open towards watching foreign films. On the other hand, the vastly increased importance of the foreign markets for Hollywood entertainment conglomerates in the 1990s suggests that U.S. producers, from the 1990s onward, would most likely have to have the international market in mind when developing movies above a certain budget level.

Janet Wasko, in her book *Hollywood in the Information Age* (1994) also addresses the growing importance of international markets for Hollywood. Wasko sums up several factors that have contributed to an increase in Hollywood's power in these markets. Those factors include media privatization, European market "unification," the removal of the Iron Curtain, leading to the creation of new markets, and the emergence and spread of new distribution and home viewing technologies (220). Explaining the importance of the European market for Hollywood and the efforts undertaken by the U.S. to clear access restrictions imposed by the individual European countries as well as the European Union, Wasko lays out the multiple activities of U.S. entertainment companies in Europe. These include, but are not limited to, an increase in co-financing and co-production activity, direct investment, financing of U.S. films through European pre-sales, production of U.S. films in Europe, and the establishment of European production subsidiaries by the major studios (227- 235). Wasko considers the extent to which Hollywood productions are influenced by the revenue potential of the international marketplace. She concludes that Hollywood's creative decision-making is

substantially influenced by considerations of how its films will perform in a global marketplace and that globalization plays a key part in story selection, story development and casting (Wasko 1994: 236). Wasko points out that despite Hollywood's continued expansion into the global market, this expansion will face increasing international competition from European transnational corporations and other international entities (239-240). As will become evident in Chapters 3 to 7, this competition—staged by European production companies engaging in European co-production activities and single nation productions successfully targeted at the respective domestic box offices—had become a reality by the late 1980s and early 1990s in the Big Five European film producing countries. European efforts at producing popular movies capable of re-capturing national market shares lost to U.S. imports, as well as their efforts at producing films for the pan-European and international market, often relied on the adoption of Hollywood strategies for developing “high concept” properties.

In *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood*, Justin Wyatt (1994) examines the wave of commercial high concept movies from Hollywood starting in the late 1970s. Wyatt defines “high concept” as “a form of differentiated product within the mainstream film industry” (7). This differentiation, according to Wyatt, can take place “through an emphasis on style within the films, and through the integration with marketing and merchandising” (ibid.). Marketing, according to Wyatt plays a significant role in the high concept segment of feature films. Wyatt states that,

[...] the connection between market research and ‘high concept’ derives from the commercial emphasis of these films: these ‘formula’ films are designed to be ‘appreciated’ as much as possible by the target audience, and, it is hoped, by other audience segments as well. (Wyatt 1994: 161)

The rise of high concept movies like *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975), *King Kong* (John Guillermin, 1976), *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977), *Superman* (Richard Donner, 1978) and *E.T.* (Steven Spielberg, 1982), according to Wyatt, “has been fostered by shifts in the economics, technology and institutional structure of the motion picture industry”

and was brought forward by “the rise of television, cable and home video - and the concurrent rise in conglomeration of the film industry” (188). Among the impacts of these changes were “the differentiation of film from other media, the necessity of film ‘playing’ across a wide range of media, and the move toward more commercially ‘safe’ product, with inherent marketing hooks, which would ensure a return on investment” (ibid.). Chapters 3 to 7 will address the parallels of the Hollywood efforts of producing high concept films and the efforts of European producers pursuing similar goals. Arguably, Hollywood’s shifting focus towards the production of high concept movies has fueled European filmmakers’ ambitions for more commercial and internationally marketable properties.

While all of these studies address major changes in the U.S. film industry beginning in the late 1970s, they don’t go into much detail on how these changes directly affected the way motion pictures in Hollywood were developed. In the next section I therefore look at literature that deals more closely with the development process in Conglomerate and Global Conglomerate Hollywood.

LITERATURE ON DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES AND STRATEGIES IN CONTEMPORARY HOLLYWOOD

In recognition of the importance of the development stage, the development process in contemporary Hollywood is addressed in a number of more recent accounts. Edward Jay Epstein (2006) in his book *The Big Picture: Money and Power in Hollywood*, for example, provides an overview of how movies are made in contemporary Hollywood and emphasizes the importance of the development process. Every movie, he writes, starts with an idea. Those ideas could originate “from a writer, agent, director, producer, studio executive, or even an industry outsider” (130). The “vast majority” of those ideas, according to Epstein, “are presented to studio executives orally in what is called a pitch” (ibid.). According to Epstein, the selection of movies the studios will get involved with, is based on a number of criteria, considered to determine the commercial viability of a particular project. Epstein writes:

Studio chiefs are focused on the particular elements in films that will keep money flowing into their clearinghouses. They pay particular attention to the aspects of a movie idea that are likely to attract, or repel equity partners, co-financiers, merchandisers, video chain stores, foreign pay-TV outlets, toy licenses, and other major contributors to their clearinghouses. (130)

Epstein also stresses the importance of the “social and political axes” of Hollywood and says that studio executives, maneuvering the complex social world of Hollywood have to balance “concerns that go beyond that of the economic logic dictated by the balance sheet of the clearinghouse” (Epstein 2006: 131). Taking these considerations into account, studio executives not only look for “strictly commercial projects,” but also for projects “that are likely to attract the sort of actors, directors, awards and media response that will help them maintain both their standing in the community and their own morale” (131).

Epstein points out that most projects in Hollywood are financed by the studios, which farm out the projects to producers who work with the studios. A percentage of them have so-called “studio deals,” in which the studios “provide producers with revolving funds that are replenished when their projects reach the production stage.” According to Epstein, there were more than 2500 projects in various stages of development at the studios and their subsidiaries in 2002 (133). He adds that “producers have little choice but to work with a major studio if they want to make Hollywood movies” (ibid.).

Considering the very low ratio of scripts in development to scripts that will eventually be green-lighted by the studios, Epstein draws attention to the strategy of producers to develop as many projects as possible to increase the chances of their realization (134). Writers working on the scripts, a blend of professional screenwriters and people who are writing on the side, are typically paid in installments for the different stages of the script they deliver. If the producers are dissatisfied with their work at any stage, the writers can typically be released and replaced with other writers (134). This practice and the common practice of hiring script doctors to rework the scripts, according to Epstein, often leads to a fairly large numbers of writers working on

a single script (ibid.). With many parties typically involved in the shaping of a studio script, the development process can be long and arduous and is, as Epstein points out, typically referred to as “development hell” (ibid.).

Epstein is not the only author talking about development hell as a common reality in Global Conglomerate Hollywood. Various other accounts emphasize the strain that development can put on the parties involved, and a few go into more detail on what it can look like. While Epstein provides a couple of examples of curious development anecdotes, David Hughes (2004) wrote an entire book about what could possibly go wrong when developing big-budget Hollywood movies. In his book *Tales From Development Hell: Hollywood Filmmaking The Hard Way*, Hughes takes a closer look at the potential pitfalls of the Hollywood development model. In his introduction, Hughes quotes Jane Hamsher, producer of *Natural Born Killers* (Oliver Stone, 1994), who describes the development process as follows:

The writer turns in a script. The producers and studio executives read it, give the writer their ‘development’ notes, and he goes back and rewrites as best as he can, trying to make everyone happy. If it comes back and it’s great, the studio and the producers will try and attach a director and stars (if they haven’t already), and hopefully the picture will get made. (10)

The reality of development however often looks vastly different. According to Hughes, the writer might turn in an excellent script, which “the producer or studio executive [...] sends out for ‘script coverage’—advice on the potential of the script from a professional script reader.” If the script coverage does not lead to the project being abandoned or the writer being replaced, the writer will receive notes, which are usually conflicting (Hughes 2004: 11). The writers then return to work, “doing their best to incorporate all the different, conflicting notes, and resubmit the script for approval” (ibid.). Hughes writes that these steps keep repeating “with the script continually evolving—but not necessarily improving—until finally someone decides it’s good enough (though probably not quite as good as the first draft) to make it into a film...” (ibid.). Once that stage is reached, the script will be circulated among potential actors and directors, which, once attached, will most likely call for a rewrite of the script

(ibid.). Hughes points out that, “since the desires of the studio, producers, directors and actors are usually mutually exclusive, all of them will blame the writer,” which then will result in him or her getting replaced and the development process starting from scratch again. And this is, according to Hughes, the definition of “development hell” (12).

Despite the horror stories about excessively long and often counterproductive development processes on big studio pictures, the U.S. film industry has been able to maintain its leading position in creating content for the global market. To see to what extent Global Conglomerate Hollywood’s development processes have been adopted by its European competitors, a closer look at the literature addressing development practices in European cinema follows.

LITERATURE ON DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES AND STRATEGIES IN THE EUROPEAN FILM INDUSTRIES

Development processes in European cinema, like their Hollywood counterparts, don’t appear to get the scholarly attention they deserve. Angus Finney’s *Developing Feature Films in Europe: A Practical Guide* (1996b), is one of the few accounts specifically focused on the development process in European cinema, and it looks at the time period from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s. Finney’s study is based on Media Business School (MBS) research from the 1990s, looking at national and pan-European film funds, independent production companies, broadcasters and a number of European training initiatives. Finney argues that awareness about of the “strategic role of development” has increased in the 1990s (1). According to Finney, the results of the MBS research suggest that European public funds like the European Script Fund (SCRIPT) and programs initiated by the Media Business School (MBS) like Ateliers du Cinéma Européen (ACE) “have helped change the perception that development was merely an irritating starting block, while the main business of films was to be found in the production process” (ibid.). Finney points out a number of problems regarding the motion picture development process within the European film industry. He calls the

process “a poorly defined, secondary element to the notion of entering film production.” According to Finney, the “development activity” of European producers was too focused on just the writing of scripts, without putting enough emphasis or completely ignoring “the surrounding but strategically central elements to the script itself” (ibid.). These elements, according to Finney are the “research and acquisitions of rights for source material, treatment development, the raising of finance, the marketing of the package, the attachment of talent and the costs of paying script editors or hiring additional writers” (Finney 1996b: 4). Finney attributes the lack of focus on these elements, during the development stage of a motion picture, among others to the fact that producers were only paid when their projects went into production. This, according to Finney, “tended to obscure the financial and practical elements essential to a healthy development process” and, even more importantly, “led the producer to take a less realistic view of the projected ‘value’ of a project and how to realize that value in the marketplace“ (4-5).

Finney attributes the traditional European way of developing films to the “auteur culture,” which focused creative power and authority on a film’s director. According to Finley, “the results of this dependence have led to feature films tending to be rescued in the cutting room by film editors rather than script editors before the main money was ever spent” (5). According to Finney, “European writers have tended to be marginalized by the auteur system, while producers also lost out and have been traditionally seen as financial servants for directors.” Finney’s conversations with European industry professionals reveal “that Europe’s producers are often under-skilled when it comes to script reading and editing” (ibid.). Pointing to the Media Business School research, Finney notes that producers, interviewed about their development practices, “were astonishingly vague about their levels of development spending and strategy” (6).

Along those lines, Anne Jäckel (2003), in her book *European Film Industries*, points out that, “compared to Hollywood, Europe still has no established tradition of script analysis or development.” According to Jäckel, “in Europe, ideas of what is

involved with development vary not only from one territory to another but also from one project to another" (29). Like Finney, Jäckel talks about steps that have been taken to address these shortcomings. Examples she cites, are the development support through the MEDIA program, which led to Support for Creative Independent Production Talent (SCRIPT), the MEDIA Business School seminars and the Ateliers du Cinéma Européen (ACE). All of them, according to Jäckel, "played a major part in convincing many European producers that creative and financial planning for a project must proceed in tandem" (30). Jäckel also points out the MEDIA II Development Program, which was designed "to encourage companies to plan project development as fully as possible," "to expand investment at that stage," and "to abandon projects lacking real commercial prospects" (30). Jäckel, however, observes that "despite the MEDIA initiatives and increased transnational collaboration, development funds in Europe remain small and attitudes towards development continue to differ." According to Jäckel,

Ireland and the UK have a conception of the development process closer to that of Hollywood. In France, Italy or Spain on the other hand, many film professionals disagree with MEDIA recommendations to adopt Hollywood methods as a normative framework. (30-31)

Jäckel observes that despite a still widely held resistance to paying more attention to the development stage, "national institutions (including the CNC in France and the Film Council in the UK) are putting more money into development funding, and today a new generation of producers is giving more importance to pre-production and script development" (31). According to Jäckel, "alongside Europe's respected directors, the region's producing talent has played a vital role in sustaining the industry" (40).

While development strategies and practices may vary among the Big Five film industries, certain trends, e.g. in the kind of genres favored to ensure competitiveness in the respective domestic as well as international markets, become apparent. Jäckel points out certain areas in which European producers have excelled in recent years. Among them are animation and visual effects. Jäckel states, that "current moves towards

animation and special effects production may not correspond to what is still regarded as national tastes, but do fulfil the expectations of young people—the biggest consumers of film today—for entertainment cinema” (27). She adds that, “along with action-packed thrillers, often made with U.S. financing, animation and effects production reflects the growing trend for Europeans to make films for the international market” (ibid.). In regards to the breakdown of genres produced in individual European countries, Jäckel observes that “European countries both attract and favour different genres” (27). She points out that the U.K. is best known for its romantic comedies and period dramas, while Germany and Spain are known for thrillers, a genre France increasingly excels in as well (ibid.). She further states that while comedies, except for U.K. and U.S. productions, are generally perceived of performing poorly outside of their country of origin, they are often the backbone of the respective domestic markets (Jäckel 2003: 27). Among the genres that have worked well for some of the markets are literary adaptations and historical costume dramas, however, the often substantial production costs tend to require international partners, as Jäckel notes (ibid.). Countries at the forefront of producing “large-scale historical films with high production values,” according to Jäckel, are France, Ireland and the U.K. Jäckel also points out that conservative decision-making by sales agents and distributors contribute to “how certain genres become representative of particular national cinemas” (28). Among Jäckel’s examples are films in the British realist tradition, gangster films, Italian comedies, Spanish black comedies and French auteur films. She writes, “as these impressions become accepted, so they reinforce and perpetuate particular types of domestic production” (ibid.). Jäckel also refers to auteur cinema, which she calls “the European film genre par excellence,” as a “production trend” (ibid.). Differentiating between auteur- and producer-driven cinema in Europe has become more challenging, according to Jäckel, as artistic and commercial aspects of cinema are combined, in particular in some of the Eastern European countries and auteur filmmakers are increasingly used as commercial assets to market films (29). In fact, the dichotomy between auteur- and producer-driven cinema seems to be one of the key components

for a better understanding of the shifting development processes in the European film industry and is examined in Chapters 3 to 7.

Considering the variety of production cultures in Europe, Jäckel points out that “differences between working practices and philosophies continue to vary from country to country” (Jäckel 2003: 40). According to Jäckel, “collaboration still largely occurs along national lines but is also rapidly moving towards European and even global configurations” (ibid.). However, despite all of the changes fostered by the European Union initiatives, a number of goals set by these initiatives, according to Jäckel, had not been met by the early 2000s. Jäckel observes that,

[...] there is little doubt the MEDIA and Eurimages initiatives have gone some way towards lessening the problems faced by the European film industries [...] these programs have not succeeded in developing a collective and competitive industrial logic to help the European film industries match the strength of Hollywood. (88)

While both Jäckel (2003) and Finney (1996) see substantial shortcomings in the European efforts to compete successfully on national as well as transnational levels in the 1990s and early 2000s, Finney’s most recent account presents a more commercially sophisticated European film industry. By the end of the first decade of the new millennium, according to Finney (2010), “Europe’s leading film production and distribution companies, some of which are now reaching maturity, offer a significant challenge to the Hollywood Studios’ traditional hegemony over the Continent and the United Kingdom” (25). According to Finney, a number of Europe’s largest media outfits “are addressing a changing, expanding market and [...] are taking the Studios on, head to head.” Comparing more recent, typical development workflows in the European and the U.S. independent film industry, Finney points out that on European films with budgets from €2–4 million, development costs would be at least €50,000 to €150,000 and on films in the €7–10 million range could reach up to €300,000 (25). These numbers are significantly higher, compared to European development costs in the 1980s and 1990s. Finney, however, says that development is still a stepchild of film production in Europe. Finney’s rather comprehensive overview of the working

mechanisms of the international film industry—with a focus on the European film industries—is one of the few, more recent, accounts that acknowledge the importance of the development stage for narrative film production in Europe. Both his 1996 and 2010 books provide invaluable guideposts for the research on changes of European development processes over the past decades. His practical insights into the major European markets—enhanced by his own involvement in the European entertainment industry—have served as a valuable resource for framing this study.

In the following section, I lay out the structure and methodology of this dissertation, providing the roadmap for the journey through the landscape of contemporary European transnational film.

STRUCTURE AND METHODOLOGY

To reiterate the questions addressed in this dissertation: First, to what extent has the direct or indirect influence of Global Conglomerate Hollywood led to an increase in transnational film productions; and, second, are the development processes of these productions inspired by the development processes and strategies applied by their U.S. competitors. My first working hypothesis is that a key contributing factor to the changes in the European film industry during the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s—in the growing segment of transnational popular cinema production—has been a shift from a writer/director-driven cinema to a more commercially-oriented development-driven cinema with producers playing a key role in the creative process. I argue that U.S. models of motion picture development, characteristic of the Global Conglomerate Hollywood era, have come to significantly influence project development in the European film industry. My second working hypothesis is that the shifts in European development practices and strategies in that area have not only been a result of European Union initiatives of the 1990s and 2000s—designed to make European cinema more competitive—but also a result of the fruits of the labor of a number of pioneering European producers in each of the five key European film industries in the 1980s and beyond. A number of these producers, I argue, have been influenced by

commercial transnational properties created by the Hollywood of the Global Conglomerate era. It was these producers who—in tandem with key filmmakers open to transnational subject matters—laid the groundwork in the 1980s for transnational popular cinema in Europe, inspired by the products of the emerging Global Conglomerate Hollywood. The European regulatory efforts in the 1990s and 2000s, aimed at supporting a pan-European audio-visual landscape, I argue, have to some extent solidified these efforts and have contributed to a more widespread adaptation of Hollywood development strategies. As additional factors leading to these changes can be considered the education of some key European writers, directors and producers in the U.S., the use of U.S. development and screenwriting literature in European film schools and film school exchange programs with the U.S. Furthermore, U.S./European co-production and co-financing ventures, U.S. runaway productions to Europe, the use of U.S. producing and screenwriting consultants in European productions and European educational programs to strengthen the domestic and transnational commercial appeal of European productions. Considering the wide-ranging direct as well as indirect influence of Global Conglomerate Hollywood on the European film industry, I argue that—as a consequence of this umbrella of factors—project selection in the Big Five film industries in post-Cold War Europe has become less based on artistic and cultural merits and more on the commercial potential of projects, in domestic as well as pan-European and international markets.

My focus on the Big Five European film producing countries does not imply that the development strategies and practices in other European countries are less influenced by Global Conglomerate Hollywood. The Eastern European film industries have arguably seen some of the most dramatic shifts in post-Cold War Europe, and other Western European countries such as Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Finland and Austria have certainly not remained unaffected by the Hollywood system during the time period discussed here. The changes, however, seem most noticeable in the Big Five film producing countries, which also constitute Global Conglomerate Hollywood's most important film markets in Europe.

The Big Five film industries in Europe have rather diverse characteristics. Each of them has its own—and often multiple—production centers, and the individual European countries are characterized by relatively different cultures and cinematic histories. The U.S. film industry, in contrast—while split in the studio and independent sector—is primarily revolving around two major film centers, Los Angeles and New York. It also has a periphery of national and international production hubs, and—within the studio sector—has an arguably more or less homogenous development culture. To what extent each of the Big Five European film industries have been influenced by Conglomerate and Global Conglomerate Hollywood and how the levels of influence differ, is explored in Chapters 3 to 7. These chapters look at key transnational properties originating in the Big Five film industries, while addressing the budgets, box office performance, and development histories of some of these films. All of the “transnational” films discussed here received at least pan-European theatrical distribution; the majority also received U.S. theatrical distribution. The emphasis on theatrical distribution in the U.S. market is based on the widely held notion that a film’s success in the U.S. market is still the key to its success in the pan-European or international market. U.S theatrical distribution is also a key factor for generating revenue in subsequent distribution windows, as well as in window-less next generation distribution models (Finney 2010). The study looks at transnational properties from the 1980s to the early 2010s, with an emphasis on the period from the 1990s to the 2010s, as some of the most significant changes have taken place during the last two decades. It shows that a real transformation of the European film industries has taken place, mirroring a similar transformation of the U.S. film industry during what is referred to in my study as the “Global Conglomerate Hollywood era,” a term combining the concepts of “Global Hollywood,” conceived by Toby Miller et al. (2001) and “Conglomerate Hollywood,” as referred to by Jay Epstein (2005) and Thomas Schatz (2008).

As Chapter 2 suggests, the European film industry, beginning in the 1980s and particularly during the 1990s and the 2000s, exhibits a major paradigm shift toward a more commercial cinema, influenced by and paralleled with major changes in the U.S.

entertainment industry due to conglomeration and globalization. Simultaneously, and with a complex intrinsic cause-and-effect relationship, the film industries in Europe underwent similar changes, driven partially by economic necessity as well as political changes. Among the latter has been the particular influence of the European Union on individual nation states and on Europe as a complex, cultural and political body as a whole.

As becomes evident, these changes not only blurred the boundaries of individual film communities, previously operating out of singular nation states, but also created a film culture that seemed to be more concerned about the economic side of filmmaking. This was due to higher production costs and correlating profit expectations, as well as concerns about creating cultural products that would have a market not only domestically but also beyond the borders of the films' home countries. With higher demands on films' performances at the box office, on pay-TV, VoD, DVD and free TV, the focus on internationally marketable content increased, and so did efforts to maximize a film's transnational potential already at the script stage. Mirroring the realities of Conglomerate Hollywood, the marketability of films now became a concern starting at the very early stages of film development. This was encouraged by various European Union initiatives that stressed the reflection of a necessarily constructed pan-European culture in the films being made. These initiatives also were concerned with the pan-European and international marketability of European films, in order to strengthen the European audiovisual sector, for political, cultural as well as economic reasons.

The emergence of a truly interconnected global film industry has been shaped in part by U.S. development models, with the U.S. film industry as a core shaping the international periphery. In turn, the peripheral film industries all over the world have been shaping the core in the form of cultural and creative influences from its directors, writers and producers. In that sense, Conglomerate Hollywood, transnationally financed, owned, and operated, is itself a reflection of a multicultural, international

marketplace, which embraces multicultural creative input—if for no other reason than to appeal to the international market.

As laid out before, the changes occurring in the European entertainment industry from the 1980s to the present have been enormous. In order to truly understand these changes, observing the European film industries from a political economy macro-perspective, in tandem with observing creative decision making processes during the development stage of European film productions from a micro-perspective, appears to be a viable way to study the extremely complex European film industries. As the chapters on the individual countries show, the individuals making key creative decisions that shape Europe's motion pictures are not necessarily writers-directors, lauded as auteurs, but increasingly creative producers working hand in hand with writers and directors.

In order to truly grasp these changes, the examination of not only writers and directors working within the new realities of the global market, but also producers, is important to understanding the intricacies of our globalized media culture and the individuals creating it. Thus, I am taking a qualitative research approach by looking at the changes in development processes through the lenses of academic literature, industry trade papers, pre-existing interviews with writers, directors and producers, as well as in-person, phone- and e-mail conversations with creative individuals involved in the development or production of European transnational films. I am also evaluating the European transnational production landscape from observations I made while attending the Berlin International Film Festivals, the European Film Markets, and the Berlinale Co-Production Markets from 1996 to 2011, as well as attending a number of seminars on European film development and financing between 1996 and 2011, through my work experience on a European co-production in 2008, and through my experiences with development in the European film industry in connection with some of my own film projects.

My interest in the subject matter stems from my film training at the University of Texas at Austin and at UCLA and from internships and work at Hollywood

production companies during and in-between my university studies. My work on independent features, writing assignments for European production companies, and work as a creative executive for a Los Angeles-based production company made me aware of the different approaches to film development in Europe and the U.S. At the same time, they also made me realize the growing similarity between the development processes in Europe and the United States.

Most of my interactions with European film industry professionals, mainly producers, writers, directors and distributors, were casual, open-ended conversations to get a sense of their activities and their perception of how their roles within the film industry had changed over time. Some of my conversation partners had been in the industry for over 20 years and hence had a very clear sense of the changes that occurred in the European film industry during the time-span this dissertation covers. These conversations became more directed and focused as my understanding of the complexities and particularities of the development process in internationally successful motion pictures increased during the course of my research. Cast and crew information, production and distribution company information and international box office performance, unless otherwise noted, were drawn from the Internet Movie Database (IMDb and IMDb Pro), Box Office Mojo, the German film industry database Mediabiz and the European film industry database Cinando.

Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of key changes in the European film industry from the 1980s to 2010, focused on the development and production of transnational popular cinema originating in the Big Five European film industries, and changes in development practices and strategies leading to their production. Chapters 3 to 7 examine changing development practices and strategies in the individual Big Five European film producing countries. Each chapter is dedicated to a single country: the U.K., France, Germany, Italy and Spain. Chapter 8 contains conclusions and recommendations for further research.

RELEVANCE OF THIS STUDY

As the literature review shows, while much is written about the dominance of U.S. films in the European market, only a few authors deal with European attempts to counter this dominance by creating transnational films, capable of succeeding in the global marketplace. Even fewer accounts are addressing the changing development strategies and practices in this evolving sector of the European film industry and their interplay with Global Conglomerate Hollywood. The majority of accounts dealing with transnational European cinema tend to be focused on European art-house cinema, which traditionally has fared well with limited art-house audiences around the globe. Transnational popular cinema originating in Europe, on the other hand, is primarily addressed in the international trade press and in industry literature and does not get the academic attention it deserves.

By looking at the performance of these films in international markets, as well as the changing development models of these European border-crossing films in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, my study focuses on an often overlooked aspect of the European film industry, one that is critical when trying to understand the intricacies of the European, as well as the global film industries.

Chapter Two: Overview of Transnational Activities in the Pan-European Film Industry from the 1980s to Present

The production of post World War II transnational popular cinema in the Big Five film industries in Europe prior to the 1980s was mostly limited to films with U.S. involvement. Exceptions were a number of European art films, capable of capturing limited international audiences, primarily in North America. Films in the Italian Neorealist tradition, the French Nouvelle Vague and New German Cinema, proved to be exportable items and served as the inspiration for American filmmakers of the New Hollywood and beyond. European popular cinema, on the other hand, with some exceptions like the Italian Spaghetti Westerns, produced during the 1960s and 1970s, tended to be limited to their countries of origin. And for the most part, producers of popular motion pictures in the Big Five European film industries faced growing competition from U.S. imports.

In the 1980s, the makeup of the film industries in the different European countries shifted substantially, as Europe steadily grew closer together culturally and politically as well as economically. Despite these changes, the pan-European film industry, like Europe itself, has been a work in progress. Europe as a political entity started out with the founding of the Council of Europe in 1949 and developed into the European Economic Community (EEC) on March 25, 1957 with the signing of the Treaty of Rome. On February 7, 1992, the EEC became the European Union, leading to the establishment of the single market on January 1, 1993. With the creation of the single market, the groundwork had been laid for Europe's film industries to increase their pan-European development and production activities and for the establishment of a European industrial base better capable of competing in world markets. Pan-European initiatives to support European cinema, such as the founding of Eurimages in 1989 and the MEDIA program in 1990, put a new emphasis on co-productions between European countries, the production of motion pictures capable of crossing European as well as international borders, and on establishing a pan-European film industry capable of

competing with U.S. imports. With the deregulation of the television markets in many European countries in the mid to late 1980s and new funding opportunities through private broadcasters, a stronger emphasis on the mass appeal of films produced in Europe emerged.

By the 1990s more and more European producers, writers and directors, encouraged by the educational efforts and financial support structures of the European Union, or in many cases just driven by economic necessities, began to embark on the venture of developing high-concept, high-profile transnational films—often modeled after products of Global Conglomerate Hollywood. Not surprisingly, Hollywood closely participated in the transformation. At the 1995 Cannes Film Festival, for example, a training pact between the North American and European film industries was announced. MPAA chairman Jack Valenti welcomed the new pact, stressing “the spirit of cooperation with the European film industry,” saying “we want to be part of the revitalization of the cinema in Europe” (“U.S., Europe strike training pact” 1995: C6). As part of the deal, member companies of the MPA and European film companies agreed to support a five-year training program, providing funds for the development of film courses, the hiring of top-level academics, and the provision of scholarships and seminars with film industry professionals (*ibid.*). Measures and initiatives like these have contributed to changes in development strategies and practices in parts of the Big Five European film industries, leading from an auteur-driven to a more producer-driven approach to filmmaking. Chapters 3 to 7 support this argument in further detail.

Among the perceived reasons for the global appeal of transnational U.S. productions were their high production values and in many cases culturally unspecific content. Achieving similarly high production values—at least with the technology available in the 1980s and 1990s—required the increase of production budgets. One of the strategies to accomplish this, has been the pooling of resources between multiple European or international partners in the form of co-production or co-financing ventures. In turn, the involvement of multiple production partners from different cultural and linguistic territories, encouraged narratives that were developed with pan-

European or international audiences in mind and often led to casting choices following the same rationale. This, at least theoretically, provided these films with a culturally pluralistic content that potentially increased their global marketability. A closer look at the successful transnational films from the 1980s to present in the following chapters will reveal that many of these productions have benefited from higher budgets, English-language production, casting of internationally recognizable stars, and the reliance on popular genres and transnational narratives.

New approaches to European filmmaking in the 1990s and beyond have in many instances led to record-breaking box office numbers within Europe and respectable numbers overseas. As Table 2.1. shows, the number of European feature films between 1991 and 2009 on EU screens rose by 90% and the admission numbers increased by 62%. European film share increased from 17% to 31% and the box office share of U.S. films declined from 73% to 67%.

Table 2.1: European Films in EU Theaters

	Number of feature-length films	Number of screens	Admissions ¹ in millions	European film share (%) ²	US film share (%)
1991	471	18,882	605	17	73
1992	489	19,056	587	17	73
1993	504	18,947	666	15	75
1994	444	18,013	677	no data	74
1995	443	18,606	664	no data	72
1996	569	19,451	709	25	71
1997	560	20,605	765	32	66
1998	555	21,855	828	22	78
1999	603	23,181	810	29	69
2000	602	23,555	844	23	73
2001	627	24,446	935	32	65
2002	644	25,234	938	28	70
2003	672	25,774	890	26	71
2004	770	28,727	1,006	30	67
2005	815	29,020	894	38	60
2006	883	29,024	926	33	64
2007	806	29,683	920	35	63
2008	849	29,716	925	33	66
2009	893	29,817	980	31	67

¹ Estimates. ² Includes European films with U.S. investment (primarily U.K.)

Source: CNC⁹

The development and production of films appealing to a pan-European and ideally global audience—a tremendous challenge by itself—has only been a part of the equation leading to success in the increasingly global media environment of the 1990s and beyond. Marketing is an essential factor to create audience awareness and to get people to see movies in theaters. Europe’s longtime resistance to see films as marketable goods instead of exclusively cultural products delayed the adoption of more aggressive U.S. marketing strategies for the promotion of European films. Yet that resistance, apparent by the French position during the Uruguay round of the GATT

⁹ From CNC Sectoral Statistics, <http://www.cnc.fr/web/en/sectoral-statistics>

negotiations,¹⁰ faded by the mid- to late 1990s, and marketing strategies for European films have more and more adopted U.S. models—including an increasing trend toward merchandising and product tie-ins (Jäckel 2003: 94-95). Marketing costs, however, have seen a tremendous rise in the 1990s and 2000s. This made it even more challenging for European distributors to compete with the U.S. majors, which in most cases have been able to simply outspent them. Technological advances in the CGI area—that had initially raised the cost of feature films—soon offered new ways of creating films with high production values at lower costs than previously possible. This paved the way for European high-concept and high-profile films, utilizing visual effects that were en par in production values with often much higher budgeted U.S. productions.

Success at the international box office is not only tied to production values, but primarily connected to the choice of the stories being told. While demographics of movie-going audiences vary between different European countries and the U.S., a film can generally only become a significant box office success, if it manages to appeal to multiple audience segments. Figure 2.2 shows a breakdown of U.S. box office results by genre from 1995 to 2011.

¹⁰ For an excellent overview of the French position in the GATT negotiations, see Grantham (2000: 91-131)

Table 2.1: Top-Grossing Genres at U.S. Box Office from 1995 to 2011

	Genre	Movies	Total Gross	Average Gross	Market Share
1	Comedy	1,684	\$44,173,065,533	\$26,231,037	24.04%
2	Adventure	482	\$36,154,788,469	\$75,009,935	19.67%
3	Drama	2,952	\$32,574,281,434	\$11,034,648	17.72%
4	Action	529	\$30,769,318,657	\$58,165,064	16.74%
5	Thriller/Suspense	517	\$14,533,756,377	\$28,111,714	7.91%
6	Romantic Comedy	383	\$10,883,210,664	\$28,415,694	5.92%
7	Horror	306	\$8,782,556,179	\$28,701,164	4.78%
8	Documentary	972	\$2,021,053,387	\$2,079,273	1.10%
9	Musical	108	\$1,701,738,728	\$15,756,840	0.93%
10	Black Comedy	76	\$745,620,441	\$9,810,795	0.41%
11	Western	36	\$685,989,706	\$19,055,270	0.37%
12	Concert/ Performance	38	\$277,964,471	\$7,314,855	0.15%
13	Multiple Genres	17	\$6,254,679	\$367,922	0.00%
14	Genre Unknown	5	\$1,685,983	\$337,197	0.00%

Source: The Numbers¹¹

The ten most financially successful films of all time are all family movies that successfully captured multiple audience segments. All of them fall into the high-concept and high-profile category. The movies are *Avatar* (James Cameron, 2009), *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997), *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977), *Shrek 2* (Andrew Adamson, 2004), *E.T.* (Steven Spielberg, 1982), *Star Wars Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace* (George Lucas, 1999), *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* (Gore Verbinski, 2003), *Spider Man* (Sam Raimi, 2002), *Star Wars: Episode III - Revenge of the Sith* (George Lucas, 2005) and *Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (Peter Jackson, 2003).

Not surprisingly, an increasing number of European producers, aiming at crossing international borders and succeeding at the global box office, began to make

¹¹ The Numbers, "Top-Grossing Genres 1995 to 2011," Nash Information Service, accessed on 7/31/2011, from <http://www.the-numbers.com/market/Genres/>

high-concept and high-profile family films with high production values and, whenever possible, international star power for maximum box office potential. Among the examples of European productions in the 1990s aiming into that direction was *The Fifth Element* (Luc Besson, 1997). This visual effects-laden and fast-paced space epic, directed by Luc Besson, chronicling Bruce Willis' and Milla Jovovich's colorful journey to save the earth from total destruction, was produced by French production company Gaumont for an estimated budget of \$90 million.¹² Gaumont Buena Vista International (GBVI) distributed the film theatrically in France and Columbia Pictures theatrically distributed it in the U.S. It was the first time that such a substantial amount of money was invested into a European film by a single production/financing entity. The performance of the film—grossing \$263,920,180 theatrically worldwide, with \$63,820,180 of that at the U.S. box office—was exceptional, by European as well as international standards.¹³ The film's success made many European producers rethink their business models and their development slates.

One attempt during the 1990s to emulate the successes of U.S. comic book adaptations was the French/German/Italian co-production *Astérix et Obélix contre César* (*Asterix and Obelix Take on Cesar*, Claude Zidi, 1999) and its sequel *Astérix & Obélix: Mission Cléopâtre* (*Asterix and Obelix Meet Cleopatra*, Alain Chabat, 2002), based on the popular French *Astérix & Obélix* comic book series. *Astérix et Obélix contre César*, budgeted at an estimated \$48 million, and *Astérix & Obélix: Mission Cléopâtre*, budgeted at an estimated \$47 million, were targeted at a European audience and performed exceptionally well on a pan-European level. They also received U.S. theatrical distribution, but had only limited success at the U.S. box office.

Both national productions, like the Italian production *Life is Beautiful* (*La vita è bella*, Roberto Benigni, 1997), as well as European co-productions, like French/German co-production *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* (*Amélie*, Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2001)

¹² IMDb 2011, "Box office / business for *The Fifth Element* (1997)," accessed on 6/24/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0119116/business>

¹³ *Ibid.*

showed that high-concept and high-profile European films had the ability to perform well at the international box office, and that even the hard to access U.S. theatrical market was penetrable by European films.

In this respect, the situation for European films in the U.S. had improved with the introduction of the specialty divisions of studios that were looking for “independent” alternatives to mainstream films. Some of the European movies—mostly the ones targeted at mainstream audiences but also high-profile art house films like *Dancer in the Dark* (Lars von Trier, 1999), *Mar Adentro* (Alejandro Amenábar, 2002) or *No Man’s Land* (Danis Tanovic, 2002)—seemed to fit that bill. However, the crisis in the independent film sector in the U.S. in the 2000s, connected to the closing of most of the studios’ specialty divisions and the substantial reduction of the number of independent film distributors in the U.S., made selling European art house movies to the U.S. market more challenging. This new reality, arguably, made it even more important for European producers, interested in North American distribution, to go beyond the international art house market and to create high-concept and high-profile films with the potential to access the international theatrical distribution networks for mainstream films. On the other hand, the proliferation of non-theatrical distribution channels like VoD, Netflix and iTunes has opened up new opportunities for foreign art house pictures.

Among events with substantial impact on the European film industry in the early 2000s were Vivendi’s disastrous effort to own and operate U.S. studio Universal, the bankruptcies of numerous European media organizations such as the German Kirch group and the Italian media group Cecchi Gori, as well as the failures of a number of other instrumental players in Europe’s film financing and distribution arena, that used to be part of the German stock exchange Neuer Markt (New Market) (Lange 2003: 5). Vivendi Universal’s failure set European ambitions to form a European studio back, leaving only Polygram and StudioCanal still in the running (ibid.). Also problematic, were the increasingly crisis-ridden European television landscape, traditionally a

backbone for the European film industry; decreases in public revenues, and less profitable advertising markets (Lange 2003: 5).

As the 2000s progressed, the transnational appeal of European film kept increasing. In 2007, European films reached an estimated market share of 28.8% at the European box office. The most successful European films that year were U.K./French/German/U.S. co-production *Mr. Bean's Holiday* (Steve Bendelack, 2007), French/Czech/U.K. co-production *La môme (La Vie en Rose)*, Olivier Dahan, 2007), French production *Taxi 4* (Gérard Krawczyk, 2007) and U.K./French/U.S. co-production *Hot Fuzz* (Edgar Wright, 2007). These films turned out to be true transnational properties, as 62% of their total admissions were outside of their home markets (EAO 2008: 16).

Mirroring a similar growth at the U.S. box office, in 2009, box office grosses in the EU increased by an estimated 12%. This increase resulted from a combination of an estimated 6% increase in cinema attendance and higher ticket prices, predominantly for 3D movies. Among the Top Five films of the year 2009 were three Hollywood 3D movies: *Avatar* (James Cameron, 2009), *Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs* (Carlos Saldanha & Mike Thurmeier, 2009) and *Up* (Pete Docter & Bob Peterson, 2009).¹⁴ While Global Conglomerate Hollywood gained the most from the increasing appetite for 3D movies worldwide, European producers made substantial efforts to catch up to the latest developments. Both in the 3D and the 2D area, production activity in Europe reached unprecedented levels. In 2009, 887 narrative feature films were produced in Europe and the market share of European film was 26.7% (ibid.). However, competing with U.S. imports still presented a major challenge, as only three films with European participation made it into the Top 20 at the pan-European box office. These films were the U.S./U.K. co-production *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (David Yates, 2009) ranked second with 33,868,313, the U.S./German co-production *Inglourious Basterds* (Quentin Tarantino, 2009), ranked ninth with 14,134,503 admissions, and

¹⁴ European Audiovisual Observatory, "Press Release: EU gross box office reached record high in 2009 as European film production continues to grow," Strasbourg, 5/6/2010

Slumdog Millionaire (Danny Boyle and Loveleen Tandan, 2009), ranked eighth with 16,004,477 admissions (ibid.).

EUROPEAN CO-PRODUCTIONS AND DEVELOPMENT

European co-productions, a common production practice in post-WWII Europe, received a boost in the 1990s through various EU initiatives, including the Eurimages and MEDIA programs. Development processes in co-production ventures inherently feature additional layers of complexity. Among the reasons are an increased number of producers and additional requirements to qualify for the different countries' sources of subsidy money, if subsidy funding is part of the respective funding umbrellas. By looking at exemplary films in Chapters Three to Seven and—where available—at aspects of their development, I attempt to shed more light on development strategies and practices in the European co-production arena of the 1990s and 2000s.

Another aspect to consider, regarding the changing development strategies and practices in European cinema, is the distribution and marketing phase. This phase has been an increasingly challenging aspect of film production in Europe in the globalization era, and changes in that area have most likely had an effect on the development phase in certain areas of the film industry.

MARKETING AND DISTRIBUTION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSNATIONAL FILMS

To successfully market films in the U.S., distributors have to invest substantial amounts of money, often a significant percentage of a film's overall budget, and similar strategies are applied by U.S. distributors for promoting and distributing their products overseas (Epstein 2005: 206-208). European distributors, on the other hand, for the most part do not have the financial means to successfully compete with their U.S. counterparts on a pan-European, let alone global scale and are dependent on their foreign counterparts to invest sufficient amounts of money into marketing campaigns of films they pick up for distribution. This has turned into a major issue, as marketing has become a key factor for European films to survive in the present-day multiplex culture

of Europe. Since a substantial share of the multiplex building activity over the past two decades has been backed by U.S. investments, many of the multiplexes in Europe today are in the hands of U.S. companies, arguably resulting in a perceived bias towards the screening of U.S. movies.¹⁵ Owners of multiplex theatres are ultimately most interested in playing films with high audience interest and generally can not justify playing low-performing films for an extended period of time, often necessary for the building of word-of-mouth in case of smaller films. As movies that do not perform well in their first week of release are usually replaced by the following weekend, distributors are forced to release films as wide as possible, accompanied by massive marketing-budgets to raise awareness levels, to get people into the theaters on opening weekend. American distributors have perfected these techniques over decades and typically have the financial clout to outspend their European counterparts (See e.g. Hayes and Bing 2004).

For European distributors, this new reality led to a situation comparable to the U.S. scenario for domestic independent films: The increasing difficulty of having a successful theatrical release, without a major studio distributing a film and orchestrating its marketing campaign. The reality of theatrical exhibition in Europe—similar to the reality in the U.S.—has forced European producers to orchestrate their distribution strategies at the development stage of a film. Major Hollywood releases of the Global Conglomerate era have been relying on marketable elements such as a recognizable A-List cast, high-concept stories or stories based on pre-existing properties with built-in audience awareness. European producers—aiming to compete at the domestic as well as the international box office—have imitated these strategies in an effort to stay competitive. As U.S. A-list talent, however, tends to come with a hefty price tag, often out of the budget range of most European single-country productions, the need for higher-budget, pan-European or European/U.S. co-productions arose. Development strategies had to be adjusted accordingly. Nonetheless, casting A-List Hollywood talent and acquiring U.S. bestselling books in many cases has still been out

¹⁵ For an overview of multiplex ownership and the internationalization of the exhibition sector, see Jäckel (2003: 124-130).

of reach for the majority of European productions. As a result, building films on popular pre-existing European properties, such as successful European novels and comic books, has been a continuing trend. In fact, a substantial share of European high-profile films since the mid-1980s have been relying on adaptations of European best-selling fiction and non-fiction books. Adapting best-selling European literary properties that are known even outside of Europe, and casting some U.S. A-list talent at least in supporting roles, has proven to be a successful model for European films to obtain U.S. theatrical distribution.

An example is *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (Tom Tykwer, 2006). The movie was based on a European bestseller and featured U.S. A-list actor Dustin Hoffman in a supporting role. Paramount-based DreamWorks SKG served as the film's U.S. distributor.¹⁶ The ability to commit a major distributor to handle a film, before or after its completion, is closely tied to the kind of package a producer is able to put together. The quality of the package, in turn, is ultimately connected to a film's genre, the widespread appeal of a particular story, its target audience and the quality of material a producer, in conjunction with a talented writer and director, is able to develop in order to attract recognizable acting talent and financing for the film. Arguably, the majority of producers of popular European transnational cinema have acknowledged the situation they are confronted with and are taking the harsh realities of international film distribution into account when developing projects. While a marketing and distribution-centered way of developing projects has been a common practice in Global Conglomerate Hollywood, it only slowly made its way into the minds of European producers, due to the completely different film industry structure in Europe.

The European Union in the early 1990s began to address the issue of the generally poor international performance of European films. Pinpointing a disadvantage

¹⁶ DreamWorks SKG, however, was less fortunate in distributing the film in the U.S. than its European distributors, who turned it into the most successful European film in European box office history by 2006. While *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* grossed \$132,816,650 at the international box office (non-U.S.), it only grossed \$2,223,293 at the U.S. box office.

of European films versus U.S. imports and identifying apparent trouble spots, such as the lack of development as well as marketing and distribution funding, the Council of Europe set up the MEDIA and the Eurimages programs. Following is a brief overview of these two programs.

EU INITIATIVES TO STRENGTHEN THE EUROPEAN FILM INDUSTRY — EURIMAGES AND THE MEDIA PROGRAMS

Eurimages is a European co-production and distribution fund started in 1988 by the Council of Europe (COE). According to the COE, “Eurimages aims to promote the European film industry by encouraging the production and distribution of films and fostering co-operation between professionals” (COE 2012a). The COE lists two objectives for the program: a cultural objective with the goal to “support works which reflect the multiple facets of a European society whose common roots are evidence of a single culture” and an economic objective (with a cultural touch...) that aims at commercially successful movies within a European cultural tradition. The COE carefully states, “the Fund invests in an industry which, while concerned with commercial success, is interested in demonstrating that cinema is one of the arts and should be treated as such” (COE 2012a). This reflects the European attitude of regarding cinema and television as cultural products, which became a central part of the argument for excluding the audiovisual industries from the GATT agreement.

The Eurimages fund is split into three different areas: Assistance for co-production, distribution and exhibition. By the end of 2010 over 1349 feature films co-productions documentaries had received Eurimages support since the fund’s inception in 1988. Close to 90% of Eurimages’s resources were used to support co-productions (ibid.). As becomes apparent when looking at the films supported by Eurimages (Figure 2.2.), the Eurimages slate represents a broad spectrum of films originating from a variety of European countries.

Table 2.2: Examples of Eurimages Supported Titles Winning Key International Awards

<i>No Man's Land</i> (Danis Tanovic, 2001)	Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film — and another 24 wins and 14 nominations
<i>La vie en rose</i> (Olivier Dahan, 2007)	Academy Awards for Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role and Best Achievement in Makeup, 4 BAFTA Awards, Golden Globe for Best Performance by an Actress in a Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy — and another 26 wins and 34 nominations
<i>Kolya</i> (Jan Sverák, 1996)	Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film and Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film — and another 17 wins and 11 nominations
<i>Trois Couleurs – Bleu</i> (<i>Three Colors: Blue</i>, Krzysztof Kieślowski, 1993)	Golden Ciak for Best Film, Golden Lion, Golden Osella for Best Cinematography — and another 14 wins and 7 nominations
<i>Farinelli</i> (Gérard Corbiau, 1993)	Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film — and another 4 wins and 2 nominations
<i>La Reine Margot</i> (Queen Margot, 1994)	Best Actress Award and Jury Prize at Cannes — and another 6 wins and 11 nominations
<i>Journey of Hope</i> (Xavier Koller, 1990)	Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film — and two other wins and one nomination
<i>Mar Adentro</i> (Alejandro Amenábar, 2002)	Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film — and another 60 awards and 30 nominations
<i>Dogville</i> (Lars von Trier, 2004)	2 European Film Awards for Best Director and Best Cinematography — and another 11 awards and 19 nominations
<i>Dancer in the Dark</i> (Lars von Trier, 1999)	Golden Palm and Best Actress Award at Cannes — and another 21 wins and 33 nominations
<i>L' éternité et un jour</i> (<i>Eternity and a Day</i>, Theodoros Angelopoulos, 1998)	Golden Palm and Price of the Ecumenical Jury at Cannes — and 8 other wins and 2 nominations
<i>Breaking the Waves</i> (Lars von Trier, 1996)	Grand Prize of the Jury at Cannes, European Film Awards for Best Actress and Best Film and FIPRESCI Prize — and another 36 wins and 14 nominations
<i>Land and Freedom</i> (Ken Loach, 1995)	FIPRESCI Prize and Prize of the Ecumenical Jury at Cannes, European Film Award for Best Film — and another 5 wins and 4 nominations
<i>To vlemma tou Odyssea</i> (<i>Ulysses' Gaze</i>, Theodoros Angelopoulos, 1995)	FIPRESCI Prize and Grand Prize of the Jury at Cannes — and another 7 wins and 5 nominations
<i>Lamerica</i> (Gianni Amelio, 1995)	Best European Film Award, C.I.C.A.E. Award, Golden Osella for Best Director, OCIC Award and Pasinetti Award for Best Film at Venice Film Festival — and another 10 wins and 4 nominations
<i>Trois Couleurs – Blanc</i> (<i>Three Colors: White</i>, Krzysztof Kieślowski, 1994)	Silver Berlin Bear for Best Director — and 2 nominations
<i>Europa</i> (Lars von Trier, 1991)	Won Best Artistic Contribution, Jury Prize and Technical Grand Prize and was nominated for Golden Palm at Cannes Film Festival — and 13 other wins and 3 nominations

Sources: Compiled from COE and IMDb by the author.

Eurimages currently has 36 member states. Four of the Big Five European film industries—France, Germany, Italy and Spain—were among its 12 founding members. The U.K. joined Eurimages in 1993 but withdrew by the end of 1995, citing budgetary reasons. During its two-year membership, the U.K. had paid \$8.5 million into the fund, while Eurimages contributed \$19 million to European co-productions with U.K. partners, leading to an estimated \$60 million in U.K. production volume. The decision to withdraw was widely criticized by the U.K. production community; the accusation was made that the U.K. government had no understanding of the working mechanisms of the European film industry and that the decision would cut off vital European funding sources (Dawtrety 1995: 35).

Each member state appoints one representative to Eurimages’s management board, which collectively makes the funding decisions (COE 2012b). The decisions take the European Convention on Cinematographic Coproduction issued in 1992 into account. Article 6 of the Convention spells out the conditions for a project to qualify as a European co-production. It requires the minimum level of contribution of a minority co-producing partner to a project to be 10% for multilateral and 20% for bilateral co-productions, in order to claim the same benefits as national productions in each of its co-producers’ countries (COE 1992a). According to Article 8 of the Convention, each co-production partner’s technical and artistic contribution must be proportionate to the share in the co-production. Disproportionate financial contributions with too little artistic and technical participation will void a production company’s co-producer status (ibid.). In its 1992 Explanatory Report accompanying the Convention, the Council of Europe discourages European English-language productions, stating that “choosing to shoot the film in a language unrelated to the demands of the screenplay for purely commercial reasons in the hope—frequently belied by the facts—of penetrating the ‘world market’ is patently contrary to the real aim of the Convention” (COE 1992b). However—possibly realizing that English-language productions might open up projects to a potentially much larger audience—the drafters of the convention ultimately leave the language of a film up to its co-production partners (ibid.).

While Eurimages supported many critically acclaimed films during its first ten years, pan-European box-office success of most of these projects was limited. Both the decision-making process of the Eurimages management board and its decisions were heavily criticized (Crofts 1998: 310-13, as cited in Miller et al. 2005). Anne Jäckel (2003) observes that Eurimages, while increasing production levels, failed to substantially strengthen pan-European distribution and exhibition (15).

Addressing some of the fund's issues, its funding criteria were revamped in 2002 and divided into two eligibility categories: a commercial one, based on a film's projected "circulation potential," and a cultural one, intended to foster "films reflecting the cultural diversity of European cinema" (COE 2003: 7). Eligibility criteria for films under the first scheme are "the commercial potential of a project, the level of market investment and the experience of the producers and director." The eligibility criteria for the second scheme, according to Eurimages, are easier to meet, and its focus is on films with "artistic value," aiming at productions with "relatively modest budgets and less well-known casts, arthouse films with strong artistic potential, and films that are more innovative in their form and subject" (ibid.). Both schemes require a film's director to be European, and the project itself to "be European in terms of cultural origin, of investments and rights" (8).

However, despite Eurimages' restructured funding criteria, the criticism did not stop. Eurimages came under attack for its alleged interference by the executive secretary for intransparent funding decisions, leading to the 2002 resignation of Eurimages president Gianni Massaro in protest of the situation (Miller et. al. 2005: 187). At a press conference following his resignation, Massaro voiced concern about Eurimages' condition:

I fear that Eurimages cannot go very far under the existing conditions. Funds given by representative states will soon be insufficient. The European Council puts at Eurimages's disposal personnel and buildings but does not contribute to the Fund itself. And yet it is regularly increasing the number of members — from small countries such as Malta and Macedonia who have equal access to the funds but only contribute a very small amount of money [...] Despite past and present reforms of Eurimages, the General Secretary of the European Council

has still opted to privilege bureaucracy. And the most important decisions at Eurimages, which should be discussed in front of the Committee that represents the 27 member states of Eurimages, are being preliminary filtered by Eurimages's executive secretary instead. (Rodier 2002)

Eurimages' new president, responding to a report commissioned by the Centre National de la Cinématographie in France, which concluded that Eurimages was both too bureaucratic and underfunded and played only a minor role when it came to decision-making processes leading to the choice of co-productions, initiated an initiative to change Eurimages funding strategies. The new criteria were based on a combination of the artistic and commercial tracks created in 2000; they introduced a new system of matching bank financing and business sponsors, while still taking the artistic values of projects into account (Miller et al. 2005).

As the following section shows, the MEDIA programs follow a different concept to foster the European film industry. The European Community's MEDIA I program was launched in 1991 with a budget of ECU 200 million. Among the program's primary goals were:

[to] stimulate and increase the competitive supply capacity of European audiovisual products, with special regard for the role and requirements of small and medium-sized undertakings, the legitimate interests of all professionals who play a part in the original creation of such products and the position of countries in Europe with smaller audiovisual production capacities and/or with a limited geographical and linguistic area. (EC 2012a)

Further goals of the program were to "step up intra-European exchanges of films and audiovisual programmes," to "increase European production and distribution companies' share of world markets," and to "promote access to and use of the new communications technologies, particularly European ones, in the production and distribution of audiovisual material" (EC 2012a).

The MEDIA I program had 19 sub-programs, including the SCRIPT program for the support of screenwriting and the EUROPA program, designed for the support of the exhibition sector. It was criticized for being underfunded and created a conflict between France and Great Britain, with the former country supporting it and the latter being

against it (Miller et al.: 188). U.K. producer David Puttnam (2000) assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the first MEDIA program as follows:

MEDIA played a valuable role in nurturing many new voices in Europe's film industry, and did much to improve the level of script development and the training of producers. But the decision to create twenty separate initiatives, scattered throughout the Community, to provide a sense of inclusiveness for each individual nation, meant that MEDIA remained too fragmented to have any significant impact on how the industry in Europe is organized. And because the program was run from Brussels, it seemed to some excessively bureaucratic; people complained that too much time was spent on gatherings in expensive hotels, and too little time focusing on the actual needs of the market. (Puttnam 2000: 262)

Yet, despite its shortcomings, the program had many benefits, some of them in areas that were in dire need of improvement such as development. The MEDIA training programs presumably were able to act as a catalyst in that area. Angus Finney (1996) points out that in the mid-1990s writers who were trained by the MEDIA program had an increased awareness of the realities of the movie industry and were more willing to work in commercial genres (19).

In 1996, the MEDIA II program started with two primary funding areas: "training," funded with €265 million, and "development and distribution," funded with €45 million (EC 2012b). "Training," under the MEDIA II program, "promotes the provision of initial and ongoing training schemes in order to improve the skills of audiovisual professionals," while "Development and Distribution aims to foster the development and transnational circulation of European films, by encouraging and consolidating cooperation between European distributors" (ibid.).

By 1998 forty projects supported by MEDIA II were in development or had been completed. Distribution of 110 films outside of their country of origin under the category "difficult works" was supported with €2.3 million. Among those films were *Breaking the Waves* (Lars von Trier, 1996), *Carne Tremula* (Pedro Almodóvar, 1997) and *Secrets and Lies* (Mike Leigh, 1996) (Miller et al. 2005: 188). Among the most internationally successful films, supported by MEDIA II, was *La vita è bella* (*Life Is*

Beautiful, Roberto Benigni, 1997). The MEDIA II program ended in 2000 and was followed by the MEDIA Plus program.

The MEDIA Plus program, in effect from 2001 to 2006,¹⁷ focused on four main areas of support: "Development," "distribution/broadcasting," "promotion," and "pilot projects" (EC 2012c). Development support, according to the European Commission, was intended to help "independent companies, particularly small and medium-sized businesses, to carry out production projects/project packages for the European and international markets" (ibid.). Distribution and broadcasting support was aimed at supporting "companies broadcasting European, non-national works to the public or for private use," and MEDIA Plus' promotion support was intended "to promote European works in trade shows, fairs and audiovisual festivals in Europe and around the globe." The total budget for MEDIA Plus was €453.6 million (ibid.). Like its predecessors, MEDIA Plus did not fund the production phase of films, and MEDIA Plus also had a complementary training program, funded with a total of €59.4 million (EC 2012d).¹⁸ Among the narrative features supported by MEDIA Plus and originating in one of the Big Five European film industries, that were able to make commercial inroads internationally, were *Le Fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* (Amélie, Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2001), *Mar adentro* (*The Sea Inside*, Alejandro Amenábar, 2004), *Goodbye Lenin!* (Wolfgang Becker, 2003), *Das Leben der Anderen* (*The Lives of Others*, Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, 2006) and *Volver* (Pedro Almodóvar, 2006).

The latest installment of the MEDIA programs—MEDIA 2007—went into effect in January of 2007 and is scheduled to run through 2013 (EC 2012e). MEDIA's funding mechanisms under the 2007 program saw substantial changes, since, according to the European Commission, "the consequences of the digital revolution and the enlargement of the EU for the European audiovisual market required a radical rethink of the priorities and structure of the new programme" (ibid.). While MEDIA 2007

¹⁷ MEDIA Plus was initially funded with €350 million for its intended duration from 2001 to 2005, but was extended to 2006, and its budget was adjusted accordingly (EC 2012c).

¹⁸ MEDIA's training program was initially funded with €50 million for the period of 2001 to 2005, prior to its one-year extension in concurrence with MEDIA Plus' extension (EC 2012d).

maintains a cultural component, aiming to “preserve and enhance European cultural diversity and its cinematographic and audiovisual heritage,” it is more focused on strengthening the competitiveness of the pan-European film industry than its predecessors. According to the European Commission, the program’s funding strategy is intended to “strengthen the production structures of small businesses to make the European audiovisual sector more competitive,” as the European Commission considers that sector the “core” of the European film industry (EC 2012e). To accomplish this, MEDIA 2007 is intended to foster “the spread of a business culture for the sector and facilitating private investment” (ibid.). These objectives and implementation mechanism suggest that the program took earlier criticism to heart and were determined to deal with the changing realities of the European as well as the global marketplace. Most likely addressing criticism about MEDIA’s perceived bias towards larger-scale productions originating in Europe’s biggest film production countries, the funding decisions are said to “reduce imbalances between European countries with a high audiovisual production capacity and countries with low production capacity or a restricted linguistic area” (ibid.). Addressing earlier criticism of hidden and biased decision-making practices, MEDIA 2007’s goals include the promotion of “transparency and competition on the single market, and thereby potential economic growth for the whole Union” (ibid.). Commercially successful transnational projects funded by MEDIA 2007 include *Slumdog Millionaire* (Danny Boyle, 2008), *The King’s Speech* (Tom Hooper, 2010), *The Artist* (Michel Hazanavicius, 2011), *The Iron Lady* (Phyllida Lloyd, 2011), *Jane Eyre* (Cary Fukunaga, 2011) and *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (Tomas Alfredson, 2011).

The MEDIA programs, not only facilitated the development, production and distribution of European films targeted at the pan-European market, but also encouraged the production of films aimed at the global market. While the viability of the MEDIA programs has been under scrutiny ever since their establishment, the European film industry overall seems to have substantially benefited from their existence (personal conversation with Martin Blaney 2011).

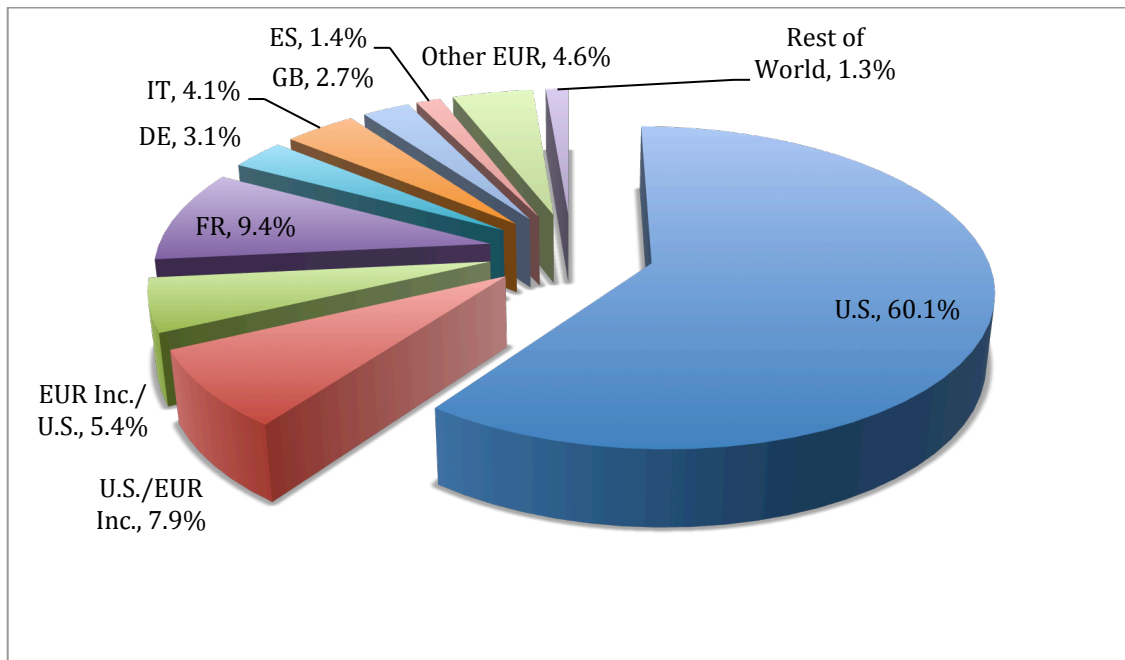
The Current State of the European Film Industry

As Chapters 3 to 7 suggest, by the time the first decade of the new millennium came to a close, segments of Europe's film industry had adopted key aspects of Global Conglomerate Hollywood's development practices to varying degrees. European film markets like the *Marché du Film* in Cannes and the Berlin Film Festival's European Film Market began to resemble the annual American Film Market (AFM). The Frankfurt Book Fair's expanded Books to Film section and events like Breakfast and Books, as part of the Berlinale Co-Production Market, were indicators that the market for films based on literary properties was booming. Looking at the slates of distributors at the *Marché du Film* 2011, a substantial percentage of films for sale were European knockoffs of popular U.S. titles. However, the larger European distribution companies had a substantial number of high-profile films in their lineups. While Eastern European development initiatives like Script East fostered the development of border-crossing movies originating in Eastern Europe, various MEDIA training programs supported script development of transnational productions of Western as well as Eastern European origin. The tighter financial climate in Europe—augmented by the crisis-ridden economies of Portugal, Greece, Italy and Spain and the questionable future of the Euro—appeared to have further increased the focus on commercially viable properties, both national as well as transnational. The film industries in the major European territories seemed to have matured, from an economic standpoint. As my conversations with a number of European producers, directors and writers suggested, more arduous, Hollywood-style script development processes had become the norm, rather than the exception, especially in the higher budget area of European cinema. At the Cannes Film Festival, initiatives like the Producers Network at the *Marché du Film*, providing, as the name suggests, networking opportunities for European film producers, encouraged co-productions between different European countries and have, according to the industry professionals I talked to, helped to solidify the creative roles of European producers. European broadcasters, feeling the financial pressures caused by economies in turmoil, sent fewer people to the 2011 festival and many of those attending came for a shorter

time period. According to industry sources, the traditionally lavish spending by production companies at the festival was in rapid decline for the second year in a row. The Marché du Film, however, was still lively, as producers from all parts of the world presented their projects and looked for co-production partners. Yet, after the prosperous 1990s and most of the 2000s, the winds in the European film industry had perceptibly changed. The global financial crisis had very noticeably begun to take its toll on the European film industries. Its effects on the Big Five European markets seemed to vary, but the tenor among film industry professionals was that times were getting tougher across the board.

Looking at market shares at the European box office in 2010, French films, with a 9.4% share, fared best, followed by productions from Italy with a 4.1% share, Germany, with a 3.1% share, and Great Britain with a 2.7% share. European/U.S. and U.S./European coproductions and co-financing ventures accounted for a combined share of 13.3%, while U.S. productions still claimed the lion's share of 60.1%, as Figure 2.2. illustrates.

Figure 2.2: EU Theatrical Admissions by Origin of Films in 2010



Based on provisional data from OBS and Lumiere.

"Inc." stands for "incoming investment."¹⁹

Source: EAO 2011: 19

The combined efforts of the European film industry to increase its competitiveness in the global market, led to a market share of 6.4% in 2010 (EAO 2011: 19),²⁰ down from 6.8% the previous year (EAO 2010: 19).²¹ The breakdown of the European market share, as illustrated in Figure 2.3., shows that the lion's share, 61.9% of European films in the North American market, goes to films from Great Britain with inward investment from the U.S. French films follow with a share of 11.6%, ahead of German films (10.7%), Great Britain's productions without inward investment (10.4%) and Spanish Films (3.5%).

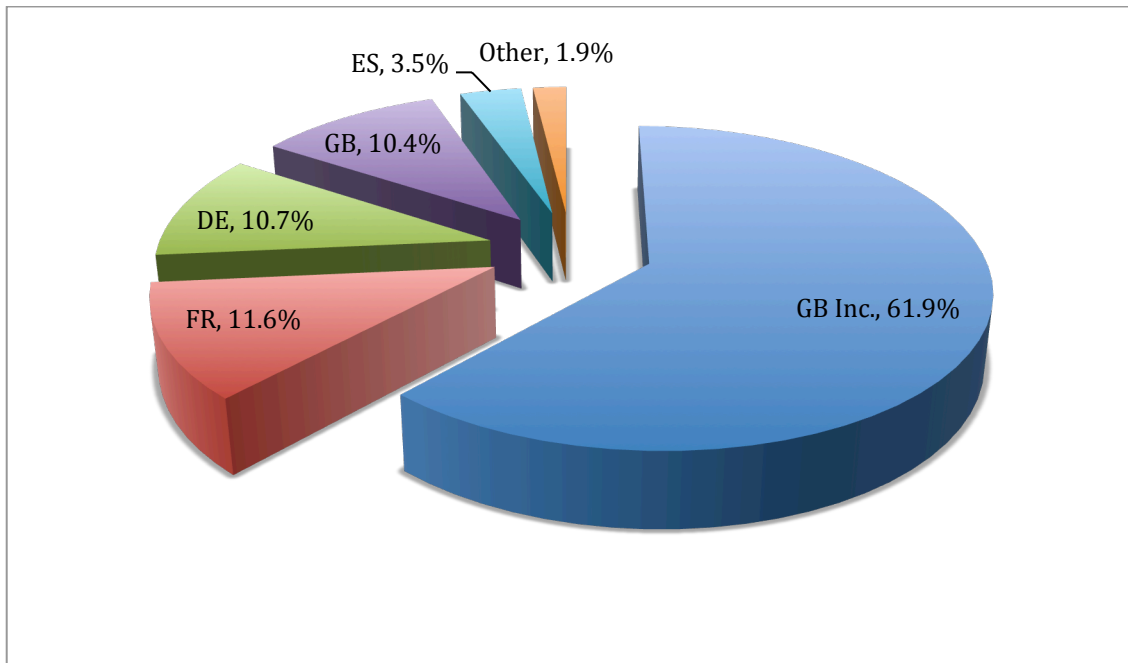
¹⁹ U.S./EUR Inc. refers to U.S. productions with a European financing component.

EUR Inc./U.S. refers to European productions with a U.S. financing component.

²⁰ Based on data from *Variety* and OBS.

²¹ Based on data from *Variety* and OBS.

Figure 2.3: Breakdown of Market Shares of EU Films in North America in 2010



Based on data from Variety, OBS

Source: EAO 2011: 19

While the market share of European films in North America is minor compared to the market share of U.S. productions in Europe, it is still remarkable that, despite all the challenges European films are faced with when aiming at U.S. distribution, there is a market for European cinema in the U.S. that could be expanded upon.

The following five chapters chronicle defining transnational movies and key industry developments in the Big Five European film industries, focusing on decisive moments in their trials and tribulations of competing in global markets with European films.

Chapter Three: United Kingdom

For a better understanding of the U.K. film industry's transnational productions during the Global Conglomerate Hollywood era, a brief look at its operations from the 1940s to the 1970s provides some context.

During what became known as the “Golden Era” of British Cinema, the British film industry in the 1940s produced films that captured domestic audiences exceeding 1 billion each year and—during the second half of the decade—generated numerous films that succeeded in international markets (Brook 2010).²² The 1940s also saw The Rank Organisation, founded in the 1930s by J. Arthur Rank, turn into the U.K.'s first vertically integrated film entity (ibid.). By the mid-1940s, Rank oversaw five film studios, a distribution company and over 650 cinemas, and its size exceeded that of any of the Hollywood studios at the time (Macnab 2010a). Rank's production slate during the 1940s and 1950s contained a large number of popular movies, among them several international hits, and employed some of the U.K.'s most prominent directors (Alexander 2010). Among Rank's competitors was Alexander Korda's London Films, founded in 1932. London Films had produced 40 films during the 1930s, and among the 18 films it produced during the 1940s were such international successes as *The Thief of Bagdad* (Ludwig Berger, Michael Powell, Tim Whelan, 1940), *A Canterbury Tale* (Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger, 1944). London Films' biggest international success was *The Third Man* (Carol Reed, 1949), that was co-produced with Hollywood legend David O. Selznick. London Films is said to have benefited from growing dissatisfaction among prominent British directors like Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, David Lean and Carol Reed with Rank's John Davis, who J. Arthur Rank

²² Some examples of internationally popular U.K. films produced during that time period were *Great Expectations* (David Lean, 1946), *Oliver Twist* (David Lean, 1948), *Hamlet* (Laurence Olivier, 1948), *The Red Shoes* (Michael Powell & Emeric Pressburger, 1948) and *The Third Man* (Michael Powell, 1949).

put in charge of operations when he withdrew from the company in 1952 (Duguid 2010a, Macnab 2010a).

In the 1950s, British war films were not only the U.K.'s biggest box office magnet, they also turned out to be viable transnational properties. The U.K. film industry's most successful film at the international box office in the 1950s was the Academy Award-winning war drama *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (David Lean, 1957) (Sinyard 2010). The late 1950s saw the collapse of the Ealing and London studios, so that by the 1960s only Rank, operating the Pinewood studios, and Associated British, operating the Elstree studios, remained of the major U.K. production houses. U.S. studios made use of the vacuum, by heavily investing in British productions (Duguid 2010b). Reinforcing the export potential of British film properties, the 1960s saw the birth of one of the U.K.'s most successful transnational franchises, the *James Bond* series, with *Dr. No* (Terrence Young, 1965). The 1960s also saw a number of U.K. productions being helmed by non-U.K. directors. Among these films were *Blow Up* (1966), directed by Italian director Michelangelo Antonioni; *Repulsion* (1965) and *Cul-de-Sac* (1966), directed by Polish director Roman Polanski; *Fahrenheit 451* (1968), directed by French director *François Truffaut*, and *Lolita* (1961) and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), directed by American director Stanley Kubrik (ibid.).

In the 1970s the British film industry was troubled by financial woes and drastically shrinking movie audiences, related to increasing competition from television and home video by the late 1970s, and a drop in U.S. investment (Brooke 2010). For the big British production companies, the 1970s were a mixed bag. EMI, which had acquired Associated British and Elstree Studios in 1969, struck a production financing deal with MGM, but the lack of a sufficient number of successful films in the early 1970s led to the resignation of EMI's head of production in 1971 and to a subsequent staff reduction by 50 percent (ibid.). Despite these difficulties, EMI managed to produce a number of internationally successful films such as *Murder on the Orient Express* (Sidney Lumet, 1974) and *That'll be the Day* (Claude Whatham, 1973) Rank, having diversified by getting into the photocopying business, focused its film

operations on popular British franchises like the *Carry On* series of comedies (Brooke 2010).²³

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSNATIONAL FILMS IN THE U.K. IN THE 1980S

The U.K. film industry continued to struggle during the 1980s. Film scholar John Hill (1996) attributes the decline in British cinema production, decreasing film budgets, and a growing dominance of U.S. films in British theaters during the early 1980s to failed policies by the Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher, coming to power in 1979 (101). The new government—as Hill points out—focused on the commercial aspect of film while ignoring its cultural value and tampered with the three cornerstones of film industry support in the U.K.: it reduced and eventually abandoned a minimum quota of British films that distributors and exhibitors had to take on; it modified and then suspended the so-called Eady levy, a tax on box-office receipts that exhibitors had to pay, destined to flow back into film production, and it replaced the publicly run National Film Finance Corporation (NFFC) with the privately operated British Screen Finance Consortium, later renamed as British Screen Finance Limited. All this was done without offering alternative mechanisms to help the British film industry out of its crisis (102-103). Hill considers the government's decision in 1986 to suspend tax incentives introduced in 1979—that had led to an increase in capital invested into film productions—similarly destructive (104).

With British Screen remaining the only government-supported film industry funding organization, equipped with a rather limited budget, television financing became essential for the survival of the British film industry (105). Channel 4, established in 1982 as a commercial channel with a public service contract, unlike the BBC and ITV, did not produce programs in-house, but purchased or financed properties

²³ *Carry on Up the Jungle* (Gerald Thomas, 1970), *Carry on at your Convenience* (Gerald Thomas, 1971), *Carry on Henry VIII* (Gerald Thomas, 1971), *Carry on Abroad* (Gerald Thomas, 1972), *Carry on Girls* (Gerald Thomas, 1973), *Carry on Dick* (Gerald Thomas, 1974), *Carry on Behind* (Gerald Thomas, 1975), *Carry On England* (Gerald Thomas, 1976), *That's Carry On* (Gerald Thomas, 1979)

made by independent production companies, domestic and international (ibid.). Hill points out that Channel 4's involvement in some of the most prominent films in the 1980s and 1990s also inspired the BBC and a number of ITV companies to get involved in feature film production (106).

The early 1980s saw the rise of Goldcrest, a film development financing company started in 1977 by Jake Eberts, a Canadian national who wet his toes in the British film business by raising money for the animated adventure drama *Watership Down* (Martin Rosen, 1978). Goldcrest's operations focused on the development and packaging of projects. Inspired by Hollywood development strategies, Goldcrest developed projects that were high-concept and—as a personal preference of Jake Eberts—many of them based on true stories (Eberts and Ilott 1990: 32-33).

Some of the most successful British transnational properties of the 1980s were directed by foreign directors. Examples are *The Elephant Man* (1980), directed by David Lynch; *An American Werewolf in London* (1981), directed by John Landis; *Moonlighting* (1982), directed by Jerzy Skolimowski, and *Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence* (1983), directed by Nagisa Oshima (Brooke 2010). This talent migration from the U.S., however, was a two-way street, as a number of British directors, such as Alan Parker, Adrian Lyne and Ridley and Tony Scott, worked predominantly in Hollywood during the 1980s (Brooke 2010).

Among the most prominent U.K. films by British directors—achieving transnational success in the 1980s—were *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981), *Gandhi* (Richard Attenborough, 1982), *Local Hero* (Bill Forsyth, 1983), *The Killing Fields* (Roland Joffé, 1984), *A Room with a View* (James Ivory, 1985), and *Hope and Glory* (John Boorman, 1987). Films arguably developed with the global market in mind, yet not performing according to expectations at either the U.K. domestic or the international theatrical box office, were *Revolution* (Hugh Hudson, 1985), *Absolute Beginners* (Julien Temple, 1986), and *The Mission* (Roland Joffé, 1986). One of the most successful British transnational films of the 1980s, directed by a foreign director, was *The Last Emperor* (Bernardo Bertolucci: 1987).

The producer of four of the previously mentioned most prominent films by British directors was David Puttnam. Starting in the 1970s, he developed, produced, and executive produced films with the international market in mind.²⁴ Following the internationally successful and critically acclaimed *Midnight Express* (Alan Parker, 1978), and commercially successful *Foxes* (Adrian Lyne, 1980), Puttnam produced the aforementioned historical sports drama *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981), which, according to James Park (1990), was “the film that most symbolized hopes for a renaissance in British filmmaking.” *Chariots of Fire* tells the story of two athletes competing at the 1924 Summer Olympics in Paris. Park calls the film “David Puttnam’s calculated attempt to show that a picture originated in Britain, and dealing with British characters, could have an international audience” (Park 1990: 144).²⁵ The film won four 1982 Academy Awards, including the ones for Best Picture and Best Writing, Screenplay Written Directly for the Screen. It also won a Golden Globe for Best Foreign Film and three BAFTA Awards for Best Picture and became what Geoff Mayer (2003) calls “one of the most internationally celebrated and commercially successful British films of all time—despite the fact that it was financed largely from non-British money” (63).

Jeremy Thomas, the producer of *The Last Emperor*, had a similar transnational development trajectory to Puttnam’s from the late 1970s onward. Thomas did not limit himself to directors from the U.K., like Nic Roeg and Stephen Frears, but produced

²⁴ Puttnam entered the U.K. film industry without any formal training. Before becoming a producer, he had been an advertising executive. This job, more or less by coincidence, led to his film producing career (Sen, 2005). Quickly rising in the ranks of a U.K. ad agency, he was supervising Alan Parker, Hugh Hudson and Ridley Scott, all working on film scripts during their time at the agency, and all later employed by Puttnam on various film projects. While Puttnam’s first movie *Melody* (Alan Parker, 1971) wasn’t very successful, his subsequent movies, *That’ll Be The Day* (Claude Whatham, 1973), *Stardust* (Michael Apted, 1974), *Bugsy Malone* (Alan Parker, 1976) and *The Duellists* (Ridley Scott, 1977)—according to Puttnam all based on “really fine scripts”—did very well (Sen 2005).

²⁵ Park attributes the film’s international success not to his extraordinary quality—stating that “on most levels, this film [...] was rather ordinary”—but to its ability to play “skillfully on the audience’s emotions,” and the fact that it “offered an old-fashioned, morally satisfying conclusion,” as well as to skillful marketing and its winning of Academy Awards (Park 1990: 144).

films for directors of different nationalities, like Jerzy Skolimowski, Nagisa Oshima and Bernardo Bertolucci. According to Park, after the global critical and commercial success of Bertolucci's *The Last Emperor* (1987), Thomas was recognized as "one of the world's leading independent producers, able to make projects wherever he wanted with whomsoever he wanted" (142).

In 1987, Puttnam accepted the chairman position at Columbia Pictures, which at the time was suffering from a dry spell at the box office. During his brief tenure at Columbia, Puttnam, unfamiliar with the studio environment, quickly alienated members of the Hollywood power elite and failed to deliver box office success, leading to his ousting from the studio after only 15 months and his return to the U.K. (Griffin & Masters (208-209).

Transnational U.K. Dramas in the 1980s

Scandal, released in 1989, was directed by Michael Caton-Jones, written by Michael Thomas and produced by Stephen Woolley. The film is based on the true story of members of the British Conservative party in the 1960s getting involved in a sex scandal, the so-called Profumo Affair, and was highly controversial when it was released. Interesting about the development process of *Scandal* is that it shows the importance of a creative producer for successfully launching a project. What started out as a mini-series concept was turned into a feature film script by Caton-Jones and Woolley (Petrie 1991: 178). Regarding his creative involvement in the feature film making process, Woolley says, "I always find I have a very strong creative influence over the screenplay. I also have a very strong hand on casting and I feel I need to have a strong hand for me to be there and follow it through to the end" (ibid.).

Scandal was Palace's first production involving Miramax. The Miramax founders Bob and Harvey Weinstein had invested \$2.35 million into *Scandal* and served as co-executive producers and U.S. distributors of the film. The Weinsteins, from the late 1980s onward, have been catalysts for the distribution of foreign films in the U.S. having demonstrated a good sense for which European films would work in the U.S.

market. Palace Pictures co-founder Nik Powell, an executive producer on *Scandal*, points out the similarities of Palace and Miramax's approaches to filmmaking:

The bonding was immediate. Harvey was really adventurous and into making a bang. If he saw a film or a project and we liked it, neither of the companies would worry about whether anybody else thought it was any good. Harvey is a great believer that sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll shouldn't only be the province of the rock business. (Finney 1996c: 146)

While Harvey Weinstein frequently visited the set in London, trying to ensure the film's marketability in the U.S. (Biskind 2004: 60-61), the development phase was entirely in British hands. *Scandal*, in fact, can serve as an example of how complicated the development process for a project in the late 1980s U.K. film industry could be, and how little it resembles the notion of "auteur filmmaking," often associated with the filmmaking process in Europe. In this case, independent record producer Joe Boyd, a U.S. native, approached Woolley with "a detailed treatment" for three mini-series scripts prepared by Australian writer Michael Thomas. Woolley liked the project but disliked the treatments and suggested to replace the writer and to approach Stephen Frears to direct it (Finney 1996c: 148). While Boyd had Thomas do a rewrite, Woolley sent the script to Frears, who liked it but ended up making the move to the U.S. film industry and doing *Dangerous Liaisons* (1988) for Warner Bros. instead (149). Development of *Scandal*, originally supported by the BBC, was dropped by the BBC due to heavy political opposition to the controversial project. The project subsequently received financial support from rising media tycoon and former member of the British parliament Robert Maxwell. When the producers reached out to partner with U.S. companies on the project in October of 1987, they garnered the interest of U.S. company Cinecom. However, after experiencing contractual difficulties at the closing stage of the deal, the U.K. producers jumped ship and chose Miramax as its U.S. partner on *Scandal* (148-156).

The development process on *Scandal* illustrates the important role of a creative producer during the development phase, and it mirrors the key role creative producers have in Global Conglomerate Hollywood. After the film's director Michael Caton-

Jones created a 180-page movie version of what was originally conceived as a mini-series, Woolley and Caton-Jones went through the script “scene by scene” in a seven-hour session. According to Caton-Jones, “we were talking about the guts of the film, not how to con people into putting money in or how to get a celebrity cast.” Caton-Jones credits Woolley for being “terribly, terribly bright” and says that after the infamous seven-hour script session he “had the most tremendous respect for him, because of his smartness and application” (Finney 1996c: 152-153). Thomas seconds Caton-Jones’ impression of Woolley by saying that “he was always suggesting ideas and raising questions, but he understands that the best way a writer works is to make him go back to the script himself and want to try harder” (153).

Fueled by pressure from Miramax, Boyd, Woolley and Caton-Jones assembled a promotable cast, including Bridget Fonda, Joanne Whalley-Kilmer, John Hurt and Ian McKellen. Woolley then, with Harvey Weinstein on his side, took the lead in pushing the film through production, which was wrapped by the end of Summer of 1988 (157-163). U.S. influence on the making of *Scandal*—in the form of constant demands by the Weinstein brothers—was apparent not only during the later stages of development and during production, but especially during post-production of the film. Harvey Weinstein’s proposed changes to the cut, according to Boyle’s recollection, were substantial. “Harvey wanted a huge chunk of the second half of the movie taken out because he thought it would confuse the American audience. We had to fight, fight and fight” (Finney 1996c: 164). Ed Glass, a former trailer editor for the Weinsteins, says, “We re-edited *Scandal*. Harvey said, ‘nobody fucking knows who Profumo is, nobody knows who Christine Keeler is, you’re dealing with Americans! You’ve gotta tell them upfront.’” According to Glass, “the auteurs felt like they were swallowing poison. They didn’t want to cut a frame. But Harvey made the movie more accessible to more people” (ibid.). Harvey Weinstein, talking about making European movies accessible to mainstream American audiences, tells Peter Biskind in an interview:

I’m a kid who was born in Queens. If I could grow up the way I grew up, with a dad in the jewelry business and a mom who worked as a secretary, and I could

love these movies—Truffaut, Fellini, De Broca, Visconti—why can't a guy in Kansas City love these movies? (Biskind 2004: 61)

While the Weinsteins re-cut *Scandal* for American audiences, its British producers promoted the film in the U.K. using Hollywood PR strategies. Palace hired a marketing researcher from Warner Bros., who explains the marketing strategy on the film as follows: “instead of doing the typical Palace-type research, which was to get anyone who would come for free—and then ask them to fill in our dodgy questionnaire, which everyone returned with coffee stains, this time we did it properly.” Palace used tracking studies and fine-tuned its marketing strategy based on their outcome to maximize the film's box office potential. With a prints and advertising budget of about £400,000, the film grossed £2.25 million at the U.K. box office by the film's 10th release day. *Scandal* substantially outperformed fellow contenders *Dangerous Liaisons* (Stephen Frears, 1988) and *The Accused* (Jonathan Kaplan, 1988) and ended up making more than \$15 million at the North American and U.K. box office (Finney 1996c: 165-166).

Securing a spot in the prestigious Directors' Fortnight at Cannes and putting its director on the international map in the late 1980s, was U.K. director Mike Figgis' big-screen debut *Stormy Monday* (1988), a crime drama starring Melanie Griffith, Sting and Tommy Lee Jones. The film was a Palace Pictures release in the U.K. and an Atlantic release in the U.S. theatrical market, where it grossed \$1,791,328.²⁶ Mike Figgis would continue his film career in the U.S., directing a slate of films including *Internal Affairs* (1990), *Liebestraum* (1991), *Mr. Jones* (1993), *Leaving Las Vegas* (1995) and *Timecode* (2000), and in the late 2000s would begin directing U.S. TV series.

Similarly internationally marketable like some of the best British dramas, were films of the British heritage genre.

²⁶ IMDb 2012, “Box office / business for Stormy Monday (1988), accessed on 4/27/2012, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0096180/business>

Transnational U.K. Heritage Films in the 1980s

Andrew Higson (2006) calls the British heritage film “one of the most visible production trends of the British—or perhaps more accurately, the Anglo-Hollywood—cinema of the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s” (204). 1980s U.K. films falling into that category were the previously mentioned *Chariots of Fire* (Hugh Hudson, 1981), *Gandhi* (Richard Attenborough, 1982), *A Passage to India* (David Lean, 1984), *A Room with a View* (James Ivory, 1986), *White Mischief* (Michael Radford, 1987) and *Maurice* (James Ivory, 1987). Higson calls these films “culturally specific,” yet “designed for [...] international distribution,” as the “commercial viability of the production trend as a whole and the Austen adaptations in particular depended crucially on the ability of producers to secure adequate exhibition in the lucrative US market, and therefore to attract the interest of American distributors” (205). According to Higson, a number of these films were “produced and/or marketed as crossover films – that is, films that might move between a niche market and a ‘mass’ market.” Higson points out that “such films are driven by both the commercialism and the market imperatives of the mainstream studio film and the cultural imperatives and artistic values of the specialized art-house film” (ibid.). More heritage films would follow in the 1990s and 2000s, as the U.K. film industry recognized the genre as a promising opportunity to capture both domestic as well as international audiences.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSNATIONAL FILMS IN THE UK IN THE 1990s

Dissatisfaction with the state of the U.K. film industry increased during the early 1990s. While some of the British A-list producers like Jeremy Thomas kept reinventing themselves and made a mark in the international marketplace, others complained about the adverse conditions plaguing the U.K. film industry. David Puttnam, most likely somewhat disillusioned by his brief experience of running a U.S. studio, points out some of the key weaknesses of the U.K. film industry in the early 1990s, compared to Hollywood:

We make as many films in Europe as they do in America. But we invest significantly less money in our industry than they do in theirs. We invest less in development, less in production, less in post-production and far less in marketing. Not surprisingly, our films are a lot less successful than theirs. (Ilott 1996: vii)

However, a shift in the U.K. film industry's development strategies and practices can be noticed by the mid-1990s. This shift was caused by changes in governmental policies, and a further transformation of the international marketplace, led by substantial changes in the U.S. film industry. The early 1990s initiated the beginning of the end of the era of conservative leadership in the U.K., characterized by a lack of adequate public support for the film industry. In November of 1990, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, responding to a challenge from within her party, resigned from her posts as Prime Minister and party leader. John Major replaced her and eventually led the Conservative Party to re-election in 1992. As the country entered into a recession, the Conservative Parties lost some of its leadership credibility and, despite an economic recovery well before the next elections, the Conservatives did not recover fast enough to receive enough votes for another term, bringing the Labour Party back into power in 1997. The change in leadership would lead to gradual, yet substantial film policy changes, that had a significant impact on the course of the U.K. film industry in the late 1990s and throughout the 2000s.

Some of these changes had an effect on development funding, and, where financing for development was concerned, competition for the various public development funding mechanisms in the 1990s was intense, and the funds operated in an increasingly challenging economic environment (Finney 1996b: 23). When the National Film Development Fund (NFDF) ceased in 1991 and passed on its operations to British Screen Finance as the key national funding body for development, the new parameters under which British Screen Finance operated marked a significant change to development funding strategies in the U.K. (Finney 1996b: 23). British Screen chief executive Simon Perry says that the difference between the prior NFDF development support and the support provided by British Screen was that the amount of money

under the old fund was completely inadequate (ibid.). Perry stresses, that with the new funding structure British Screen wants to “encourage a range of writers, including experienced ones, to come and write the kinds of films that could be made in Europe, from Europe, and in which British Screen could eventually invest” (24). This marked a clear departure from investing money in projects with a questionable commercial future. Perry also proposes a more hands-on approach by the funding body, by creating an almost studio-like development environment (25). Finney points out that British Screen, supporting roughly a dozen projects per year in the 1990s was tailored to producers, while the British Film Institute’s development funding was tailored to writers and directors, with each project being awarded a set fee for two screenplay drafts and a screenplay polish (ibid.). According to Finney, five to seven projects of about 500 submissions were funded, and the development-to-production ratio tended to be about 2 to 1 (ibid.).

Cautious optimism about a better future for the British film industry was reflected in an increase in production volume. The number of films produced by the U.K. film industry in the 1990s almost doubled from 1990 to 1999, from 53 to 103 films. The U.K.’s national film share grew from 7% in 1990 to a peak of 23% in 1997 and dropped to 14.1% the following year, slightly recovering to 16.5% in 1999. The U.S. film share was highest in 1991 with 93% and settled at 80.5% in 1999. The share of European films at the U.K. box office peaked in 1996 with 3.1% and dropped to 1.6% by 1999, as Table 5.2. shows.

Table 5.2.: Film Production in the U.K. — 1990-1999

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Feature-length films produced ¹	53	51	48	52	73	73	121	115	91	103
Number of first-run films in theaters	396	341	232	238	299	269	322	339	356	360
Number of Screens	1,659	1,770	1,837	1,854	1,976	2,010	2,166	2,383	2,581	2,758
Admissions (in millions)	96.9	97.6	102.9	113.2	124.0	114.9	123.8	138.9	135.2	139.1
Box-office receipts (in million £)	226.9	274.3	275.0	315.0	381.9	382.6	440.2	512.4	547.0	563.0
U.K. national film share (%) ³	7.0	5.5	8.4	4.7	12.3	10.4	12.8	23.0	14.1	16.5
U.S. film share (%)	89.0	93.0	85.8	87.0	85.6	85.2	81.7	73.5	83.9	80.5
European film share (%)	-	-	-	-	-	1.4	3.1	2.0	1.9	1.6

¹ Includes films produced by U.S. companies and shot in the U.K. Data Source: BFI

³ Includes films produced by means of American investments.

Source: CNC²⁷

The recovery from low national film shares at the U.K. box office can be attributed to an increase in co-ventures with the U.S. and an increasing focus on the development and production of films capable of performing well at the international box office. Two of the genres the U.K. has had a track record of excelling in internationally have been comedy and romantic comedy. Several U.K. romantic comedies in the 1990s turned into transnational properties and were able to cross over into the U.S. market. Among the more prominent ones was *Truly Madly Deeply* (1990), written and directed by Anthony Minghella. Theatrically distributed in the U.S. by the Samuel Goldwyn Company, it grossed \$1,554,742 at the U.S. box office.²⁸

Even more successful internationally has been Working Title's slate of romantic comedies. Working Title, founded in 1984 by Tim Bevan and Sarah Radclyffe, was acquired by Polygram in 1992, the same year that Polygram and Universal Pictures

²⁷ CNC World Cinema Statistics, from <http://www.cnc.fr/web/en/sectoral-statistics>

²⁸ Produced by the BBC, U.K. production company Lionheart and U.S. company Winston, *Truly Madly Deeply* laid the groundwork for U.K. writer/director Anthony Minghella's international film career.

launched distribution company Gramercy. The latter would serve as the North American distributor for Polygram's films, while also releasing a number of award-winning properties from other European countries, as well as some highly acclaimed U.S. independents.²⁹ Prior to Polygram's involvement in *Working Title*, Bevan and Radclyffe were struggling independent producers. According to Bevan:

We would develop a script, that would take about 5% of our time; we'd find a director, that'd take about 5% of the time and then we'd spend 90% of the time trying to juggle together deals from different sources to finance those films. The films were suffering because there was no real structure and, speaking for myself, my company was always virtually bankrupt. (Higgins 2005)

Working Title's international breakthrough came with *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Mike Newell, 1994). The romantic comedy—distributed in the U.S. by Gramercy—not only did well at the U.S. box office, generating \$52,700,832, but also grossed \$193 million internationally (non-U.S.), which led *Working Title* to a financing and distribution deal with French StudioCanal. *Four Weddings and A Funeral* marked the beginning of a streak of internationally successful contemporary comedies for *Working Title*.³⁰ It provided a morale boost for the struggling U.K. film industry and supported PolyGram's global expansion strategy. PolyGram's president Michael Kuhn in 1994 verbalized the company's strategy of focusing on international rather than national markets and going head to head with Hollywood:

If you mix up culture and business, you get yourself in a big mess. Nobody talks about French penicillin. You have to say there's a huge worldwide industry—in the movie business, whether you like it or not, the business is the Hollywood movie industry, a \$60 billion worldwide industry. The big question for France—for Europe—is how can we get our share? (Le Film Français May 17 1994, as quoted in Dale 1997: 155)

According to Martin Dale (1997), PolyGram “decided from the beginning that the key target market was to penetrate the U.S. market, a maxim learned from 25 years

²⁹ Among Polygram's releases of successful U.S. independents during the 1990s were *The Usual Suspects* (Bryan Singer, 1995), *Fargo* (Joel and Ethan Coen, 1996), *The Last Days of Disco* (Whit Stillman, 1998) and *The Big Lebowski* (Joel and Ethan Coen, 1998).

³⁰ *Working Title's* first successful production was Stephen Frears' *My Beautiful Launderette* (1985).

experience of selling music into the U.S.” (155). Dale states that the “main focus of the company has been to produce American and British films intended to open first in the US market and then to be sold abroad” (ibid.).³¹ However, by the mid-1990s, PolyGram’s film division, had lost \$20 to \$40 million per year and Michael Kuhn’s strategy to make the operation profitable by producing “a string of hit movies” had failed (Dale 1997: 156). When Seagram bought Polygram in 1999, Universal Pictures, owned by Seagram at the time, made Working Title part of its operations (Klady 2010). This new scenario significantly strengthened Working Title’s ability to produce successful transnational films, as will become evident in the section covering U.K. cinema in the 2000s.

When looking at *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, its development process also appears to support the argument that high-concept and high-profile transnational U.K. projects from the 1980s onward have increasingly followed development models typically found in Global Conglomerate Hollywood. The script for *Four Weddings and a Funeral* was shepherded through 17 drafts by U.K. producer Duncan Kenworthy. (Dale 1997: 108). Kenworthy, educated in the U.K. and the U.S.,³² attached *Enchanted April* director Mike Newell and approached Working Title with the project. Working Title, “nervous” at first, trimmed the film’s budget from \$5.5 to \$4.45 million and put the project into production (Dale 1997: 109). The film, starring Andie McDowell and Hugh Grant, grossed \$52,700,832 at the U.S. box office and \$193 million at the international (non-U.S.) box office.³³

³¹ Dale also points out that PolyGram, by the mid-1990s, also produced several French and Dutch films per year, relying on private equity and state subsidy money.

³² Kenworthy received his education at Oxford and the University of Pennsylvania and got his start in the U.S. Entertainment industry by working on the television series *Sesame Street* (Duncan Kenworthy - Producer 2010).

³³ Box Office Mojo 2010, “Four Weddings and a Funeral,” accessed on 6/15/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=fourweddingsandafuneral.htm>

While *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, shot for an estimated budget of approximately \$5.4 million³⁴ was an international hit with a very high investment to return ratio, another U.K. film fared even better in that respect: The British comedy *The Full Monty* (Peter Cattaneo, 1994), about six unemployed men from Sheffield who decide to expose themselves at a self-organized strip event, in order to raise money for various causes, was shot for an estimated \$3.5 million and grossed \$211,988,527 internationally.³⁵ Theatrically distributed in the U.S. by Fox Searchlight, it generated \$45,950,122 at the U.S. box office,³⁶ making it one of the most successful U.K. productions of the 1990s.³⁷

U.K. Transnational Heritage Films in the 1990s

In the wake of the domestic and international successes of some of the 1980s British heritage films, the U.K. film industry followed up with a staple of heritage movies like *Orlando* (Sally Potter, 1992), *Howards End* (James Ivory, 1992), *Much Ado about Nothing* (Kenneth Branagh, 1993), *Angels and Insects* (Philip Haas, 1995), *The Madness of King George* (Nicholas Hytner, 1995), *Mrs Brown* (John Madden, 1997), *Elizabeth* (Shekhar Kapur, 1998), *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (Charles Sturridge, 1991), *Enchanted April* (Mike Newell, 1991), *Carrington* (Christopher Hampton, 1995), *Jude* (Michael Winterbottom, 1996), *The Wings of the Dove* (Iain Softley, 1997), and *Shakespeare in Love* (John Madden, 1998).

A number of these films turned out to be internationally marketable. The romantic drama *Persuasion* (Roger Mitchell, 1995), a U.K./French/U.S. co-

³⁴ Based on author's currency calculation using historic exchange rates. IMDb budget estimate for *Four Weddings and a Funeral* is listed as £3.5 million.

³⁵ Non-U.S.

³⁶ Box Office Mojo 2010, "The Full Monty: Summary," accessed on 6/15/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=fullmonty.htm>.

³⁷ Only the U.S. micro-budget independent comedy *Napoleon Dynamite* (Jared Hess, 2004) had a better investment to return ratio in the U.S. market that year. With a production budget of about \$400,000, *Napoleon Dynamite* grossed \$44,540,956 at the U.S. box office. It, however, only made \$1,577,141 internationally. Box Office Mojo 2010, "Napoleon Dynamite: Summary," accessed on 6/15/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=napoleondynamite.htm>.

production,³⁸ for example, received U.S. theatrical distribution by Sony Pictures Classics and grossed \$5,462,325 at the U.S. box office.³⁹ The screenplay of *Persuasion* was written by Nick Dear, based on a Jane Austin novel.⁴⁰

More successful internationally was the Stephen Evans and David Parfitt produced comedic period drama *The Madness of King George*, directed by Nicholas Hytner.⁴¹ The film tells the story of George III, King of Great Britain and Ireland from 1760 to 1801, and his battle with a serious form of dementia, that affected him personally and his performance as ruler of Great Britain during the later years of his life. Production companies involved were the U.K.'s Channel Four Films and Stephen Evans' newly established production company Close Call Films, along with U.S. production and distribution entity The Samuel Goldwyn Company. *The Madness of King George* won multiple international awards⁴² and was theatrically distributed in the

³⁸ *Persuasion* was produced by George Faber from the BBC and Fiona Finlay. Production companies involved were French BBC Films, Millésime Productions, U.S. company WGBH (as WGBH Boston) and French broadcaster France 2 (FR2) as a co-producer.

³⁹ IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for *Persuasion* (1995)," accessed on 11/19/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0114117/business>

⁴⁰ Talking about what attracted him to the story and his perception of Jane Austen's narrative, screenwriter Nick Dear says, that *Persuasion*, despite being set in 1814 and written in 1816, appeared very modern to him (Sony Pictures Classics – *Persuasion* 1995). Dear says, he wanted "to write a film that had more in common with Ingmar Bergman than with the standard adaptation of Jane Austen" (ibid.). According to Dear, "the difficulties in adapting *Persuasion* for the screen were firstly, finding a structure which allowed us to stick very faithfully to what happens in the novel; and then secondly having a central character who hardly speaks for most of the first half and therefore can't motor the action along as a central character conventionally does" (ibid.). Dear says that adapting a novel is a "craft job" of "interpreting the novel for oneself and then finding a film language for it" (ibid.).

⁴¹ It was Hytner's film debut. Prior to *The Madness of King George*, he had made a name for himself as an acclaimed U.K. theater director and received international recognition by staging the musical *Miss Saigon*, which subsequently turned into a global success. *The Madness of King George* was written by Alan Bennet, who adopted his own play.

⁴² Among the awards were three BAFTA Awards, including the Alexander Korda Award for Best British Film, an Oscar for Best Art Direction - Set Direction. It also won the Best Actress Award at Cannes and was nominated for the Golden Palm, and won the Writers' Guild of Great Britain Award for its screenplay. Among the three Oscars it was nominated for were: Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium, Best Actress in a Supporting Role for Helen Mirren and Best Actor in a Leading Role for Nigel Hawthorne.

U.S. by Goldwyn. It grossed \$15,238,994 at the U.S. and £3,330,349 at the U.K. box office respectively.⁴³

With the U.S. success of Hytner's film, Hollywood seemed an attractive option to continue his career. After directing several U.S. studio movies,⁴⁴ he returned to the U.K. to direct the comedy drama *The History Boys* (1996). Hytner calls his time in the U.S. a "mistake professionally." He says that spending too much time in the U.S. while neglecting his career in the U.K. was damaging. He says that he did it partially because his conviction of being able to "make it in American movies," which he eventually realized that he "absolutely couldn't" (Dickson 2010). According to Hytner, his motivation of making movies in the U.S. was not driven by economic considerations, but came from his desire to reach a mass audience (ibid.).

Among Shakespeare adaptations that turned into transnational properties in the 1990s was the U.K./U.S. co-production *Twelfth Night*. Written and directed by Trevor Nunn, based on a play by William Shakespeare and produced by BBC Films and U.S. production companies Fine Line Features, Renaissance Films, Circus Films, and film financing/production company Summit Entertainment. Shakespeare screen adaptations in the 1990s show that producers were relying on a seemingly working formula for making films perceived to cross international borders and were also successful at the U.K. box office. *Twelfth Night*, while getting distribution in the U.S., however, is an

⁴³ IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for *The Madness of King George* (1994)," accessed on 7/27/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0110428/business>

⁴⁴ Hytner followed up with the historical drama *The Crucible* (1996), written by Arthur Miller, based on his play and produced by Robert A. Miller and David V. Picker for an estimated budget of \$25 million for U.S. studio Twentieth Century Fox, also a distributor on the film. The film—starring Daniel Day-Lewis, Winona Ryder and Paul Scofield—received much critical acclaim and was nominated for two Oscars, two Golden Globes, a Golden Bear and a BAFTA Award for Best Adapted Screenplay. However, grossing only \$7,343,114 at the U.S. box office, it failed to meet the studio's expectations. Nevertheless Hytner was able to continue his U.S. directing career with the romantic comedy *The Object of My Affection* (1998), written by Wendy Wasserstein, based on the novel by Stephen McCauley and produced by Laurence Mark for Twentieth Century Fox, also serving as a distributor for the film. The film stars Jennifer Aniston, Paul Rudd and Kali Rocha and—produced for an estimated budget of \$15 million—grossed \$29,187,243 at the U.S. and \$17,718,646 at the international (non-U.S.) box office respectively. He followed up with the U.S. TV movie *Twelfth Night, or What You Will* and the musical drama *Center Stage* (2000).

example that the formula was not always successful, as the film grossed only \$551,545 theatrically by December 1996.⁴⁵ The U.S. reviews for the film were mixed. *LA Times* critic Kevin Thomas (1996) wrote that, “Nunn's distinguished ensemble cast acts away mightily, but only fitfully do the actors actually seem to become the characters they are playing. The inevitable result is a film that only occasionally comes alive.” *Variety* critic Todd McCarthy (1996) calls it an “OK Shakespeare adaptation, a handsome, agreeably performed rendition that fails to ignite much laughter or any real emotion” and predicts its “commercial prospects” to be “modest,” which turned out to be accurate.

Much more successful at the global box office, and one of the most successful U.S./U.K. co-productions of the 1990s, was the Academy Award winner *Shakespeare in Love* (1998), directed by John Madden. Veteran writer Tom Stoppard⁴⁶ collaborated on the screenplay with British writer Marc Norman, also one of the film’s producers.⁴⁷

Shakespeare in Love serves as an example for a hybrid U.S./U.K. production, with a development process firmly rooted in the U.S. system, and U.S. producers mostly in control of the primary elements of development and production. Marc Norman presented his original script to U.S. producer Edward Zwick, who took the project to Universal, where he had a studio deal, attached Julia Roberts and gave the script to Tom Stoppard to rewrite (Biskind 2005: 327). Roberts dropped out of the project after Daniel Day-Lewis, whom she envisioned to play Shakespeare, turned down the role and Universal consequently put the movie into turnaround (ibid.). Zwick tried to get another studio on board but did not succeed and finally took the script to Miramax, which agreed to come on board. The Weinsteins, after tough negotiations with Universal, were able to acquire the script for \$4.5 million and under the condition that they wouldn’t cast any big stars in the movie, as Universal was apparently afraid

⁴⁵ IMDb 2009, “Box office / business for Twelfth Night (1996), accessed on 7/27/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0117991/business>

⁴⁶ Stoppard’s writing credits at the time included *The Russia House* (1990), *Empire of the Sun* (1987) and *Brazil* (1987).

⁴⁷ Norman’s writing credits include *Cutthroat Island* (1995).

that the Weinsteins would turn the movie into a hit and make Universal look bad (Biskind 2005: 328-329). Zwick, with the help of a high-powered entertainment attorney, managed to maneuver himself back onto the project, but, according to Peter Biskind, subsequently was “frozen out of the project,” leaving Harvey Weinstein in charge (329). According to Marcy Granata, Miramax’s VP of publicity at the time, Harvey Weinstein “was involved in every detail. He even knew what the leading lady should wear. He produced everyone else to produce. It was Selznick!” (330). What we can take away from Peter Biskind’s account on the development process of *Shakespeare in Love*, is that the amount of control on the U.S. side of the co-production was substantial. How big of a creative role U.K. producer David Parfitt played during the development phase is hard to gauge. What it shows, however, is the complexity of the development process, which producers on both side of the Atlantic have to face on most projects. In the case of *Shakespeare in Love*, the result turned out to be very successful. The film, budgeted at an estimated \$25 million and distributed by Miramax, made \$100,241,322 at the U.S. box office and a phenomenal \$189 million at the international (non-U.S.) box office.⁴⁸

Also successful at the international box was the historical biopic *Elizabeth* (1998), directed and written by Michael Hirst. Production companies involved in *Elizabeth* were Working Title Films, Polygram Filmed Entertainment and Channel Four Films. The film, produced by Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner and Alison Owen, was distributed theatrically in the U.S. by Gramercy Pictures and in the U.K. by Universal Pictures. At the same budget level of an estimated \$25 million as *Shakespeare in Love*, the film grossed \$30,012,990 at the U.S. and \$52,067,943 at the international box office.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Box Office Mojo 2010, “Shakespeare in Love: Summary,” accessed on 05/11/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=shakespeareinlove.htm>

⁴⁹ Box Office Mojo 2010, “Elizabeth: Summary,” accessed on 5/11/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=elizabeth%A0.htm>

U.K. Transnational Thrillers in the 1990s

Among the most successful transnational properties originating in the U.K. during the 1990s was *The Crying Game* (Neil Jordan, 1992). The psychological thriller was written and directed by Neil Jordan, produced by Stephen Woolley, co-produced by Elizabeth Karlsen and executive produced by Nik Powell. While the *Crying Game* was a commercial failure in Europe, it won an impressive number of international awards⁵⁰ and was theatrically distributed in the U.S. by Miramax, grossing \$62,548,947 at the U.S. box office.

In 1994, TV director Danny Boyle had his big screen debut, which also introduced producer Andrew MacDonald and writer John Hodge to the U.K. film industry. The film that brought the three talents together, was crime thriller *Shallow Grave*. Production companies involved were Channel Four Films and Andrew MacDonald's newly founded Figment Films. The film was produced for a budget of an estimated \$2.5 million in association with The Glasgow Film Fund. It grossed £4,923,439 in its home territory, the U.K., received U.S. theatrical distribution and grossed \$2,881,508 at the U.S. box office and \$20.5 million worldwide.⁵¹ Another transnational film property in the thriller genre, was Guy Ritchie's *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (1998). The crime thriller, a U.K./U.S. co-production between SKA Films, HandMade Films, Polygram, Summit Entertainment and The Steve Tisch Company, had 3,687,919 admissions in the E.U.⁵² and, distributed by Gramercy in the U.S., grossed \$3,753,929 at the U.S. Box Office.⁵³

⁵⁰ Among the awards for *The Crying Game* were an Academy Award for Best Screenplay, a Writers Guild of America Award for Best Screenplay - Written Directly for the Screen, a Writers Guild of Great Britain Award for Best Screenplay, a BAFTA Award for Best British Film, a European Film Award and a number of awards from various U.S. film critics associations.

⁵¹ IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for *Shallow Grave* (1994)," accessed on 7-27-2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0111149/business>

⁵² Lumiere, "Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels," accessed on 04/16/2012, from http://lumiere.obs.coe.int/web/film_info/?id=8051

⁵³ Box Office Mojo, "Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels," accessed on 04-16-2012, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=lockstockandtwosmokingbarrels.htm>

Transformation of the Film Financing System

1997 was a crucial year for the U.K. film industry as the newly elected Labor government introduced a series of tax breaks that would encourage private equity funding for the U.K. film industry. Under the new tax legislation, producers and buyers of “British films” with budgets equal to or below £15 million pounds were allowed a 100% tax write-off of their investments after one year (Senter 2000). In order to qualify as a British film, 70% of a film’s budget had to be spent in the U.K. and 70 percent of a film’s crew had to be from EU or Commonwealth countries. While prior to 1997 only 20 films annually were recognized as British films by the tax authorities in the U.K., the change in tax laws brought that number up to 200 by the year 2000 (ibid.).

A *truly* game-changing development in the U.K. film industry, however, happened in 1997 in the form of a new funding scheme. By February 28 that year, production companies would get a chance to apply for a pool of U.K. National Lottery money to invest in film projects. According to *Variety* contributor Adam Dawtrey (1997a), the new funding structure was “designed to transform the U.K.’s fragmented but buoyant production scene into a miniature version of the Hollywood studio system.” The four most promising applications were each going to get a share of the approximately \$240 million National Lottery pool. The agency deciding on which four of the “at least 17 serious bidders” would get access to the money, was the Arts Council of England (Dawtrey 1997a: 13). Each franchise, according to Dawtrey, was envisioned to bring together several potent producers “to form powerful mini-studios pumping out commercial British pics for the global market” (ibid.). Bidders for the franchises were required to come up with matching equity financing for the funds they would receive from the lottery. A ceiling of \$3.3 million was established as the maximum amount of lottery money producers could spend on each individual project (ibid.). Dawtrey points out that U.K. producers seldom profit from their films, even if they are financially successful, as they are forced to enter into unfavorable financing agreements in order to get their films off the ground (ibid.). The company groups awarded the franchises—three instead of the four originally planned—were French company Pathé Pictures,

U.K. companies DNA Films and the Film Consortium.⁵⁴ They had proposed to produce a combined number of 90 film projects during a six-year period, budgeted at a total of \$736 million. \$148 million was requested from the UK National Lottery and the rest of the money was supposed to be raised by the companies themselves (Dawtrety 1997b: 1).

The three franchises now had the right to apply for up to 50% of financing for each of their individually proposed projects, but there was no guarantee that these projects would actually get awarded the money. Also important to note was the fact that the producers that were part of the franchises pledged to also work with producers outside their respective franchises (*ibid.*). The way the lottery system was established appears to be inspired by the U.S. studio system, in which a few key players have access to large pools of financing and a massive distribution network and are relying on outside producers to provide them with projects that they in many instances co-develop.

⁵⁴ Pathé Pictures' bid was backed by money from StudioCanal, U.K. investment bank BZW and U.K. private bank Coutts. Pathé Pictures applied for \$53 million in Lottery funding, proposing to produce 35 films in six years (Dawtrety 1997b: 1). Among U.K. producers that were part of the bid were Simon Channing Williams, best known for producing Mike Leigh's *Secrets and Lies* (1996); Jake Eberts, executive-producer on *Chariots of Fire* (1981), *Der Name der Rose* (1986) and *Dances With Wolves* (1991); Norma Heyman, producer on *Dangerous Liaisons* (1988); Lynda Myles, Working Title co-founder Sarah Radclyffe; Michael White, producer of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975) and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975); Barnaby Thompson, co-producer of *Wayne's World 2* (1993) and producer of *Spice World* (1997); and Uri Fruchtmann, also a producer on *Spice World*. Most of these producers had expertise in transnational filmmaking and had experience in the development of border-crossing properties. The second group that was awarded Lottery funding—the Film Consortium—was comprised of Virgin Cinemas and production companies Scala, run by Nik Powell and Steve Woolley; Skreba, run by Simon Relph and Ann Skinner; Paralax, run by Sally Hibbin; and Greenpoint, run by Ann Scott (Dawtrety 1997b: 1). Among the titles these companies were known for were *Riff-Raff* (Ken Loach, 1991), *Land and Freedom* (Ken Loach, 1995), *The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill But Came Down a Mountain* (Christopher Monger, 1995)—all produced by Paralax Pictures—*Wetherby* (David Hare, 1985)—produced by Greenpoint Films—*Dark Blood* (George Sluizer, 1993) and *Backbeat* (Iain Softley, 1994)—produced by Scala Productions—and *Damage* (Louis Malle, 1992)—produced by Skreba Films. The Film Consortium aimed at producing 39 films over the six-year period and asked for \$49 million from the Lottery. Among the financing sources for this franchise were the French bank Cofiloisirs and Berliner (Dawtrety 1997b: 1). DNA films—winner of the third franchise—consisted of U.K. producers Andrew Macdonald and Duncan Kenworthy, backed by PolyGram for distribution, but with no financing sources as part of the bid (*ibid.*).

To what extent this new film finance system influenced the development process of U.K. productions will become clearer in the following sections.

Among the first slate of realized projects that received UK Lottery funding—by what was now titled “The Greenlight Fund”—were the Oscar Wilde biopic *Wilde* (Brian Gilbert, 1997), starring Stephen Fry, Jude Law and Vanessa Redgrave; the romantic period drama *Swept from the Sea* (Beeban Kidron, 1997), starring Rachel Weisz, Vincent Perez and Ian McKellen; the band comedy *Still Crazy* (Brian Gibson, 1998), starring Stephen Rea, Billy Connolly and Jimmy Nail, and *Topsy-Turvy* (Mike Leigh, 1999), starring Jim Broadbent, Allan Corduner and Dexter Fletcher. All of these films received U.S. distribution. While neither *Still Crazy* nor *Swept from the Sea* were able to reach the half-million dollar mark at the U.S. box office, *Wilde* and *Topsy Turvy* were able to gross \$2,157,701 and \$6,201,757 respectively.⁵⁵

Among films with U.K. participation that performed at the levels of the most successful Hollywood fare in the late 1990s were the romantic comedy *Notting Hill* (Roger Michell, 1999), grossing \$363 million worldwide, ranking it 6th at the global box office that year, and the U.K./U.S. co-production of the James Bond installment *The World is Not Enough* (Michael Apted, 1999), ranking 10th at the global box office (EAO 2000: 9).⁵⁶ The production coincided with Philips’ sale of Polygram Filmed Entertainment to Seagram, which integrated it into its film studio Universal Pictures.

While predictions for the future of the U.K. film industry in the early 1990s still were relatively bleak, the introduction of National Lottery funding led to a substantial boost in production volume and to a more optimistic outlook. The Hollywood studio-like nature of the organization of the new funding mechanism, seemed to lead to a more

⁵⁵ IMDb 2011, “Box office / business for *Wilde* (1997),” accessed on 7/21/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120514/business>, IMDb 2011, “Box office / business for *Topsy-Turvy* (1999),” accessed on 7/21/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0151568/business>

⁵⁶ *Notting Hill*, starring Hugh Grant, Julia Roberts and Richard McCabe, was directed by Roger Michel, written by Richard Curtis, produced by Duncan Kenworthy and executive produced by Tim Bevan, Richard Curtis and Eric Fellner. Production companies involved were Working Title and Polygram Filmed Entertainment. The production coincided with Philips’ sale of Polygram Filmed Entertainment to Seagram, which integrated it into its film studio Universal Pictures.

structured and more commercially-driven approach to feature film development in the U.K. The following section will cover how the UK Lottery funding was also used to support new film training initiatives like the screenplay development training program The Script Factory. The latter, calling itself “Europe’s premier script development organization,” was established by Charlotte Macleod in 1996 and started out by staging screenplay readings using a cast of established actors (The Script Factory: About us 2010). Among the better-known projects that were performed in one of The Script Factory staged readings, helping to realize the project, was *Dirty Pretty Things* (Stephen Frears, 2002) (ibid.). The Script Factory has also been offering Masterclasses, script feedback, one-on-one development meetings and training courses in Film, TV and Radio for its growing member community (ibid.). In collaboration with the National Film and Television School (NFTS), The Script Factory also started offering an 18-month diploma program in script development. According to the Script Factory’s website:

The Script Factory/NFTS Diploma in Script Development seeks to equip participants with a detailed and sophisticated understanding of how and why stories work, and then guide students in how to bring about solutions to problems when working with scripts, treatments and screenwriters. The ultimate aim of the Diploma is to nurture and support highly skilled people in this field who can contribute to the creation of better films in all sorts of roles for the UK and international film industry. (Training: Diploma in Script Development 2010)⁵⁷

Script Factory co-founder Lucy Scher (2011), in her book *Reading Screenplays*, writes that the “Script Factory Reader Training Course” she conceived has been taken by a wide variety of industry professionals, in both the U.K. as well as other countries, including “heads of studios, heads of funds and screen agencies, producers, distributors, commissioners, directors, agents and screenwriters, as well as those seeking to start a career in reading and development” (8). Scher’s course on script reading and the Diploma program in script development follow Hollywood development models. Like

⁵⁷ The Script Factory, “Training: Diploma in Script Development,” accessed on 6/22/2010, from http://www.scriptfactory.co.uk/go/Training/Info_25.html

the majority of her American colleagues, she considers screenwriting and story development a “craft” (10), departing from a more artist-centered European view of the screenwriting process. In her book, that instructs its readers on how to read screenplays and how to write effective coverage, she stresses the importance of genre in order to achieve what she calls a “more satisfying story” (13).

European programs like the Script Factory have been quite obviously inspired by the Hollywood development environment and—like producers and developers in contemporary Hollywood—often draw from a wide array of literature on how to write and re-write screenplays, in order to create fundable properties with the potential to turn into commercially viable films.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSNATIONAL FILMS IN THE U.K. IN THE 2000S

The year 2000 can be considered a turning point for the U.K. film industry, as it marks the launch of the UK Film Council under chairmanship of renowned British film director Alan Parker. The latter, in his second year of tenure at the Film Council, made a famously controversial speech, pointing out past and present issues of the U.K. film industry and calling for a radical rethinking of the way the U.K. film industry operates. Presenting his views on "building a sustainable UK film industry" to industry representatives, he stresses the objective of having the U.K. film industry coming to terms with "the new realities of today's global market" (Parker 2002: 2). Parker says, that "we have to stop defining success by how well British films perform in Milton Keynes. This is a big world—really successful British films like *Notting Hill* can make up to 85% of their revenues outside the U.K." (9). To keep the U.K. competitive in the global environment, Parker calls for "not mere change, but transformation [...] at every single level of the UK film business" (ibid.). He suggests putting the focus on distribution and states that "in a successful industry, distribution pulls production behind it." Parker furthermore demands "a fiscal policy which stimulates market investment rather than one that primarily serves ‘producer interests’" (10). He calls the existing tax incentives inefficient, saying that they are focusing on production, without

supporting distribution of U.K. films. Instead, Parker calls for tax breaks helping the distribution sector. He also stresses the need for lowering production costs in the U.K. and for adjusting budgets to market conditions (11). Parker also suggests to completely revamp the training landscape of the U.K. film industry, pointing out a shortage of talent in all areas of the British film industry and an aging talent pool (Parker 2002: 11).⁵⁸ He underlines his suggestions with a sense of urgency, by saying:

Slowly, but inexorably, many of our “competitive advantages” are evaporating. Our creative and technical skills, our cost-base, our ability to compete in the world market at every level - they are all under threat in the long term, and unless we jump out of the pot in the next few years then eventually we too will be goners. Make no mistake. (14)

His words resonated with many U.K. film industry professionals. However, refocusing or reinventing the U.K. film industry to make it more competitive on a global level and less dependent on Hollywood, would require a Herculean effort by the U.K. film industry. The UK Film Council, during its 11-year tenure, would significantly contribute to turning the U.K. film industry into a more stable and less crisis-ridden entity. As Table 5.1. shows, the number of feature films produced in the U.K. more than doubled between 2000 and 2003. Production levels then slowly declined again, with a brief rebound in 2009, but by the end of the decade they were still 32% higher than at the beginning. The 2000s started with a 14.8% share of national films and ended with a 22.6% share, peaking at 33.1% in 2005 and 2008.

⁵⁸ Parker further stressed the increasing competition from film industries around the world, including film industries in Eastern Europe, and suggested to "form partnerships with them now," in order to "have a much better chance of supplying services to them—particularly our high-end skills—as their industries mature" (Parker 2002: 13).

Table 5.3.: Film Production in the U.K. — 2000 - 2010

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Feature-length films produced ¹	90	83	119	196	174	164	134	127	126	144	119
Number of first-run films in theaters	367	321	369	423	451	467	505	518	527	503	No data ²
Number of Screens	2,954	3,164	3,258	3,316	3,342	3,357	3,440	3,514	3,610	3,651	3,741
Admissions (in millions)	142.5	155.9	175.9	167.3	171.3	164.7	156.6	162.4	164.2	173.5	169.2
Box-office receipts (in million £)	583.0	645.0	755.0	742.0	770.0	770.0	762.0	821.0	849.5	943.8	988.3
U.K. natl. film share (%) ³	14.8	25.0	22.6	15.9	23.4	33.1	19.1	28.6	31.1	16.7	22.6
U.S. film share (%)	75.3	73.9	71.3	73.5	73.2	63.1	77.1	67.7	65.2	81.0	No data
European film share (%)	1.5	4.2	1.2	2.1	0.6	1.6	1.2	1.8	2.3	1.2	No data

¹ Includes films produced by U.S. companies and shot in the U.K. Sources: BFI and UK Film Council

² Based on data available by 5/15/2011

³ Includes films produced by means of American investments.

Source: CNC⁵⁹

A part of the production surge in the early 2000s can be attributed to the continued impact of UK Lottery funding. Lottery money was dispersed by the UK Film Council through several funds for different stages of the filmmaking process and for different types of films. The areas were development and production, distribution and exhibition, and training and education. The educational and training programs included the Skillset program, established in 1992, which over the years helped to professionalize the U.K. Film industry in all areas and at all stages of the filmmaking

⁵⁹ CNN World Cinema Statistics, from <http://www.cnc.fr/web/en/sectoral-statistics>

process. All of these support mechanisms, to varying degrees, enhanced the growth of the U.K. film industry in the 2000s.

The following sections cover two of the most prominent U.K. production companies in the 2000s: DNA Films, which after a slow start in the late 1990s, rose to the number two position among U.K. production companies, and Working Title, which had established its leadership position in the U.K. film industry by the 1990s. The focus will be on the key questions of this study: in what manner do these companies develop films; to what degree do the producers of these films play an active role in developing the stories; to what extent are these companies dependent on or influenced by Hollywood, and whether their films fall in the categories of high-profile and high-concept transnational properties.

Before looking at DNA Films, led by producers Duncan Kenworthy and Andrew MacDonald, one should examine *The Beach*, a film that Andrew MacDonald produced under his Figment Films label in 2000. The film is especially interesting as it is the most international property of MacDonald's early 2000s slate of projects and sheds some light on the working mechanisms of the development process of U.K. produced transnational films. The Danny Boyle directed thriller, starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Daniel York and Patcharawan Patarakijjanon, was written by John Hodge, based on the bestselling novel by Alex Garland. It tells the story of a group of young backpackers in Thailand. Boyle, MacDonald and Hodge worked on the film as a tight-knit team. Alex Garland, who visited the set in Thailand during the shoot, observed that "a couple of times I'd sit in on a meeting the three of them were having and you could tell that this was the core area where the film was being made; it was really made by these three people" (Scott 2005: 172). Asked by *Time* contributor Stephen Short whether he considered making *The Beach* as a risk, Danny Boyle says:

We always try to take real risks. People have said to me that using Leo was just playing for the dollar. Well, if I wanted to take the least risk possible, I'd have made *Trainspotting 2*. I've been asked often enough. *The Beach* with Ewan McGregor would have been too easy. (Short 2000)

Casting DiCaprio, however, was a well-calculated choice, building on DiCaprio's star persona and using the audience expectations attached to DiCaprio after his role in *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997). Boyle says, "using his Titanic persona was obviously attractive to us," and states that they "wanted to lure people in. This is a beautiful island, it's secret, a very sacred place. If you add to that the young romantic hero of world cinema as he was then, the two were absolutely made for one another" (Short 2000). Boyle points out the importance of stars in mass audience films, saying, "we kid ourselves that an audience wants to see a Spike Lee or a Martin Scorsese film, but ultimately all they want to see is actors. A mass audience always goes to a cinema for actors, not directors." Boyle admits that *Trainspotting* "was pretty much lifted from Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas*" and that "The Beach certainly references *Apocalypse Now*, playing with Hollywood's image of the Vietnam War. It's also got a lot of *Deliverance* about it, the 1972 John Boorman film. I consciously took from that" (ibid.). Boyle's, MacDonald's and Hodge's efforts to make an audience-friendly film paid off. *The Beach*, theatrically distributed by Fox in the U.S., grossed \$39,785,027 at the U.S. box office and \$104,271,846 internationally (non-U.S.).⁶⁰ The following section on DNA films shows how Boyle's and MacDonald's approach to transnational filmmaking manifested in that company.

DNA Films

DNA Films from 2000 to 2002 produced five features: *Beautiful Creatures* (Bill Eagles, 2000); *Strictly Sinatra* (Peter Capaldi, 2001), *The Parole Officer* (John Duigan, 2001), *Heartlands* (Damien O'Donnell, 2002) and *The Final Curtain* (Patrick Harkin, 2002). All of these were geared towards the international market, yet none of them did significant business outside of Europe. Out of the five, only *Beautiful Creatures*, starring Rachel Weisz, Susan Lynch and Iain Glen, received theatrical distribution, yet,

⁶⁰ Box Office Mojo 2011, "The Beach: Summary," accessed on 2/23/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=beachthe.htm>

grossing only 55,835, the Focus Features release flopped at the U.S. box office.⁶¹ Changing the course of the company, in 2002 MacDonald turned DNA Films into a co-venture with U.S. studio Twentieth Century Fox's specialty division Fox Searchlight, while still operating on part of the first round of UK Lottery money allocated to the original franchise (Martinson 2007). MacDonald is known for being a risk-taker, but also for having a very business-oriented, mindset. In an interview with *Guardian* contributor Jane Martinson (2007), MacDonald says that,

I don't want just to sit down and have a good idea and then spend the next four years getting it made. I do that as well but it's difficult. Great British producers, people like David Puttnam, they did it. But you can't really create a business that way ... You have to get involved in a variety of stuff to make money ... You need to get into this game of doing 10 or more films and then they balance out. (ibid.)

Through DNA Films, MacDonald and the UK Film Council invested in 14 films between 2000 and 2010. Among the more successful transnational properties of the slate that DNA Films produced, co-produced or merely invested in, were *28 Days Later* (Danny Boyle, 2002), *Love Actually* (Richard Curtis, 2003), *The Last King of Scotland* (Kevin MacDonald, 2006), *The History Boys* (Nicholas Hytner, 2006), *Notes on a Scandal* (Richard Eyre, 2006), *Sunshine* (Danny Boyle, 2007) and *28 Weeks Later* (Juan Carlos Fresnadillo, 2008). MacDonald thinks like a Hollywood producer and distances himself from many of his less commercially-oriented U.K. colleagues. He says, "I don't just think I want to make a film about Proust because I read it at college [...] And there are a lot of people who think like that. I only want to make films that I think are going to be successful" (Martinson 2007). MacDonald appears to be well respected in the Hollywood film industry. U.S. film producer Scott Rudin, who worked with MacDonald on several films, among them *A Life Less Ordinary* (1997), says about him: "I have an enormous respect for Andrew and am personally very fond of him [...]"

⁶¹ Box Office Mojo 2011, "Beautiful Creatures: Summary," accessed on 6/2/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=beautifulcreatures.htm>

He cares about movies, is shrewd and yet doesn't take it all too seriously. He doesn't think it's genetic research" (Martinson 2007).

28 Days Later (2002), produced by MacDonald, can serve as an example for his ingenuity as a producer of transnational properties. The Danny Boyle directed sci-fi horror movie was shot for an estimated budget of \$8 million and was seen by 4,059,998 theatergoers in Europe, making it the 29th top-grossing film among productions originating from a single European country between 2001 and 2007. The film, distributed by Fox Searchlight theatrically in the U.S., generated a U.S. box office return of \$45,063,889 and grossed \$37,654,970 internationally (non-U.S.).⁶² It was one of only a few European films that drew more than 20% of their audience from European territories other than their respective national markets (Lange 2003: 6). Sarah Street (2009) attributes the European and U.S. box-office success of *28 Days Later* to its "stylistic energy," that according to her, "is representative of the "trans-national appeal of much of recent British cinema" (136). Street says that commonalities between Danny Boyle's *28 Days Later*, Justin Kerrigan's *Human Traffic* (1999) and Pawel Pawlikowski's *My Summer of Love* (2004) include,

[...] a stylistic foregrounding of place with its shots of the city and the rural landscape that have the effect of combining a local address with a more global sensitivity. While each film has its particular locale which may or may not be familiar to audiences, their basic topography could also be identified with other cities and landscapes, evoking a kind of shorthand familiarity that opens up these films to international audiences. (Street 2009: 137)

Novelist Alex Garland, author of *The Beach*, wrote the screenplay for *28 Days Later*. It was Garland's second screenplay. Garland is an autodidact novelist as well as a self-trained screenwriter. Asked about whether he read any of the "classic" U.S. screenwriting how-to books, Garland responds, that he never trusted them. He says, that he had asked Andrew MacDonald for a couple of screenplays, so he would get a feel for the way they were written. Garland admits, "I didn't really know what I was doing"

⁶² Box Office Mojo 2011, "28 Days Later," accessed on 7/22/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=28dayslater.htm>

(Scott 2005: 174). By the time he wrote his second script, *28 Days Later*, he says that he still believed that he “was an economical writer and it turned out that I wasn’t” (Scott 2005: 174). Garland recalls,

[...] getting script notes on *28 Days* from John Hodge and I remember John saying, ‘This scene; why don’t you just stop it there? Why have you got all this other stuff? Just cut it there, lose the scene afterwards and cut to there.’ As soon as he said it, I could see yes, he’s absolutely right” (ibid.).

Garland’s experiences are a good example of what the involvement of producers and directors can look like during screenplay development. They suggest that the collaboration and frequent interactions between the writer, director and the producer(s) of a film, if dealing with capable individuals like Boyle, Hodge and MacDonald, can be beneficial for successfully shaping a story during the development process.

Also a project with DNA involvement was the high-profile and high-concept European co-production *The Last King of Scotland* (2006), directed by Kevin Macdonald, written by Peter Morgan and Jeremy Brock, based on the novel by Giles Foden and produced by Lisa Bryer, Andrea Caldenwood and Charles Steel.⁶³ The fictional drama, about a young medical doctor from Scotland, who travels to Uganda and becomes a personal doctor to Uganda’s despotic president Idi Amin, was produced for an estimated budget of £5 million and grossed £5,301,931 theatrically in the U.K. Fox Searchlight distributed the film in the U.S., where it grossed \$17,605,861 at the box office by May 2007.⁶⁴ The film, a majority U.K. and minority German co-production drew 2,594,873 people into European theaters, ranking it 31st at the European box office among co-productions originating from the Big Five European film industries between 2001 and 2007 (Kanzler 2008: 30).

28 Weeks Later (2007), the sequel to *28 Days Later*, was directed by Spanish writer/director Juan Carlos Fresnadillo; produced by Andrew Macdonald, Allon Reich

⁶³ Production companies involved in the making of the film were U.K. companies Slate Films, Film4, Cowboy Films, DNA Films, Scottish Screen and the UK Film Council, German production company Tatfilm and U.S. studio indie film division Fox Searchlight Pictures.

⁶⁴ IMDb 2009, “Box office / business for *The Last King of Scotland* (2006),” accessed on 7/28/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0455590/business>

and Enrique López-Lavigne, and executive produced by Danny Boyle and Alex Garland.⁶⁵ Rowan Joffe, Juan Carlos Fresnadillo, Enrique López Lavigne and Jesús Olmo wrote the screenplay. The fact that three writers and the director collaborated on the screenplay, suggests an U.S. approach to the development process. However, director Juan Carlos Fresnadillo, in an interview with *Esplatter* (2007), stresses that he, as a director, was given a great amount of creative freedom in making the film and was told by “the producers to make my own movie, try to make my personal vision about this landscape.” Fresnadillo emphasizes his character-driven approach to the movie, saying that “to me, the characters are the most essential thing. Everything is coming from them. The horror, the apocalyptic vision—all of this stuff is coming from the characters” (Esplatter: Exclusive Interview 2007). The producers’ strategy of giving a different touch to the sequel by employing an innovative Spanish director paid off. *28 Weeks Later* made it into the 2007 list of Top 25 films at the European box office, ranking number 24 with 1,873,720 admissions (EAO 2007: 16). *28 Days Later* was distributed worldwide by Twentieth Century Fox, and in the U.S. in a joint venture by Twentieth Century Fox subsidiaries Fox Searchlight and Fox’s fledgling genre production label Fox Atomic. It grossed \$28,638,916 at the U.S. box office and \$35,599,524 at the international (non-U.S.) box office.⁶⁶

Passing the baton of the *28 Days Later* franchise to Fresnadillo, Danny Boyle turned to directing sci-fi thriller *Sunshine* about a team of astronauts sent on a mission to re-invigorate the dying sun. The film, starring Cillian Murphy, Rose Byrne and Chris Evans, was written by Alex Garland.⁶⁷ Danny Boyle, in an interview with Patrick Kolan (2007), talks about the origins of the film and his motivations for making it.

⁶⁵ Entities involved in the development and production of the film were the U.K. entities DNA Films, Figment Films and the UK Film Council, Spanish production companies Koan Films and Sociedad General de Cine (SOGECINE) S.A. and U.S. studio specialty division Fox Atomic.

⁶⁶ Box Office Mojo 2011, “28 Weeks Later,” accessed on 7/22/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=28weekslater.htm>

⁶⁷ Production companies involved — all U.K. — were DNA Films, Ingenious Film Partners, Moving Picture Company (MPC), also one of the leading visual effects producers in the U.K., and the UK Film Council.

Boyle says that Alex Garland gave him the script in a London pub and that he considered it “an amazing premise for a film.’ This idea of eight astronauts strapped to the back of a massive bomb, the size of Manhattan Island, flying towards the heart of the Sun where they're going to try to explode it. I just thought ‘That's pretty cool’” (Kolan 2007). Boyle says, he “always wanted to do a space movie,” and that “there's not been a movie made about the Sun, really.” Explaining the rationale driving the development of the story, Boyle says:

[...] so we thought, ‘Let's do that’, because everybody's focusing on global warming and stuff like that. The fear is that everything is heating up — let's go the other way, flip it, and make a film about global freezing — like at the end of the film. And if Sydney's frozen, you know the planet's in a bit of trouble. (Kolan 2007)

This informal way of choosing projects to develop, primarily based on gut instincts and personal preferences, diverts from a more stringent development model. What it illustrates is that, really interesting movies are not formulaic or created primarily with a particular target audience in mind, but originate from ideas that deeply resonate with the directors, producers and writers that are turning them into tangible properties.

While *Sunshine* grossed \$28,342,050 at the international box office (non-U.S.), its U.S. performance was relatively weak. Distributed by Fox Searchlight, it grossed \$3,675,753 at the U.S. box office.⁶⁸ Nevertheless it contributed to the overall success story of the DNA label.

While DNA Films during the 2000s turned into the second most successful film production venture in the U.K., Working Title still stayed ahead of the competition, turning out transnational box office successes that were hard to challenge, as revealed in the following section.

⁶⁸ Box Office Mojo 2011, “Sunshine: Summary,” accessed on 7/23/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=sunshine06.htm>

Working Title in the 2000s

By 2005 Working Title employed 40 people and had offices in Los Angeles and Australia (Higgins 2005). In terms of development, Polygram's and later Universal's involvement in Working Title, proved beneficial for the thriving production company. Bevan says that with Polygram on board, they "turned the whole thing upside down. 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" (Higgins 2005). Bevan correlates these changes in operations to the films Working Title was making subsequently, saying that "it's no surprise that two or three years after [1992] we started to have a considerable amount of commercial success from those movies" (ibid.). Bevan stresses the importance of thorough script development and criticizes the general development practices in the U.K.:

Quality is everything. The day we greenlight a movie, that's the day the development process starts for us. Every word of that script's got to be checked ... too often I think what happens in Britain is the day they greenlight a script is the day they say, that's finished. (Higgins 2005)

While being a part of Polygram boosted Working Title's ability to turn out internationally marketable films, Working Title really excelled when it became a part of Universal. According to Bevan,

[...] being part of a US studio structure is essential if you want to play the long game in the movie business. Six studios control movie distribution worldwide. The various supply engines, like talent agencies and marketing people, understand the studios and everyone who is playing seriously in the film business will be part of a studio structure. (Higgins 2005)

Working Title co-chairman Eric Fellner, elaborating on the realities of working within the studio system, says: "I guess technically not owning the company means we lost control, but the way the film business works is that it's people-driven rather than structure-driven." Fellner stresses that he and Bevan "are by profession film producers, and the business of Working Title is producing films." He says, "by dint of that we get to run it how we want" (Higgins 2005). Bevan explains, that depending on the nature of

the project, Universal's involvement varies. On *Pride and Prejudice* (Joe Wright, 2005) Universal was very hands off, while on the *The Interpreter* (Sydney Pollack, 2005), it was very involved. The latter, according to Bevan, because of its large budget and because it was a part of Universal's core business. Bevan points out that "collective heads are on the line for a film like that, rather than just our heads" (Higgins 2005).

Explaining how Working Title is splitting the risk between the films of different budget levels and genres, Bevan says, "in the year you do *Bridget Jones 2* you kind of know that film is going to do all right, so you can take a bigger risk at the other end, which was *Shaun of the Dead*." (ibid.)

Beginning in 2005, Working Title started to aim even higher. According to Fellner, he and Bevan were "trying to up the ante a little bit in terms of the scale and diversity of films," yet under the mandate of producing movies capable of generating \$200 to \$400 million at the international box office. This task, according to Bevan, was difficult to accomplish with films originating in the U.K. (ibid.). In 2005 Bevan and Fellner were concerned about the strong British pound and the weak British tax incentives with some hope for the latter situation improving with the new British government in place. Pointing out the harsh economic realities of film production, Bevan says that,

[...] when you're doing a big movie that's studio based, spending a lot of money on building sets, the first thing you do is a budget for shooting here, as tight as possible. Then you have to do an exercise in your head about taking it to Prague or somewhere in Eastern Europe, or Canada, or America. On a \$50 million movie the difference can be as much as \$6m-\$9m. (Higgins 2005)

With *Billy Elliot* (2000) Working Title produced one of the biggest successes for the U.K. film industry in the early 2000s. The U.K./French co-production, directed by Stephen Daldry, drew 7,328,612 audience members to European theaters, ranking it 8th at the European box office among co-productions originating from the Big Five European countries between 2001 and 2007 (Kanzler 2008: 30). *Billy Elliot* was one of the first pickups for Universal's new specialty label Universal Focus, that later turned

into Focus Features.⁶⁹ Budgeted at an estimated \$5 million, it generated \$21,995,263 at the U.S. box office and \$87,285,000 at the global box office (non-U.S.).⁷⁰ According to Stephen Daldry, *Billy Elliot's* commercial potential was underestimated by its producers. He says,

The reason why you have a million different co-producers on this movie is because no one wanted to give any money whatsoever. Had someone felt this was going to be another Full Monty, chances are they would have given us more than 2.9 million pounds. What's surprising to me, given the success of 'The Full Monty,' is how few films have copied its formula. (Bailey 2000)

Daldry sees the necessity for substantial changes in the U.K. film industry, which, in his opinion, does not produce enough films for the working class audience (ibid.).

In 2001, Working Title produced an international hit with *Bridget Jones's Diary* (Sharon Maguire, 2001), the only film with U.K. participation that made it into the Top 20 of the global box office. The U.K./U.S./French co-production ranked 11th, grossing \$278 million internationally—\$72 million of that at the U.S. box office (EAO 2002: 9). *Bridget Jones's Diary* was produced by Working Title, French StudioCanal and U.K. production company Little Bird for a budget of an estimated \$26 million.⁷¹ Tim Bevan, Eric Fellner and Jonathan Cavendish produced, and Andrew Davies, Richard Curtis and Anne Fielding wrote the screenplay, based on Fielding's novel. Interesting in this context is whether or not the development process on the Working Title films under the Universal banner was leaning towards a Hollywood approach of development. Richard Curtis, illustrating the writing process of *Bridget Jones's Diary* says,

Helen did a draft. Then I did a draft. And I'm sure all of us did more than one draft. And somewhere in there Sharon Maguire also did a draft, attempting to

⁶⁹ Other production entities involved were BBC Films, StudioCanal, Tiger Aspect Productions and in association with WT2, a newly founded U.K. spinoff of Working Title Film, and financed in part by Lottery money administered by the Arts Council of England.

⁷⁰ Box Office Mojo 2010, "Billy Elliot: Summary," accessed on 1/17/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=billyelliott.htm>

⁷¹ IMDb 2012, "Box office / business for Bridget Jones's Diary (2001)," accessed on 4/28/2012, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0243155/business>

put together my early suggestions, stuff that Helen and Andrew had done and stuff from the book. I then worked on it for around two and a half months before it started shooting. And after all that, when we went to the read-through it was still only about sixty-seven per cent right. *Four Weddings and Notting Hill* were more right than that. (Owen 2003, 96)

Bridget Jones's tremendous global success resulted in plans for a franchise, and not long after the release of *Bridget Jones's Diary*, development commenced on *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason*, based on the second *Bridget Jones* novel by Fielding. Three of the original writers were writing the screenplay to the sequel, together with a fourth—Canadian-born screenwriter Adam Brooks, best known for his scripts for *French Kiss* (Lawrence Kasdan, 1995), *Practical Magic* (Griffin Dunne, 1998) and *Wimbledon* (Richard Loncraine, 2004). The sequel, directed by Beeban Kidron, had a higher budget with \$40 million⁷² and had more production entities involved.⁷³ Grossing \$40,203,020 domestically and \$222,294,509 internationally (non-U.S.), it was a reasonable success for Working Title.⁷⁴

Also relatively successful for Working Title was *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (2001), directed by John Madden, and adapted for the screen by Shawn Slovo, based on a novel by Louis de Bernières. The R-rated romantic drama, starring Nicolas Cage, Penélope Cruz and John Hurt, was produced by Working Title Films, Universal Pictures, Miramax Films and French StudioCanal and Canal+, and grossed \$25,543,895 at the U.S. box office and £9,141,397 at the U.K. box office.⁷⁵ Also a transnational property, although not quite as successful, was the romantic comedy *Wimbledon* (2004), directed by Richard Loncraine and written by Adam Brooks, Jennifer Flackett and Mark Levin. The U.K./French co-production was produced by Tim Bevan, Liza

⁷² Box Office Mojo 2011, "Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason," accessed on 7/25/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=bridgetjones2.htm>

⁷³ Besides the original three production companies involved—Working Title, Little Bird and StudioCanal—Universal Pictures, Atlantic Television and Miramax Films, the distributor of the original, also received producing credits. Universal Pictures theatrically distributed the sequel.

⁷⁴ Box Office Mojo 2011, "Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason," accessed on 7/25/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=bridgetjones2.htm>

⁷⁵ IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for Captain Corelli's Mandolin (2001), accessed on 7/26/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0238112/business>

Chasin, Eric Fellner and Mary Richards. Production companies on Wimbledon were Working Title Films, Universal Pictures, British production companies Firststep Productions and Inside Track Films and French StudioCanal. Produced for an estimated \$31 million,⁷⁶ *Wimbledon* drew 2,130,676 audience members into European theaters, and ranked 42nd at the European box office among co-productions originating from the Big Five European countries between 2001 and 2007 (Kanzler 2008: 30). Its U.S. theatrical gross was \$16,831,505.⁷⁷

Working Title horror comedy *Shaun of the Dead* (2004) was co-produced with Universal, StudioCanal, FilmFour, Big Talk Productions, WT 2 Productions and Inside Track 2. Directed by Edgar Wright, co-written by Wright and Simon Pegg and produced by Nira Park, it grossed \$13,464,388 theatrically in the U.S. and \$16,496,518 internationally (non-U.S.).⁷⁸ Working Title also produced Wright's next feature, *Hot Fuzz* (2007), in a similar U.S./U.K./French co-production constellation, partnering with its parent company Universal, French StudioCanal, and U.K. companies BigTalk Productions and Ingenious Film Partners. *Hot Fuzz* drew 4,879,885 audience members into European theaters, ranking it 15th at the European box office among co-productions originating from the Big Five European film industries between 2001 and 2007 (Kanzler 2008: 30).⁷⁹ The film attracted 4,904,701 people to EU theaters⁸⁰ and grossed \$23,618,786 at the U.S. box office by July 2007.⁸¹

⁷⁶ IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for Wimbledon (2004)," accessed on 7-27-2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0360201/business>

⁷⁷ IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for Wimbledon (2004)," accessed on 7-27-2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0360201/business>

⁷⁸ Box Office Mojo 2011, "Shaun of the Dead," accessed on 7/22/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=shaunofthedead.htm>

⁷⁹ *Hot Fuzz* also won the 2008 Empire Award (U.K.) for Best Comedy and the 2007 National Movie Award (U.K.) for Best Comedy and Wright was nominated for an Empire Award for Best Director.

⁸⁰ Lumiere, "Hot Fuzz," accessed on 4/28/2012, from http://lumiere.obs.coe.int/web/film_info?id=27982

⁸¹ IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for Hot Fuzz (2007)," accessed on 7-26-2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0425112/business>, *Hot Fuzz* was produced by Working Title Films and Universal Pictures, U.K.-based companies Big Talk Productions and Ingenious Film Partners, and French StudioCanal.

The only film breaking the pattern of Working Title's well-constructed transnational comedies, a firmly established trademark of the company, was *United 93* (2006). The speculative re-enactment of what might have happened on board of United Airlines Flight 93 during the 9/11 incidents was a Working Title/Universal production in association with U.S. production company Sidney Kimmel Entertainment. The thriller was written and directed by Paul Greengrass, who discussed his motivation for making the film:

9/11 was unique — the most important event of our lifetime, casting a shadow over all our futures [...] It's vital for cinema to begin the task of exploring what it meant, and what it continues to mean today. Hopefully Flight 93 will be a worthy contribution to that process. (Mitchell 2005)

United 93 was shot at Pinewood Studios in U.K. and on location in the U.S. and the U.K. (ibid.). It had 3,359,612 admissions in the EU⁸² and grossed \$11,478,360 at the U.S. box office.⁸³

Looking back at a string of successful transnational film properties, Universal Pictures in 2007 renewed Bevan's and Fellner's contract for an additional seven years. Upon contract renewal, Universal chairman Marc Shmuger and co-chairman David Linde released a statement, saying:

We are extremely pleased to announce this agreement with Working Title, one of our most valued producing partners and a unique voice in filmmaking throughout the world [...] This seven-year commitment is a testament to the strength of the partnership between Working Title and Universal, and reflects our immense regard for Tim, Eric and their team. (Mitchell 2007)

By 2010 Working Title was still the major driving force of transnational popular cinema for the U.K. According to *Screen International* contributor Leonard Klady (2010) "there is an over-riding consensus that the UK film industry consists of Working Title... and everyone else." Klady states that, by the end of the 2000s, Working Title

⁸² Lumiere, "United 93," accessed on 4/28/2012, from http://lumiere.obs.coe.int/web/film_info/?id=25635

⁸³ IMDb 2012, "Box office / business for United 93," accessed on 4/28/2012, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0475276/business>

“retains the essence of a growth company—an entity striving to expand its reach artistically and commercially.” Since the international success of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* in 1994, Working Title’s slate of productions made over \$3 billion at the international box office (ibid.). However, Working Title is the exception, not the rule, when it comes to film production in the U.K. during the 1990s and 2000s.

The U.K. Film Industry’s Co-Production Activities in the 2000s

While the U.K. film industry’s main co-production focus had traditionally been on the U.S., the 2000s saw a number of European co-productions with U.K. involvement and a growing interest of U.K. producers to engage in European co-productions. Among the more prominent examples of European co-productions with U.K. involvement were U.K./German co-production *Bend It Like Beckham* (2002).⁸⁴ The transnational romantic soccer comedy, directed by Gurinder Chadha and written by Chadha and Guljit Bindra and Paul Mayeda Berges accounted for 4,776,747 admissions in Europe, making it the 16th highest-grossing European co-production from 2001 to 2007. *Bend It Like Beckham* also became a substantial success beyond European borders. Theatrically distributed by Fox Searchlight in the U.S., it made \$32,543,449 at the U.S. box office.⁸⁵ Also very successful internationally was the U.K./U.S./French/Italian co-production⁸⁶ *The Queen* (2006), directed by Stephen Frears, written by Peter Morgan, and produced by Andy Harries, Christine Langan and Tracey Seaward.⁸⁷ The biographical drama was nominated for six Oscars in 2007.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Production companies on *Bend It Like Beckham* were Kintop Pictures, German companies Road Movies Filmproduktion, Roc Media and Helkon Media AG and funding body Filmförderung Hamburg, U.K. companies Future Films, The Works, Scion Films, British Screen Productions and British Sky Broadcasting (BSkyB) and The Film Council.

⁸⁵ Box Office Mojo 2011, “Sweet Sixteen,” accessed on 11/4/2011, from <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=sweetsixteen.htm>

⁸⁶ The U.K. production companies served as the majority producers and the French and Italian production companies as the minority producers.

⁸⁷ Production companies involved were French Pathé Pictures International, Pathé Renn Productions, France 3 Cinéma and Canal+, U.K.’s Granada Film Productions and Future Films, Italy’s BIM Distribuzione, and U.S. companies Future Films and Scott Rudin Productions.

Shot for an estimated budget of £9.8 million, *The Queen* grossed \$18,325,317 at the U.K. box office, received U.S. distribution by Miramax Films and grossed \$56,441,711 at the U.S. box office.⁸⁹ In 2005 U.K./French co-production *The Descent* (2006) turned into a surprise hit in the U.K. The horror film, written and directed by Neil Marshall,⁹⁰ subsequently was picked up for U.S. distribution by Lions Gate and grossed \$26,005,908 at the U.S. box office.⁹¹ Also receiving U.S. distribution was the U.K./German co-production *Chéri* (Stephen Frears, 2009). The heritage romantic drama, set in Paris in the 1920s, was produced for an estimated budget of \$23 million.⁹² It received a Golden Bear nomination at the Berlin Film Festival and was picked up by Miramax for U.S. theatrical distribution. *Chéri* received mixed reviews and, despite its somewhat bankable international leads Michelle Pfeiffer and Kathy Bates, failed to catch on with U.S. mainstream audiences. It grossed \$9,366,227 worldwide and \$2,684,051 at the U.S. box office.⁹³

While the U.K.'s European co-productions overall were a hit and miss at the international box office, the U.S./U.K. co-productions in the 2000s were more successful in general. Among prominent U.K./U.S. co-productions in the early 2000s was *In America* (Jim Sheridan, 2002). The period drama portrays the journey of an Irish immigrant family settling in New York City and, written by Sheridan and two of his daughters, was inspired by some of the Sheridan family's personal experiences. Produced by Arthur Lappin and Jim Sheridan, it received U.S. theatrical distribution by

⁸⁸ Helen Mirren won the Oscar for Best Performance by an actress in a Leading Role. Among its other Oscar nominations were Best Motion Picture of the Year and Best Writing, Original Screenplay.

⁸⁹ Box Office Mojo 2011, "The Queen: Foreign," accessed on 7/22/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=queen.htm>

⁹⁰ *The Descent* was produced by Celador Films, a company that started producing films in 2002 with Stephen Frears' *Dirty Pretty Things*, French production company Pathé. It was produced in association with U.K. company Northmen Productions.

⁹¹ IMDb, "Box office / business for The Descent (2005)," accessed on 7/28/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0435625/business>

⁹² Box Office Mojo, "Cherie: Summary," accessed on 01/16/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=cheri.htm>

⁹³ Box Office Mojo, "Cherie: Summary," accessed on 01/16/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=cheri.htm>

Fox Searchlight and grossed \$15,539,656 at the U.S. box office and \$9,843,255 internationally (non-U.S.).⁹⁴

In 2007 Michael Winterbottom's film *A Mighty Heart* generated \$9,758,870 at the international box office (non-U.S.) and managed to cross over into U.S. cinemas, generating \$9,176,787.⁹⁵ The estimated budget of the co-production between the U.K. production company Revolution Films, U.S. studio subsidiary Paramount Vantage and U.S. production company Plan B Entertainment was \$16 million. The film, written by U.S. writer John Orloff, based on the book by Marianne Pearl, stars Angelina Jolie and John Futterman.

In a different league in terms of international popularity was *Mamma Mia!* (Phyllida Lloyd, 2008). The property moved from stage musical to screen version, both written by Catherine Johnson. The U.K. side of the co-production consisted of people relatively inexperienced in blockbuster production, with Johnson being a television writer and *Mama Mia's* U.K. producer Judy Craymer having only a 1998 TV movie to her credit. However, the film's U.S. producer Gary Goetzman and its executive producers Tom Hanks and Mark Huffam had substantial track records.⁹⁶ The film they produced captured audiences around the globe, to a large degree attributable to the popularity of ABBA's music. *Chicago Reader* critic J.R. Jones calls it "the year's most aggressive chick flick, with a score of irresistibly catchy ABBA tunes sweetening the dumb story like peaches in cottage cheese" (Jones 2008). *New Yorker* critic Anthony Lane writes, "the legal definition of torture has been much aired in recent years, and I take *Mamma Mia!* to be a useful contribution to that debate." Lane, however also acknowledges the film's potential mass audience appeal:

⁹⁴ Box Office Mojo 2011, "In America: Summary," accessed on 7/22/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=inamerica.htm>

⁹⁵ Box Office Mojo 2011, "A Mighty Heart: Summary," accessed on 01/30/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=mightyheart.htm>

⁹⁶ Gary Goetzman's list of producing credits includes *The Polar Express* (Robert Zemeckis, 2004) and *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (Joel Zwick, 2004) and executive producer Tom Hanks' producing credits includes *Charlie Wilson's War* (Mike Nichols, 2007), *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (Joel Zwick, 2002) and *Cast Away* (Robert Zemeckis, 2001); and Mark Huffam's producing credits include *Johnny English* (Peter Howitt, 2003) and *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (John Madden, 2001).

[...] there are, to be fair, millions of viewers who will relish the sheer unlikelihood of all this. They will cheer on the actors' warbled singing, and the hobbled-donkey style of dancing, precisely because it is so amateur and shambolic—because, in short, it reminds them of themselves having a good time. (Lane 2008)

Mamma Mia!, despite scoring a less than stellar 53% on Rotten Tomatoes,⁹⁷ was a serviceable enough viewing experience to turn into a global blockbuster. According to Johnson, she had a mass audience in mind when setting out to write the screenplay for *Mama Mia!* According to Johnson, “when Phyllida said to me right at the beginning, ‘in the best possible world, which movie musical would you most like *Mamma Mia!* to be like’ and immediately I thought ‘*Grease*’” (*Mamma Mia!* Interview 2008). Johnson describes the conception of the idea behind *Mamma Mia!* as follows:

[...] the original idea came out of that first meeting with Judy because we were talking about the fact that the songs are very upbeat, young songs and then you have ones about the break down of relationships. It didn't seem to make sense to do a linear show about a couple who fall in love and then several years later get divorced, so we started thinking we could structure it with two generations in the story. (*Mamma Mia!* Interview 2008)

Johnson says that she “used to watch a lot of daytime television” and had “always been fascinated about this idea about what's it like if you don't know who is your baby's father? That idea about a search for identity” (*Mamma Mia!* Interview 2008). According to Johnson “the rest of the story came completely out of the lyrics—it literally came from being shut away with Bjorn's lyrics [...] I thought ‘who are the characters who would say these lyrics if it was dialogue and where do they fit into the story?’” (*ibid.*).

The fact that for *Mamma Mia!* a first-time theatrical screenwriter was paired with a first-time theatrical director by a first-time theatrical producer to make a blockbuster by design with a U.S. studio and be able to retain some form of creative control is rare. One of the reasons this was possible was that Craymer held on to the underlying rights

⁹⁷ Rotten Tomatoes 2010, “*Mama Mia!* (2008),” accessed on 6/12/2010, from http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/mamma_mia/

and insisted on Johnson and Lloyd for the project (*Mamma Mia!* Interview 2008). Aware of the realities of U.S. (co-) productions, Johnson says that, “obviously we could have been replaced and if I hadn’t written a decent screenplay I would have wanted to have been replaced.” What the interview with Johnson also suggests is that much of the creative control over story development stayed in British hands and that the popularity of the film can in part be attributed to the U.K. creative team’s ability to take a fresh look at the musical genre. According to *Guardian* contributor Stuart Heritage (2008), a sequel to *Mamma Mia!* is in development, but can’t seem to get off the ground, possibly because ABBA’s best songs were all already used in the original.

The success of U.K./U.S. co-productions with transnational appeal like *Mamma Mia!* inspired producers from both continents to increase their development activities on projects in that vein. Towards the end of the decade, however, some of the enthusiasm about co-productions appeared to have ebbed. U.K. producer Mike Downey in 2009 calls the path of international co-productions anything but “unproblematic.” According to Downey, “the co-prod business is all about fees, talent pool, reciprocation, curiosity and a tendency to the cosmopolitan rather than the Anglocentric” (Gubbins 2006). As the 2000s drew to a close, the co-production climate in the U.K. appeared less than ideal. At a 2010 roundtable about independent film production in the U.K., featuring some of the U.K.’s most successful producers, Alison Owen (producer of *Elizabeth*, *Proof*, *The Other Boleyn Girl*) says that “ever since we stepped out of Eurimages and we raised the bar to 25% on the minimum spend for the tax credit, we haven't been able to offer much to most European co-productions” (State of independents 2010). Jeremy Thomas, addressing the realities of co-productions with the U.S., adds that, “the tax credit has been designed to help the industrialised film business, which is the [Hollywood] studio system. On a budget of \$100m, they can take \$20m out of the UK” (State of independents 2010). Stephen Woolley (producer of *The Crying Game* and *Michael Collins*) points out,

The studios don't include the tax credit in their budget figures, so they're keeping the budget numbers down to balance their books. I think that's

outrageous... We all support Harry Potter and James Bond because they give the employment to people here in the UK. They also allow us to make our films because someone who has just come off 20 weeks on Harry Potter can afford to shoot your film for five weeks or six weeks. We like the activity, the problem is how those films are put together in terms of funding. That is kind of scary for us. (State of independents 2010)

The big U.S./U.K. movie franchises were the most successful properties the U.K. film industry participated in during the 2000s and early 2010s. Due to the involvement of U.S. entities in both financing and creative capacities, development of these properties has been fairly similar to the development of U.S. studio movies that don't have international co-production partners. In some ways, the big transnational blockbuster franchises with U.K. involvement like *the Harry Potter* series and the *James Bond* series are basically Hollywood offshore productions. The *James Bond* franchise carried over into the new millennium with *Die Another Day* (Lee Tamahori, 2002) and was the only film with U.K. participation that made it into the Top 20 at the global box office in 2002. The action thriller was produced by Barbara Broccoli and Michael G. Wilson, through U.K. production companies Eon Productions and Danjaq, and U.S. studios MGM and United Artists.⁹⁸ *Die Another Day*, ranked number 10 at the global box office, grossing a total of \$322 million, \$169 of that at the U.S. box office (EAO 2003: 9).

However, not only global franchise movies managed to perform well at the international box office in the 2000s. In contrast to the *James Bond* and *Harry Potter* franchises, Danny Boyle and Loveleen Tandan took a very different approach, when they created a global box office phenomenon with the romantic crime drama *Slumdog Millionaire*. The film, directed by Boyle and co-directed by Tandan, was written by Simon Beaufoy, based on a novel by Vikas Swarup and produced by Christian Colson. Production companies involved were Celador Films, Film 4 and Pathé Pictures

⁹⁸ Neal Purvis and Robert Wade wrote the screenplay. Purvis and Wade, together with Bruce Feirstein, had previously also co-written *The World Is Not Enough* (Michael Apted, 1999).

International. *Slumdog Millionaire*, produced for an estimated \$15 million,⁹⁹ became both a pan-European as well as a global success. With 16,004,477 admissions, *Slumdog Millionaire* was the number two European film at the EU box office, and ranked eight among all productions (EAO 2010: 20). It swept the 2009 Oscars and Golden Globes and made \$141,319,928 at the U.S. box office by May 28, 2009.¹⁰⁰ *Slumdog* writer Simon Beaufoy offers a glimpse at the development process of the film, by lauding the experience of working with Danny Boyle. He says, "there's nobody better to work with. Danny is intensely collaborative. He wanted my opinion the entire time. That's how film-making should be, but in fact it's incredibly rare" (Rose 2009). Doing research for the script, Beaufoy went to Mumbai three times. He says,

[...] any authenticity in the film is due to the people we met there. We asked them what they thought we should film. It was they, for instance, who told us about the big gangster problem in the slums. Their ideas were better than anything I could have dreamt up. I ended up writing something operatic and melodramatic which is so not my usual style. It is a world of utter extremes. You can get the most beautiful woman in the world walking past followed by a guy with no arms and legs on a skateboard. You have to go with it. (Rose 2009)

Another commercial and transnational milestone for the U.K. film industry in the 2000s was *The King's Speech* (2010), the most successful U.K. independent film to date. Produced by Iain Canning, Emile Sherman and Gareth Unwin, the biopic was directed by Tom Hooper. It was supported by the UK Film Council, but released too late to ensure the latter's survival. *The King's Speech* is based on a play written by U.K./U.S. author David Seidler, who also wrote the screenplay for the film. The biographical period drama was developed and produced by U.K. production companies See-Saw Films and Bedlam Productions. In a UK Film Centre panel at the UK Pavilion at the Cannes International Film Festival 2011,¹⁰¹ Ian Canning and Gareth Unwin, two of the film's producers, and Xavier Marchand from Momentum Pictures, the film's U.K.

⁹⁹ IMDb 2012, "Box office / business for *Slumdog Millionaire*," accessed on 4/28/2012, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1010048/business>

¹⁰⁰ Box Office Mojo 2011, "*Slumdog Millionaire*: Summary," accessed on 01/30/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=slumdogmillionaire.htm>

¹⁰¹ Attended and transcribed by the author.

distributor, talked about the development and production of *The King's Speech*. Iain Canning says, that the seed money for developing the film came from Richard Price, the ex-chairman of BAFTA. According to Iain Canning, he is part of a group of “high net worth individuals who like to speculate on projects we develop.”¹⁰² More development money came from the film’s U.K. distributor Momentum, drawing from a UK Film Council Vision Award (ibid.). Production companies involved in *The King's Speech* were U.K. company Bedlam Productions and U.K./Australian company See-Saw Films. See-Saw Films was founded in 2008 by Emile Sherman and Iain Canning.¹⁰³ *The King's Speech*, the first theatrical feature under the See-Saw Films banner, was in development for about a year, according to Canning. At the outset, the decision had to be made whether to go the U.S. studio route with the film or whether to go the independent route. According to Gareth Unwin, the producers had one studio offer to produce the film in exchange for worldwide rights. Unwin says that going that route “would have been pretty heart wrenching.” He calls their eventual decision to go the independent route “the best choice we could make,” but says that, after the decision was made, “the financing hell started.”¹⁰⁴ Canning says that with the UK Film Council on board, Colin Firth and Geoffrey Rush attached and two key territories covered, the producers began negotiations with the Weinstein Company. Canning remembers that The Weinstens, while eager to do the film, negotiated for three days straight without a break. According to Canning “we were pushing back and fourth the territories. We wanted them to acquire a certain amount of the world, but at the same time we wanted to keep some territories to make the investors happy.” The Weinstein Company ended up contributing about half of the film’s \$15 million budget in exchange for Latin

¹⁰² Canning, Iain, “The King’s Speech: From development to distribution,” UK Film Centre panel at UK Film Centre Pavilion, Cannes International Film Festival 2011, 5/16/2011, attended and transcribed by the author

¹⁰³ According to their website, See-Saw films “has a first-look deal with Momentum Pictures” and “a co-development deal with Buckland Films in which Buckland Films works with See-Saw to co-finance the development of See-Saw’s slate” (See-Saw Films 2011).

¹⁰⁴ Unwin, Gareth, “The King’s Speech: From development to distribution,” UK Film Centre panel at UK Film Centre Pavilion, Cannes International Film Festival 2011, 5/16/2011, attended and transcribed by the author

American Benelux, Hong Kong and other rights to the film, says Canning. The creative influence of Harvey and Bob Weinstein, who became executive producers of *The King's Speech*, according to Canning, was relatively limited. The Weinsteins were very fond of the project from the start and "wanted to get the film made." Harvey Weinstein, according to Canning, was a fan of Colin Firth. The choice to go the independent route and to involve the Weinstein Company, rather than going the U.S. studio route was made in order to avoid "the development heavy road of the studios," says Canning.¹⁰⁵ The creative collaboration between the director, the producers, Momentum Pictures and the Weinstein brothers was reportedly unproblematic. Tom Hooper, according to Xavier Marchand, creatively had "quite a healthy relationship with [...] the producers and the Weinstein company."¹⁰⁶ Marchand says, "Tom was very smart about taking comments and coming up with his own solutions."¹⁰⁷ Interestingly, according to Canning, it was not until a test screening in New York, when the producers realized that they had made a comedy.¹⁰⁸

The King's Speech premiered at the Telluride Film Festival, where it was positively received. The reactions of the Telluride audience led to minor changes in the film's cut before its screening at the Toronto Film Festival, where it won the coveted audience award, says Unwin.¹⁰⁹ The Weinstein Company's distribution strategy for the film in the U.S. market was a platform release. Momentum and The Weinstein Company coordinated their release schedules, as Momentum was planning a January release for the film in the U.K. None of the producers had anticipated the number of awards the film would receive in the U.S. as well as in Europe.¹¹⁰ According to Unwin,

¹⁰⁵ Canning, Iain, "The King's Speech: From development to distribution," UK Film Centre panel at UK Film Centre Pavilion, Cannes International Film Festival 2011, 5/16/2011, attended and transcribed by the author

¹⁰⁶ Marchand, Xavier, "The King's Speech: From development to distribution," UK Film Centre panel at UK Film Centre Pavilion, Cannes International Film Festival 2011, 5/16/2011, attended and transcribed by the author

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Canning, Iain, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Unwin, Gareth, *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

receiving the PGA award was “like a lightning bolt in the room.”¹¹¹ He says, the guild awards, including the DGA award for director Tom Hooper “changed everything.” The awards, according to Unwin, created an “incredible momentum” for the film. Harvey Weinstein’s release strategy, however, frightened the U.K. producers at first. Unwin describes the “slow platform release” as “scary,” but credits Harvey Weinstein for being “a genius at organizing.” He says, that “his strategy was to build slow and keep it quiet” and points out that Harvey Weinstein took the right approach. *The King’s Speech*’s box office was not that big originally. However, when the film premiered in the U.K., the awards it had garnered before the U.K. release helped to create buzz.¹¹² The first screening of *The King’s Speech* in London on January 6, 2010 was preceded by an “intense BAFTA campaign” and was “a huge success,” says Marchand, who calls *The King’s Speech* “an intelligent movie,” and “not a Friday night film.”¹¹³ He sees the audience for the film as “slightly older” and female skewed. Marchand points out that 35 percent of the audience were seniors and that during the subsequent DVD release in the U.K., 900,000 units sold in the first week, comparable to the successful DVD release of *Quantum of Solace* (Marc Forster, 2008).¹¹⁴ Asked about the impact of *The King’s Speech* on the U.K. film industry, Canning says that it changed the production landscape in the U.K., as it encouraged a new wave of “quality projects” and led to a rebound of prestige films, whose numbers had been in decline, giving way to action and horror movies.¹¹⁵ Marchand agrees, pointing out that at some point in early 2011, 60 percent of movies released, like *True Grit* (Ethan and Joel Coen, 2010) and *Black Swan* (Darren Aronofsky, 2010), were quality movies, as the appetite for those films had substantially increased. He says that in Cannes in 2011, “it took only three minutes

¹¹¹ Unwin, Gareth, “The King’s Speech: From development to distribution,” UK Film Centre panel at UK Film Centre Pavilion, Cannes International Film Festival 2011, 5/16/2011, attended and transcribed by the author

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Marchand, Xavier, *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Canning, Iain, *ibid.*

during my first sales meeting [...] for somebody to say 'it's like *The King's Speech*.'"¹¹⁶ The film, starring Colin Firth, Geoffrey Rush and Helena Bonham Carter, won 57 international awards, among them four Oscars, and received 89 award nominations. It was theatrically distributed by the Weinstein Company in the U.S. and grossed \$138,797,449 at the U.S. box office. Its international box office performance, with \$275,414,100, was even more impressive.¹¹⁷

Films like *The King's Speech* led to a more favorable investment climate for U.K. independent productions in the early 2010s and reaffirmed the transnational potential of cinema originating in the U.K.

THE U.K. FILM INDUSTRY IN THE LATE 2000S

By 2008, according to *Screen International* contributor Wendy Mitchell, the U.K. had “become the key non-U.S. territory for Hollywood films” (ibid.). Mitchell states that, while “Japan can deliver higher grosses [...] the UK has emerged as the most consistent predictor of an international hit” (ibid.). According to Mitchell, “launching [a film] early in the U.K. means that the U.K. records can build buzz elsewhere” (ibid.). Mitchell quotes Sony Pictures Releasing International’s president Mark Zucker who supports that notion by saying, “Americans like to hear the news that a film has set records in the UK [...] Especially with the credit crunch, Americans will be more willing to go see a proven product” (ibid.). At the same time, the financing situation for independents in the U.K. became more difficult in 2008 when Broadcaster Channel 4, a strong supporter of independent film through its Film Four label, suffered from financial difficulties and the UK Film Council announced a GBP 22 million cut in lottery funding over a five year period, in order to funnel these resources into the 2012 London Olympics (EAO 2009). While by 2009 the number of independent films

¹¹⁶ Marchand, Xavier, “The King’s Speech: From development to distribution,” UK Film Centre panel at UK Film Centre Pavilion, Cannes International Film Festival 2011, 5/16/2011, attended and transcribed by the author

¹¹⁷ Box Office Mojo 2011, “The King’s Speech: Summary,” accessed on 7/23/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=kingspeech.htm>

budgeted at more than GBP 500,000 had decreased from 163 in 2003 to 94, the U.K. production spend reached a record high of \$1.5 billion. The latter was primarily due to a dramatic increase in investment from U.S. studios, spurred by the U.K. film tax relief, a beneficial exchange rate and the end of the WGA strike (EAO 2010).

By the end of the 2000s, the notion that U.K. producers needed to be tied in with U.S. studios in order to be internationally competitive was challenged. As several pacts between U.K. producers and U.S. studios were set to expire, a number of U.K. producers began to reevaluate the situation and strengthened their European connections rather than pursuing further ties with the U.S. Matthew Vaughn and Kris Thykier's U.K. production company Marv Films, for example, terminated their three-year first-look deal with Sony Pictures in 2009, when Kris Thykier set up a new production company Peapie. U.K. company Ruby Films three-year development and production deal with Miramax expired without a single project coming to fruition under the pact (Jaafar 2009). Referring to the Hollywood studios' shutdown of the majority of their specialty divisions by 2008, Ruby's Paul Trijbits says,

[...] from an indie producer point of view, you will always look for any which way you can to get support for your overhead and increase the possibility of having someone fund your films. You've only got Sony Pictures Classics left. There's no need for a first-look deal when you've only got one place to go. (ibid.)

Ruby Films, however, was able to add another U.S. studio component to one of their next projects. For their romantic drama *Jane Eyre* (Cary Fukunaga, 2011), they teamed up with BBC Films and U.S. studio specialty division Focus Features. *Jane Eyre* was theatrically released by Focus feature and grossed \$11,242,660 at the U.S. box office and \$20,910,513 internationally (non-U.S.).¹¹⁸

By the end of the 2000s, big U.K./U.S. franchise movies continued to be among the highest grossing transnational properties. The most successful European film at the European box office in 2009 was the U.K./U.S. co-production *Harry Potter and the*

¹¹⁸ Box Office Mojo 2012, "Jane Eyre: Foreign," accessed on 04/29/2012, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=janeeyre2011.htm>

Half-Blood Prince (David Yates, 2008). Its 33,868,313 admissions were only topped by the U.S. animated family movie *Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs* (Carlos Saldanha & Mike Thurmeier, 2009), which 40,223,466 Europeans went to see in theaters (EAO 2010: 20).

U.K. producers by the end of the 2000s were facing a crucial additional decision at the development stage: Whether to shoot in 2D or 3D. With a substantial percentage of the U.S. studios offering 3D versions of their tentpole movies, competing with Hollywood required closing the technological gap. *Street Dance 3D* (2010), produced for an estimated \$7.2 million by U.K. company Vertigo Films, co-financed by Little Gaddesden Productions and BBC Films and supported by the UK Film Council's Premiere Fund, was the first U.K. feature film shot completely in 3D (*Street Dance 3D overtakes tentpoles* 2010). The film, targeted at a teen audience, was marketed using the Internet, combining Twitter and Facebook campaigns with a slew of pre-release screening events, featuring street dancers, all over the U.K. *Street Dance 3D* was launched on 345 3D screens, 40 more than *Avatar*. It held the number-one slot at the U.K. box office on its opening weekend, outperforming U.S. blockbuster contenders *Prince of Persia* (Mike Newell, 2010), *Robin Hood* (Ridley Scott, 2010) and *Iron Man 2* (Jon Favreau, 2010) (ibid.).

Like its European neighbors, the U.K. film industry has also been heavily affected by the intensifying pressure of the global economic downturn. By 2010 a number of large banks that used to be very active in bigger budget film financing, had either withdrawn from the business or reduced their activities, leaving mostly smaller players with less financial clout to engage at the top level (Macnab 2010b). Geoffrey Macnab quotes a film industry observer, commenting on the harsh realities of U.K. film financing in the late 2000s:

You might get 30% gap and they [the financiers] would lend you a good number against the pre-sales and they would give you a good number against the tax credit and you could go out and get a chunk of equity from private funders, and you would be done [...] Nowadays, you would be hard pressed to get 20% gap and sometimes not even that. You will get less against your pre-

sales, a smaller percentage of your tax credit and the equity is very tough to track down. (Macnab 2010b)

In 2010 public film funding in the U.K. underwent further changes, as the UK Film Council, forced to cut costs, merged its Premiere, New Cinema and Development funds into a single \$23 million production fund (EAO 2010).

With film financing becoming harder to obtain, it seems that the focus on both sides of the Atlantic will be even more on transnational motion pictures that are perceived as highly marketable entities. The climate appears to be such that there is less and less room for cinema with limited audience appeal. However, the U.K.'s close ties with the Hollywood film industry put it into a very peculiar situation when it comes to creating mainstream films for either its domestic market and/or the global market. *Screen International* contributor Mike Goodridge says that,

[...] the fact the UK shares a language with the US has also damaged its home market for mainstream films. While France, Germany, Spain and Italy regularly score local blockbusters with homegrown comedies, thrillers and event dramas, the UK has found its culture co-opted and owned by Hollywood. (Goodridge 2009)

However, the U.K.'s focus on transatlantic collaborations has made it the only serious blockbuster (co-) producing country in Europe. In 2010, collaborations between the U.K. and the U.S. film industry resulted in five titles in the Top 20 at the worldwide box office. These titles were the U.K./U.S. co-production *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (David Yates, 2010), ranking 4th with a global box office of \$895 million, \$284 million of that from the U.S.; U.S./U.K. co-production *Inception* (Christopher Nolan, 2010), ranking 5th with a global box office of \$824 million, \$293 of that from the U.S.; the U.S./U.K./German co-production *Sherlock Holmes* (Guy Ritchie, 2009), with a global box office of \$524 million, \$209 million of that from the U.S.;¹¹⁹ the U.S./U.K. co-production *Prince of Persia: Sands of Time* (Mike Newell, 2010), ranking

¹¹⁹ Unrounded figures for *Sherlock Holmes*: 524,028,679 global box office and \$209,028,679 domestic box office. From Box Office Mojo, "Sherlock Holmes: Foreign," accessed on 04/29/2012, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=sherlockholmes.htm>

14th with a global box office of \$336 million, \$91 million of that from the U.S., and *Robin Hood* (Ridley Scott, 2010), ranking 15th with a global box office of \$320 million, \$105 million of that from the U.S. (EAO 2011: 13). The only other European film industry, which had a film in the Top 20 at the worldwide box office in 2010 was Germany, with the German/French/U.K. co-production *Resident Evil: Afterlife* (Paul W.S. Anderson, 2010) (EAO 2011: 13), the latter an indicator that U.K. participation in European co-productions also has its merits.

Conclusions Regarding the Perceived Changes in U.K. Development Practices and Strategies

The U.K. film industry, with its long history of interaction with the U.S. film industry, has shown increasing similarities to the U.S. film industry with regards to its development strategies and practices. This can be attributed to a combination of factors. Among the most prominent ones are the U.K. serving as a preferred service producer for U.S. runaway productions; avid co-production activity between the U.S. and the U.K.; a shift in U.K. educational initiatives and activities in the 2000s; as well as shifts in U.K. government funding strategies emphasizing commercial and transnational properties. As the rapidly changing landscape of transnational properties with U.K. involvement during the 1990s and 2000s suggests, that the U.K. film industry has both benefited and suffered from the influence of Global Conglomerate Hollywood.

Chapter Four: France

Throughout the history of cinema, France has been one of Europe's most prolific filmmaking nations. Looking at the time period from the 1980s to the early 2010s, the French film industry has maintained its prominent position among the Big Five film industries in Europe, not only in terms of the quantity of films produced, but also in terms of its ability to market its films internationally. The share of French productions that qualify as transnational properties, by definition of their cross-border marketability, has been increasing and is higher than in most other European film industries. The French film industry over the last decades has not only managed to retain higher-than-average domestic box office shares, but also has been playing a major role in the pan-European as well as the global film market. Like in most European countries, television has played a major role in shaping the French film industry and has also been a significant contributing factor in the realm of transnational productions. The interaction between cinema and television, reflecting the developments in other European countries, however, has not been without friction. Michael Temple and Michael Witt (2004) summarize the historical relationship of cinema and television in France as follows:

From the 1950s, a certain cultural condescension, on the part of the more established medium, successively evolved into suspicion in the 60s, panic in the 70s and crisis in the 80s, when cinema suddenly found itself a relatively minor feature in what was becoming known as the 'French audiovisual landscape.' (188)

Following the end of the state monopoly on broadcasting in 1974, television pre-sales and co-productions have become key components of the French film industry (Ibid.). As television has become an intrinsic part of the production landscape, it also has come to play a major role in the development and financing of transnational films. A look at the most prominent French transnational productions over the last three decades, shows that the vast majority was at least partially financed by television.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSNATIONAL FILMS IN FRANCE IN THE 1970S AND 1980S

Among French filmmakers starting their careers in the 1970s, Jean-Jacques Annaud has been among the most prolific creators of transnational films. His first feature film *Noirs et blancs en couleur* (*Black and White in Color*), made in 1976, was the official entry for the Academy Awards in the Best Foreign Language Film category for the Ivory Coast and won. Subsequently, he directed the French/Canadian/U.S. co-production *La guerre du feu* (*Quest for Fire*, 1981). The film was shot for an estimated \$12.5 million, a substantial budget for a French co-production at the time, and received U.S. theatrical distribution by 20th Century Fox and grossed \$20,959,585 at the U.S. box office.¹²⁰ In the late 1980s, Annaud demonstrated with the French/U.S. co-production *L'ours* (*The Bear*, 1988), that European cinema was not only capable of blockbuster performance in local European markets, but also had the potential to succeed internationally. *L'ours* was nominated for and won a number of international awards, received U.S. theatrical distribution by TriStar, and grossed \$31,753,898 at the U.S. box office.¹²¹

But Jean-Jacques Annaud was not alone in his endeavors to make films with transnational appeal for a mass audience.¹²² The 1980s saw the emergence of a new cinema movement that became known as the “Cinéma du Look.” Among transnational films that can be considered as part of that movement were Jean-Jacques Beineix's *Diva* (1981), Luc Besson's *Le grand bleu* (*The Big Blue*, 1988) and Léos Carax's *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf* (*The Lovers on the Bridge*, 1991). Among the Cinéma du Look films of the 1980s, *Le Grand Bleu* was the most successful internationally. It received theatrical distribution in the U.S. by Columbia Pictures and grossed \$3,580,882 at the U.S. box

¹²⁰ Box Office Mojo, “Quest for Fire: Summary,” accessed on 6/13/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=questforfire.htm>

¹²¹ IMDb 2011, “Box office / business for *The Bear* (1988),” accessed on 6/13/2010, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0095800/business>

¹²² Annaud also helmed the German/French/Italian co-production *Der Name der Rose* (*The Name of the Rose*, 1986), addressed in more detail in Chapter 5.

office,¹²³ making it one of the more internationally appealing films among the slate of 33 narrative films that French production and distribution company Gaumont produced or co-produced in the 1980s.¹²⁴ *Le Grand Bleu* also marked a relatively new trend in French cinema that was started with Roman Polanski's film *Pirates* in 1986: The production of English-language films, which led to objections in France. French film critic Michel Ciment, for example, points out that *Pirates* (Roman Polanski, 1986), *Un Homme amoureux* (*A Man in Love*, Diane Kurys, 1987) and *Le Grand Bleu* (Luc Besson, 1988), all three English-language pictures, were the opening night films of the 1986, 1987 and 1988 Cannes Film Festival respectively, and that this development "stresses symbolically the dilemma of French cinema. As its sales abroad are dwindling the only prospect for some producers is to go directly for the Anglo-Saxon market by speaking the language of its potential customers" (Ciment 1988: 160). Ciment's concerns about an Americanization of the French film industry were fueled by an increase in American imports, causing a drop in French national theatrical market share to 35.5 percent in 1986 (ibid.).

However, the English-language films helped to strengthen the French film industry's role as a producer of pan-European and international cinema, which in the long run would help to keep the presence of Hollywood films in French theaters at bay. Inspired by the success of some of the English-language films, parts of the French film industry shifted their focus to the development and production of transnational properties. Their efforts were supported by the enormous financial power of French media conglomerates, a strong domestic subsidy system, and in many cases the pan-European support structures and co-producing opportunities.

¹²³ Box Office Mojo 2011, "The Big Blue," accessed on 7/4/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=bigblue.htm>

¹²⁴ *Le grand bleu* was Gaumont's third collaboration with Luc Besson after producing Besson's 1985 film *Subway*, together with Besson's company Les Films du Loup, TSF Productions and TF1 Films Production and facilitating a limited theatrical run for Besson's *Le Dernier Combat* (*The Last Battle*, 1983) (Hayward 1998: 28).

Among genres with export potential was the thriller, which has historically done well internationally. French thrillers were often referred to as “polar” films, and considered as a reaction to U.S. crime novels and Hollywood thrillers gaining popularity in post-war France (Austin 2008: 118).¹²⁵ Among films of the action/comedy/thriller sub-genre succeeding internationally were *Le Professionnel* (*The Professional*, Georges Lautner, 1981), *L’as des as* (*Ace of Aces*, Gérard Oury 1982) and *Le Marginal* (*The Outsider*, Jacques Deray, 1983). All three of them were relatively successful at the German box office, with 3,210,134, 1,486,283 and 1,416,947 admissions respectively.¹²⁶ Also reaching international audiences in the late 1980s was *Monsieur Hire* (Patrice Leconte, 1989),¹²⁷ theatrically distributed in France by UGC, in the U.K. by Palace Pictures and in the U.S. by Orion Classics, where it grossed \$1,417,030.¹²⁸

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSNATIONAL FILMS IN FRANCE IN THE 1990s

The French film industry in the 1990s flourished, aptly funded by various film subsidy mechanisms and collaborations with, and pre-sales to, France’s potent TV sector, and by funding from French media conglomerates. As Table 4.2 shows, the number of French initiative films in the 1990s rose from 106 in 1990 to 150 in 1999.

¹²⁵ A number of French thrillers were based on American crime novels, such as François Truffaut's *Tirez sur le pianiste* (*Shoot the Pianist*, 1960), Jean-Jacques Beineix's *La Lune dans le caniveau* (*The Moon in the Gutter*), some were political thrillers, such as Costa-Gavra's *Z* (1969), *L'Aveu* (*The Confession*, 1970) and *État de Siège* (*State of Siege*, 1972). Audience magnets were also the thrillers with comedy elements and the “gangster” movies of the 1970s and 1980s (Austin 2008: 118-119).

¹²⁶ IMDb 2011, “IMDb 2011, “Box office / business for Le marginal (1983),” accessed on 8/20/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0085900/business>

¹²⁷ *Monsieur Hire* was written by Leconte and Patrick Dewolf, based on a novel by Belgian writer Georges Simenon. Philippe Carcassonne and René Cleitman produced the film. It was a co-production between Cinéa, Hachette Première and FR3 Films Production and received support from Centre National de la Cinématographie (CNC), Sofimage and Sofica Créations.

¹²⁸ Box Office Mojo 2010, *Monsieur Hire: Summary*,” accessed on 5/29/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=monsieurhire.htm>.

Table 4.2.: Film Production in France — 1990 - 1999

CNC approved films	French initiative films	of which entirely French films	and co-production films	foreign majority films	selective funding films ¹	Total
1990	106	81	25	37	3	146
1991	108	73	35	36	12	156
1992	113	72	41	31	11	155
1993	101	67	34	36	15	152
1994	89	61	28	22	4	115
1995	97	63	34	32	12	141
1996	104	74	30	27	3	134
1997	125	86	39	33	5	163
1998	148	102	46	32	3	183
1999	150	115	35	31	-	181

¹ Films receiving selective funding for productions with Central and Eastern European countries (ECO funds).

Source: CNC¹²⁹

Mirroring conglomeration trends and the constant flux in corporate ownership in the U.S. media industry, some of the major players in French cinema changed owners in the 1990s. Production and distribution company Pathé, for example, in the 1980 owned by French industrial tycoon Vincent Bolloré's Groupe Rivaud and Italian financier Giancarlo Parretti, turned fully French again, when French conglomerate Chargeurs bought out Parretti's stake in 1990 (Fleming 1990: 5). Overall, conglomerate ownership, paired with global ambitions, led to an increased openness towards the production of transnational properties. Pathé's subsidiary Pathé Entertainment in the 1990s produced the Western *Quigley Down Under* (Simon Wincer, 1990), starring Tom Sellek, Laura San Giacomo and Alan Rickman. Distributed in the U.S. by MGM, the film grossed \$21,413,105 at the U.S. box office.¹³⁰ Similarly successful was the thriller *Not Without My Daughter* (Brian Gilbert, 1991), starring Sally Field, Alfred Molina and Sheila Rosenthal—co-produced by Pathé Entertainment and U.S. company Ufland Productions. The latter—theatrically distributed in the U.S. by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer

¹²⁹ CNC World Cinema Statistics, from <http://www.cnc.fr/web/en/sectoral-statistics>

¹³⁰ Box Office Mojo 2011, "Quigley Down Under," accessed on 7/2/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=quigleydownunder.htm>

(MGM)—grossed \$14,789,113 at the U.S. box office.¹³¹ MGM and Pathé Entertainment also co-produced *Thelma and Louise* (Ridley Scott, 1991), starring Brad Pitt and Susan Sarandon, distributed by MGM and grossing \$45,360,915 at the U.S. box office.¹³² However, not all of Pathé Entertainment's international co-production ventures in the early 1990s succeeded at that level. The 1991 action comedy *Company Business* (Nicholas Meyer, 1991), starring Gene Hackman, Mikhail Baryshnikov and Kurtwood Smith, and the romantic drama *The Man in the Moon* (Robert Mulligan, 1991), starring Sam Waterston, Tess Harper and Gail Strickland, grossed only \$1,501,785 and \$2,853,80 at the U.S. box office respectively.¹³³ Among Pathé co-owner Chargeurs' global film ventures in the 1990s were participations in Paul Verhoeven's erotic drama *Showgirls* (1995), written by blockbuster author Joe Eszterhas, and in the Western *Last of the Dogmen* (Tab Murphy, 1995), starring Tom Berenger, Barbara Hershey and Kurtwood Smith. Neither of these films performed as well as anticipated. In 1996, Chargeurs, who had spread its business interests primarily across the media, auto and textile industries, split its operations, leaving its media ventures with Pathé. Its media assets included a 17% share in U.K. satellite broadcaster BSkyB, movie theaters in the Netherlands, and French production and distribution companies Renn Productions and AMLF (Williams 1996: 18).¹³⁴

In 1999, Pathé was acquired by Vivendi, which, according to its chairman Jean-Marie Messier, was particularly interested in Pathé's share in British telecommunications company British Sky Broadcasting Group (BskyB), in order to

¹³¹ Box Office Mojo 2011, "Not Without My Daughter," accessed on 7/2/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=notwithoutmydaughter.htm>

¹³² Box Office Mojo 2011, "Thelma and Louise," accessed on 7/2/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=thelmaandlouise.htm>

¹³³ Box Office Mojo 2011, "Company Business," accessed on 7/2/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=companybusiness.htm>, IMDb 2012, "Box office / business for *The Man in the Moon* (1991)," accessed on 4/21/2012, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0102388/business>

¹³⁴ The last film produced under the Pathé Entertainment label, was the U.K./French co-production *Honest* (David A. Stewart, 2000), a black comedy that did not cross over into the U.S. market.

facilitate its goal of playing a leading role in Europe's pay TV market (Tagliabue 1999: 4). Keeping Pathé's shares in BSKyB and shares in the French satellite broadcasting company CanalSatellite, Vivendi sold the rest of Pathé's assets, including its film operations, to the family of Pathé's CEO Jérôme Seydoux, Pathé's majority shareholder (ibid.).

While Jérôme Seydoux would remain at the helm of the re-configured Pathé, his brother Nicolas continued his chairmanship of Pathé's competitor Gaumont. Like Pathé's, Gaumont's production and co-production slate turned increasingly transnational in the 1990s.¹³⁵ Several of the 40 narrative feature films Gaumont was involved with as a producer and co-producer during that decade, can be considered as transnational properties. Three of them were directed and co-produced by Luc Besson: *La Femme Nikita* (1990), a co-production between Gaumont, Luc Besson's Les Films du Loup and Italian production company Cecchi Gori Group Tiger Cinematografica; *Léon (Leon: The Professional)*, 1994), a co-production between Gaumont and Luc Besson's second production company Les Films du Dauphin, starring Jean Reno, Gary Oldman and Natalie Portman; and *Le cinquième élément (The Fifth Element)*, 1997), Bruce Willis, Milla Jovovich and Gary Oldman, and *Joan of Arc (The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc)*, 1999), starring Milla Jovovich, John Malkovich and Rab Affleck. All of these films were produced for above average budgets, compared to other French films at the time (*Le cinquième élément* and *Joan of Arc*, for example, were budgeted at \$90 million and \$85 million respectively), and all of them had by European standards more than respectable U.S. box office results: *Léon*, *Le cinquième élément* and *Joan of Arc*, all three theatrically distributed by Sony/Columbia, grossed \$19,501,238, \$63,820,180 and \$14,276,317 respectively;¹³⁶ and *La Femme Nikita*, distributed by

¹³⁵ Gaumont, founded in 1895, has been one of the most prolific production and distribution companies in France.

¹³⁶ Box Office Mojo 2011, "The Professional: Summary," accessed on 7/6/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=professional.htm>; Box Office Mojo 2011, "The Fifth Element," accessed on 7/6/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=fifthelement.htm>; Box Office Mojo 2011, "Joan of Arc," accessed on 7/6/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/search/?q=Joan%20of%20Arc>

Samuel Goldwyn, grossed \$5,017,971 at the U.S. box office.¹³⁷ The films' international (non-U.S.) box office performances were equally impressive: *Le cinquième élément* and *Joan of Arc*, for example, grossed \$200.1 million and \$52.7 million respectively.¹³⁸ Gaumont was also involved in the Ridley Scott directed historical drama *1492: Conquest of Paradise* (1992), about the Spanish discovery of America, addressed below. Among smaller films Gaumont produced during the 1990s, which received U.S. theatrical distribution, was Francis Veber's comedy *Le dîner de cons* (*The Dinner Game*, 1998), co-produced by EFVE and TF1. Distributed by Lions Gate Films in the U.S., it grossed \$4,071,548 at the U.S. box office.¹³⁹ The French national production ranked 14th with 8,996,894 admissions at the European box office and was the only French film that made it into the Top 20 at the European box office that year (EAO 1998).

In the 1990s, French pay-TV networks began to invest substantial sums of money into the French national film industry as well as into European and international co-productions. The prime example is Canal+.¹⁴⁰ Through an agreement with the French government, Canal+ was granted special conditions to show films one year after their theatrical release and much sooner than their competition. In return, Canal+ was required to invest 20% of its budget in film production (vs. 3% for its competitors) and 60% of those investments had to flow into European productions; also 45% of the European productions invested in were required to be French (Miller et al. 2005: 198-200). The first transnational narrative under the StudioCanal banner was the U.S./French co-production *Universal Soldier* (Roland Emmerich, 1992), starring Jean-Claude Van Damme, Dolph Lundgren and Ally Walker. The sci-fi action movie was a

¹³⁷ Box Office Mojo 2011, "La Femme Nikita: Summary," accessed on 7/6/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=lafemmenikita.htm>

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Box Office Mojo 2011, "The Dinner Game: Summary," accessed on 7/4/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=dinnergame.htm>

¹⁴⁰ Canal+ was launched in 1984 and by 1999 had 14 million subscribers in Belgium, Germany, Spain, French-speaking North Africa, Poland, Italy, the Netherlands and Scandinavia, which amount to about half of all of Europe's pay-TV subscribers (Canal+, Annual Report 1999, as cited in Miller et al. 2005: 198-199).

co-production with U.S. companies Carolco Pictures, IndieProd Company Productions, and German director Roland Emmerich's newly founded U.S. production company Centropolis Film Productions. Budgeted at an estimated \$23 million, it grossed \$36,168,043 at the U.S. box office and \$101.2 million worldwide.¹⁴¹ Among the 20 narratives StudioCanal was involved in as a producer and co-producer during the 1990s, the following ones can be considered as transnational properties, due to their concepts and international casts: The drama *Damage* (Louis Malle, 1992), starring Jeremy Irons, Juliette Binoche and Miranda Richardson; the French/U.K. period drama *Carrington* (Christopher Hampton, 1995), starring Emma Thompson, Jonathan Pryce and Rufus Sewell; the U.K./French/Belgium biopic romance *Total Eclipse* (Agnieszka Holland, 1995), starring Leonardo DiCaprio, David Thewlis and Romane Bohringer; the French/U.K./Dutch/Luxembourg drama *The Pillow Book* (Peter Greenaway, 1996), starring Vivian Wu, Ewan McGregor and Yoshi Oida, and *The Straight Story* (David Lynch, 1999), starring Richard Farnsworth, Sissy Spacek and Jane Galloway Heitz. Among StudioCanal's French productions featuring all-French casts with some transnational marketing potential in the 1990s, was the crime thriller *Les amants criminels* (*Criminal Lovers*, François Ozon, 1999), distributed by Strand Releasing in the U.S.

A landmark in the French film industry's globalization endeavors was the partnership between Canal+ and U.S. film studio Sony, initiated in 1995. According to *Variety* contributor Patricia Saperstein (1995), the goal of the partnership was "to develop 'high-end' (\$10 million to \$15 million) English-language European films" (M3). This budget range was still considered high by European standards in the mid-1990s, despite an increasing number of European productions with substantially higher budgets. Sapperstein points out that, "the deal shows Europeans are looking to the U.S. to learn the studio development process, which has never been fully implemented in Europe" (M3). To further increase its presence in the international market and to secure

¹⁴¹ IMDb 2011, "Box office / business for Universal Soldier (1992)," accessed on 7/26/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0105698/business>

properties for its distribution pipeline, Canal+ in 1998 announced the start of a joint production company with U.S. studio Warner Bros., aiming at the production and distribution of between four and six films per year over a five-year period (Canal+, Warner Bros form joint film company 1998). U.S. producer Steven Reuther was put in charge of the operation. The agreement gave Canal+ exclusive broadcast rights for those movies on its European pay TV channels and all distribution rights for the German territory. Warner Bros. would receive the worldwide distribution rights for all other territories (ibid.). Canal+'s global activities were reflected in its acquisition practices. The number of films Canal+ pre-purchased from 1994 to 1999 increased from 94 to 140, and the amount of money spent on pre-purchases increased from €78.12 million in 1994 to €141.75 million in 1999 (See Table 4.3).¹⁴²

Table 4.3.: Canal+ Pre-Purchases

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Number of films	94	99	107	135	139	140
French Initiative Films	80	81	85	109	117	121
Pre-purchases (in million €)	78.12	96.47	103.43	133.37	139.92	141.75
Average contribution per film (in million €)	0.83	0.97	0.97	0.99	1.01	1.01
% of approved film budgets	17.8	17.6	20.6	18.9	18.6	20.5
% of budgets for French Initiative Films	19.8	20.2	22.6	20.6	22.1	24.6

Source: CNC¹⁴³

Canal+ in the 1990s also became involved in development support for projects of first-time directors, through Canal+ Écriture. The latter, founded by Didier Boujard, was geared towards nurturing first-time directors and helping getting first films off the ground. The initiative accepted 15 projects per year with the goal to turn about one-third of them into completed screenplays in a two-year time period (Finney 1996b).

¹⁴² The majority of movies Canal+ pre-purchased from 1994 to 1999 were "French Initiative Films," films creatively controlled by French entities. Canal+'s financial commitment to these films ranged from 17.8 to 20.5 percent of their budgets (19.8 to 24.6 percent on French Initiative Films) (See Table 4.3).

¹⁴³ CNC World Cinema Statistics, from <http://www.cnc.fr/web/en/sectoral-statistics>

According to Boujard, Canal+ Écriture would not act as producers but rather would offer the scripts to producers upon completion, tackling a perceived problem with development in the French film industry. According to Boujard, “many French producers simply don’t have the means to spend a long time on development, and certainly few have the financial means to take a significant risk on development” (Finney, 1996b). Écriture’s goal in the mid-1990s was to sell the screenplays to producers covering Écriture’s expenses or to co-produce Écriture-backed films. In March of 1995 Canal+ Écriture, now under leadership of Nicholas Boukhrief and Richard Grandpierre, announced that it would expand its efforts with a larger budget and continue to work closely with the Equinoxe program. Finney speculates that the change in leadership was caused by discontent at Canal+ with films that did not meet the broadcaster’s needs (Finney 1996b: 51). Grandpierre points out a shortage of commercial French films, available to the broadcaster:

The majority of French films we are obliged to buy have similar subjects, small theatrical audiences, and go on to attract a low number of viewers when we broadcast them. We will be looking to support films that have merits different to those sought by the CNC’s Avances Sur Recettes, including, for example, projects that could have attracted Channel 4 or a producer like Roger Corman. (Finney 1996b: 51)

Similar to Canal+ and StudioCanal, UGC also made strategic changes. During the 1990s, UGC produced and co-produced 44 theatrical features, with several transnational properties among them. Among the more prominent films in that area were *Cyrano de Bergerac* (Jean-Paul Rappeneau, 1990), *Green Card* (Peter Weir, 1990), *Delicatessen* (Marc Caro and Jeane-Pierre Jeunet, 1991), *Arizona Dream* (Emir Kusturica, 1993), *Il mostro* (*The Monster*, Roberto Begnini, 1994), *Stealing Beauty* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1996), *Hard Rain* (Mikael Salomon, 1998), *A Simple Plan* (Sam Raimi, 1998), and *eXistenZ* (David Cronenberg, 1999). Among the films under the UGC PH label, started by UGC founding partner Philippe Hellmann, UGC co-produced the \$60 million U.S./French/Japanese/German co-production *The Jackal* (Michael Caton-Jones, 1997), starring Bruce Willis, Richard Gere and Sidney Poitier; the \$65

million U.S./U.K./French/German/Japanese co-production *Primary Colors* (Mike Nichols, 1998); the U.S./U.K./German/Japanese/French co-production *Virus* (John Bruno, 1999), starring Jamie Lee Curtis, William Baldwin and Donald Sutherland, and the comedic drama *The Kids Are Alright* (Lisa Cholodenko, 2010), starring Annette Bening, Julianne Moore and Mark Ruffalo.

Development strategies and practices, in both the French conglomerate as well as the independent sector, changed in the 1990s when The Centre National de la Cinématographie (CNC), the main funding source for the majority of French productions, altered its funding policies. The CNC began to support producers and “company-driven development,” rather than supporting writer/directors individually (Finney 1996b: 51). When Jeanne Morreau was put in charge of the Avances Sur Recettes fund, a fund that had previously predominantly supported first- and second-time directors, she increased the number of loans given for the re-writing of scripts (21). Avances also started to fund educational measures by sending authors of screenplays rejected by the fund to screenwriting and development initiatives, including the Sundance Institute, the Equinoxe workshops and the Frank Daniel screenwriting workshops (ibid.). Considering that Sundance and Frank Daniels are U.S. institutions and that Equinoxe also relies to a certain degree on U.S. screenplay consultants, this is an indicator for U.S. development models finding their way into the French system by the 1990s. This, again, supports the notion of a growing U.S. influence on European motion picture development. Like Avances’ increasing support for development, PROCIREP, a French authors’ rights society, began to support producers during the development stage of motion pictures by offering CNC-registered producers funds for the writing stage of films, rather than giving the money to the writers directly (Finney 1996b: 22).

In 1994 Aide Au développement (AAD) was initiated by the CNC. Finney calls AAD “probably the most important new strategy in the field of film development in France” as it “reflects a new view about development strategy in Europe” (ibid.). According to Finney (1996b), the completely re-worked AAD guidelines stipulated that

money disbursed by the organization could only be spent on screenplay development, including rights acquisition, research, the writing and re-writing process, translation and documentation and not on other parts of the development process, such as casting or financing. The money, repayable loans upon start of principal photography, was made available to producers instead of writers and directors (22). Finney points out that CNC administrators expected to achieve a 50 percent ratio of films that made it into production. This was double the development-to-production ratio of SCRIPT's support mechanism, due to a more careful selection of projects, focusing on a project's likelihood to make it to the production stage (23).

The Evolution of the French Sci-Fi, Fantasy and Horror Genres in the 1990s

The fantasy genre had not been one of the fortes of post-war French cinema. Guy Austin (2008) writes that—overlooked by French film critics and “perceived as a principally Anglo-Saxon form, epitomised by German expressionism, Hollywood melodrama and Hammer horror”—the few French post-war directors making fantasy films, among them Jean Cocteau and George Franju, “were perceived as mavericks” (144). This changed, as French fantasy films, starting in the 1990s, and French horror films, starting in the 2000s, became strong driving forces for the French film industry. Austin attributes the rise of the popularity of the fantasy and horror genre to the rising economic and social tensions France has been experiencing since the 1990s (ibid.). The most prominent example of the revived French fantasy genre in the 1990s is *Delicatessen* (1991), directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro. Caro and Jeunet would continue to reinvigorate French fantasy cinema with *La Cité des enfants perdus* (*The City of Lost Children*), a dark fantasy epic about the theft of children's dreams by an evil scientist. The latter shows how differently a foreign film can be perceived on U.S. screens. While the film received favorable reviews overall, New York Times critic Stephen Holden (1995) calls it a “provocative but impossibly convoluted cinematic fantasy,” stating that *The City of Lost Children* “is so enraptured by its own visual

gimmickry and weird characters that it forgets to connect the dots of its overly populous story.” For Holden,

‘The City of Lost Children’ carries little allegorical resonance. While its story seems to warn about the loss of imagination in an overly technologized world, it is too disjointed to carry much weight. The movie is best appreciated as a collection of whimsical toys drawn from a fantasy grab bag that encompasses everything from Grimm's fairy tales to ‘Star Wars.’ (Holden 1995)

LA Times critic Kevin Thomas (1996) on the other hand lauds the film, writing that, “‘The City of Lost Children’ is a stunningly surreal fantasy, a fable of longing and danger, of heroic deeds and bravery, set in a brilliantly realized world of its own. It is one of the most audacious, original films of the year” (Thomas 1996). According to Thomas, “not even the weirdness of its greatly gifted French creators Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro's 1991 ‘Delicatessen’ prepares you for this new film of theirs, at once more ambitious yet also more easily accessible and involving than their earlier effort” (ibid.). U.S. audience reactions to the film, reflected by box office numbers, were somewhere in between these two extremes: The film, shot for an estimated budget of \$18 million made a modest \$1,513,028 at the U.S. box office.¹⁴⁴

French sci-fi film experienced a rejuvenation in a variety of ways with the release of Luc Besson’s *Le cinquième élément* (*The Fifth Element*, Luc Besson, 1997). The \$90 million Gaumont production raised the bar for French transnational filmmaking on several levels and—with its global box office result of \$263,920,180¹⁴⁵—contributed to redefining the commercial potential of European English-language productions with international casts. *Le cinquième élément* ranked number four at the 1997 European box office with 18,704,436 admissions. It was the only French film that made it into the Top 20 at the European box office (EAO 1999).

¹⁴⁴ IMDb 2009, “Box office / business for La cité des enfants perdus (1995),” accessed on 11/5/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0112682/business>

¹⁴⁵ IMDb 2011, “Box office / business for The Fifth Element (1997),” accessed on 6/24/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0119116/business>

French Transnational Thrillers in the 1990s

Among the more prominent transnational properties within the French thriller genre in the 1990s was the French/German thriller *Knight Moves* (1992). The English-language production was directed by German director Carl Schenkel, written by U.S. writer Brad Mirman, produced by French producers Jean-Luc Defait and Ziad El Khoury, co-produced by German producer Dieter Geissler and executive produced by French actor/producer/writer Christopher Lambert. The film originated with Christopher Lambert taking Brad Mirman's script to Jean-Luc Defait, who then acquired the rights. The two attached Carl Schenkel as the director, who—based on a previous working relationship—got Dieter Geissler on board as a co-producer (Ilott 1996: 70-71). The development process on *Knight Moves*—and the role of the producer within the development process—hints at changes in the French development model. The film's producer Jean-Luc Defait points out that, “the big difference between a European independent producer and the big American studios is that they have enough money and time to spend developing projects properly” (Ilott 1996: 75). They also, according to Defait, unlike most European producers, have the luxury to be able to abandon projects if they turn out to be unfeasible. Lacking sufficient development funds, European producers mostly have to throw all their eggs into one basket and after investing their money into development of a film are usually forced to shoot. According to Defait, “that's the weakness” (ibid.). While stressing the importance of the development process and mentioning his involvement in “going through the script, checking for what wasn't absolutely necessary,” Defait defines his role as a producer rather narrow, stating that, “as a producer it is my duty to bring people together [...] to make the budget work and make everyone happy at the same time” (ibid.). *Knight Moves* did relatively well in Europe and received theatrical distribution by InterStar in the U.S., where it grossed \$923,418 at the box office.¹⁴⁶ Defait, calling the film a “flop” in the U.S., blames the film's lackluster performance in that market on several factors:

¹⁴⁶ Box Office Mojo 2010, “Knight Moves: Summary,” accessed on 6/15/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=knightmoves.htm>

“First, it was too sophisticated. Second, Lambert wasn’t a star in America. Third, we weren’t lucky with our distributor. InterStar released it with as small marketing budget and no TV support. That was the killer” (Ilott 1996: 75). If he would have to do it over again, he would still cast Christopher Lambert in the lead, Defait says, and he “might have had someone else instead of Tom Skerritt” as “it would have been good to have a stronger name for America.” Also, to make the film more marketable in the U.S., he says, “while I wouldn’t make the film less sophisticated, I would make it a little more American” (75-76). Defait stresses that, “when making a film, whatever it is, you have to know your target market. Is it America? Is it international? Is it your own home market? Before even starting work on the script, you should think of that” (76). Regarding *Knight Moves* Defait’s target audience was European. He says that, his “attitude was, ‘I am making this for Europe. If I get an American deal, good. But this is for Europe first and foremost’” (ibid.). According to Defait,

[...] if you want to grab the American audience you need a big cast. If you have a big cast, you need a big budget; not just for the stars but for the hotels, limos, production values and everything else that comes as part of the package. Few European producers can do that. (ibid.)

Defait’s strategic imperatives for developing films sound very similar to those of his American colleagues and became increasingly common among French producers as the 1990s progressed.

French Transnational Historical Dramas in the 1990s

In 1993 the most expensive French film at its time of release hit international movie screens. The film was the historical drama *Germinal*, directed by Claude Berri. It was written by Berri and Arlette Langmann, based on the novel by Émile Zola, produced by Claude Berri and executive produced by Pierre Grunstein and Bodo Scriba. Set in a French coal miners’ town in the 1860s, it tells the story of the impoverished population rebelling against their unacceptable living and working conditions. Émile Zola’s book is considered a French literary classic and had already previously been turned into a 1960s movie—*Germinal* (Yves Allégret, 1963)—and a

1970s BBC mini-series. The latest version stars Gérard Depardieu and Miou-Miou and was turned into a poster-child of French national cinema during the end of the Uruguay round of the GATT negotiations (Waxman 1994). For Berry, making the film was politically motivated and presented a tribute to his father, who had been a workers' rights advocate (ibid.). Berry calls it an important film, saying that "I know that when we're all dead, people will still be watching this film," and French newspaper critic Gerard Lefort — despite speaking unfavorably about the film itself — called it "practically a civic duty to choose 'Germinal' over 'Jurassic Park'" (Waxman 1994). Despite its heavy promotion in France, it only drew 6,139,961 million audience members into French theaters and despite its internationally bankable male lead, it failed to connect with U.S. audiences, grossing only \$378,854 at the U.S. box office.¹⁴⁷

More successful internationally was the romantic period drama *Est-Ouest* (*East-West*), directed by Régis Wargnier and written by Rustam Ibragimbekov, Sergey Bodrov, Louis Gardel and Régis Wargnier. The French/Bulgarian/Spanish/Russian co-production tells the story of a Russian émigré couple, lured back into Russia by Stalin. It stars Oleg Menshikov, Sandrine Bonnaire and Catherine Deneuve.¹⁴⁸ While *Est-Ouest* was not very successful in Europe, with only 553,533 admissions in France and 155,692 in Russia,¹⁴⁹ *Est-Ouest* was nominated for a Best Foreign Language Film Oscar, received U.S. distribution and grossed \$2,775,520 at the U.S. box office.¹⁵⁰

Alain Goldman—a longtime MK2 employee working under Marin Karmitz—after leaving MK2 produced *1492: Conquest of Paradise* (1992). The French/Spanish co-production was directed by U.K. blockbuster director Ridley Scott and written by

¹⁴⁷ IMDb 2011, "Box office / business for Germinal (1993), accessed on 7/1/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0107002/business>

¹⁴⁸ Entities involved were UGC YM, France 3 Cinéma, NTV-PROFIT, Gala Film, Mate Producciones S.A., Canal+, Sofica Sofinergie 5, Centre National de la Cinématographie (CNC) and Studio 1+1. The film received Eurimages production support and MEDIA II distribution support.

¹⁴⁹ Lumiere database, accessed on 7/1/2011, from http://lumiere.obs.coe.int/web/film_info/?id=12158

¹⁵⁰ IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for Est - Ouest (1999)," accessed on 11/9/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0181530/business>

French writer Roselyne Bosch. The film—starring Gérard Depardieu as Christopher Columbus and Sigourney Weaver as Queen Isabella I—was one of the most expensive European co-productions at that point of time, costing an estimated \$47 million¹⁵¹ and reaching the lower end of the Hollywood budget scale of similar films. The film, produced by Alain Goldman and Ridley Scott, performed well in Europe, but did not even come close to blockbuster level in the U.S. Released by Paramount Pictures in up to 1,008 theaters, it grossed a—for a major studio release—relatively modest \$7,191,399 at the U.S. box office.¹⁵²

French Transnational Comedy Dramas and French Transnational Comic Book Adaptations in the 1990s

The French comedy drama *Arizona Dream* (1993) was an English-language production, directed by Serbian director Emir Kusturica and co-written by Emir Kusturica and David Atkins, a U.S. native. The film's producer was Claudie Ossard, who had also produced *Delicatessen*. It starred Johnny Depp, Jerry Lewis, Faye Dunaway, Lili Taylor and Vincent Gallo.¹⁵³ The film was quintessentially a European art film with an A-list American cast. It received U.S. theatrical distribution by Warner Bros., who, according to New York Times critic Janet Maslin (1995), “in pointless attempts to market ‘Arizona Dream’ for middle-of-the-road audiences,” shortened and then “jettisoned” it. *Arizona Dream* grossed \$112,547 at the U.S. box office.¹⁵⁴

The big high-concept and high-profile film with France as a majority co-producing partner, was comic-book adaptation *Astérix et Obélix contre César* (Claude Zidi, 1999). The film stars Christian Clavier as Astérix, Gérard Depardieu as Obélix and Roberto Benigni as Lucius Detritus, featuring at least two well-known international

¹⁵¹ Box Office Mojo 2010, “1492: Conquest of Paradise: Summary,” accessed on 5/30/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=1492.htm>

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Production and financing entities involved were Canal+, Constellation, Hachette Première and UGC.

¹⁵⁴ Box Office Mojo 2010, “Arizona Dream: Summary,” accessed on 5/30/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=arizonadream.htm>

actors to balance the fact that the comic book was more of a European phenomenon and that international star power would be required to make the film internationally marketable. With *Astérix et Obélix contre César* in fact, France followed in the footsteps of Hollywood blockbuster movies based on comic book franchises, and did so rather successfully on a pan-European and, more limited, international scale. While its budget—at \$48 million—was at the lower end of comparable U.S. comic book adaptations, it was in the upper end of European co-productions at the time.¹⁵⁵ The film sold 9 million tickets in France (Austin 2008: 215) and was picked up by Lions Gate for U.S. theatrical distribution, released on June 4th, 1999 and made \$1,644,060 at the U.S. box office by July 4, 1999, with its widest release being 73 theaters and a per screen average of \$4,829.¹⁵⁶

French Transnational Art House Cinema in the 1990s

Select French high-profile art house cinema kept resonating both with critics as well as art house audiences in France and internationally, as the third installment of Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Three Colors* trilogy—*Trois couleurs: Rouge* (1994)—showed. The film, a French/Swiss/Polish co-production, was directed by Krzysztof Kieslowski, written by Kieslowski and Krzysztof Piesiewicz, produced by Marin Karmitz and executive produced by Yvon Crenn. Production companies involved were French Canal+ and MK2 Productions, Swiss CAB Productions and Télévision Suisse-Romande (TSR) and Polish Zespól Filmowy Tor. *Trois couleurs: Rouge* was the first Kieslowski film that crossed the \$2 million dollar mark at the U.S. box office. Distributed theatrically in the U.S. by Miramax, it made \$4,043,686 at the box office.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ IMDb 2010, "Box office / business for *Astérix et Obélix contre César* (1999)," accessed on 05/10/2010, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0133385/business>

¹⁵⁶ Box Office Mojo 2010, "*Asterix et Obelix Contre Cesar*," accessed on 05/10/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=asterixetobelixcontrecesar.htm>

¹⁵⁷ IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for *Three Colors: Red* (1994)," accessed on 7/27/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0111495/business>

Agnieszka Holland, asked in an interview about the changes Kieslowski went through when making films in Western Europe, says that Kieslowski “became much more aware of the box office in some ways. He even became a little obsessed by box office success.” Holland finds the success of Kieslowski’s “French” films surprising, considering that “in many ways, his French films are not easy—they’re slow and revolve around very exacting metaphysical questions. They don’t have action plots.” Yet Kieslowski seemed to be fascinated by the opportunity to make films for an international audience. According to Holland, “this kind of a possibility—to communicate something very personal to an audience with whom you don’t share a common language or experience—was very exciting for him” (Stehlik 2000).

Patrice Leconte, in 1996 also reaffirmed that art house films were capable of crossing borders and turning into—at least moderate—successes in the highly coveted U.S. market. Leconte’s historical comedic drama *Ridicule*, written by Rémi Waterhouse in collaboration with Michel Fessler and Eric Vicaut, was nominated for a Best Foreign Language Film Oscar and received theatrical distribution by Miramax Zoë in the U.S., where it grossed \$2,503,829.¹⁵⁸ *Ridicule* ranked 20th with 1,942,729 admissions among European films at the EU box office (EAO 1999: 42).

In 1998 Karmitz produced *Claire Dolan*, directed—in the U.S.—by Lodge Kerrigan. Karmitz called the making of *Claire Dolan* his “own way of fighting the American system [...] to show Americans that we excel in an expertise which they have now lost” (Rapin 2010). Karmitz’s efforts were not very successful in terms of U.S. box office returns and failed to please U.S. critics. Except for Chicago Sun-Times critic Roger Ebert, who gave the film 3 ½ stars (Ebert 1998), the majority of critics panned the film, leaving it with a meager 25% rating on Rotten Tomatoes.¹⁵⁹ *Variety* critic Todd McCarthy (1998) calls it “a rarefied, emotionally distant art film” that is “of possible appeal only to the most intellectual critics and viewers, some of whom will be

¹⁵⁸ IMDb 2009, “Box office / business for *Ridicule* (1996),” accessed on 11/9/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0117477/business>

¹⁵⁹ Rotten Tomatoes 2010, “*Claire Dolan* (1998),” accessed on 5/29/2010, from http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/claire_dolan/

very taken with the film's cinematic discipline,” and a film that “will fall in the watching-paint-dry category even for specialized audiences, spelling dim commercial prospects” (60). McCarthy’s prediction proved to be right as the film—grossing an abysmal \$9,480 at the U.S. box office—could have hardly performed worse.¹⁶⁰

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the French film industry had managed to continuously re-invent itself. France furiously defended its national film culture against U.S. imports during the Uruguay round of the GATT negotiations, while, at the same time increasing the number of transnational films and maintaining the highest production volume of any European country. The elaborate, and periodically updated, French public film funding mechanisms benefited both commercial as well as art house films. Especially in the realm of European co-productions, French producers managed to create a number of pan-European, as well as international properties. As some of the examples suggested, the development of many of these films was still auteur driven, although an increasing trend of collaboration during the development phase was noticeable, hinting at a more development- and producer-driven approach. The next section covers French transnational popular cinema in the 2000s.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSNATIONAL FILMS IN FRANCE IN THE 2000S

The French film industry continued growing in the 2000s. The number of French initiative films rose from 145 in 2000 to 203 in 2010. The majority of these films were French national productions. The number of French co-productions, however, more than doubled between 2000 and 2003 and the number of foreign majority films more than doubled between 2000 and 2010 (Table 4.4.).

¹⁶⁰ Box Office Mojo 2010, “Claire Dolan,” accessed on 5/29.2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=clairedolan.htm>

Table 4.4.: Film Production in France — 2000 - 2010

	French initiative films	of which entirely French films	and co-production films	foreign majority films	Total
2000	145	111	34	26	171
2001	172	126	46	32	204
2002	163	106	57	37	200
2003	183	105	78	29	212
2004	167	130	37	36	203
2005	187	126	61	53	240
2006	164	127	37	39	203
2007	185	133	52	43	228
2008	196	145	51	44	240
2009	182	137	45	48	230
2010	203	143	60	58	261

CNC Approved Films

Source: CNC¹⁶¹

As the quantity of French productions and co-productions rose, so did the number of transnational properties. The most prominent transnational player in the French film industry in the 2000s continued to be Vivendi's Canal+ and Studio Canal. In 2000, Vivendi head Jean-Marie Messier announced that—as a mid-range strategy—he was contemplating about the complete integration of StudioCanal into Universal. At the same time 20% of StudioCanal stocks were released in order to raise the Euro equivalent of \$185.1 million dollars to start a pan-European studio (James 2000: 10). In early 2001, briefly after the Vivendi-Seagram merger, Pierre Lescure, head of Universal's Film and TV division, said that the merger would allow StudioCanal to withdraw from the majority of its co-production deals after the expiration of the respective contracts (James 2001: 20). During the 2000s, StudioCanal substantially boosted its production activity by producing and co-producing 235 narrative feature films. Over 90 of them can be considered as projects with transnational elements and/or transnational appeal. In 2007, StudioCanal increased its annual investments in film production to \$200 million. By 2007, it had over 5000 films in its library and had struck

¹⁶¹ From CNC World Cinema Statistics, <http://www.cnc.fr/web/en/sectoral-statistics>

a deal with Universal to distribute its films in the Benelux countries and in 2006 had acquired U.K. distributor Optimum to become an even more powerful force in European distribution. It also expanded its commitment to Working Title Films (James 2007: 15). According to StudioCanal's new chairman Olivier Courson, "Studio Canal is back, but doing things differently this time." Vivendi's restructuring efforts after the sale of Universal had led to a leaner company structure operating on a smaller budget. But with the purchase of Optimum and the opening of an office in London, aimed at the development of "international projects," StudioCanal went into the offensive again (ibid.). However, the business strategy had changed. Scrapping further in-house productions, StudioCanal now focused on co-productions. According to Courson, "the idea is to initiate projects, not to only be a financial partner, and to be able to nourish our distribution pipeline and international sales" (ibid.). The new agenda entailed StudioCanal's financial involvement in 3 "international projects" a year and 12 to 15 French and European films (ibid.). Courson says that "popular comedies are one of the things France is best at," and that StudioCanal is "positioning" itself "as a European major while working on bigger budget films with the American majors" (ibid.).¹⁶² Canal+, staying atop the domestic as well as international market trends, in 2006 made a move with the inherent potential of influencing Hollywood's foreign market strategies by hitting its pocket book. It announced a takeover of competing pay-TV network TPS.

¹⁶² Among the transnational films that StudioCanal backed from 2007 to 2010, were the U.K./French/U.S. co-production *Hot Fuzz* (Edgar Wright, 2007), the U.K./French/German co-production *Mr. Bean's Vacation* (Steve Bendelack, 2007), the Hong Kong/China/French co-production *My Blueberry Nights* (Kar Wai Wong, 2007), the French/Italian co-production *Une vieille maîtresse* (*The Last Mistress*, Catherine Breillat, 2007), the U.K./French co-production *Atonement* (Joe Wright, 2007), the U.S./U.K./French co-production *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (Shekhar Kapur, 2007), the French/Spanish co-production *Sa majesté Mino* (*His Majesty Minor*, Jean-Jacques Annaud, 2007), the French/Spanish co-production *I Come with the Rain* (Anh Hung Tran, 2008), the French/U.S./Mexican/Belgian co-production *Julia* (Erick Zonca, 2008), the Italian/French co-production *Il divo* (Paolo Sorrentino, 2008), the U.S./French/U.K./Czech co-production *Babylon A.D.* (Mathieu Kassovitz, 2008), the French/German co-production *L'armée du crime* (*The Army of Crime*, Robert Guédiguian, 2009), the French/Italian co-production *Les herbes folles* (*Wild Grass*, 2009), the French/ Algerian/Belgian/Tunisian co-production *Hors-la-loi* (*Outside the Law*, Rachid Bouchareb, 2010), the U.S./French/U.K. co-production *Senna* (Asif Kapadia, 2010), and the U.S./French co-production *The Tourist* (Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, 2010)

The merger of the two largest French pay-TV providers was part of Canal+'s plan to lower acquisition prices for Hollywood movies (James 2006). Competition between the two pay-TV networks had led to inflated prices for U.S. imports. With deals with several studios coming up for renegotiation, Canal+'s takeover of TPS was most likely to affect acquisition prices negatively, except for the most popular blockbuster movies, an issue that was mirrored in Germany, Italy and Spain (James 2006).

In 2007, changes in StudioCanal's leadership led to a decrease in StudioCanal's production and financing operations in the U.S. and to a stronger focus on the key European markets. When Olivier Courson became CEO of StudioCanal, he verbalized intentions to turn it into a European studio. Courson's new strategy marked somewhat of a departure from StudioCanal's earlier international co-financing and production ventures—many of them in conjunction with U.S. production companies—and its main objective of fueling its French distribution pipeline (Goodridge 2010). Courson points out that when he became StudioCanal's CEO, the company was “a European company financing US producers” (ibid.). According to Courson, under his tenure, StudioCanal, while originally a Canal+ subsidiary, has turned into a separate, autonomous operation, under the umbrella of Groupe Canal Plus (ibid.). While Canal+ buys all of StudioCanal's acquired, produced and co-produced properties undiscounted, sales to Canal+ make up for only 5% of StudioCanal's revenues (Goodridge 2010). Courson stresses that StudioCanal for the most part is financially independent, but also relies on outside equity financing to increase its production volume. The company, according to Courson, spends about \$200 to \$270 million annually on productions, and half of StudioCanal's revenue comes from its extensive film library (ibid.). According to Courson, StudioCanal focuses on distribution in the three key European territories—France, the U.K. and Germany. The strategy behind running a successful European studio, according to Courson, is to utilize synergies in distribution between a set of key territories and “to control your product to feed your distribution.” While the latter requires either producing the projects or at least having “strong relationships with producers and talent,” the organization of StudioCanal, unlike the typical organization

of U.S. studios, is de-centralized. Each of StudioCanal's operations in its three key territories—France, the U.K. and Germany—is run by individual managers, aiming at “building a powerful product line for each territory” (ibid.). However, according to Carson, “there is also a very strong co-ordination and we talk to each other about the productions all the time” (ibid.). In terms of development, StudioCanal's model appears to show substantial similarities with the development strategies and practices of Global Conglomerate Hollywood: Ron Halpern, StudioCanal's executive vice-president of international production and acquisitions, says that “we talk to distribution at the idea stage [...] to see if they get the project, to see if there's a market for it and make sure we're not trying to come up with ideas distribution doesn't want” (ibid.). Canal+ and its film production entity StudioCanal, by the early 2010s, maintain their global operations. They have continued their investment in international co-productions and have maintained their close ties to the U.S. film industry. Their international orientation can be considered an industry-wide trend.

A look at Pathé's production slate in the 2000s suggests that Vivendi's ownership in Pathé has also augmented the company's international orientation. The 2000s saw a substantial increase in Pathé's production activities. Under the 34 films the company produced or co-produced between 2000 and 2010 were many transnational properties. Among the most prominent films—each with at least a certain impact at the international box office—were the animated family comedy *Chicken Run* (Peter Lord & Nick Park, 2000), the family adventure *Deux frères* (*Two Brothers*, Jean-Jacques Annaud, 2004) and the animated family adventure *Doogal* (Dave Borthwick, Jean Duval & Frank Passingham, 2006).

UGC, during the 2000s, produced and co-produced 25 feature films, among them the transnational properties *Company Man* (Peter Askin & Douglas McGrath, 2000), *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* (*Amélie*, Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2001), *The Sea Inside* (Alejandro Amenábar, 2004), Company credits for *La fille du RER* (*The Girl on the Train*, André Téchiné, 2009) and the French/Italian co-production *Un prophète* (*A Prophet*, 2009). A noteworthy effort to create a transnational property was the

production of the Western *Renegade* (Jan Kounen, 2004). The \$40 million French/Mexican/U.S. co-production, starring Vincent Cassel, Michael Madsen and Juliette Lewis, did not receive U.S. theatrical distribution and made most of its money in its home territory

EuropaCorp., by the mid-2000s, was a firmly established European production powerhouse. It produced and co-produced 42 films from 2000 to 2005, the majority of them—by European standards—relatively high budget productions. 16 of the 42 films were written or co-written by Luc Besson—one of them (*Angel A*, 2005) was directed by Besson—making him one of the most exceptional European writer/producer/director hybrids. While only a handful of EuropaCorp. films during that period turned into serious contenders at the U.S. box office, many of them succeeded at the French and the pan-European box office. The majority of EuropaCorp.'s properties have also been successful in the international TV, VoD, DVD and online markets. Its slate of successful transnational properties, produced and co-produced from 2000 to 2005, include action crime drama *Kiss of the Dragon* (Chris Nahon, 2001), a U.S./French co-production starring Jet Li and Bridget Fonda; action crime thriller *The Transporter* (Louis Leterrier, Corey Yuen, 2002), a French/U.S. co-production, starring Jason Stratham and Qi Shu; French horror drama *Haute Tension (High Tension)*, Alexandre Aja, 2003), and French/U.S. co-production *Danny the Dog (Unleashed)*, Louis Leterrier, 2005). During the second half of the 2000s EuropaCorp. produced and co-produced 58 feature films. Among the most successful transnational titles were the family fantasy adventure *Arthur et les Minimoys (Arthur and the Invisibles)*, Luc Besson, 2006), starring Freddie Highmore, Mia Farrow and Madonna; crime thriller *Ne le dis à personne (Tell No One)*, Guillaume Canet, 2006); action crime thriller *Taken* (Pierre Morel, 2008), a French/U.K./U.S. co-production, starring Liam Neeson, Maggie Grace and Famke Janssen; the franchise installment *Transporter 3* (Olivier Megaton, 2008), also a French/U.K./U.S. co-production; the action crime drama *Colombiana* (Olivier Megaton, 2011), a French/U.K. co-production, and the action crime thriller *From Paris with Love* (Pierre Morel, 2011), a French/U.K. co-production, starring John Travolta,

Jonathan Rhys Meyers and Kasia Smutniak. From 2005 to 2011, EuropaCorp. produced and co-produced 51 feature films, some of them sequels to successful EuropaCorp. properties of the late 1990s to mid-2000s.

In a 2009 press release, boasting about *Transporter 3* being the most successful French film worldwide, EuropaCorp. reiterates its international business strategy:

With development in the international markets as one of the major focuses of EuropaCorp's marketing policy, these figures prove the success of this strategy, which, in addition to the strong reputation the Group holds abroad, enables it to attract prestigious international talent and to work with distributors from around the world. (Transporter 3 2009)

Considering its output volume and focus on high-concept, high-profile properties targeted at the domestic, pan-European and international box office, EuropaCorp. has clearly established itself as a major driving force for European transnational popular cinema. By the early 2010s, however, the EuropaCorp. enterprise was suffering from financial problems. According to industry sources, EuropaCorp. spent excessively in areas not directly related to production. EuropaCorps.' financial woes are making the future of the company somewhat uncertain.

The following sections cover some of the more successful transnational properties produced or co-produced by the French film industry between 2000 and 2011, grouped by genre and beginning with French transnational dramas.

French Transnational Dramas in the 2000s

Among French dramas that turned into internationally marketable properties in the 2000s was *Sous le sable* (*Under the Sand*, 2000). The mystery drama was directed by François Ozon; written by Emmanuèle Bernheim, Marina de Van, François Ozon and Marcia Romano, and produced by Olivier Delbosc and Marc Missonnier. The film tells the story of a woman whose life is turned upside down when her husband suddenly and mysteriously disappears. Despite its only moderate international success, it can be considered as one of the more interesting border-crossing French films in the 2000s. Ozon received his film education at the Université de Paris and at La Femis, where he

studied under Eric Rohmer and Jean Douchet (Schilt 2004). Despite his elite film education, Ozon says in an interview with Kevin Conroy Scott (2005) that he “learned more about screenwriting by making my movies alone on Super-8 than I did at La Femis.” Ozon says, “at La Femis we had to do some screenwriting exercises and write scenarios, but it wasn’t where I learned how to write screenplays. I would say I really learned from the little films I made with my friends” (Scott 2005: 340). Asked about his perception of the differences between European and American screenwriters, Ozon says that in France there are typically less screenwriters working on a film than in the U.S., where screenwriters “can be so very direct, they’re not afraid to say things. Sometimes in France we fear that because we think it’s vulgar.” Ozon attributes this perceived freedom of U.S. screenwriters to the fact that they “think only of the audience,” and he admits that “sometimes in France we don’t think enough of the audience” (342). Asked about where he sees the differences between an American and a French blockbuster, Ozon says, “I think the American blockbusters are better [laughs] We try to make it like the Americans but I think it’s best to leave the Americans to do what they do best” (ibid.). *Sous le sable* grossed \$5,078,989 at the international (non-U.S.) box office and, theatrically distributed by Winstar in the U.S., grossed \$1,452,698 at the U.S. box office.¹⁶³

Ozon made eight more films between 2001 and 2011. While several of them received U.S. distribution, only two of them performed well at the U.S. box office. One of them was the psychological crime drama *Swimming Pool* (2003), written by Ozon and French novelist Emmanuèle Bernheim,¹⁶⁴ which apparently has been the most accessible Ozon film to American audiences, possibly helped by the fact that it is an English-language film. *Swimming Pool* was produced in association with Canal+ and British Headforce Ltd. Focus Features signed on as the film’s U.S. theatrical distributor

¹⁶³ Box Office Mojo 2010, “Under the Sand,” accessed on 1/14/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=underthesand.htm>

¹⁶⁴ The film was produced by Olivier Delbosc and Marc Missonnier and co-produced by Timothy Burrill. Production companies involved were French production companies Fidélité Productions and co-production partners were France 2 Cinéma, Gimages and FOZ.

and it grossed \$10,105,505 at the U.S. box office.¹⁶⁵ While some critics considered the film lifeless and pretentious, it was overall reviewed favorably. *USA Today* critic Mike Clark (2003), for example, gave the film three out of four stars, summing up the film as follows:

With a little sex, some mystery, a little sex, an appealing title and a little sex, France's *Swimming Pool* has what it takes to become an art house audience magnet, especially amid the heat of summer [...] Rebounding from last summer's musical folly *8 Women*, director/co-writer Francois Ozon has fashioned another of those illusion-vs.-reality wrestling matches that European filmmakers can't resist.

While New York Observer critic Andre Saris calls it “more an exquisite art object than an involving movie” (Saris 2003), Houston Chronicle critic Eric Harrison, giving the film a “B-,” writes that “Ozon takes a long time setting up his story, but the interplay between Sagnier and Rampling is electric” (Harrison 2003). The latter review echoes a number of critics’ appreciation of the film’s visuals and characters but only lukewarm appreciation for the film’s plot. However, this is where a Hollywood studio’s marketing department comes in, spinning the nature of a film to attract a larger audience share. *Swimming Pool* was marketed by Focus Features as a sexy foreign thriller with plenty of nudity. It apparently managed to appeal to several audience quadrants, explaining its better than average box office performance for a foreign art house movie. Ozon’s only other reasonably well performing film in the U.S. market was the Bafta, César and Golden Lion nominated comedy *Potiche* (2010), starring Catherine Deneuve, Gérard Depardieu and Fabrice Luchini. *Potiche* was theatrically distributed by Music Box Films in the U.S. and grossed \$1,618,844.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ IMDb 2009, “Box office / business for *Swimming Pool* (2003),” accessed on 8-21-2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0324133/business>

¹⁶⁶ IMDb 2012, “Box office / business for *Potiche* (2010),” accessed on 4/21/2012, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1521848/business>

Transnational French Romantic Comedies and Dramas

French romantic comedy dramas are among the more popular genre hybrids that have shown potential in the international market. However, while exportable, their box office numbers rarely exceed the \$1 million mark. An example is *Le Goût des autres* (*The Taste of Others*, Agnès Jaoui, 2000), which was nominated for a 2000 Best Foreign Language Oscar.¹⁶⁷ Miramax Films and Offline Releasing distributed *Le Goût des autres*—produced by Les Films A4, France 2 Cinema and Canal+—in the U.S., where it grossed \$635,282.¹⁶⁸ Describing the development process of *Le Goût des autres*, Jaoui says, her and her co-writer Jean-Pierre Bacri’s objective was “[...] to make our characters as precise as possible, so you can understand them or identify with them. As we wanted to speak about the theme of power, it was very difficult to make nice people. What we noticed is that, when people have to deal with power, they are not very charming” (Hennigan 2004). When showing the film in foreign territories, Jaoui says, audiences would often perceive the film as very “French” (ibid.).

Released in the same year was the romantic comedy drama *Le battement d'ailes du papillon* (*Happenstance*, Laurent Firode, 2000), starring Audrey Tautou. *Le battement d'ailes du papillon* was an all-French co-production between Canal+, Gimages, Les Films des Tournelles and Les Films en Hiver. It chronicles the lives of a disparate group of Parisiens, whose destinies are intertwined in mysterious ways and whose paths cross and uncross in a seemingly random, yet ultimately meaningful fashion. *Le battement d'ailes du papillon* was distributed in France by Les Films des Tournelles and picked up for U.S. theatrical distribution by Lot 47 Films, for which the film marked their debut as a distribution company. The film never showed in more than

¹⁶⁷ It was written by Jean-Pierre Bacri and Agnès Jaoui, and produced by Christian Bérard and Charles Gassot.

¹⁶⁸ IMDb 2009, “Box office / business for *Le goût des autres* (2000),” accessed on 7-28-2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0216787/business>

7 theaters and the total U.S. box office gross was a mere \$251,444.¹⁶⁹ It, however, inspired a relatively successful U.S. remake: *The Butterfly Effect* (Eric Bress, 2004).

With a sizable budget, a relatively tight script and a very slick look, *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain* (*Amélie*, Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2001) reestablished the potential of highly stylised French romantic comedy dramas at the international box office.¹⁷⁰ Five of the film's six co-producing companies were French, one was German.¹⁷¹ Budgeted at an estimated €11.4 million, it drew 20,395,173 people into European cinemas, ranking it 2nd at the European box office among co-productions originating from the Big Five European film industries between 2001 and 2007 (Kanzler 2008: 30). Miramax Films picked up *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain* for U.S. distribution. It was very well received in the U.S. market and grossed \$33,201,661 at the U.S. box office.¹⁷² In fact, the film was so successful that smart international marketers of *Le battement d'ailes du papillon* capitalized on the sudden global name recognition of *Audrey Tautou* by re-titling the film *Amélie 2* for its video release in Hong Kong. *Amélie's* director Jean-Pierre Jeunet—after spending a period of time in the U.S., directing *Alien: Resurrection*—had returned to France to make *Amélie*, a movie he always wanted to make (Mottram 2001).¹⁷³ Talking about the different experiences of directing Hollywood vs. European films, Jeunet—referring to his work on *Alien: Resurrection*—says:

¹⁶⁹ Box Office Mojo 2010, "Happenstance: Summary," accessed on 05/11/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=happenstance.htm>

¹⁷⁰ *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain* (*Amélie*) was written by Guillaume Laurant and Jean-Pierre Jeunet, produced by Jean-Marc Deschamps, Claudie Ossard and Arne Meerkamp van Embden, and co-produced by Helmut Breuer.

¹⁷¹ *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain* received support from one of Germany's state subsidy boards, the Filmstiftung Nordrhein-Westfalen and additional financing from Canal+ and the French Sofica funds (Sofinergie 5).

¹⁷² IMDb 2009, Box office / business for *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* (2001)," accessed on 7-28-2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0211915/business>

¹⁷³ Asked about the inception of the movie, Jeunet says that he "had all these notes and anecdotes collected since childhood that I was trying to find a way to bring together" (ibid.), Returning to France after the *Alien: Resurrection* shoot, he went back to work on the script of *Amélie* and finally was able to make it work (Mottram 2011).

I was sure I was going to be fired after two or three weeks, but it wasn't the case. It was just like another film, just with more money and more problems and more explanations and more fights with the studio. But it was fine. I got the freedom I wanted, but it's a complicated process. You have to fight for it. You have to explain everything. In France, it's the opposite. I have the freedom. (Harkness, 2010)

Jeunet explains his way of working as follows: “I write the scripts myself. It always takes a long time to find the money. I shoot for months and months. The post-production is long, then I lose lots of time with promotion” (ibid.). Jeunet’s career so far spans only half a dozen projects, with most of them being highly successful.

In 2001 *Le placard (The Closet)*, written and directed by Francis Veber and produced by Patrice Ledoux proved itself as a pan-European and international property. *Le placard* was produced by French production companies Gaumont in co-production with EFVE and TF1 Films Production and in participation with Canal+, for an estimated budget of \$16.9 million.¹⁷⁴ *Le Placard*, a comedy about a straight man who pretends to be gay in order to prevent being fired from his job, not only has a fairly high-concept premise, but also features internationally recognizable star Gérard Depardieu. The film drew 6,986,892 Europeans to the theaters, ranking it 11th among entirely national films from Big Five European countries between 2001 and 2007 (Kanzler 2008: 31). Miramax Films picked up the solidly constructed comedy for U.S. theatrical distribution. It opened on four screens on July 1, 2001, made \$85,253 on its opening weekend and went on to gross \$6,671,454 at the U.S. box office.¹⁷⁵

Much more serious, yet even more successful at the U.S. box office was the romantic drama *La veuve de Saint-Pierre (The Widow of Saint-Pierre)*, directed by Patrice Leconte, written by Claude Faraldo and adapted by Patrice Leconte. The high-profile film, starring Juliette Binoche and Daniel Auteuil was produced by Frédéric

¹⁷⁴ Author’s currency calculation, using historical currency conversion from OANDA.com, based on IMDb business data from IMDb 2009, “Box office / business for *Le placard* (2001),” accessed on 7-28-2009, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0243493/business>

¹⁷⁵ IMDb 2009, “Box office / business for *Le placard* (2001),” accessed on 7-28-2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0243493/business>

Brillion and Gilles Legrand and co-produced by Daniel Louis and Denise Robert. Production companies involved were Epithète Films, France 2 Cinéma, France 3 Cinéma and co-producer Cinémaginaire Inc. The intricate drama is about an accidental murderer who awaits his execution on a small French island and is befriended by the island's military commander's wife. While waiting for a guillotine to be shipped to the island to end his life, he wins the hearts and minds of the islanders. The film was theatrically distributed by Pathé and Polygram Film Distribution in France, Prooptiki in Greece, Cinema Mondo in Finland, Atlantis Entertainment in Czechoslovakia, United International Pictures (UIP) in Switzerland and Lions Gate Films in the U.S. Its worldwide theatrical distributor was Pyramide Distribution (ibid.). It grossed \$3,058,380 at the U.S. box office.¹⁷⁶

Laconte, with a steady stream of successes at both the European as well as the international box office can be considered a poster child for French border-crossing cinema for over three decades. Like a number of his successful French directing colleagues, Leconte has drawn some of his inspiration from Hollywood. Asked about his remarkable productivity as a writer/director, he names his passion for filmmaking as his driving force and says, "when you do this job with passion and professionalism, it's very tough. On the other hand, like John Huston, I'd like to become very old and go on and make films until I die" (Kaufman 2001).

Not only inspired by but also educated in the U.S. was French director Cédric Klapisch, who, after two rejections from the French film school Institut des hautes études cinématographiques, attended NYU film school. Klapisch's third narrative feature, the 1996 low-budget romantic comedy *Chacun cherche son chat* (*When the Cat's Away*), produced for an estimated \$300,000 by Vertigo Productions and France 2 Cinéma in participation with Canal+, received U.S. distribution by Sony Pictures

¹⁷⁶ IMDb 2011, "Box office / business for The Widow of Saint-Pierre," accessed on 7/28/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0191636/business>

Classics and grossed \$1,652,472 at the U.S. box office.¹⁷⁷ Among Klapisch's subsequent films, *L'Auberge Espagnole* (2002), *Russian Dolls* (2005) and *Paris* (2008) were border-crossing properties, all receiving U.S. distribution. *L'Auberge Espagnole* was the most successful of Klapisch's movies—both in Europe as well as internationally. The latter, a French/Spanish co-production, drew 4,762,026 viewers into European theaters, ranking it 17th among co-productions originating from the Big Five European film industries between 2001 and 2007 (Kanzler 2008: 30). Shot for a budget of about €5.3 million, it grossed \$3,895,664 at the U.S. box office.¹⁷⁸

Also quite successful internationally was the comedic drama *Comme une image* (*Look At Me*, 2004), directed by Agnès Jaoui, written by Jean-Pierre Bacri and Agnès Jaoui and produced by Jean-Philippe Andraca and Christian Bérard. Production companies involved were French production companies Les Films A4, France 2 Cinéma, StudioCanal, French broadcaster Canal+, and Italian production company Eyescreen S.r.l. The character-driven film tells the story of a young singer, the insecure daughter of a famous novelist, who is faced with the indifference of her father, and an environment comprised mainly of people who are using her to gain access to her father, except for a young journalist who really loves her for who she is. This is a fact that she eventually embraces, after learning a series of intense life lessons. The French majority and Italian minority co-production drew 2,453,205 audience members into European cinemas, ranking it 36th at the European box office among co-productions originating from the Big Five European film industries between 2001 and 2007 (Kanzler 2008: 30). The film was picked up by Sony Pictures Classics for U.S. theatrical distribution and grossed \$1,736,499 at the U.S. box office.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Box Office Mojo 2011, "When the Cat's Away," accessed on 7/27/2011, from <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=whenthecatsaway.htm>

¹⁷⁸ IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for *L'auberge espagnole* (2002)," accessed on 11/9/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0283900/business>

¹⁷⁹ IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for *Comme une image* (2004)," accessed on 7/28/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0374583/business>

Not quite as successful, but also a transnational property, was Patrice Leconte's comedy *Mon meilleur ami* (*My Best Friend*, 2006). It was written by Patrice Leconte and Jérôme Tonnerre, based on an idea by Olivier Dazat and produced by Olivier Delbosc Marc Missionnier and Eric Jehelmann. The later credited as "development producer," indicating that development in 2006 France was now taken fairly seriously in most sectors of the film industry. Production companies involved were Fidélité Productions, TF1 Films Production, Exception Wild Bunch and Lucky Red. The film was produced in participation with Canal+, CinéCinéma and in association with Virtual Films. *Mon meilleur ami* was distributed worldwide, including the U.S., where it received theatrical distribution by IFC Films and grossed \$1,426,784 at the U.S. box office and \$13,260,954 internationally (non-U.S.).¹⁸⁰

According to Leconte, the film "stemmed from a very simple idea: a guy goes to a funeral attended by very few people and asks himself this question which we have all asked ourselves once or twice: 'What about me, who will come to my funeral?'" (Brooks 2007). According to Leconte, he and his co-writer Jerome Tonnerre aspired to do a film based on the question of the true nature of friendship and wanted to "create a universal comedy that would also be firmly anchored in reality." Leconte's approach to filmmaking seems to involve an honest concern and curiosity for the audience reactions to his films. In the case of *Mon meilleur ami* he said, "I know that when audience members leave the film, they almost always ask themselves the question: 'Do I have a best friend?' This proves that the film moved them or, at least, that it did not leave them indifferent" (ibid.). Also interesting about Leconte's approach to filmmaking is that it appears to rely less on existing narrative blueprints. Leconte says, that he is "unable to mention a specific film that would have inspired us to write this one. It's better to be inspired by life than by other people's movies!" (ibid.). The key to making successful films, according to Leconte, is passion and a strong believe in a project. Leconte says that, "it is only with this energy and genuineness that we can hope to make, one day, a

¹⁸⁰ IMDbPro 2010, "Box office / business for Silent Hill (2006)," accessed on 7/7/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0384537/business>

film that will connect with the audience” (ibid.). Leconte’s account supports the notion of increasingly box-office and TV-ratings driven approaches to filmmaking in France. According to Leconte, “in France, the only more or less independent films are those that manage to be made on a small budget and without a TV channel as co-producer.” He stresses the creative compromises that come with the “practically unavoidable partnership with TV stations,” which, according to Leconte, “makes our films less and less independent, and tends to normalize the projects and ideas we have, which is rather sad” (Brooks 2007). Leconte’s statement supports the argument that a substantial part of French cinema has been subject to very commercial corporate models, arguably patterned after models of Global Conglomerate Hollywood.

French box office returns dropped by an alarming 10% (Ciment 2006:141). One of the films preventing it from sliding even further was the romantic war drama *Joyeux Noël* (*Merry Christmas*, 2005), which—with 1,923,717 admissions—was one of the stronger contenders at the French box office. It was written and directed by Christian Carion, produced by Christophe Rossignon and co-produced by Andrei Boncea, Christopher Borgmann, Bertrand Faivre, Soledad Gatti-Pascual and Benjamin Herrmann. The film can serve as an example for the somewhat complicated European co-production structures that exist and the large number of production companies often involved in a single project, in this case over a dozen, in addition to financial incentives from several countries.¹⁸¹ The French/German/U.K./Belgian/Romanian co-production,

¹⁸¹ Production companies involved were French production companies Nord-Ouest Productions, Artémis Productions (co-production), TF1 Films Production (co-production), Les Productions de la Guéville (co-production), Romanian production company Media Pro Pictures (co-production), U.K. production company The Bureau and German production company Senator Film Produktion (co-production). The film was produced in participation with the following entities: French broadcaster Canal+, French production company CinéCinéma, German broadcaster Sat.1, Centre National de la Cinématographie (CNC) and was supported by Eurimages, German Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg and Filmförderungsanstalt (FFA), Belgian Le Tax Shelter du Gouvernement Fédéral de Belgique, French Région Nord-Pas-de-Calais and C.R.R.A.V. It was produced in association with French production companies Soficinéma, Cofimage 16, Uni Etoile 2, Sogécinéma 3, Groupe Un and Cinéart and Belgian production company SCOPE Invest, and Japanese production company Nippon Herald Films.

shot for an estimated \$22 million,¹⁸² attracted 2,765,343 people to European theaters, ranking it 29th at the European box office among co-productions originating from the Big Five European film industries between 2001 and 2007 (Kanzler 2008: 30). The film was picked up by Sony Pictures Classics for a theatrical release in the U.S. and grossed \$1,054,361 at the U.S. box office.¹⁸³

In 2007, the romantic musical drama *Les chansons d'amour* (*Love Songs*) was nominated for a Golden Palm. Written and directed by Christophe Honoré, the film grossed \$2,862,367 worldwide (non-U.S.) and was picked up for U.S. theatrical distribution by IFC Films, generating a marginal \$104,567 at the U.S. box office with its widest release pattern being seven theaters.¹⁸⁴ Given its internationally unknown cast, the weak performance does not surprise—also considering that IFC at the time was not known for strong theatrical campaigns, and releasing a fairly mainstream foreign comedy with most likely an only marginal P&A budget would unquestionably have been a herculean task. In an interview about his previous film *Dans Paris* (2006), a relatively low-budget film shot for an estimated \$1.5 million, Christophe Honoré—asked about the film’s “New Wave style”—says that:

I wouldn't say the film is in the style of the New Wave. The reasons are mainly economic. It is increasingly difficult to raise money for independent films in France. So we're in the same situation as the New Wave films made in the 1960s. We can either wait two or three years to get all the money we need or you film fast, with actors you like, in the street. You make films the way you write a love letter — which was my principle here. (Stratton 2007)

Honoré says, they “followed the lessons of the New Wave, which was that filmmakers should adjust their means to their desires or their desires to their means. So the idea is to work with the means we have and reclaim that style of filmmaking” (Stratton 2007). According to Honoré, “there is a return to 'Frenchness' in French films - something I

¹⁸² IMDb 2009, “Box office / business for Joyeux Noël (2005),” accessed on 8/10/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0424205/business>

¹⁸³ IMDb 2009, “Box office / business for Joyeux Noël (2005),” accessed on 8/10/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0424205/business>

¹⁸⁴ Box Office Mojo 2011, “Love Songs,” accessed on 7/28/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=lovesongs.htm>

don't like. It's a very bourgeois, very formulaic. I wanted to put the sheer joy of filmmaking at the heart of the film" (ibid.). Honoré, in fact, explicitly distances himself from the New Wave by saying,

I'm not a child of the New Wave. I am a grandchild of the New Wave, so I can afford to be more arrogant, light-hearted and playful with the legacy. And I can take a wider perspective and look at people like Milos Forman and so on and try and recapture that lightness, that pleasure in lovingly presenting characters when you don't even know what they'll do in the next scene. (Stratton 2007)

Neither Honoré's next film *La belle personne* (2008), nor *Non ma fille, tu n'iras pas danser* (2009) were able to get U.S. releases.

Following the international success of *La môme* (2007), Olivier Dahan directed *My Own Love Song* (2009). The road movie, starring Renée Zellweger, Forest Whitaker and Nick Nolte. The film was produced by Légende Films, the company that was also behind *La môme* (2007) and *Babylon A.D.* (2008).

French Transnational Action Dramas, Comedies and Thrillers in the 2000s

While French comedies, romantic comedies and romantic comedy-dramas enjoyed continuing success in the 2000s, both domestically and in some cases internationally, the French action and thriller genres proved to have the greatest potential in the international market. The globally most successful French representatives of the action and thriller genres during the 2000s were *Les rivières pourpres* (2000), *Kiss of the Dragon* (2001), the *Transporter* franchise (2002, 2005 and 2008), *Unleashed* (2005), *Ne le dis à personne*, *Taken* (2008) and *Colombiana* (2010). *Kiss of the Dragon* was a French/U.S. co-production, directed by Chris Nahon and written by Luc Besson and Robert Mark Kamen, based on a story by Jet Li. The film about a Chinese agent, played by Jet Li, who travels to Paris to bust a Chinese mobster, was produced by Luc Besson, Steve Chasman and Happy Walters and co-produced by Bernard Grenet. Production and financing entities involved on the French side were Luc Besson's EuropaCorp. and Canal+, and on the U.S. side Twentieth Century-Fox, Current Entertainment, Immortal Entertainment and Quality Growth International Ltd.

Shot for an estimated budget of \$25 million, *Kiss of the Dragon* grossed \$64,437,847 worldwide, more than half of that, \$36,845,124, in the U.S.¹⁸⁵

Les rivières pourpres (*The Crimson Rivers*, 2000) is a French psychological thriller about two detectives investigating two seemingly unconnected crimes in a remote mountain area of the French alps and soon discover that they are connected and that there is a terrible truth hidden behind these incidents that endangers them as well as everybody around them. The film was directed by Mathieu Kassovitz, director of the highly-acclaimed drama *La haine*. It was written by Mathieu Kassovitz and Jean-Christophe Grangé, based on the latter's novel. The film's producer was Alain Goldman. Companies involved were Gaumont, Légende Entreprises, TF1 Films Production and Canal+. With an estimated budget of \$16.9 million,¹⁸⁶ a clever script and a high-concept scenario, the film's high-powered backers were pushing a transnational property that would provide a high enough box office return to establish a franchise. The film grossed an international total of global total of \$59.5 million, however was not very successful in the U.S. market, grossing only \$594,966.¹⁸⁷ The film's strongest markets were its home market, followed by the Italian and the German market. What the film shows is that high-concept thrillers with high production values and interesting scripts can perform well in the larger European markets; however, crossing over into the U.S. market requires even more cleverly conceptualized films.

The sequel *Les rivières pourpres II - Les anges de l'apocalypse* (*Crimson Rivers 2: Angels of the Apocalypse*, 2004) was directed by Olivier Dahan and written by Jean-Christophe Grangé and Mathieu Kassovitz. It was produced for an estimated €30

¹⁸⁵ Box Office Mojo 2010, "Kiss of the Dragon: Summary," accessed on 2/4/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=kissofthedragon.htm>

¹⁸⁶ Currency calculation by the author, using historical exchange rate data from OANDA.com, based on IMDb 2011, "Box office / business for *The Crimson Rivers* (2000), accessed from "http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0228786/business

¹⁸⁷ Box Office Mojo 2011, "Les Rivieres Pourpres (*The Crimson Rivers*): Summary," accessed on 7/2/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=lesrivierespourpres.htm>

million,¹⁸⁸ almost twice as much as the original, by Alain Goldman and co-produced by Luc Besson. The French majority and Italian and British minority co-production¹⁸⁹ drew 3,774,391 people into European theaters, making it the number 21 co-production at the European box office, originating from the Big Five European film industries between 2001 and 2007. It grossed \$40 million internationally (non-U.S.)¹⁹⁰ and performed significantly weaker than the original in the pan-European market. Its U.S. theatrical numbers were even worse than the original. Released by TVA, it made only \$152,148 theatrically, but got a DVD distribution deal with Sony Pictures Home Entertainment. What both movies showed, however, was that the pan-European market could support elevated budget levels on high-concept genre movies.

In 2006, Luc Besson's EuropaCorp successfully released the Guillaume Canet directed thriller *Ne le dis à personne* (*Tell No One*, 2006), written by Guillaume Canet and Philippe Lefebvre, based on a novel by U.S. bestselling author Harlan Coben. The film, produced for an estimated budget of €11,7 million, had 3,037,384 admission in France by March 27, 2007 and was theatrically distributed with subtitles by Music Box Films in the U.S., where it grossed \$6,177,192.¹⁹¹ What's interesting about *Tell No One* is that the film is based on an English-language property that was translated into a French-language property only to be re-imported into the U.S. market in a subtitled version. This provides for an excellent example of the increasing interconnectivity of the global film business in the 1990s and 2000s.

In 2002, EuropaCorp released *The Transporter*, initiating one of the most successful action film franchises in French film history. *The Transporter*, budgeted at \$21 million, was produced by Luc Besson and Steve Chasman. It was directed by Louis

¹⁸⁸ IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for Les rivières pourpres II - Les anges de l'apocalypse (2004)," accessed on 5/11/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0337103/business>

¹⁸⁹ Production companies involved were French Studio Légende, Europa Corp., TF1 Films Production and Canal+, Italian production company Filmauro and British production company Epica Ltd.

¹⁹⁰ Box Office Mojo 2011, "Les Rivieres Pourpres 2 (Crimson Rivers 2), accessed on 7/2/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=lesrivierespourpres2.htm>

¹⁹¹ IMDb 2010, "Box office / business for Ne le dis à personne (2006)," accessed on 05/01/2010, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0362225/business>

Leterrier and Corey Yuen and written by Luc Besson and Robert Mark Kamen. The French/U.S. film can serve as an example of European/U.S. co-productions on which creative control remained primarily in the hands of the European partner. French entities involved were EuropaCorp, TF1 Films and Canal+. The film's U.S. co-production partner was Current Entertainment, with which EuropaCorp. had previously partnered on *Kiss of the Dragon* (Chris Nahon, 2001). *Transporter* had 1,637,624 admissions in Europe, received U.S. distribution by 20th Century Fox and grossed \$25,296,447 at the U.S. box office. The film's international numbers were equally impressive for a French action movie: It grossed \$18,632,485 at the international box office (non-U.S.).¹⁹²

Its sequel, *Transporter 2* (2005), budgeted at \$32 million, directed by Louis Leterrier and written by Luc Besson, was able to top the original's box office performance. Like the original released by 20th Century Fox, it grossed \$43,095,856 at the U.S. box office and \$42,071,783 at the international box office (non-U.S.).¹⁹³ With a higher budget also came a greater number of participants in the production.¹⁹⁴

Luc Besson also entrusted Louis Leterrier with directing the martial arts action movie *Unleashed* (2005), starring Jet Li, Bob Hoskins and Morgan Freeman. Written by Besson and produced by Besson and Steve Chasman,¹⁹⁵ the film grossed \$50,871,113 worldwide theatrically, \$24,537,621 of those at the U.S. box office.¹⁹⁶

Instead of taking on the third installment of the franchise, Louis Leterrier—a hard-working, very dynamic, yet very humble director with a good sense for visual

¹⁹² Box Office Mojo 2009, "The Transporter: Summary," accessed on 8/10/2009, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=transporter.htm>

¹⁹³ Box Office Mojo 2009, "Transporter 2: Summary," accessed on 7/2/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=transporter2.htm>

¹⁹⁴ *Transporter 2* was produced by French entities EuropaCorp., TF1 Films Production, TPS Star and Canal+, and U.S. studio Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation and U.S. production companies Current Entertainment, Sea Side Films Florida Inc. and Post Media.

¹⁹⁵ Production and financing entities involved on the French side were Europa Corp. and TF1 Films Production and Canal+, on the U.S. side Current Entertainment and Qian Yian International; and on the U.K. side Clubdeal.

¹⁹⁶ Box Office Mojo 2011, "Unleashed: Summary," accessed on 11/6/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=unleashed.htm>

storytelling¹⁹⁷—accepted a U.S. offer to direct *The Incredible Hulk* (2008). French director Olivier Megaton took over the franchise, directing *Transporter 3* (2008), which—like the entire franchise—was written by Luc Besson and Robert Mark Kamen, and produced by Luc Besson and Steve Chasman. Theatrically distributed by Lionsgate in the U.S., it grossed \$31,715,062 at the U.S. and \$77,264,487 at the international (non-U.S.) box office.¹⁹⁸ The *Transporter* movies are a perfect example of a Hollywood-inspired European action franchise. The fact that they work both in Europe as well as the U.S. can be considered as a major accomplishment for the writers, directors and producers of the franchise.

Also penned by Luc Besson and Robert Mark Kamen was *Taken*, one of the most profitable French international co-productions to date. The French/U.K./U.S. co-venture, directed by Pierre Morel, was produced by Luc Besson for an estimated budget of \$25 million.¹⁹⁹ The development process on *Taken* sheds some light on the way that films are developed in the French film industry in the Global Conglomerate Hollywood era. In an interview with Edward Douglas (2009) for ComingSoon.net, Pierre Morel says that Luc Besson pitched him the story of *Taken* at a restaurant and one year later, after financing for the movie was complete, approached him again and asked him if he was still interested in directing himself. Morel describes the way of working with Luc Besson as follows: “Once you get to work with Luc, we just read the script together, we make a few notes, we make a few changes if needed and from there on, you're free to go.” It certainly does not even remotely sound like the “hellish” development environment known from many U.S. blockbuster movies and, according to Morell, Luc Besson is a fairly hands-off producer during the production phase as well. Morell says, that he had not “seen Luc at all on my set and I've never had a producer breathing down

¹⁹⁷ I had the opportunity in Spring of 2008 to spend some time with Leterrier and Vincent Tabillon in the editing room during post-production of *The Incredible Hulk* (Louis Leterrier, 2008) and witnessed how he—even under the pressure of finishing a \$150 million dollar Hollywood movie on a very tight release schedule—was able to remain calm and composed.

¹⁹⁸ Box Office Mojo 2011, “Transporter 3: Summary,” accessed on 7/2/2011

¹⁹⁹ IMDb 2011, “Box office / business for Taken (2008/I),” accessed on 11/6/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0936501/business>

my neck through the whole process.” He describes the experience of working on a Besson project as “very comfortable” (ibid). According to Morell, “he just trusts me and we just have a general conversation about what the overall things should be, and that's it.” Morell goes on to describe the process as “very, very short.” According to him “it's not a long process of discussing how to do things; it's really a generic thing and it's very fast” (Douglas 2009).

Like the *Transporter* franchise, the revenge movie *Colombiana* (2011) was directed by Olivier Megaton and written by Luc Besson (screenplay) and Robert Mark Kamen. Producers of the film were Luc Besson and Pierre-Ange Le. *Colombiana* grossed \$36,665,854 at the U.S. box office and \$24,3 million at the international (non-U.S.) box office, \$5,445,710 of those in its home territory France.²⁰⁰

French Transnational Historical Dramas in the 2000s

Successful both in Europe and the U.S. was the French/U.K./German/Polish co-production *The Pianist* (Roman Polanski, 2002).²⁰¹ Production and financing entities involved in the all-French production were Europa Corp., TF1 Films Production, Grive Productions, Canal+, CinéCinéma and A.J.O.Z. *The Pianist* can be considered a very high-concept and—thanks to the director—high-profile, transnational property. Having lost his mother during the Holocaust, the true story about a Jewish pianist's struggle for survival in the Warsaw ghetto was close to Polanski's heart. In order to be able to do *The Pianist*, he turned down an offer to direct *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg, 1993) (Cole Lownes 2002). *Pianist* producer Gene Gutowski, who had worked with Polanski for almost 40 years, explains why Polanski preferred Szpilman's story:

This particular book appealed to Roman because it is written with such immediacy and objectivity. The book is full of optimism, Szpilman doesn't

²⁰⁰ Box Office Mojo 2011, “Colombiana: Summary,” accessed on 11/6/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=colombiana.htm>, Box Office Mojo 2011, “Colombiana: Foreign,” accessed on 11/6/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=colombiana.htm>

²⁰¹ *The Pianist* was written by Ronald Harwood, based on the book by Wladyslaw Szpilman and stars Adrien Brody, Thomas Kretschmann and Frank Finlay.

blame anyone. He's simply saying, 'That's the way it was.' I almost feel like Szpilman wrote it as though he was looking at it all through a camera, as though he were recording it and telling it as he saw it. (Cole Lowmes 2002)

The Pianist had 8,512,013 admissions in Europe, making it the 6th highest-grossing co-production in Europe from 2001 to 2007 (Kanzler 2008: 30). Shot for an estimated budget of \$35 million, it grossed \$32,572,577 at the U.S. box office.²⁰²

Set during World War I, *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* (*A Very Long Engagement*, 2004), a dark romantic period drama, directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet, stirred up controversy in France upon its very successful release. The fact that the film was financed with U.S. money caused two French producers' associations—whose member companies include Pathé, Gaumont, UGC and MK2—to take legal action against the CNC's decision to support the film and win their case. According to their arguments, the film, partially financed by Warner Bros. France, could not be considered as a "French" movie, despite the fact that it was shot in France, in French, stars French actors and made use of a French crew (Ciment 2006: 140). Michel Ciment points out the strange nature of that decision, considering that the same year *Alexander* (Oliver Stone, 2004)—co-produced by Pathé and shot as an English-language picture with an "Anglo-Saxon" cast and crew and directed by an American director—qualified as a "French" movie (*ibid.*). The film's director Jean-Pierre Jeunet describes the situation as follows:

I got something pretty rare: American power and a lot of money to distribute the film worldwide. I can tell you politicians from right to left are so proud of the film, actors, technicians, everybody except the independent French producers who campaigned against it. But, you know we live in a capitalist world where the only thing is to earn money. They want to get rid of Warners from France. They are not prepared to share the cake. (Hoggard 2005)

Despite of the controversy, the film proved to be not only very successful at the French box office, grossing \$31,380,114,²⁰³ but also did very well internationally. *Un long*

²⁰² IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for *The Pianist* (2002)," accessed on 11/5/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0253474/business>

dimanche de fiançailles had a total worldwide theatrical gross of \$70,115,868, \$6,524,389 of that from the U.S. market.²⁰⁴

French Transnational Romantic Thrillers in the 2000s

Laetitia Colombani's romantic thriller *À la folie... pas du tout* (*He Loves Me... He Loves Me Not*, 2002), starring Audrey Tautou, originated as a 40-minute thesis script at the French national film school Ecole Louis Lumiere (Blackwelder 2003). After graduating, Colombani spent four years re-writing it and turning it into a feature-length script. She then sent her script to French producer Charles Cassot, whose long list of credits includes the Academy Award nominated *Le goût des autres* (*The Taste of Others*, Agnès Jaoui, 2000). Cassot decided to produce it. Colombani also sent a copy of the script to Audrey Tautou, who, after an initial rejection because she was afraid of playing a part that was very different from her previous work, two days later accepted the challenge and agreed to come on board (ibid.). Cassot hired another writer, Caroline Thivel, to get the script ready for production, and Laetitia Colombani stayed attached as the director. The film, a domestic co-production between Cofimage 12, TF1 Films Production, TPS Cinéma and Téléma, received theatrical distribution in the U.S. by Samuel Goldwyn Films and grossed \$1,009,827.²⁰⁵ It received mixed reviews in the U.S. market. *Variety* critic Lisa Nesselson called it a "modest but neatly plotted film" that "is a somewhat formal but consistently engaging oddity that rewards viewers who like to pay close attention" (Nesselson 2002). According to Nesselson, "every character's gestures, however abrupt or extreme, fit into a framework whose complexity is gradually revealed with great skill. However, the script's precision does make the picture more a mentally than emotionally rewarding exercise" (ibid.). The mainstream press reviews were positive. *USA Today* critic Claudia Puig calls it a "genre-busting

²⁰³ Box Office Mojo, "A Very Long Engagement: Foreign," accessed on 11/6/2011, from <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=verylongengagement.htm>

²⁰⁴ Box Office Mojo, "A Very Long Engagement: Summary," accessed on 11/6/2011, from <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=verylongengagement.htm>

²⁰⁵ IMDb 2010, "Box office / business for He Loves Me... He Loves Me Not (2002)," accessed on 6/28/2010, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0291579/business>

movie,” having “the appearance of a love story but morphs into a thriller, told cleverly in a nonlinear style. Think *Sliding Doors* crossed with *The Sixth Sense*, with a little *Memento* thrown in.” Puig summarizes it as “a story of love and obsession that makes for an intriguing cinematic experience on Valentine's or any other day“ (Puig 2002).

French Transnational Inspirational dramas in the 2000s

Inspirational movies—in a variety of genres—have often proven themselves as transnational properties. An example is the French/Swiss/German co-production *Les choristes* (*The Chorus*, 2004), directed by Christophe Barratier. The inspirational drama about a boarding school for troubled teens in post-war France and a courageous teacher, who changes the boys' lives by starting a school choir,

While often perceived as a remake of *La Cage aux rossignols* (Jean Dreville, 1945), Christophe Barratier points out,

[...] it's not really a remake; I bought the rights, so for legal reasons I credit Dreville. I took from his film only the plot about a supervisor who goes to a boarding school to organize a choir. But the two movies are really, really different. All the characters, and a lot of what happens in my movie, are one part autobiographical, the other, my imagination. (Gronvall 2005)

Les choristes, Barratier's feature film debut,²⁰⁶ was produced by French producers Nicolas Mauvernay, Barratier's uncle Jacques Perrin, and Swiss producer Arthur Cohn (ibid).²⁰⁷ Barratier exemplifies a new generation of French filmmakers, whose role models are often found outside of French cinema. Barratier says that, “Our generation

²⁰⁶ Barratier, who comes from a film business, family studied music before he made the transition into film. He started out writing TV movies, directed a short film and then TV commercials, before joining Jacques Perrin's production company. Perrin, his uncle, put him in charge of development at his company, leading to Barratier working on highly-acclaimed documentary *Microcosmos* (Claude Nuridsany & Marie Pérennou, 1996) and Oscar-nominated documentary *Winged Migration* (Jacques Perrin, Jacques Cluzaud & Michel Debats, 2001) (Gronvall 2005).

²⁰⁷ Christophe Barratier received screen story and screenplay credit and Philippe Lopes-Curval received screenplay credit for the film. Companies involved were French entities France 2 Cinéma, Galatée Films, Banque Populaire Images, Novo Arturo Films, Pathé Renn Productions, Canal+, the Centre National de la Cinématographie (CNC) and Procirep, German financing and production entity CP Medien AG and German Dan Valley Film AG, and Swiss production company Vega Film.

is not like the 1960s, obsessed with reading Cahiers du Cinéma” (Hoggard 2005). He says,

I am very open to every type of cinema, but for me the best directors are the ones who allow you to share emotions. The Chorus is set in a school, so people say to me, "Oh you must be influenced by *Zéro de conduite* or *The 400 Blows*." And they are shocked when I say, "But no, truly, there are more important films about children for me, like *Billy Elliot*!" (ibid.)

Produced for an estimated €5.5 million, *Les choristes* attracted 12,032,541 viewers into European theaters, ranking it 3rd among co-productions originating from the Big Five European film industries between 2001 and 2007 (Kanzler 2008: 30). *Les choristes* was also nominated for a Best Foreign Language Film Oscar, and was picked up by Miramax Films for U.S. distribution, grossing \$3,629,758 at the U.S. box office.²⁰⁸

French Transnational Sci-Fi Movies in the 2000s

The majority of European transnational popular cinema has focused on past or present scenarios. It almost seems like European filmmakers, possibly burdened by their respective histories, shy away from looking into the future, or that the science fiction genre is taken less seriously by European critics and funding bodies, leading to an unfavorable funding situation. Interestingly, France seems to have a cinema more open towards the on-screen future than its European neighbors.

An example of a moderately successful transnational Sci-Fi properties originating in France in the 2000s is *Banlieue 13 (District 13, 2004)*, directed by Pierre Morel, written by Luc Besson and Bibi Naceri, produced by Besson and executive produced by Bernard Grenet.²⁰⁹ The film—starring Cyril Raffaelli, David Belle and Tony D'Amario—was shot for an estimated €12 million and received theatrical distribution by Magnolia Pictures in the U.S. and grossed \$1,197,786 at the U.S. box

²⁰⁸ IMDb, 2012, Box office / business for *The Chorus*," accessed on 6/28/2010, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0372824/business>

²⁰⁹ Production entities involved were Luc Besson's Europa Corp., TF1 Films Production and Canal+.

office.²¹⁰ While it isn't one of the more globally successful French science fiction films, its development process sheds some light on how Luc Besson works with writers and picks his directors. Pierre Morel describes how he was recruited for *Banlieue 13*:

With Luc, I have such a long relationship, as a camera person, and as a D.P. and as a straight helper for him for some of the shows he did, I D.P.'ed some of his commercials. He knew I was willing to direct so the first time, for 'District B13,' he just offered me the script. 'I know you want to try to direct.' He knew I knew all the guys in 'B13' so he said, "Do you want to read the script? And if you like it, just come back to me and shoot.' And I liked it. That was as simple as that. (Douglas 2009)

Luc Besson, asked about the strategy and concept behind recruiting new talent for the projects he writes and produces, says, "there's no rule. I try to build a kind of oasis, where people can land there. If they have ideas, if they're good, if they're cool, we will find one day an opportunity where they can do something" (Douglas 2007). Regarding Morel, Besson confirms Morel's story, saying that he had known Morel "for a long time" and was impressed by Morel's work ethic, aptitude and attitude and when EuropaCorp developed *Banlieue 13*, according to Besson a "little French film [...] with unknown actors," he gave the project to Morel to direct (Douglas 2007). The ability to take these kinds of creative risks on unknown talent and first-time directors, according to Besson, is made possible by the financial successes of his other films. Asked about the extent of his involvement as a producer with his directors during the actual production, he says, "my best quality as a producer is that I'm a director. It means that I don't have to prove anything [...] I always try to bring some of my expertise, but I'm always very careful to respect their world and how they want to do the film" (ibid.).

While Luc Besson's EuropaCorp. led the way with successful transnational popular films, other French production companies followed suit. One of the more prominent examples of transnational properties in the 2000s was *Babylon A.D.* (2008),

²¹⁰ IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for Banlieue 13 (2004)," accessed on 11/19/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0414852/business>

directed by Mathieu Kassovitz.²¹¹ Kassovitz had received critical acclaim for his work in France. He won a Golden Palm in 1995 for his drama *La haine* and was nominated for a Golden Palm in 1997 for directing the crime drama *Assassins*. He subsequently directed the U.S. horror movie *Gothika* (2003), starring Halle Berry, which—budgeted at an estimated \$40 million—grossed \$59,588,068 at the U.S. box office.²¹²

Babylon A.D.'s cast includes a number of internationally bankable actors such as Vin Diesel and Gérard Depardieu. The film, a French/Czech/U.S. co-production was produced by Alain Goldman and executive produced by Avram Kaplan and David Valdes.²¹³ Produced for an estimated budget of \$70 million, *Babylon A.D.* had a worldwide theatrical gross of \$72,105,690.²¹⁴²¹⁵ While the film was an international box office success by European standards, it received primarily negative reviews from international critics, scoring an abysmal 7% on Rotten Tomatoes.²¹⁶ Hollywood Reporter critic A. O. Scott (2008), for example, writes that, “this odd, solemn disaster has made itself spoiler-proof by refusing to make any sense at all. The only explicable thing about ‘Babylon A.D.’ is that it was not screened in advance for critics.”

Considering the film's, by European standards, relatively high budget of an estimated \$70 million, its worldwide gross—compared to similar U.S. productions—was unimpressive. For a production, originating in Europe, however, the numbers are

²¹¹ *Babylon A.D.* was written by Kassovitz and Eric Besnard and co-written by Joseph Simas, based on the novel *Babylon Babies* by Maurice G. Dantec.

²¹² IMDb 2010, “Box office / business for *Gothika* (2003),” accessed on 2/1/2010, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0348836/business>

²¹³ Companies involved were French entities Légende Films, MNP Enterprise, M6 Films and M6, StudioCanal and Canal+. The Czech co-production partner was Okko Production and the U.S. partner was Twentieth Century-Fox.

²¹⁴ IMDb 2010, “Box office / business for *Babylon A.D.* (2008),” accessed on 2/1/2010, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0364970/business>

²¹⁵ Top performing territories for the film were the U.S. with \$22,532,572, France and Algeria, Monaco, Morocco and Tunisia with a combined \$8,051,142, Russia with \$5,720,547, Italy with \$3,374,069, Mexico with \$3,372,367, Germany with \$3,415,400 and the U.K., Ireland and Malta with a combined \$2,161,024. Box Office Mojo 2010, “*Babylon A.D.*: Foreign Box Office,” accessed on 2/1/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=babylon.htm>

²¹⁶ Rotten Tomatoes, “*Babylon A.D.* (2008),” accessed on 2/1/2010, from http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/babylon_ad/?page=3&critic=approved&sortby=date&name_order=asc&view=#contentReviews

quite impressive and films like *Babylon A.D.* and *Transporter 3* in 2008 led to an increase in French film exports by 16% (Gubbins & Kenny 2008). Overall, *Babylon A.D.* can be seen as an interesting example of European efforts of making high-concept, high-profile movies for the international market, with U.S. co-production partners, yet failing to perform at the level of comparable Hollywood productions. Mathieu Kassovitz, in a pre-release interview for the film, revealed what attracted him to the story of *Babylon A.D.*:

The scope of the original book was quite amazing [...] The author was very much into geopolitics and how the world is going to evolve. He saw that as wars evolve, it won't be just about territories any more, but money-driven politics. As a director it's something that's very attractive to do. (Neuman 2008)

Kassovitz, however, complains about the experience of making the film and is quite negative about the end result, saying, “I'm very unhappy with the film [...] I never had a chance to do one scene the way it was written or the way I wanted it to be. The script wasn't respected. Bad producers, bad partners, it was a terrible experience” (ibid.). According to Kassovitz,

The movie is supposed to teach us that the education of our children will mean the future of our planet. All the action scenes had a goal: They were supposed to be driven by either a metaphysical point of view or experience for the characters... instead parts of the movie are like a bad episode of *24*. (ibid.)

Frustrated about working within the confines of a U.S. studio co-production environment, Kassovitz says, “Fox was sending lawyers who were only looking at all the commas and the dots [...] They made everything difficult from A to Z” (ibid.). Kassovitz also complains about Fox’s interventions during the editing phase, which resulted in cutting about 15 minutes from the finished film, resulting in it being confusing (ibid.).

While European science fiction films generally have a difficult time competing internationally with their—typically high-budget, effects- and star-driven—Hollywood competition, the playing field in the horror genre tends to be more level.

French Transnational Horror Movies in the 2000s

Le pacte des loups (*Brotherhood of the Wolf*, 2001) opened the door for a new wave of French horror films. The Christophe Gans directed historic horror movie is based on a popular French myth. It tells the story of an envoy, sent out by the French king in the 1800s, to find and destroy a mysterious beast that had been haunting a French mountain region and killing a large number of people. The film was very popular in France and was the number eight grossing film among Europe's entirely national films from 2001 to 2009, drawing 8,455,709 viewers to European theaters (Kanzler 2008: 30). Distributed by Universal Pictures, it made \$10,928,863 at the U.S. box office by May 5, 2002.²¹⁷

While *Le pacte des loups*—budgeted at an estimated \$29 million²¹⁸—showed that medium-budget French horror films were capable of crossing over into the U.S. market, *Haute tension* (*High Tension*, Alexandre Aja, 2003)—budgeted at an estimated €2.2 million²¹⁹—showed that French horror movies shot for much lower budgets also had a chance at performing well internationally. *Haute Tension* is a home invasion movie in which two girls in a remote country home are terrorized by an ominous killer. The film was directed by Alexandre Aja, written by Alexandre Aja and Grégory Levasseur, produced by Alexandre Arcady and Robert Benmussa, executive produced by Andrei Boncea and co-produced by Luc Besson. Production companies involved were Luc Besson's EuropaCorp. and Alexandre Films. *Haute Tension* was picked up by Lions Gate Films for theatrical distribution in the U.S. and—released in a dubbed version—grossed \$3,645,438 at the U.S. box office.²²⁰ The film's performance was respectable enough for the director to successfully make the transition to Hollywood. Alexandre

²¹⁷ IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for *Le pacte des loups* (2001)," accessed on 11/10/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0237534/business>

²¹⁸ Box Office Mojo 2012, "Brotherhood of the Wolf: Summary," accessed on 4/22/2012, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=brotherhoodofthewolf.htm>

²¹⁹ IMDb 2012, "Box office / business for *High Tension* (2003)," accessed on 4/22/2012, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0338095/business>

²²⁰ IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for *Haute tension* (2003)," accessed on 11/10/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0338095/business>

Aja has since directed the U.S. horror films *The Hills Have Eyes* (2006), *Mirrors* (2008) and *Piranha 3-D* (2010).

Banking on horror movies' domestic as well as international appeal, the French horror genre in 2005 received a boost from Canal+, which started new production label "French Frayeur," dedicated to producing horror movies (Grey 2009). According to Manuel Alduy, Canal+'s head of cinema and founder of French Frayeur, Canal+ co-produces the horror films and contributes roughly €700,000 to the films' budgets that typically range from €1.3 million to €2 million (Grey 2009). Among Canal+'s motivations for entering the horror market—besides an estimated domestic audience base of about 500,000 horror-philes—is the films' international marketability, as, according to Aldy, "horror films cross cultural boundaries much more easily than French comedies or small budget art house films" (ibid.).

Among other French horror films in the 2000s that succeeded both on a pan-European as well as international level was *Silent Hill* (2006). The movie, directed by Christophe Gans and written by Roger Avary, is based on the *Silent Hill* video game. The film was a French/Canadian/Japanese co-production. Producers were Canadian based Don Carmody, and Samuel Hadida, for French production company Davis-Film. The film was produced in association with the Konami Corporation, the Japanese company that produced the video game franchise, for an estimated budget of \$50 million.²²¹ Talking about the experience of adapting the video game into a motion picture, Christophe Gans says,

Adapting the games presented a major challenge. It's the most complicated game to adapt, for all the reasons that gamers across the world know: the aesthetic has no equivalent; it's maybe the only game with such an important back-story. The mythology of *Silent Hill* has been built through several games, and each of them is remarkable. And the characters in the games have that twisted quality which makes them very special for every gamer. And the game by itself was an amazing experience...so yeah, for all these reasons; it was a major challenge to put that game on screen. It was impossible for me to do *Silent Hill* and not be serious about it. (Bettenhausen 2006)

²²¹ IMDb 2011, "Box office / business for *Silent Hill* (2006)," accessed on 12/3/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0384537/business>

Gans says he was fully committed to do the best possible adaptation of the popular video game. He says, "If you want to adapt *Silent Hill*, and you're not ready to face all of the complexity of the story, it's just too much." According to Gans, "for a lazy director, like the one who directed *Doom*, simply *Silent Hill* would be too big of a piece to swallow." Gans says, he had a long-term investment into pursuing the *Silent Hill* adaptation. He says, "I dreamed of adapting this game when I first started playing *Silent Hill* six years ago. I prepared myself for six years to do this job, knowing that every fan in the world would wait for me with an axe." Addressing the story, Gans says that to him the most interesting aspect of the world of the story was its portrayal of "good vs. evil." Gans says:

Because *Silent Hill* comes from a part of the world where the line between good and evil is blurred more so than in the West, it's very interesting to deal with that [...] Because *Silent Hill* comes from a part of the world where the line between good and evil is blurred more so than in the West, it's very interesting to deal with that [...] In *Silent Hill*, I don't attempt to answer these questions, but I do try to illustrate them. And I think it's one of the most important objectives of the horror genre, to ask the right questions. Horror is actually a very political genre. It's become more and more interesting, because *Silent Hill* is a Japanese creation, and we bring our own complex morality to it. (Bettenhausen 2006)

While the film grossed \$46,982,632 at the U.S. box office,²²² American film critics overall did not share the apparent enthusiasm of the film's younger-skewing audience. In fact, virtually none of the leading U.S. critics responded positively to the film. Among the critics disliking *Silent Hill* was Chicago Sun-Times critic Roger Ebert. Ebert, who gave the film one and a half stars. While applauding the film's "terrific" visuals, he writes that he felt lost about the film's content. He says that, "although I did not understand the story, I would have appreciated a great deal less explanation [...]" Perhaps those who have played the game will understand the movie, and enjoy it"

²²² IMDbPro 2010, "Box office / business for *Silent Hill* (2006)," accessed on 7/7/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0384537/business>

(Ebert 2006). Gans, confronted with Ebert's assessment of his film and Ebert's supposed claim that video games "are not art," says,

Fuck him. You know, I will say to this guy that [he] only has to read the critiques against cinema at the beginning of the 20th century. It was seen as a degenerate version of live stage musicals. And this was a time when visionary directors like Griffith were working. That means that Ebert is wrong. It's simple. Most people who despise a new medium are simply afraid to die, so they express their arrogance and fear like this. He will realize that he is wrong on his deathbed. (Bettenhausen 2006)

Despite Gans' questionable rhetoric to defend his film, *Silent Hill*'s global box office performance made it a truly transnational property. It grossed \$5,813,657 at the French box office and performed well all over Europe, as well as in Mexico, Japan and South Korea.²²³ Its global (non-U.S.) box office was \$50,624,821. It received theatrical distribution in the U.S. by Sony/Columbia and grossed \$46,982,632 at the U.S. box office.²²⁴

French Transnational Family Dramas and Family Animation

Among the more prominent family dramas with transnational potential—originating in France—was the English-language French/U.K./Czech/Italian co-production *Oliver Twist* (2005), directed by Roman Polanski, written by Ronald Harwood, based on a novel by Charles Dickens, and produced by Robert Benmussa, Roman Polanski and Alain Sarde. Production companies involved were French R.P. Productions, which also produced the previous Polanski movies *Bitter Moon* (1992), *The Ninth Gate* (1999) and *The Pianist* (2002); Italian production company Medusa Produzione, covered in Chapter 6; Czech production and production services company ETIC Films, and U.K. company Runteam II Ltd.

²²³ Box Office Mojo 2011, "Silent Hill: Foreign," accessed on 12/3/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=silenthill.htm>

²²⁴ Box Office Mojo 2011, "Silent Hill: Summary," accessed on 12/3/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=silenthill.htm>

Produced for an estimated €50 million²²⁵ and starring Barney Clark, Ben Kingsley and Jeremy Swift, *Oliver Twist* drew 4,644,267 people into European theaters, ranking it 19th among co-productions originating from the Big Five European film industries between 2001 and 2007 (Kanzler 2008: 30). Picked up by Sony Pictures Entertainment (SPE) for theatrical distribution in the U.S., it grossed \$1,987,287 at the U.S. box office.²²⁶

While Sony distributed *Oliver Twist* in its original European version, another European film with a French majority co-producer received a complete makeover before its U.S. theatrical release. That film was *Pollux, le manège enchanté* (*The Magic Roundabout*, 2005), one of the European film industry's more prominent attempts at creating a 3D animated family movie with blockbuster potential. Like some of its U.S. models, made by, most prominently, Disney, Pixar and Dreamworks, the film not only had multiple directors, Dave Borthwick, Jean Duval and Frank Passingham, but also multiple writers.²²⁷ Producers of the film were Claude Gorsky, Bruce Higham, Andy Leighton and Pascal Rodon.²²⁸ While most likely primarily geared at the European multiplex market, it also had its producers looking overseas. The French majority and U.K. minority co-production drew 2,563,978 audience members into European theaters, ranking it 32nd at the European box office among co-productions originating from the Big Five European countries between 2001 and 2007 (Kanzler 2008: 30). The film was picked up for U.S. distribution for all media by The Weinstein Company, which modified it for its U.S. theatrical run. The Weinstein's attempts of making the movie more appealing to U.S. audiences—by changing its title to *Doogal*, trying to adapt the dialogue to American sensibilities and replacing the original voiceover talent with

²²⁵ IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for *Oliver Twist* (2005)," accessed on 8/10/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0380599/business>

²²⁶ IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for *Oliver Twist* (2005)," accessed on 8/10/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0380599/business>

²²⁷ Paul Basset (screenplay), Raolf Sanoussi (co-writer), Stephane Sanoussi (co-writer) Serge Danot (characters), Martine Danot (characters) and Tad Safran (additional material)

²²⁸ Production companies involved were French entities Action Films, Action Synthese, Pathé Renn Productions, Pathé, Pricel, Canal+ and France 2 Cinéma, as well as U.K. entities SPZ Entertainment, bolexbrothers limited and the UK Film Council.

popular U.S. actors and other show business celebrities—very apparently failed. The movie not only got very negative reviews, scoring only 8% on Rotten Tomatoes,²²⁹ but it also was unable to connect with U.S. audiences on a larger scale. It was produced for an estimated budget of \$20 million, which can be considered as relatively inexpensive compared to most of its U.S. CGI animated competition. While the \$7,415,850 it made at the U.S. box office²³⁰ would be considered good for European films on U.S. screens, it was presumably well below the expectations of its distributors.

Meanwhile, Luc Besson had his own family animated film in store: The 3D animated *Arthur et les Minimoys* (*Arthur and the Invisibles*, 2006), which he directed himself. The screenplay was written by Céline Garcia and Besson, based on Besson's own book, using more of a development-by-committee approach, typically found in Hollywood animation development. *Arthur et les Minimoys* was an all-French production, produced by Europa Corp. and Avalanche Productions, in association with Canal+ and Sofica Europacorp for an estimated budget of \$86 million.²³¹ Luc Besson, asked about the rationale behind doing *Arthur et les Minimoys* and whether he was trying to move away from some of his more violent previous movies, says:

It's not intentional. I think it's natural. In the '80s, the society I was living in Paris was kind of bourgeois, le gauche, caviar, you know? And you're younger and you're tough, and you want just to kick a little and talk about the dark side, especially after 'Big Blue.' But then the world today is so hard. You see so much pain around the world, and I don't feel as a director to kick some more. I feel they've kicked enough. (Douglas 2007)

Besson explains the change to a less violent approach, by saying “I don't feel so proud as a human being today, as an adult [...] I don't feel proud, to leave the world the way we're leaving it to the 800 richest people in the world who have all the money to the 800 millions of poor people.” Besson calls for change, saying, “we cannot live like this.

²²⁹ Rotten Tomatoes 2010, “Doogal, 2006: T-Meter Critics, “ accessed on 6/30/2010, from <http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/1156283-doogal/>

²³⁰ IMDb 2009, “Box office / business for The Magic Roundabout (2005),” accessed on 8/11/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0339334/business>

²³¹ Box Office Mojo 2011, “Arthur and the Invisibles,” accessed on 7/7/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=arthurandtheinvisibles.htm>

We're going through a catastrophe if we live like this. There's billions of people who live with one dollar a day, and global warming and pollution.” According to Besson, his goal was to make a younger demographic aware of the problems through storytelling, “to at least try to give them some feeling so that they can be better than us” (Douglas 2007). Besson, described the inception of *Arthur et les Minimoys* as follows:

The real beginning of ‘Arthur’ is this gentleman called Patrice Garcia, he worked on ‘The Fifth Element.’ He was one of the main designers, and he came to see me on the editing of ‘Joan of Arc’ with a drawing of Arthur seated on a leaf, and I fell in love and I said, ‘We should do that. It's wonderful.’ That was how it started.

Describing the development process, Besson says that “the three big movements [were] writing the script and the storyboard and creating each character and the world, that's in 2D, a team of five people for three years, they have done 14 or 15,000 drawings. That's the first step, and then you get the storyboards” (Douglas 2007).

Arthur et les Minimoys’ had 8,447,226 admissions in the EU²³² and received U.S. theatrical distribution by MGM, grossing \$15,132,763 at the U.S. box office.²³³

Finally, Jean-Jacques Annaud served the same audience segment with the English-language film *Deux frères* (*Two Brothers*, 2004), he directed and produced.²³⁴ The coming of age live action adventure, featured two tigers and their struggle with their often inhumane non-animal environment as they go on a rather incredible journey to return to their natural habitat. In addition to the two tigers, the film stars Guy Pearce, Freddie Highmore and Jean-Claude Dreyfus. Production companies involved were French companies Pathé, Pathé Renn Productions, TF1 Films Production and Canal+, and U.K. company Two Brothers Productions. Universal Pictures theatrically distributed the French majority and British minority co-production in the U.S. Produced

²³² The film performed best in France, with 4,112,904 admissions, the U.K. with 1,090,792 admissions and Germany with 696,375 admissions. Lumière database 2011, *Arthur et les Minimoys*, accessed on 8/21/2011, from http://lumiere.obs.coe.int/web/film_info/?id=25580

²³³ Box Office Mojo 2011, “Arthur and the Invisibles,” accessed on 7/7/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=arthurandtheinvisibles.htm>

²³⁴ The film’s other producer was Jake Eberts, and it was co-produced by Timothy Burrill and Paul Rassam. *Deux frères* was written by Alain Godard, Jean-Jacques Annaud and Julian Fellowes.

for an estimated €59,660,000, the film grossed \$19,176,754 theatrically in the U.S. and \$42,995,296 internationally (non-U.S.).²³⁵

French Transnational Biographical Dramas

Among the more prominent French biographical dramas of the 2000s that were able to cross international borders was *La môme* (2007) (aka *La Vie en Rose*), a biopic about French singer Édith Piaf, was directed by Olivier Dahan, written by Olivier Dahan and Isabelle Sobelman and produced by Alain Goldman.²³⁶ Among numerous international awards, the film won two Oscars and a Golden Globe. It grossed \$75,973,087 internationally (non-U.S.), received U.S. theatrical distribution through Picturehouse and made \$10,301,706 at the U.S. box office.

In 2009, the most successful French-language film was the biopic *Coco avant Chanel* (*Coco Before Chanel*). It was directed by Anne Fontaine, written by Anne Fontaine and Camille Fontaine, and produced by Caroline Benjo, Philippe Carcassonne and Carole Scotta. The film was a co-production between French Haut et Court, Ciné@, France 2 Cinéma and U.S. studio Warner Bros.'s French subsidiary Warner Bros. Entertainment France. It was produced with participation of Canal+, CinéCinéma, France 2 (FR2) and in association with Films Distribution, Cofinova 5, Banque Populaire Images 9 and Scope Pictures. The film's development proces involved external consultation. British screenwriter, playwright and director Christopher Hampton, who was hired as an adviser on the project, talks about his consulting experience on the film. He says, Anne Fontaine,

[...] was working with a young writer just out of film school called Camille Fontaine (no relation). Once they'd produced a first draft, I went over for a week and talked it through with them both. Then I did the same after the second draft and again before Anne started shooting. It was the ideal job: relaxed conversation in a Paris hotel and no actual writing. (Hampton 2009)

²³⁵ Box Office Mojo 2011, "Two Brothers: Summary," accessed on 7/8/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=twobrothers.htm>

²³⁶ *La môme* was co-produced by Marc Jenny, Oldrich Mach and Timothy Burrill.

Talking about the story, Hampton says, “what was very smart about Anne's take on the story was that instead of doing a stately progression through Chanel's life, she decided just to focus on the emergence from obscurity of this strange figure” (ibid.).

Coco avant Chanel was distributed theatrically in France, Germany, Japan, Brazil, Spain and Italy by Warner Bros.; by Sony Pictures International (SPI) in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland, Slovakia and Bosnia and Herzegovina; and by Sony Pictures Classics in the U.S. Produced for an estimated €19,430,000, *Coco avant Chanel* grossed \$6,075,032 at the U.S. box office by January 24, 2010.²³⁷ The film's total (non-U.S.) box office as of January 24, 2010 was \$41,272,486.²³⁸

French Film Exports in the 2000s

According to CNC statistics, reproduced in Table 4.5, the majority of revenue from French film exports from 2003 to 2008 was from sales to Western Europe. Sales to North America more than doubled between 2003 and 2006, substantially decreased in 2007, and rose again in 2008.²³⁹

²³⁷ IMDb 2010, “Box office / business for *Coco avant Chanel* (2009),” accessed on 2/1/2010, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1035736/business>

²³⁸ Countries the film performed especially well in, were France and Algeria, Monaco, Morocco and Tunisia, where it grossed a combined \$8,680,317 at the box office, Japan, where it grossed \$7,045,089, Germany, where it grossed \$4,815,653, the U.K., Ireland and Malta where it grossed a combined \$3,080,060 and Spain, where it grossed \$2,448,911. Box Office Mojo 2010, “*Coco Before Chanel*,” accessed on 2/1/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=cocobeforechanel.htm>

²³⁹ CNC World Cinema Statistics, from <http://www.cnc.fr/web/en/sectoral-statistics>

Table 4.5.: Export Revenue from French Films by Geographical Area

(in 1000 €)	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Western Europe	65,048	78,967	78,544	76,856	58,396	63,653
North America	20,867	17,168	28,808	46,853	24,822	28,603
Eastern Europe	9,183	13,803	12,222	17,883	17,871	23,804
Asia	18,831	21,453	22,652	15,991	17,751	12,793
Latin America	3,772	3,198	4,410	4,765	4,681	4,160
Other	2,354	2,639	2,218	3,099	3,239	3,184
Middle East	1,450	1,701	1,835	1,934	1,196	2,194
Oceania	1,228	1,186	1,658	2,437	2,635	1,998
Africa	908	1,111	805	529	852	954
Total	123,641	141,226	153,151	170,349	131,442	141,344

Source: CNC²⁴⁰

The peak of French film export revenue in 2006 coincided with an exceptionally strong year domestically. Seven French films were among the ten highest-grossing films at the French box office: *Les bronzés 3: amis pour la vie* (*Friends Forever*, Patrice Leconte, 2006), distributed by Warner Bros., led the field of French contenders, grossing \$81 million at the French box office. *Camping* (Fabien Onteniente, 2006), distributed by Pathé, came in second with \$42 million, beating *Mission Impossible III* (J.J. Abrams, 2006). 2006 also proved that budget was not necessarily related to box office performance: French low-budget romantic comedy *Je vous trouve très beau* (*You Are So Handsome*, Isabelle Mergault) made \$27 million at the French box office, outperforming both *X Men 3* (Brett Ratner, 2006) and *Casino Royale* (Martin Campbell, 2006), which grossed \$22 and \$18 million respectively (James 2006b). Similarly well performed romantic comedies *Prête-moi ta main* (*I Do*, 2006) (starring Alain Chabat and Charlotte Gainsborg) and *Hors de prix* (*Priceless*, 2006) starring Audrey Tatou (James 2006b). In 2006 many U.S. blockbusters struggled against their French competition. As French box office returns for U.S. fare—except for *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* (Gore Verbinski, 2006), *Ice Age: The Meltdown* (Carlos Saldanha, 2006) and *The Da Vinci Code* (Ron Howard, 2006)—were generally

²⁴⁰ From CNC World Cinema Statistics, <http://www.cnc.fr/web/en/sectoral-statistics>

disappointing. This prompted Olivier Snanoudj, director of the French exhibitors' organization Fedto La Fédération Nationale des Cinémas Français to remark: "A lot of American blockbusters no longer respond to what audiences want. Special effects are not enough. People want to be entertained but they also want quality" (James 2006b). Luc Besson, in a reception speech for a Serbian cinema award, seconded that notion. According to Besson, audiences are "getting bored" with American cinema and for that reason, in France as well as other countries in Europe, were turning to domestic offerings (Agence France Presse 2006).

As the 2000s progressed, French cinema audiences continued to embrace local fare. *Entre les murs* (*The Class*, 2008) is a drama about a high school teacher changing the lives of a diverse and challenging group of students was directed by Laurent Cantet; written by Cantet, Robin Campillo and François Bégaudeau, and produced by Simon Arnal, Caroline Benjo, Barbara Letellier and Carole Scotta. *Entre les murs* was nominated for and won a number of international awards. Among the most notable honors were the Golden Palm at the Cannes Film Festival in 2008, an Independent Spirit Award for Best Foreign Film, an Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Language Film in 2009 and a London Critics Circle Film Award for Foreign Language Film of the Year in 2010. *Entre les murs* made \$25,099,786 at the international box office (non-U.S.), was picked up by Sony Pictures Classics for U.S. theatrical distribution and generated \$3,766,810 at the U.S. box office.²⁴¹

Unlike *Entre les murs*, *Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis* (*Welcome to the Sticks*, 2008), directed by Dany Boon, was targeting French mainstream audiences and aiming for French blockbuster performance, which it managed to achieve. It turned out to be the most successful film at the French box office in 2008. While it did not receive U.S. distribution, Will Smith's and James Lassiter's production company Overbrook bought the remake rights for the film (Overbrook und Warner planen Sch'tis"-Remake 2008).

²⁴¹ Box Office Mojo 2010, "The Class: Summary," accessed on 6/7/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=class08.htm>

The French Film Industry's Increasing Openness to Hollywood

The end of the 2000s somewhat loosened the French reluctance to open up its film incentives to U.S. companies. It might have been a result of the previously mentioned discussion that arose when Jeunet's film *Un long dimanche de fiançailles* (*A Very Long Engagement*, 2004) was considered not "French" enough to qualify for government subsidies. While France to this day does not have a co-production treaty with the U.S., it showed initiative in the late 2000s to attract international productions to shoot in France through the introduction of the International Cinema Tax Credit (C2I), which allows foreign production companies spending over €1 million and at least five shooting days in France to claim a 20 percent tax rebate (Film France: News 2010). Among U.S. movies shot partially in France, and benefitting from the new initiative, were *Inception* (Christopher Nolan, 2010), *Hereafter* (Clint Eastwood, 2010), *Killers* (Robert Luketik, 2010), *The Tourist* (Florian Henckel von Donnersmark, 2010) and Universal Pictures' animated feature *Despicable Me* (Pierre Coffin, Chris Renaud, 2010) (ibid). The Marvel comic book adaptation *Thor* (Kenneth Branagh, 2011) also qualified for the tax credit by using French visual effects powerhouse BUFF as their lead VFX vendor, as well as Woody Allen's *Midnight in Paris* (2011) (Film France: News 2010). The latter, very appropriately, also had its European premiere at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival. After the new law was in effect—according to the General Manager of Film France, Patrick Lamassoure—there had been "a significant extension of the shoots for Hollywood films in France, with an average length that changed from 3 to 7 days." Film France's president Nicolas Traube calls the new tax rebate a "long awaited measure" that "is extremely important for the development of the whole audiovisual cinema industry, particularly in the troubled times the sector is going through." According to Traube, "one of the primary missions of Film France is to promote the film and audiovisual industry to national and foreign productions." Traube says, his "agency has indeed been working for several years with the CNC, the national body in charge of the new mechanism, and in complete adequacy with the technical industries, on the setup of the new tax rebate and its technical details" (Film France:

News 2010). To what extent these new initiatives will further Americanize the French film industry remains to be seen.

CONCLUSIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSNATIONAL CINEMA IN FRANCE

The French film industry has undergone substantial changes during the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. Despite France successfully spearheading an anti-free-market position in regards to the audiovisual industries in Europe in the 1980s and 1990s, its film industry—supported and protected by a constantly evolving and adapting framework of intelligently drafted cultural policies—has fostered an increasing number of successful transnational properties. French media conglomerates' activities not only span the European market, but have also extended into the global market. While the expansion has not been without challenges and has come with a number of prominent failures, the French film industry has managed to establish a significant global component. Numerous French productions in the 1990s and 2000s have succeeded not only in the pan-European but also in the global market, including the traditionally hard to penetrate U.S. market. What this has meant for development strategies and practices is manifold. While France's culturally oriented subsidy structure has been a substantial driving force throughout the last decades, funding for French auteur films still exists in abundance and the overall quantity of French films in that area every year is staggering. Nevertheless, an increasingly strong commercial sector of French cinema has allowed the country to maintain a substantial market share for national films as well as productions with France in majority and minority co-producing roles.

The combination of a large number of art house projects in combination with very commercial projects—the latter often with pan-European and in many instances global appeal—has put the French film industry ahead of its European neighbors in terms of the quantity of its film output. The abundant financial resources of French media conglomerates combined with their need to fill their distribution pipelines with attractive projects for domestic as well as pan-European and increasingly international audiences—have turned the birthplace of cinema into a continuing force to be reckoned

with—in Europe as well as globally. With an increasing number of collaborations between French and U.S. entities and multiple and continuing attempts of French companies to integrate themselves into the U.S. film industry, U.S. models of development, characteristic of Global Conglomerate Hollywood, have found their way into the French film industry, ensuring the French film industry continuing competitiveness on domestic, pan-European as well as a global levels.

Chapter Five: Germany

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSNATIONAL FILMS IN GERMANY IN THE 1980s

The following sections address whether Global Conglomerate Hollywood has affected the German film industry and whether the evolution of the West-German and later unified German film industry in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s into a more commercial domestic as well as internationally focused industry can be seen as a reflection of the former. The focus is on the growth dynamics of transnational films originating in West Germany, and subsequently the reunified Germany, during these decades, and whether the producers of transnational films have adopted U.S. development strategies and practices.

The production of West German popular transnational films, inspired by the New Hollywood blockbusters of the mid-1970s and beyond, constituted one of the emerging industry trends in popular West German film production beginning in the 1980s. The West German film industry's shift towards a more commercial, mainstream cinema is often attributed to the transition from a liberal Social Democratic government (SPD) under chancellor Helmut Schmidt to a conservative Christian Democratic government (CDU) under chancellor Helmut Kohl. As Hans-Bernhard Moeller and George Lellis (2002) point out, New German Cinema "has sometimes been regarded as the cinematic creation" of the SPD-led government, while the CDU-reigned governments "have constantly favored the old-guard, commercially oriented film" (219). Moeller and Lellis also state that the change in government brought with it a change in film funding practices. The funding culture, according to the authors, changed from "a system based on cultural merit" to a system "based on industrial and economic models" (ibid.). Among the West German producers working within that new model, and laying the groundwork for films with pan-European and international marketability in the 1980s, were producers Bernd Eichinger, Günter Rohrbach and Chris Sievernich. Among the

West German directors who had established an international reputation, based primarily on art house movies that received international recognition and distribution predominantly in global art house circuits, were New German cinema auteurs Volker Schlöndorff, Wim Wenders and Werner Herzog. Among the border-crossing films of these filmmakers were Schlöndorff and von Trotta's *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum* (*The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum*, 1975); Schlöndorff's literary adaptation *Die Blechtrommel* (*The Tin Drum*, 1979), the first German film winning an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film; Herzog's *Aguirre, der Zorn Gottes* (*Aguirre, the Wrath of God*, 1972), and Wenders' Golden Palm nominated literary adaptation *Der amerikanische Freund* (*The American Friend*, 1977). All of the directors of these films showed interest in international film production. In the 1980s, Schlöndorff and Wenders in particular were open to international co-productions, shot outside of West Germany. Wenders' Sam Shepard adaptation *Paris, Texas* (1984) was theatrically released in the U.S. by 20th Century Fox and grossed \$2,164,507 at the U.S. box office.²⁴² During the 1980s, Schlöndorff directed the German/French/Belgian co-produced war drama *Die Fälschung* (*Circle of Deceit*, 1981), partially shot in Lebanon; German-French co-production *Un amour de Swann* (*Swann in Love*, 1984), shot in France, and acclaimed U.S./German TV co-productions *Death of a Salesman* (1985) and *A Gathering of Old Men* (1987), both shot in the U.S. Herzog made *Fitzcarraldo* (1982), shot in Peru; *Wo die grünen Ameisen träumen* (*Where the Green Ants Dream*, 1984), shot in Australia, and *Cobra Verde* (1987), shot in Africa, Brazil and Colombia. All of these directors unquestionably raised the international profile of the German film industry.

Among the most commercially as well as internationally oriented producers in Germany, who cut their teeth in the 1970s, was Bernd Eichinger.²⁴³ In 1978, he bought

²⁴² IMDb 2010, "Box office / business for Paris, Texas (1984)," accessed on 6/18/2010, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0087884/business>

²⁴³ Eichinger, after graduating from the Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film München (HFF), started his film career by co-writing the German TV movies *Casanova* (1972), *Die Eltern* (*The Parents*, 1973) and *Perahim - die zweite Chance* (*Perahim - The Second Chance*, 1974). He then

parts of the bankrupt Constantin Film GmbH, one of Germany's leading post-war film distribution and production companies, and began managing the company, now renamed to Neue Constantin Film GmbH and fundamentally changed Constantin's business strategies (Garncarz & Elsaesser 1995: 93). Another visionary German producer at the time was Günter Rohrbach, who became known for producing Rainer Werner Fassbinder's internationally acclaimed TV-mini series *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1980) and at the same time produced Wolfgang Petersen's *Das Boot* (*The Boat*, 1981). Three films produced in the 1980s stand out in terms of German producers' increasing commercial and international orientation: *Das Boot* (Wolfgang Petersen, 1981), *Der Zauberberg* (*The Magic Mountain*, Hans W. Geissendörfer, 1982) and *Die Unendliche Geschichte* (*The Neverending Story*, Wolfgang Petersen, 1984).

Das Boot can be considered as a breakthrough film in terms of its success domestically and across international borders. The \$14 million co-production between Bavaria Film, Radiant Film and public broadcasters Süddeutscher Rundfunk (SDR) and Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR) was as Hollywood, in terms of high-concept narrative and production values, as one could get in 1980s Germany. It would inspire other German transnational productions to come. Martin Blaney (1992) writes that the production of *Das Boot* entailed, "a conscious aim from the very start to adopt the series/feature film combination, which has since become a popular model for ambitious television co-productions" (340). Blaney also attributes the international success of *Das Boot* to the "harmonious working relationship" between the German film and television industries on the project (ibid.). According to Blaney, the production of *Das Boot* feature and TV series at the Bavaria Atelier Studios "was also valuable experience for launching the studios into the international market for handling big-budget film

transitioned into producing on HFF colleague Wim Wenders' first feature film *Falsche Bewegung* (*Wrong Move*, 1975), which aced the 1975 German film awards and started both Eichinger's and Wenders' film careers. Among Eichinger's most ambitious films in the 1970s were historical war drama *Stunde Null* (*Zero Hour*, 1977), directed by Edgar Reitz, and Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's *Hitler - ein Film aus Deutschland* (*Hitler: A Film from Germany*, 1977). The same year Eichinger executive produced *Die Konsequenz* (*The Consequence*, 1977), directed by Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie Berlin (DFFB) graduate Wolfgang Petersen.

production” (366). *Das Boot* was nominated for a Golden Globe for Best Foreign Film, six Oscars and a DGA Award. It was picked up for U.S. distribution by U.S. studio Columbia Pictures and grossed \$10,915,250 at the U.S. box office.²⁴⁴ Brad Prager (2003) considers *Das Boot* to be “simultaneously an extension of New German Cinema projects and a Hollywood-inspired film that arguably marked the end of those projects” (237). According to Prager, the film “resembles American popular films whose success it emulated” (255). He sees the film’s success in both the German and the U.S. market not just as “a consequence of technical precision and mastery in a Hollywood style, but also about the particularities of its historical context” (Prager 2003: 255). Prager points out that the film “stands at the end of the era of auteur cinema in Europe, and it participated in introducing a new period in which the demand for popular entertainment films supplanted the thoughtful response to purely affirmative postwar German films” (ibid.). He considers *Das Boot* as “thoroughly consonant with the hit films to which it gave birth, such as *The Hunt for Red October* (McTiernan, 1990), *Crimson Tide* and *U-571*,” as well as “formally indistinguishable from those bigger budgeted Hollywood productions” (ibid.). Martin Blaney (1992) points out that the feature film’s impressive U.S. box office performance and Academy Award nominations “were used as a visiting card by the studio management, led by Günter Rohrbach, and by its ‘house’ director Wolfgang Petersen, to attract American finance for feature film production based in Germany and targeted at the international market” (366).

Another early 1980s project, ambitious in scope and international in concept, was *Der Zauberberg*. Like *Das Boot*, *Der Zauberberg* was a collaboration between West German television and film entities and was produced as a feature film and a three-episode television series.²⁴⁵ Martin Blaney (1992) writes,

[...] as with *Das Boot* this production was a conscious attempt by a German film to appeal through international financing, lavish production values, and,

²⁴⁴ Box Office Mojo 2010, “Das Boot,” accessed on 6/18/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=dasboot.htm>

²⁴⁵ The latter to be broadcast two years after the theatrical release of the film (Blaney 1992: 360).

unlike *Das Boot* which had saved money on casting unknown ‘faces,’ a multi-lingual cast, to an international, i.e. North American, audience. (360)

Development on *The Zauberberg* appears to have been relatively straightforward. In May of 1979, producer Horst Wendlandt from West German production company Rialto Film approached Hans W. Geissendörfer to adapt the Thomas Mann novel. Geissendörfer then wrote a 3-hour feature film version of the novel and in September Wendlandt ordered a final draft of the screenplay (Blaney 1992: 360-361). Geissendörfer finished the final version of his script in early 1980 (361). By then two versions were planned, a 3-hour feature and a 5-hour TV series. After Wendlandt withdrew from the project in April of 1980, producer Franz Seitz, who had produced Schlöndorff’s *Törless* (1966) and *Die Blechtrommel* (*The Tin Drum*, 1979), came on board (ibid.). The film was shot for an estimated \$9 million²⁴⁶ budget. Financing for the film came from the Federal Interior Ministry, The FFA’s Projektkommision, German broadcaster ZDF, the Berlin Film Fund, French production and distribution company Gaumont and Italian production company Opera-Film (ibid.). The film’s cast was international, and the producers had a distribution agreement for West Germany with United Artists, facilitated by co-producer Leo Kirch, who was going to market the film internationally (362). *Der Zauberberg*, while receiving mostly negative reviews in the West German press, turned out to be a box office success in West Germany in 1982. However, the film’s high production costs—by German standards of the time—made it difficult for the production to break even (364).

Both *Das Boot* and *Der Zauberberg* laid the groundwork for more internationally oriented bigger-budget productions and encouraged producers to challenge Hollywood’s blockbuster imports with movies made in West Germany.

In an attempt to challenge popular Hollywood imports in the adventure and fantasy genre, Bernd Eichinger, Dieter Geissler and Bernd Schaefer developed a film adaptation of the German bestseller *Die Unendliche Geschichte* by Michael Ende, and

²⁴⁶ DM 20 million. Dollar amount based on 1981 DM/Dollar exchange rate from PACIFIC Exchange Rate Service, accessed on 8/22/2011, from <http://fx.sauder.ubc.ca/etc/USDpages.pdf>

attached Wolfgang Petersen as a director. The film, produced by Eichinger Geissler and Schaefers and co-produced by Rohrbach, raised the budget ceiling for German productions to an estimated \$27 million.²⁴⁷ With a budget level not likely to be recoupable from the German market alone, the project was geared towards the international marketplace and can be considered exemplary for the way producers like Eichinger and Rohrbach changed the role of that profession in Germany in the 1980s.

A closer look at the way *Die Unendliche Geschichte* was developed shows some similarities with development practices, typical for Hollywood. Eichinger, film-school-trained and experienced in screenwriting, and Rohrbach, with an understanding for dramaturgy from his theater studies and practical theater experience, put Wolfgang Petersen and Herman Weigel in charge of coming up with a screenplay.²⁴⁸ During the development process of *Die Unendliche Geschichte*, Rohrbach and Eichinger turned Michael Ende's long and complex young adult fantasy novel into a streamlined, Hollywood-style script. In the process, they changed the film's setting from Germany to the U.S. and turned the lead character from a chubby and socially awkward kid into a slim, handsome and savvy youngster with whom audiences around the world could identify. In fact, the producers and writers changed the story so much, that author Michael Ende removed his blessings and himself from the project, causing some media stir at the time. However, despite the final product lacking much of the magic of the underlying novel, the film—as envisioned by its producers—turned into a highly marketable property, both in Germany and internationally. The film grossed \$19,024,799 in Germany and—theatrically distributed by Warner Bros. in the U.S.—\$20,158,808 at the U.S. box office.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ IMDb 2010, "Box office / business for The NeverEnding Story (1984), accessed on 6/18/2010, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0088323/business>

²⁴⁸ Weigel, also a graduate of the Munich film school, had started his writing career by penning a short for film school colleague Uli Edel to direct, and subsequently wrote or co-wrote all of Edel's films up to Christiane F.

²⁴⁹ IMDb 2011, "Box office / business for The NeverEnding Story (1984), accessed on 6/19/2010, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0088323/business>

All three of these movies exemplify a trend towards higher-budget, more producer-driven movies, financed from multiple sources, including television. All three of them had budgets only recoupable if the films would sell to pan-European or international territories. Hence, all were developed with the international market in mind.

Equally internationally oriented, and even more inspired by Hollywood blockbuster films, was the work of Roland Emmerich. His HFF thesis film in 1981 was an ambitious science fiction film that he would subsequently turn into the roughly \$2 million sci-fi feature *Das Arche Noah Prinzip* (*The Noah's Arc Principle*, 1984), nominated for a Golden Bear at the 1984 Berlin International Film Festival.²⁵⁰ Emmerich's filmmaking efforts, primarily financed by his father, a Southern German industrialist, was ingenious in the art of creating relatively low-budget productions with high production values. Hence, he was able to follow his vision of making German "Hollywood-style" films, without the influence of the German government film funding culture or television involvement. In the 1980s Emmerich produced and directed the commercial English-language pictures *Joey* (1985) and the horror-comedy *Hollywood Monster* (1987). While neither of these films received U.S. theatrical distribution, both received U.S. video distribution and prepared Emmerich for his most ambitious German project at the time, the sci-fi movie *Moon 44*, which was released in 1990. Emmerich was not only interested in making Hollywood-style movies, but also open to adopting the ways they were made. This entailed a development process in which multiple writers collaborated. The screenplay for *Moon 44*, for example, was written by Dean Heyde, with Roland Emmerich, P.J. Mitchell and Oliver Eberle receiving story credits. The screenplay for *Joey* was written by Roland Emmerich, Hans J. Haller and

²⁵⁰ IMDb 2010, "Box office / business for *Das Arche Noah Prinzip* (1984)," accessed on 6/18/2010, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0086911/business>. Currency conversion based on a DM1 million budget figure and a DM/US\$ exchange rate of 1.975, retrieved from Triacom on 10/5/2011, from <http://www.triacom.com/frame.html?http://www.triacom.com/archive/exchange.en.html&en>

Thomas Lechner with additional dialogue by James Melkonian and Carl Colpaert, indicating a Hollywood-like approach to the development process of *Joey*.

While Emmerich focused on creating Hollywood-inspired movies based on original screenplays he developed, Eichinger, a co-producer on Emmerich's *Das Arche Noah Prinzip*, began specializing on the adaptation of best-selling novels. He purchased the rights to Italian author Umberto Eco's bestselling book *Il nome della rosa* (*The Name of the Rose*) and hired French director Jean-Jacques Annaud to direct it. The English-language film released in 1996 not only did well in Europe but also was picked up by 20th Century Fox for a U.S. theatrical release and grossed \$7,153,487 at the U.S. box office.²⁵¹

Partially due to the efforts and international focus of this core group of German producers, an increasing number of German films, as well as European co-productions with German production companies as partners, were able to cross European as well as global borders. German film journalist Edmund Luft in 1988 observes that "German cinema is becoming increasingly active in international film projects." He refers to this trend as "part of the German film-makers' survival strategy" (Luft 1988: 170-171). Luft points out that in 1988 over half of the German feature films shown in theaters were co-productions with German TV, and German producers relied heavily on government subsidies, creating an environment that was "often seen as restrictive" (Luft 1988: 171). To counter these limitations, according to Luft, "worldwide independence is sought and the possibilities of creative symbiosis between the native and the foreign are being discussed" (Luft 1988: 171).

Last Exit to Brooklyn (1989) and *Hanussen* (1988) followed this trend. The former was produced by Bernd Eichinger, directed by Uli Edel and written by Desmond Nakano, based on a book by Hubert Selby Jr. Eichinger had developed the film without external funding and raised production financing through international presales together with international sales agent Guy East (Cowie 1989: 19). Eichinger

²⁵¹ Box Office Mojo 2010, "The Name of the Rose," accessed on 6/12/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=nameoftherose.htm>

had read Selby's book during his school years in the late 1960s and was intrigued by it. According to Eichinger, the problem of turning the book into a script was its "episodic nature" (ibid.). *Last Exit to Brooklyn* can serve as an example for the increasing length of development processes in German films, geared at the international market. Eichinger says that the script for *Last Exit to Brooklyn* went through "10 to 15" drafts. His determination to shape the films he produces in the development phase, and his close involvement in the process, set Eichinger apart from many of his German producer colleagues. Author Selby supports that notion by lauding Eichinger for his producing efforts and saying that Eichinger, "not only has a vision that is realistic, but he is willing to put money where his mouth is. He won't compromise" (Cowie 1989: 19).²⁵² While not a significant international hit, the film received U.S. theatrical distribution by Cinecom and grossed \$1,730,005 at the box office.²⁵³

Another late-1980s German film with international potential was *Hanussen*, directed by Hungarian director Istvan Szabo, and written by Péter Dobai and István Szabó.²⁵⁴ The historical drama about Austrian occultist and clairvoyant Erik Jan Hanussen was produced by Artur Brauner and co-produced by Judit Sugár.²⁵⁵ However, with 228,000 admissions, the film did not reach blockbuster level in Germany and—despite being nominated for a Golden Palm, a European Film Award, a Golden Globe,

²⁵² For Edel, *Last Exit to Brooklyn* opened the doors to work on international projects and, like many other European directors, he made use of the opportunity. However, his film career took a hit when he directed the infamous *Body of Evidence* (1993), starring Madonna. It never really got going again until the mid-2000s, when he directed *Dark Kingdom: The Dragon King* (2004), a television mini-series that was also released as a theatrical feature in select European markets. In the 2000s, he successfully teamed up with Bernd Eichinger again, directing the high-profile and well-received historical German terrorist drama *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex* (*The Baader Meinhof Complex*), which will be addressed in one of the following sections.

²⁵³ IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for *Last Exit to Brooklyn* (1989)," accessed on 11/5/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0097714/business>

²⁵⁴ With additional material by Paul Hengge and dialogue by Gabriella Prekop.

²⁵⁵ Production companies were Artur Brauner's German production company Central Cinema Company Film (CCC), German public television network Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF) and Hungarian production companies Hungarofilm, Mafilm, Mokép and Objektív Filmstúdió Vállalat.

an Oscar in the Best Foreign Language Film category, and an Independent Spirit Award—it failed theatrically in the U.S.²⁵⁶

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSNATIONAL FILMS IN GERMANY IN THE 1990S

Up to the early 1990s, the development phase could still be considered a stepchild of the German film industry. Finney (1996b), identifying problems in that area prior to the mid-1990s, considers these a result of the mindsets of both producers and screenwriters.²⁵⁷ Among Finney's observations is that the target audience for most films in Germany—if they were produced with a target audience in mind at all—was domestic. Finney points out that the majority of German producers were not focused on looking for projects that could cross international borders (26). Various initiatives during the 1990s, however, led to changes in German film development practices, not only in terms of the kind of properties being developed but also in the way of developing these properties. Among the catalysts for change in the German film industry on an institutional level were the founding of the Filmboard Berlin-Brandenburg in 1994, and the Filmförderungs GmbH (Hamburg Film Fund) in 1995. Both funding bodies introduced a more commercial approach to motion picture development. Among other funding bodies that increased their emphasis on development was the Filmstiftung Nordrhein-Westfalen (26-27). Under Dieter Kosslick's command from 1992 to 2001, the Filmstiftung NRW turned into a model for the implementation of successful commercially oriented support mechanisms for the German film industry. Acknowledging the central role of the creative producer in motion picture development, Kosslick endorsed the founding of a writing and development program in Cologne that commenced in 1994, bringing producers, writers,

²⁵⁶ Distributed by U.S. studio Columbia Pictures, Hanussen grossed only \$82,635 at the U.S. box office. Box Office Mojo 2010, "Hanussen: Summary," accessed on 1/14/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=hanussen.htm>

²⁵⁷ Having talked to German agents and distributors in the early 1990s, Finney observes that screenwriters were not used to develop their scripts in conjunction with producers and generally expected to have their screenplays go into production without revisions. This, according to Finney, resulted in many projects prematurely going into production, insufficiently developed and without a clear awareness of the films' target audience (Finney 1996b: 26).

teachers and distributors together to work on projects. The program would continue to implement what Kosslick calls “a very un-European way of developing,” focusing on the perceived need for scripts “to be targeted for a specific market” (Finney 1996b: 28). In what appears to be a rather radical departure from the traditional German and for the most part European funding system, Kosslick’s idea was to move away eventually from production funding altogether and only offer development funding (ibid). Kosslick’s embrace of a more commercial and internationally oriented West German film culture would eventually reflect in his approach to revamp the Berlin International Film Festival, which he has been directing since 2001.

Similar to the funding strategies of the Filmstiftung NRW, the Filmboard Berlin-Brandenburg, initiated in 1994 as a combination of two previously existing regional film funds, applied market-driven criteria to the selection of projects and dedicated 10% of its funds for the development and pre-production phases of projects (ibid).²⁵⁸ Considering that subsidies from state and federal funding bodies have played a vital role in the financing of German films, a shift in these entities’ perceptions of the film industry can be seen as having a tremendous impact not only on what kinds of films were made, but to a certain degree also on how they were made.

Especially interesting in this context is to what extent an increased focus on a structured development process and the development of commercial properties, has been a reaction to the prevailing dominance of Hollywood films on European movie screens. A look at the German film production landscape in the 1990s shows indications of a more economically viable film industry—with transnational ambitions that were only partially realized.

As Table 5.2 shows, the number of German national films produced rose from 48% in 1990 to 75 in 1999, while the market share of national films fluctuated between 6.3% and 16.7% (Table 5.2.).

²⁵⁸ The fund’s director Klaus Keil believed that the development process had been a severely neglected aspect in the German film industry and emphasized the importance of properly developed scripts as a sine qua non for a successful German film industry (Finney 1996b: 28).

Table 5.2.: Film Production in Germany — 1990-1999

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
National films (theatrical)	48	72	63	67	60	63	64	61	50	74
First-run films (theatrical)	304	334	288	263	263	260	287	286	287	327
Number of screens	3,222	3,686	3,630	3,709	3,763	3,814	4,035	4,128	4,244	4,651
Admissions (in millions)	102.5	119.9	105.9	130.5	132.8	124.5	132.9	143.1	148.9	149.0
Box-office receipts (in million €)	423.3	501.4	455.8	598.2	627.9	605.1	671.9	750.9	818.2	808.4
National film share (%)	9.7	13.6	9.5	7.2	10.1	6.3	15.3	16.7	8.1	11.1
U.S. film share (%)	83.8	80.2	82.8	87.8	81.6	87.1	75.1	70.5	85.4	78.6
European film share (%) ²	-	-	-	-	-	5.1	9.3	14.0	6.9	14.3

¹ Based on admissions

² Based on admissions. CNC calculations based on Lumière database. Shares include films with direct U.S. investment, primarily from the U.K.

Source: CNC²⁵⁹

During the 1990s, the trend to a more commercial cinema in Germany continued, and an increasing number of producers focused on the development of transnational films. As part of the evolving transnational production landscape, a number of German production companies pursued English-language films as a strategy for economic success. In 1992, for example, CineVox Entertainment at the American Film Market (AFM) announced plans to produce or co-produce a minimum of 20 English-language films per year over a 5-year period. CineVox's vice president Graham Ludlow specified the slate of films as "A-quality films with international appeal" (Ulmer 1992).²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ CNC World Cinema Statistics, from <http://www.cnc.fr/web/en/sectoral-statistics>

²⁶⁰ CineVox's strategy not only exemplifies the trend of English-language film production by German production companies, but also the internationalization of management staffs. In this particular case, Tim Hampton—who had worked with CineVox president and CEO Dieter Geissler in producer and line producer capacities on previous movies including *The Neverending Story II*, and prior to that was in charge of 20th Century Fox's European projects—was appointed president of worldwide production and assigned as a producer to several CineVox projects.

The aspirations of creating transnational properties were also fueled by a relatively dire situation for German films at the German box office in the early 1990s. According to *Variety* writer Jack Kindred (1993), of the 309 films released in Germany in 1992, “about 90 were German productions, most of which either failed to find a distributor, or had a brief one week or even one day release to qualify for subsidy funds,” while U.S. films “had a market share of over 80%” (166). As producers were looking for outside funding sources and projects that could not only compete with American blockbusters at the domestic but also at the pan-European and international box office, the production landscape kept changing. By 1993, the overall economic position for German cinema, despite the aforementioned changes, was still less than desirable. According to Kindred (1993), “a flawed subsidy system and a market too small to sustain high-budget projects take most of the blame for another bad year for German film” (165). Sales of German films at MIFED were suffering, an ongoing trend. One of the reasons, as stated by Cinepool International’s president Lilli Tyc-Holm, was a dwindling German TV market, with commercial broadcasters moving to in-house production (Ulmer 1993). Sellers of German movies also pointed out the dominance of Hollywood titles on German screens as a serious problem, as well as the booking practices of the American majors, leaving little room for German productions (ibid.). At the same time, German titles, geared towards the international marketplace, were not meeting their targets. Addressing possible solutions for the German film industry to cope with the challenging situation, Tyc-Holm says, “the only possibility is for us to go into international co-productions [...] or we can wait for the future and count on the need for more product on TV. Until then, we’re in a crisis, and it will take time to change” (Ulmer 1993). Among potential ways out of the perceived crisis was a revised German national film subsidy legislation (FFG), which turned into law on January 1, 1993. According to Kindred (1993), this was “after years of sometimes

(Ulmer 1992). CineVox’s close relations with the U.S. were also evident by an output deal for CineVox entire slate with Warner Bros. Germany (ibid.).

acrimonious debate among producers, exhibitors, distributors and politicians” (Kindred 1993: 166) However, Kindred says:

Critics of the new FFG claim that it still has failed to deal adequately with the crux of the problem, e.g. how to support film projects with commercial prospects instead of productions based on the box-office poison known as ‘Kultur,’ often a selection of committee criterion. (ibid.)

According to Kindred, Germany’s exhibitors, in an effort to overhaul their outdated exhibition venues, invested almost \$185 million in the building of new theaters and multiplexes and the overhaul of existing theaters, leading to a total of twelve multiplexes in operation and nine additional ones being built (ibid.).²⁶¹ Possibly as a result of some of these changes and developments, German films’ market share at the domestic box office in 1994—after its historic low of 8.4% in 1993—increased to 10.35% (Kindred 1995: 159). A substantial contributor to the increased market share were German domestic comedies. However, the success of German comedies at the domestic box office in the 1990s rarely translated into international sales. The few German comedies that managed to get U.S. theatrical distribution had only modest box office success. An example is Sönke Wortman’s 1994 comedy *Der Bewegte Mann* (*Maybe, Maybe Not...*). Picked up for U.S. theatrical distribution by Orion Classics in 1996, the film that drew a record 6,510,000 people into German theaters, grossed only \$366,506 at the U.S. Box office.²⁶² The discrepancy between its German and its U.S. box office performance manifested the perception among U.S. distributors that the German comedy wave of the 1990s was a local phenomenon and that German comedies, no matter how successful they were domestically, had little prospects at the international box office. The following section deals briefly with key properties of the German comedy wave and addresses their international performance.

²⁶¹ 1994 also showed a substantial increase in moviegoing activity by people from the former GDR - from 16.8 million in 1993 to 19.7 million in 1994 (Kindred 1995: 159).

²⁶² IMDb 2009, “Box office / business for Der bewegte Mann (1994),” accessed on 11/11/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0109255/business>

German Transnational Comedies and Family Movies in the 1990s

The 1990s saw a series of German comedies successful at the German box office. The comedies helped to increase German domestic market share, but generally remained local phenomena. Among those successes were the aforementioned *Der Bewegte Mann* and *Stadtgespräch* (*Talk of the Town*, Kaufmann, 1995), both featuring popular German comedy actress Katja Riemann. *Stadtgespräch* was the first German production of Disney's German subsidiary,²⁶³ in collaboration with Studio Hamburg and Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF). Produced by Henrik Meyer, Bettina Reitz and Klaus Eichhammer, and written by U.S. screenwriter Ben Taylor, it attracted 1.5 million viewers to German theaters.²⁶⁴

Among other successful German comedies were *Männerpension* (*Jailbirds*, Detlev Buck, 1996), *Keiner liebt mich* (*Nobody Loves Me*, Doris Dörrie, 1995) and *Das Superweib* (*The Superwife*, Sönke Wortmann, 1996).²⁶⁵ These three comedies attracted 3.1 million, 1.3 million and 2.1 million audience members, respectively into German theaters (Kindred 1997: 145). While none of these films turned into transnational properties, they served as incentives for the U.S. studios to engage in local production.

German attempts at making border-crossing family movies in the 1990s were hit and miss, as German producers' journeys in the footsteps of Hollywood met with varying degrees of success and failure. Among successful transnational properties involving German producers in the early 1990s, was the German/U.S. sequel to *Die Unendliche Geschichte* (*The Neverending Story*, 1984). *Die Unendliche Geschichte II* (*The Neverending Story II: The Next Chapter*, 1990) was directed by U.K. director George Miller and written by Karin Howard, based on the novel by Michael Ende.²⁶⁶ The family fantasy adventure was a co-production between U.S. studio Warner Bros.

²⁶³ Credited to Disney's Buena Vista Pictures.

²⁶⁴ IMDB 2010, "Box office / business for Talk of the Town (1995), accessed on 6/2/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0114523/business>

²⁶⁵ *Das Superweib* was produced by Bernd Eichinger and Martin Moszkowicz and written by Gundula Leni Ohngemach, based on a German bestselling novel by Hera Lind.

²⁶⁶ *Die Unendliche Geschichte II* was produced by Dieter Geissler, co-produced by Bodo Scriba and executive produced by Tim Hampton.

and Dieter Geissler's German production company Cinevox. The joint creative effort of sequalizing Michael Ende's novel led to a film hardly distinguishable from mainstream American fantasy films. Budgeted at an estimated \$36 million, it drew a total of 3,207,000 people into German theaters and made \$16,283,667 at the U.S. box office,²⁶⁷ a considerable success at the time for a movie originating in Germany.

Not so successful was the sequel to Willy Bogner's popular skiing movie *Feuer und Eis* (*Fire and Ice*, 1986). *Feuer, Eis und Dynamit* (*Fire, Ice and Dynamite*, 1990) was produced by Bernd Eichinger, who had dropped out of the *Neverending Story* franchise. The alpine skiing movie extravaganza, starring Roger Moore and Shari Belafonte, was directed by Willy Bogner and written by Tony Williamson and Willy Bogner.²⁶⁸ Shot for an estimated budget of about \$13 million,²⁶⁹ it drew 717,000 viewers into German theaters.²⁷⁰ The original *Feuer und Eis* received U.S. theatrical distribution, but the box office results were disappointing, and it was met with only limited enthusiasm among U.S. critics.²⁷¹ While the *Feuer und Eis* sequel fell short of both its domestic and international potential, the original *Feuer und Eis* can be seen as a step towards a German event cinema with an eye on the international market.

Other family films with presumably transnational ambitions had similar fates. *Asterix in America* (*Asterix Conquers America*, Gerhard Hahn, 1994), budgeted at \$19 million, had 1,602,000 admissions in Germany and was theatrically distributed by

²⁶⁷ IMDb 2010, "Box office / business for The Neverending Story II: The Next Chapter (1990)," accessed on 1/14/2010, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0100240/business>

²⁶⁸ While John W. Howard, who wrote the original with Willy Bogner, had no prior or subsequent movie credits, Tony Williamson, Bogner's writer on *Feuer, Eis und Dynamit*, had a track record in U.S. television series writing and had written the screenplays for the movies *Nightwatch* (1973) and co-written the sequel to *Cross of Iron* (1977), *Steiner: Das eiserne Kreuz* (1979).

²⁶⁹ Currency conversion by the author based on IMDb data, using historical exchange rates provided by OANDA.com.

²⁷⁰ IMDb 2010, "Box office / business for Feuer, Eis & Dynamit (1990), accessed on 1/15/2010, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0099564/business>

²⁷¹ *The New York Times*, for example, called it "the fanciest skiwear commercial ever made" (Goodman 1987).

MTM in the U.S., however, made only \$768,488 at the U.S. box office.²⁷² *The Neverending Story III* (Peter MacDonald, 1994), budgeted at \$17 million,²⁷³ was released by Warner Bros. in Germany, attracting 998,000 viewers, but received only a limited theatrical release in the U.S. by Miramax.²⁷⁴ According to Jack Kindred (1995), the performance of both films was well below expectations (159).

German Transnational Art House Movies in the 1990s

While the New German Cinema for many filmmakers seemed only a distant memory by the 1990s, German art house movies with transnational appeal still managed to find their way onto international movie screens, although less frequently than in the past. An example of a 1990s art house movie that managed to cross international borders was *Das schreckliche Mädchen* (*The Nasty Girl*, 1990), written and directed by Michael Verhoeven. The comedy about a young woman unearthing her hometown's Nazi past, which turned out to be a relatively successful transnational property, both commercially and critically, was produced by Michael Verhoeven, his wife Senta Berger and Helmut Rasp for Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF).²⁷⁵ It was nominated for an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film in 1991 and a number of other prestigious international awards.²⁷⁶ It subsequently was picked up for U.S. theatrical distribution by Miramax Films, released on October 26, 1990 on two screens, played until June 6, 1991 with its widest release being 40 theaters, and grossed \$2,281,569 at the U.S. box office.²⁷⁷ Verhoeven continued his cinematic exploration of the German

²⁷² Kindred 1995: 159, IMDb 2011, "Box Office/Business for Asterix Conquers America," accessed on 11/7/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0109162/business>

²⁷³ IMDb 2011, "Box Office/Business for The Neverending Story III," accessed on 11/7/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0110647/business>

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ The film was a co-production between Verhoeven's production company Sentana Films, Filmverlag der Autoren and German public broadcaster Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF).

²⁷⁶ Among a number of other awards, it won the 1990 Silver Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival, the 1992 BAFTA Film Award for Best Film not in the English Language and the New York Film Critics Circle Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

²⁷⁷ Box Office Mojo 2010, "The Nasty Girl," accessed on 1/14/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=nastygirl.htm>

Nazi past, that he had started in the 1980s, with a movie about the German resistance, *Die Weisse Rose (The White Rose, 1982)*, with the Holocaust movie *Mutters Courage* (1995). The latter did not cross over into the international theatrical market, and Verhoeven would continue his long and successful career in the German TV movie, TV series and documentary areas, writing and directing primarily for television.

Wim Wenders continued his transnational filmmaking activities in the 1990s with *Bis ans Ende der Welt (Until the End of the World, 1991)*, a German/U.S. co-production by Wenders' German production company Road Movies Filmproduktion, French production company Argos Films, U.S. production company Village Roadshow Pictures and U.S. Studio Warner Bros. While *Bis ans Ende der Welt* appears to be conceived as a film appealing to a global audience, it ended up failing to attract one. Despite its U.S. production partner that also served as the film's U.S. theatrical distributor, the film—shot for an estimated budget of \$23 million on locations all over the world—grossed only \$752,856 at the U.S. box office.²⁷⁸

Wim Wenders's work up to that point had repeatedly dealt with stories taking place in America, such as *Der amerikanische Freund (The American Friend)* (1977), *Alice in den Städten (Alice in the Cities)* (1974) and *Paris, Texas* (1984). Wenders says that he “learned from Anthony Mann, John Ford, Howard Hawks or Nicholas Ray, all of the American directors” (Daly & Waugh 1995). In terms of story development and his approach to storytelling, Wenders, however, does not seem to follow Hollywood development models. Talking about his way of developing stories and his selection process for screenwriters to work with, he says, “the structure and story of what I want to do [...] I feel it's something that has to come from myself.” However, he says that he does not know how to write good dialogue. According to Wenders, “whenever I was writing dialogue, everybody was speaking with my voice and that's boring.” Choosing writers to work with, he says, “I was never really looking for somebody who was a screenwriter in the sense that he was responsible for the ‘screen-play’. I was looking for

²⁷⁸ IMDb 2010, “Box office / business for *Bis ans Ende der Welt* (1991),” accessed on 03/10/2010, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0101458/business>

somebody who was just a good writer.” Wenders says that he prefers and has chosen to work primarily with novelists rather than screenwriters in his fiction films (ibid.). Wenders’s work in the 1990s up to the mid 2000s remained focused on U.S. stories, both in the documentaries and narrative films he directed (*Buena Vista Social Club*, 1999, *The Million Dollar Hotel*, 2000, *The Soul of a Man*, 2003, *Land of Plenty*, 2004).

Volker Schlöndorff’s career trajectory shows similarities as well as differences to Wenders’s. Like Wenders, Schlöndorff is an example of German directors of the late 1970s and 1980s who—in his case for a limited period of time—moved their filmmaking activities to the United States. Schlöndorff, who began his filmmaking career in France as an assistant to film directors Louis Malle, Jean-Pierre Melville and Alain Resnais, turned into one of the most prolific German filmmakers. Subsequent to his Oscar win for *The Tin Drum* in 1979, Schlöndorff received numerous offers to direct U.S. productions, including one from Steven Spielberg to direct an episode of the U.S. television series *The Twilight Zone* (Schlöndorff 2008: 304). However, it was not until the mid-1980s, that Schlöndorff shot a film in the United States. The film—a TV movie—was the U.S./German co-production *Death of a Salesman* (1985), based on the play by Arthur Miller. Starring Dustin Hoffman, Kate Reid and John Malkovich, it garnered a number of awards and nominations, among them four Golden Globe nominations and one win, ten Emmy nominations and three wins, and a Television Critics Association Award. According to film scholars Hans-Bernhard Moeller and George Lellis (2002), Schlöndorff was “working from a determined script and with almost all the actors from the stage production and using a set that derived from the one used on Broadway,” hence taking on “the role of metteur en scène” (224). Continuing his U.S. activities, Schlöndorff directed the U.S./U.K./German co-production, *A Gathering of Old Men* (1987).²⁷⁹ Charles Fuller wrote the screenplay, based on the novel by Ernest J. Gaines. According to Moeller and Lellis (2002), “Schlöndorff, in his

²⁷⁹ It was a co-production between German production company Bioskop Film, U.S. broadcaster Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), German broadcaster Hessischer Rundfunk (HR), U.S. production company Jennie & Co. and U.K. production companies Consolidated Productions and Zenith Entertainment.

collaboration with politically committed American writers working with a largely commercial format, produced a calculated recipe, a mixture of political commitment with Hollywood genre” (245-246). *A Gathering of Old Men* played on the CBS television network in the U.S. and was released theatrically in Germany by Filmverlag der Autoren.

Conceptualized for international big screens from the beginning was *The Handmaid's Tale*. The sci-fi drama was directed by Volker Schlöndorff and written by Harold Pinter, based on a novel by Margaret Atwood. The U.S./German co-production was produced by Daniel Wilson, co-produced by Eberhard Junkersdorf and executive produced by Wolfgang Glattes. Production companies involved were German production company Bioskop Film²⁸⁰ and U.S. production companies Cinecom Entertainment Group, Cinétudes Films, Daniel Wilson Productions Inc., Master Partners and Odyssey. The film had 265,000 admissions in Germany and was theatrically distributed in the U.S. by Cinecom Entertainment Group. It grossed \$4,960,385 at the U.S. box office.²⁸¹ It was nominated for a Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival in 1990 and won the 1991 GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Film. Despite Schlöndorff's undeniable skills as a director, U.S. reviews of *The Handmaid's Tale* were mixed and mostly unenthusiastic. To *Washington Post* staff writer Desson Howe, for example, “Schloendorff [...] directs with a uniform dullness that creates little sense of suspense.” However, it is not only Schlöndorff's directing Howe criticizes, it is also the adaptation itself. According to Howe,

Volker Schloendorff (working in a foreign language) and screenwriter Harold Pinter scoop the surface aspects of Margaret Atwood's novel carefully, but leave her darker implications about abortion, fundamentalist-type beliefs and individual freedoms swinging in a facile, finger-wagging wind. (Howe 1990).

²⁸⁰ Bioskop Film, renamed in the 1990s into Neue Bioskop Film, is one of the more prominent German production companies, with its roots as a distribution company dating back to 1916. It was a force of New German cinema with titles such as *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum* (*The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum*, Schlöndorff & von Trotta, 1975) and Best Foreign Language Film Oscar winner *Die Blechtrommel* (*The Tin Drum*, Schlöndorff, 1979).

²⁸¹ IMDb 2009, “Box office / business for *The Handmaid's Tale* (1990),” accessed on 11/10/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0099731/business>

Chicago Sun-Times critic Roger Ebert, who gave the film two stars, writes, “for all of its anger, ‘The Handmaid’s Tale’ is curiously muted” (Ebert 1990). According to Hans-Bernhard Moeller and George Lellis, “Schlöndorff works in *Handmaid* from a script that opts for simplicity rather than complexity of structure, and the response among critics has in many cases been the same: the accusation that the result is schematic and one-dimensional” (Moeller and Lellis 2002: 254). However, Moeller and Lellis point out a number of cultural references to the Nazi era that might have been lost on American audiences, and say that the film’s structure is “much like that of Atwood, who also tells her story in brief scenes that link together both everyday and significant actions to combine an abstract, hypothetical portrait of a dystopic community with more narrative elements” (ibid.). Despite Pinter’s screenplay omitting critical backstory elements, Moeller and Lellis state, “if Schlöndorff’s film lacks Atwood’s multiple time layers and background information, it nonetheless remains close to its source work in mood and ultimate effect” (ibid.).

However, Schlöndorff was not entirely satisfied with his production and the development process. In his autobiography, he mentions Pinter’s initial refusal to his request to make changes to, what Schlöndorff considered a rather dry and mechanic script. He also reflects about his casting choices and reminisces about turning down marquee names like Madonna and not considering other higher-profile actors for some of the roles. According to Schlöndorff, these decisions were driven by his intention to avoid star power distracting from the film’s characterizations. In hindsight, he, at the time not yet particularly well versed with the Hollywood system, regrets not having taken a more commercial approach to the project (399-403).

During the years he spent in the United States, first on the East and later on the West Coast, Schlöndorff experienced first-hand the benefits and shortcomings of the U.S. system of motion picture development and also the aforementioned scenario of “development hell.” Represented by veteran agent Paul Kohner, Schlöndorff for over half a decade maneuvered through the trenches of Hollywood. He says, “the number of

films that I was pushing ahead in development hell like Sisyphos his stone kept increasing.” Talking about a project for MGM, he developed with actor Steve Martin, who also co-wrote the screenplay, he says that for four years “unfortunately everytime we arrived with a new draft, somebody new was in charge. He had new wishes, and we started from the beginning again” (Schlöndorff 2008: 364).²⁸²

Schlöndorff’s next English-language project was a European financed and produced film again. *Homo Faber* (Voyager, 1991), starring Sam Shepard, Juli Delphy and Barbara Sukowa, was written by Rudy Wurlitzer, based on the novel by Max Frisch. It was produced by Eberhard Junkersdorf and executive produced by Bodo Scriba and Vasilis Katsoufis.²⁸³ While border-crossing, it paled compared to the box office results of *The Handmaid’s Tale*. *Homo Faber* was picked up for U.S. distribution by Castle Hill Productions and grossed \$516,517 at the U.S. box office.²⁸⁴

Based on his close contact with the French film industry during his formative years as a filmmaker and his transnational filmmaking expertise, Schlöndorff received an offer to lead the defunct DEFA film studios in Berlin Babelsberg. These were bought in 1992 by French Compagnie Générale des Eaux, later a part of Vivendi. Schlöndorff’s assigned mission was to take East Germany’s production hub prior to German reunification, into a new era. Schlöndorff’s efforts to save the Babelsberg Studios from closing down and reinvigorating the studio, while not successful during his tenure, eventually paved the way for the studio’s rise in the 2000s, as the reunified Berlin solidified its position as a film production center, not only for German, but also for international productions.

²⁸² Translation by the author.

²⁸³ Production companies involved were German Bioskop Film, French Action Films and Greek Stefi 2.

²⁸⁴ IMDb 2009, “Box office / business for *Homo Faber* (1991),” accessed on 11/11/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0102050/business>

Key German Production Companies with Transnational Titles on their Slates in the 1990s

While the majority of German film production entities in the 1990s remained focused on producing for the German domestic market, a number of companies expanded their operations into the international market. Among them were production and distribution companies Senator and Constantin.

In 1994, Senator Film got into international distribution with its newly formed unit Senator Film International. Senator Film International relied on U.K. and U.S. staff for some of their key operations. The company hired Kimberley Ferguson, who previously worked for the American Film Marketing Association as VP of international sales (Riddell 1994). Two years later, Senator moved its international sales office from Berlin to London and hired Penny Wolf, IAC/Goldcrest's former head of sales, to run the London office and recruited sales and distribution consultant the David Lamping Co. as advisers for its international ventures (Bateman 1996). Wolf says that Senator International's move to London was intended to strengthen its position in the international marketplace. According to her, the company's Los Angeles subsidiary "would continue to operate as the eyes and ears for the company" (ibid). That statement exemplifies not only the international ambitions, but also the strategy of select German companies aspiring to establish themselves as global players in the 1990s. The fact that Wolf refers to the Los Angeles office as the "eyes and ears" of the operation indicates that Senator's L.A. activities are considered to be a key factor when it comes to the company's business strategy, and that this strategy was heavily influenced by Hollywood. Among Senator's international productions in 1996 was the British/German/French co-production *Hollow Reed*, directed by Angela Pope. *Hollow Reed* received theatrical distribution in the U.S. by Lions Gate in 1997, however, only generated a lifetime theatrical gross of \$265,732.²⁸⁵

²⁸⁵ Box Office Mojo 2010, "Hollow Reed: Summary," accessed on 04/27/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=hollowreed.htm>

Global Conglomerate Hollywood's Direct Involvement in Germany in the 1990s

Increasing box office shares for domestic films in the key European markets encouraged the U.S. majors to increase their involvement in local productions—as part of their international strategy. The first two U.S. studios taking the plunge into local production in the 1990s were Walt Disney and Warner Bros. Walt Disney's German subsidiary Buena Vista International Film Production, Germany, co-produced the German blockbuster *Knockin' on Heaven's Door* (Thomas Jahn, 1997). According to Eric Hansen (1999), Christoph Ott, Buena Vista Germany's VP of distribution and production at the time, was “considered by many in Germany to have almost singlehandedly revived the local feature film industry [...] when BV began applying Disney-style marketing to local product with surprising success.” Ott, together with Buena Vista Germany's managing director Manfred Braun, also oversaw the German Best Foreign Language Film Oscar nominee *Jenseits der Stille* (*Beyond Silence*, Caroline Link, 1996),²⁸⁶ which was co-produced with Arte, Bayerischer Rundfunk, Roxy Film, Schweizer Fernsehen, and Claussen & Wöbke Filmproduktion GmbH (ibid.). The latter company two years later produced *23*, directed by Hans-Christian Schmid and written by Michael Gutman and Schmid. The film, inspired by a true story about a group of German computer hackers' daring illegal activities, was theatrically distributed by Buena Vista International in Germany. The development of the film was influenced on several levels by U.S. development practices: Through their collaboration with Buena Vista on *Beyond Silence*, the producers Jakob Claussen and Thomas Wöbke had been exposed to the American way of development and production. In addition, the film's co-writer/director Hans-Christian Schmid is a product of a U.S. film school education. Schmid, among Germany's more talented directors who started their careers

²⁸⁶ *Jenseits der Stille* (*Beyond Silence*), directed by Caroline Link, received U.S. distribution by Miramax, yet created only a meager \$171,334 at the U.S. box office. IMDb 2009, “Box office / business for *Jenseits der Stille* (1996),” accessed on 11/10/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0116692/business>

in the 1990s, had studied screenwriting at USC, one of the most commercially oriented writing programs in the U.S.

Warner Bros. established a German production subsidiary in late 1998, set to co-produce German-language films with German partners (Hils 1998: 18). Sony opened a German-language production unit at Babelsberg Studios in January of 1998. According to the president of the Columbia TriStar Motion Picture Group, Ken Lemberger, Columbia planned to invest a minimum of \$55 million in Brandenburg, the German state in which the Babelsberg Studios are located. Lemberger called the initiative “another strategic step in SPE’s business plan to establish local motion picture production and original language programming in key markets around the world.” He justified Sony’s move by saying, “the German marketplace is the most dynamic and fast-growing in the world.” Sony’s plans with its German local language production unit at the time were to make four to five local productions a year in the budget range of \$2 to \$4 million within 2 years (Hils 1998: 66).

When the American studios first opened their subsidiaries in Germany, they were met with suspicion. Peter Engelmann, head of development at Sony’s subsidiary Deutsche Columbia Pictures in the 1990s, remembers “a strong anti-Americanism in the German film industry (then), a David versus Goliath conflict of 'us' against the big American companies. There are also a lot of 'old loyalties', as people know each other from film school” (ibid.).

While many of the co-productions under the studios’ German subsidiaries in the 1990s benefited primarily from the superior marketing expertise of the U.S. partners, increasingly the U.S. style of development and the use of mainstream Hollywood narrative conventions also found their ways into these productions. While most of the German subsidiaries are primarily staffed with German executives, they interface with their U.S. studios’ headquarters in Los Angeles, adopting at least some of their corporate parents’ strategies. In addition, talent migration from the studio subsidiaries

to German production companies further increased the spread of U.S. creative strategies in the German film industry.²⁸⁷

Despite the German film industry's increase in production volume in 1996 and a number of German films' encouraging box office performance, the exportability of German cinema was still rather limited. Only 8.8% percent of admissions to German films in 1996, were admissions outside of the domestic market (EAO 1998: 23). Among the few German transnational properties by the end of the 1990s was Wim Wenders' *The End of Violence* (1997), a German/French/U.S. co-production, written by Nicholas Klein and developed by Wenders and Klein.²⁸⁸ *The End of Violence* received U.S. theatrical distribution through Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), but failed to get any significant traction in the U.S. theatrical market, grossing a disappointing \$283,033 at the U.S. box office.²⁸⁹ Wenders attributes the failure of the film to an inappropriate choice of titles:

Some movies come at the wrong time—but start with the title. I knew in my heart that the title would paint the film into an ideological corner. We showed it at Cannes and it immediately got pushed into this stupid conversation about violence, when the film isn't about violence at all. It failed expectations just because of that title. After it was too late, Nicholas [Klein] and I came upon the right title: we should have called it "Invisible Crimes" but we didn't—and I'm convinced that the film would have had a different life from the start if we had. (Chaw 2006)

Wenders' film, one of the few that received U.S. theatrical distribution in 1997, was not alone with its issues on how to tackle the international market. *Hollywood Reporter* contributor Eric Hansen (1997) asked industry professionals at the 1997 Cannes Film Festival about the value of German films in the international marketplace. The answers

²⁸⁷ An example is Buena Vista Germany's Christoph Ott leaving the U.S. subsidiary in 1999 to join German production and distribution company Senator.

²⁸⁸ *The End of Violence* was produced by Klein, Deepak Nayar and Wenders and executive produced by Ulrich Felsberg, Jean-François Fonlupt and Ingrid Windisch Production companies involved were French companies CiBy 2000, Ciby Pictures, U.S. company Kintop Pictures and Wim Wenders' German production company Road Movies Filmproduktion.

²⁸⁹ IMDb 2010, "Box office / business for *The End of Violence* (1997)," accessed on 03/10/2010, from <http://uk.imdb.com/title/tt0119062/business>

varied. Wolfram Skowronnek-Schaer from German sales company Cinepool says that international buyers are interested in German films, but have become “more cautious.” Rosemarie Dermuehl, head of international sales at Bavaria Film International tells Hansen, “the Germans have to establish themselves again internationally, that will take a little time. We don't want to just sell our films, we also want to create a long-term basis for future business internationally.” Michael Weber, at the time Bavaria’s head of acquisitions, points out that Soenke Wortmann’s German megahit *Der Bewegte Mann* (*Maybe, Maybe Not*) remained a local success and flopped in the U.S., which “may have shaken international buyers’ confidence” (Hansen 1997).

Despite some promising developments in the German film industry, critics still pointed out severe deficiencies. Marc Seiler, head of German production company Capella Films, talking about producing practices in the German film industry, for example, says:

Instead of seeing their job as fostering a commercial cinema, they see it in terms of maintaining a domestic film production base. It becomes a political decision [...] Nobody's job depends on a return on the subsidized films. They're in the business of dispensing money, not making it. (Saperstein 1995: M3)

Seiler prefers U.S. business models in the film industry. He says, “the answer for investors is that the American model has proven to be a much more efficient system in terms of return on investment.” According to Seiler, “There just aren't enough attractive co-productions for us to invest in” (ibid.). Pointing out some of the issues he sees with the European film industry, he says,

The funding in Hollywood depends on the ability to put people in cinema seats, but in Europe, it's based on a jigsaw puzzle of how to spend the money. It's difficult to have a partnership in that system, because governmental bodies and subsidized companies have a gulf of expectations with commercial companies, which is difficult to bridge. (Saperstein 1995: M3)

The situation, however, was considered to be on the verge of improving. German producer Chris Sievernich, by then working primarily out of Hollywood, says that ventures like the Berlin Film Fund have started to take the market into consideration for

their funding decisions and have increased their focus on development. Sievernich believes, “it’s good for the producers to have to go out and start talking to distributors [...] Europe has finally realized the value of a proper development process” (ibid.).

New Models for German Film Financing

1997 was a significant year for the German film industry, as a new instrument to raise capital for media companies was introduced to the German stock exchange. Modeled after the NASDAQ in the U.S., Germany introduced the Neuer Markt (New Market), a stock exchange for trading shares of so-called new technology companies that, due to their smaller size, did not qualify for the DAX, the main stock exchange. Among them were biotechnology, telecommunications and information technology companies. The first media enterprises that offered shares on the New Market was Munich-based EM TV in fall of 1997, with a number of other German entertainment companies to follow suit in subsequent years (Kindred 2000). Equipped with substantial amounts of money, many newly established or re-configured players headed to Hollywood to invest in the entertainment industry, adding themselves to the growing number of German expats. According to Frances Schoenberger, at the time representative of the German film community in Hollywood, roughly 300 German film industry professionals were working in Hollywood in 1997. This was a growing number, possibly fueled by Germany’s local box office successes and the attention they were getting in the U.S., and the successes of directors Roland Emmerich and Wolfgang Petersen, film music composer Hans Zimmer and cinematographer Michael Ballhaus (Hansen 1997). Their success stories arguably not only inspired German film industry professionals to join the Hollywood community, but also encouraged the German film community to adopt Hollywood approaches to transnational filmmaking.

German National Cinema in a Border-Crossing Sprint: *Lola Rennt*

The 1998 release of his third feature film *Lola rennt* (*Run Lola Run*) marked the birth of a truly transnational phenomenon that would provide German cinema in the late

1990s and beyond with a renewed international platform. *Run Lola Run* was written and directed by Tom Tykwer, produced by Stefan Arndt, Gebhard Henke for German broadcaster Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR) and Andreas Schreitmüller for European broadcaster Arte and executive produced by Maria Köpf.²⁹⁰ The film was produced for an estimated budget of \$1.9 million.²⁹¹ It received MEDIA II distribution support and had 2,935,789 admissions in the EU market. Its highest grossing markets, besides its home market Germany with 2,257,651 admissions, were Italy with 111,096 admissions, Switzerland with 109,954 admissions, Austria with 99,250 admissions, the U.K. with 75,976 admissions and France with 75,063 admissions.²⁹² The U.S. market was the film's second most profitable market after Germany. Theatrically distributed by Sony Pictures Classics in the U.S. *Lola rennt* had a lifetime theatrical gross of \$7,267,585.²⁹³ As these numbers show, it was by no means the transnational blockbuster it is often portrayed as, but it did significant business in markets where German films traditionally do not perform that well, and its investment to return ratio was exceptional. Within the German market, *Lola rennt* was the breakthrough film for X-Filme Creative Pool, a company that former movie theater owners Tom Tykwer and Stefan Arndt co-founded with director Wolfgang Becker in 1992. In an interview with Robert Deacon, Stefan Arndt describes the business model of X-Filme as follows:

We wanted to freely swim around between the definitions of art and commerce. Film, after all, is made for sums for which one could buy one to two homes in the suburbs. You have to be able to answer the question to your financiers of how you can return their investment with your film. For that reason we, from the beginning, aimed at success in the domestic as well as international cinema,

²⁹⁰ Production companies involved in the film were X-Filme Creative Pool, Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR) and Arte.

²⁹¹ U.S. Dollar budget estimate based on exchange rate calculation by the author, using historic exchange rates from OANDA.com, based on a DM 3.5 million budget estimate from IMDb 2011, "Box office / business for Run Lola Run (1998)," accessed on 8/23/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0130827/business>

²⁹² Lumiere database, accessed on 8/23/2011, from http://lumiere.obs.coe.int/web/film_info/?id=8065

²⁹³ Box Office Mojo 2010, "Run Lola Run," accessed on 1/18/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=runlolarun.htm>

because we knew that the grosses in Germany wouldn't suffice. That's thinking internationally. (Defcon 2010)

While *Lola rennt* saved X Filme from bankruptcy, it, according to Arndt, also “almost killed” its producers. Arndt stresses that, while shepherding *Lola rennt* to international success, they were not able to produce another film for one and a half years. According to Arndt, “the German system of film financing and money returns is not producer friendly there is a strong cartel of licensing agencies that takes the money and doesn't let it get to the producer” (Defcon 2010). Arndt considers “everything outside of Hollywood structures” as “underdog” or “underground,” and says, “our budgets are much lower and our possibilities much more limited. Hence we have to create originals such as *Lola rennt*.” (ibid.).

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSNATIONAL FILMS IN GERMANY IN THE 2000s

The new millennium saw a continuation of the parallel trends of producing commercial films aimed at the domestic box office, and the production of films suitable for pan-European as well as global audiences. As Table 5.2 shows, the number of theatrical films produced in Germany rose from 75 in 2000 to 144 in 2009 and dropped to 119 in 2010. The national film share between 2000 and 2010 fluctuated between 9.4% and 27.4%. The U.S. film share dropped from 81.9% in 2000 to 66.9 in 2008. The share of European films at the German box office between 2000 and 2009 fluctuated between 8.8% in 2000 and 22.2% in 2006. These numbers indicate that the German film industry's strategies, to produce popular, commercial cinema, led to higher production volumes and domestic theatrical market shares and a lower U.S. film share. The numbers also show that European cinema by the 2000s had a firmly established presence in German theaters.

Table 5.2.: Film Production in Germany — 2000 - 2010

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
National films (theatrical)	75	83	84	80	87	103	122	129	125	144	119
First-run films (theatrical)	373	338	321	315	368	372	487	484	373	396	No data
Number of screens	4,783	4,792	4,868	4,868	4,870	4,889	4,848	4,832	4,810	4,734	4,699
Admissions (in millions)	152.5	177.9	163.9	149.0	156.7	127.3	136.7	125.4	129.4	146.3	126.6
Box-office receipts (in million €)	824.5	987.2	960.1	850.0	892.9	745.0	814.4	757.9	794.7	976.1	920.4
National film share (%) ¹	9.4	15.7	9.5	16.7	20.8	13.9	21.5	15.1	21.0	27.4	16.8
U.S. film share (%)	81.9	77.0	83.0	76.8	72.1	77.2	72.0	73.2	66.9	72.5	No data
European film share (%) ²	8.8	18.6	21.4	9.4	13.6	22.2	13.8	19.5	16.9	12.4	No data

¹ Based on admissions

² Based on admissions. Calculations based on Lumière database. Shares include films with direct U.S. investment, primarily from the U.K.

Source: CNC²⁹⁴

The Development of Transnational Films in Germany in the 2000s

By the 2000s, Global Conglomerate Hollywood’s subsidiaries in Germany were an accepted part of the production landscape, and the studios were enjoying a much more hospitable environment than in the 1990s. According to Martin Blaney (2008), “[...] a new generation of German producers and talent has a completely different mindset when it comes to collaborating with U.S. studios.” As examples, Blaney mentions several German producers involved in collaborations with U.S. studios in the 2000s: Andreas Ulmke-Smeaton and Ewa Karlstroem from SamFilm, who produced the family comedy *Die Wilden Kerle* and its sequel *Die Wilden Kerle 2 (The Wild*

²⁹⁴ CNC World Cinema Statistics, from <http://www.cnc.fr/web/en/sectoral-statistics>

Soccer Bunch) with Disney, and producers Jakob Claussen and Thomas Wöbke, who signed a three-picture deal with Twentieth Century Fox (Blaney 2008). The U.S. influence on the development process is particularly evident in the later example. Blaney quotes Claussen, saying, “we consult with Fox about the screenplays, the choice of creative elements and the casting of our films.” Claussen points out the benefit of that working arrangement, saying, “we can enjoy all the advantages of the Hollywood model, but remain our own masters” (ibid.).

Twentieth Century Fox’s Germany distribution subsidiary Twentieth Century Fox of Germany began looking into local productions in the 2000s. According to Germar Tetzlaff, the subsidiary’s Senior Product Manager Theatrical/Local Productions and Acquisitions, Twentieth Century Fox Germany is looking into producing and co-producing German mainstream films with strong domestic box office potential. He says that the German market in the 2000s got extremely competitive. According to Tetzlaff, Twentieth Century Fox Germany has been working with a small group of executives and freelance development personnel to develop its German properties. The subsidiary is open to producing English-language films (Germar Tetzlaff, personal communication, 2/12/2011).

Key German Production Companies with Transnational Titles on their Slates in the 2000s

In 2008, UFA Cinema was founded. Being a part of the UFA group of companies, the Bertelsmann-owned company has been focusing on high-profile productions for both the German domestic as well as the international market. Indications for UFA Cinema’s global orientation, are its distribution partnership with Focus Features International and Universal Pictures International. The management team of UFA Cinema is comprised of veterans of the German film and television industry. The UFA group is the largest producer of television fiction in Europe. The group’s seven production divisions are UFA Fernsehproduktion, teamWorx, Phoenix-Film, UFA Entertainment, Grundy UFA and Grundy Light Entertainment and UFA

Cinema. While the first six divisions cover everything from ambitious TV event movies (teamWorx), reality programming (UFA Entertainment), daily soaps and telenovelas (Grundy UFA), UFA Cinema marks the group's return to the feature film market. The UFA group is a subsidiary of Fremantle, headquartered in London, and Fremantle is a subsidiary of RTL, which is owned by Bertelsmann, the world's third largest media conglomerate. Despite the company's partnership with Universal Pictures International (UPI) and Focus Features International (FFI), the majority of UFA Cinema's productions has been geared towards the German domestic market. Among the company's original slate of productions have been eight family movies, two of them based on German novels and six on original screenplays, two romantic comedies, a dramedy, a family crime movie, based on a German bestseller, an animated comedy, a thriller, two dramas based on bestselling novels and a political family drama.²⁹⁵ Only a few of UFA Cinema's productions can be considered as potential contenders in the international theatrical market. Among those are the adaptation of Robert Harris' international bestseller *Vaterland*, a thriller about the fictional scenario of a world in which the Nazis never lost power and *Der Medicus*, based on the international bestseller by U.S. author Noah Gordon, about a young Englishman who travels the world in order to become a physician. UFA Cinema hired screenplay author Gavin Scott to adapt the book, and Volker Engel and Marc Weigert's Los Angeles based production company Uncharted Territory to do the visual effects. According to UFA Cinema's website, accessed in Fall 2011, Universal Pictures is interested in co-producing *Der Medicus* and there is "enormous international interest from independent distributors, that see *Medicus* in the tradition of big European productions like *Das Geisterhaus*, *Der Name der Rose*, *Das Parfüm – Die Geschichte eines Mörders* or *Die Päpstin*" (UFA Cinema, 2011a).²⁹⁶

²⁹⁵ For a detailed description of UFA Cinema's projects, see their website at <http://www.ufa-cinema.de/filme/allgemeine-uebersicht.html>.

²⁹⁶ Translation by the author.

UFA's strategy differs from many of its German competitors, because of its financial backing by Bertelsmann, which makes it less dependent on collaborations with television. UFA holds on to the right to its feature film properties, rather than selling them to the co-producing TV outlets, the latter being a common practice in theatrical film production in Germany. UFA Cinema has output deals with television networks, but keeps the development mostly in-house. By following this model, UFA is relatively autonomous during the development phase of their movies. Some of UFA Cinema's staff members are U.S. trained and familiar with the development process at the U.S. studio level. UFA Cinema staff regularly converses with the U.S. studios and is tied in to the U.S. agency system.²⁹⁷

The End of "Silly Money" and the Beginning of New Funding Structures

2005 marked the beginning of the end of the era of German film funds. As German tax laws were announced to change in 2006, in order to close tax loopholes, German film funds were about to become obsolete. Rather than being able to go out with a bang and make use of the final months of potential write-offs, investors were shocked to hear that the head of Germany's leading film fund VIP was prison-bound, facing fraud and tax evasion charges. Since 2001, VIP had raised over \$900 million in fund money, which it invested primarily into Hollywood movies. Among those movies were the Sony production *All the King's Men* (Steven Zaillian, 2006), the Paramount production *Ask the Dust* (Robert Towne, 2006), the Millenium production *Edison* (David J. Burke, 2005), the Lakeshore Entertainment production *Half Light* (Craig Rosenberg, 2006), and the Lionsgate production *Lord of War* (Andrew Niccol, 2005) (Meza 2005). The changes in German tax law would effectively end the German media funds based financing of Hollywood. As an average of 80 percent of the \$16.9 billion raised by German film funds between 1997 and 2004 were invested into Hollywood productions, an argument about the feasibility of those tax breaks ensued (ibid.). When

²⁹⁷ Ulrich Schwarz, producer, UFA, Berlin, personal communication, Los Angeles, 5/2/2011.

the tax breaks were actually terminated in 2006, the impact of those changes was most heavily felt in the U.S. film industry. However, it also affected those German producers, who had made their livelihoods based on facilitating access to German media funds. Access to German money had provided a number of German producers access to Hollywood, and in many cases gave them first-hand experience with the Hollywood development model. As some of these producers, now lacking the required capital to be potent Hollywood players, turned back to their home countries for future projects, they brought some of these insights back to Germany with them.

Meanwhile, private equity investment into German films was on the rise. A late 2000s example is the epic flying adventure *Der Rote Baron* (*The Red Baron*, 2008). The film, chronicling the life of German WWI fighter pilot Manfred von Richthofen, was written and directed by Nicolai Müllerschön. German production company Niama produced it predominantly with private equity money. Only after the majority of production finance was raised, did some of the German funding mechanisms pour additional money into the project. The visual effects for the film were created by German—and soon thereafter global—visual effects company Pixomondo under VFX supervisor Rainer Gombos. Not a single airplane left the ground during the production, as all of the film’s aerial battles were created digitally and many of the film’s historic sets were virtual. Its visual effects were so advanced that the company subsequently was contracted by George Lucas’ Industrial Light and Magic for collaboration on future projects and did pre-visualization and created a number of visual effects sequences for Roland Emmerich’s *2012*.²⁹⁸ In 2010 *Der Rote Baron* was theatrically released in the U.S. by Monterey Media, where it made a disappointing \$37,189 at the box office.²⁹⁹ Its reviewers mostly concurred that the film’s strengths lay in the excellently orchestrated and visually engaging aerial battles, and that its primary weaknesses were

²⁹⁸ Personal communication with Rainer Gombos, VFX supervisor at Pixomondo, June 2009

²⁹⁹ Box Office Mojo 2010, “The Red Baron: Summary,” accessed on 10/10/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=redbaron.htm>

in the script department. *Der Rote Baron* scored a relatively low 21% on Rotten Tomatoes.³⁰⁰

German Transnational Art House Movies in the 2000s

The success of German art house movies peaking during the New German Cinema era, had ebbed after the end of that movement, but a relatively modest number of German art house films kept selling internationally throughout the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. While few of them were able to cross the \$1 million mark at the U.S. box office in the 2000s, some of them made it past the \$500,000 mark. Examples for the latter were Volker Schlöndorff's *Die Stille nach dem Schuß* (*The Legend of Rita*, 2000), theatrically distributed in the U.S. by Kino International and grossing \$671,565 at the U.S. box office;³⁰¹ and Tom Tykwer's *Der Krieger und die Kaiserin* (*The Princess and the Warrior*, 2001), theatrically distributed in the U.S. by Sony Pictures Classics and grossing \$871,058 at the U.S. box office.³⁰² Examples for German art house films in the 2000s that crossed the \$1 million threshold in the U.S. and succeeded in a variety of international markets were Michael Haneke's films *Funny Games* (2007), *Caché* (*Hidden*, 2005) and *The Piano Teacher* (2001). All of them received U.S. theatrical distribution and grossed \$1,294,640, \$3,634, and \$1,900,282 respectively.³⁰³ Most successful among Haneke's films was *Das weisse Band* (*The White Ribbon*, 2009).³⁰⁴ It

³⁰⁰ Rotten Tomatoes 2010, "The Red Baron (Der rote Baron) (2008)," accessed on 10/10/2010, from http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/10010789-red_baron/?page=2&critic=columns&sortby=&name_order=&view=#contentReviews

³⁰¹ IMDb 2009, "Box office/ business for Die Stille nach dem Schuß," accessed on 7/23/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0234805/business>

³⁰² IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for Der Krieger und die Kaiserin (2000)," accessed on 11/11/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0203632/business>

³⁰³ IMDb 2011, "Box office / business for Funny Games (2007)," accessed on 10/6/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0808279/business>, IMDb 2011, "Box office / business for Caché (Hidden) (2005)," accessed on 10/6/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0387898/business>, IMDb 2011, "Box office / business for The Piano Teacher (2001)," accessed on 10/6/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0254686/business>

³⁰⁴ Very well received among critics, festival programmers and international awards juries, the film won the 2009 Golden Palm, the FIPRESCI Prize and the Cinema Prize of the French National Education System, three European film awards, was nominated for a BAFTA Film Award for Best

grossed \$17,096,582 at the international (non-U.S.) box office and—theatrically released in the U.S. by Sony Pictures Classics—grossed \$2,222,862 at the U.S. box office.³⁰⁵ Much talked about in Europe and the U.S. and garnering numerous awards,³⁰⁶ yet remaining under the \$500,000 mark at the U.S. box office was the German/Turkish co-production *Gegen die Wand* (*Head-On*, 2004).³⁰⁷ The romantic drama, written and directed by Fatih Akin, was produced by Stefan Schubert, Ralph Schwingel and co-produced by Akin, Mehmet Kurtulus and Andreas Thiel. Producer for broadcaster Arte was Andreas Schreitmüller and for NDR Jeanette Würfl.³⁰⁸ The film was nominated for and won a plethora of awards in Europe. The U.S. reviews of *Head-On* were overwhelmingly positive. Echoing many other enthusiastic reviews, *Los Angeles Times* film critic Kenneth Turan (2005) wrote about the film:

Impeccably made, uncompromising in its implacable vision of the deranging power of love, sex and controlled substances, this savage and staggering film knows how to take our breath away. It's a French New Wave romance flying dangerously high on speed, a bleak and bittersweet love story willing to go to

Foreign Language Film and for an Oscar in the same category and garnered a number of other prestigious international wins and nominations. *Das weiße Band* was a German/French/Austrian/Italian co-production with Germany's X-Filme Creative Pool as the majority producer and Austrian company Wega Film, Italian company Lucky Red and French companies Les Films du Losange and Canal+. The film's €12 million budget was pieced together in typical European co-production fashion: Contributors were German film subsidy bodies Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung (MDM), the German Federal Film Board, Deutsche Filmförderfonds (DFFF) and the Austrian Film Institute and the Vienna Film Financing Fund and the French Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication. The film also received Eurimages support.

³⁰⁵ Box Office Mojo 2011, "The White Ribbon: Summary," accessed on 10/15/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=whiteribbon.htm>

³⁰⁶ Among the awards were the Golden Bear and the FIPRESCI Prize at the Berlin Film Festival, the European Film Award for Best Film and the Audience Award for Best Director and the 2005 Goya Award for Best European Film. In the U.S. the film was nominated for a 2005 Independent Spirit Award.

³⁰⁷ The film was picked up by U.S. art house distributor Strand Releasing and was theatrically released on January 21, 2005 in one theater and made \$15,216 on its opening weekend. The film, whose widest release was 9 theaters, made a total of \$435,395 at the U.S. box office. Box Office Mojo 2009, "Head-On (*Gegen die Wand*): Summary," accessed on 8/2/2009, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=head-on.htm>

³⁰⁸ Production companies involved in the making of the film were German production companies Bavaria Film International, Wüste Filmproduktion, Turkish Panfilm German broadcaster Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR) and European broadcaster Arte.

extreme emotional places you wouldn't think it could reach, a cross-cultural drama by a filmmaker who has inside-out knowledge of both sides of the divide.

The steady stream of European co-productions with German participation, on the other hand, was targeted at the pan-European box office and—especially in the case of high-budget productions—had to be developed as transnational properties with the global market in mind. That is, if the films' co-producers were aiming at recouping their expenses. This strategy proved successful for films like *Le fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain* (Amélie, Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2001), a co-production with Cologne-based production company MMC and supported by the Filmstiftung Nordrhein-Westfalen, which turned into a global success, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSNATIONAL FILMS IN GERMANY IN THE 2000s.

My conversations with German film industry professionals suggest that, by the mid-2000s, U.S.-style development strategies were a common thing in the more internationally oriented areas of the German film industry, but also in the domestic area where commercial broadcasters, interested primarily in the bottom line, influenced the development of co-produced TV/theatrical hybrids. With film and television in many cases closely interwoven, the television development process appears even more closely linked to models of Global Conglomerate Hollywood. The screenplay development stages in the German film industry typically consist of the writing of an exposé, followed by a treatment and a more extensive so-called “Bilder Treatment” (Image Treatment). Writing the screenplay is the final step. Noticeable is a stronger emphasis on story structure than on the working mechanisms of the individual scenes and the dialogue function. German TV executive and academic Dennis Eick (2005) in a practical book on writing exposés, treatments and concepts for film and TV—comparable to the popular U.S. book *Writing Treatments That Sell* (Atchity & Wong 2003)—points out that treatments and exposés typically do not contain dialogue. Eick, in fact, points out, “overall, dialogue can be neglected. It belongs to the least relevant elements of a film. Mistakes or weaknesses in a screenplay are seldom caused by bad

dialogue, but more likely related to structural issues” (74).³⁰⁹ This strongly contradicts many U.S. screenplay manual writers, screenplay teachers and successful screenplay authors, who consider dialogue a key component of a screenplay. While paint-by-numbers screenwriting approaches might work in an environment like the German commercial television industry, that—as described to me by a number of German film and television industry professionals—tends to cater to the lowest common denominator, they tend to fall short for theatrical productions aiming at both the domestic, as well as the global box office. Eick is an executive at Germany’s commercial broadcaster RTL and might be correct that dialogue in German made-for-TV movies does not matter that much. From conversations with executives in the German TV industry, I got the sense that the target audience of the commercial cable networks often was looked down upon by the executives in charge of creative decision-making. This contrasts with the U.S. system, where interestingly, some of the best writing can be found in television rather than in film. From talking to German producers and screenwriters, I got the sense that German television executives, as well as feature film producers, tend to rely on U.S. screenwriting literature, or German screenwriting literature derived from U.S. screenwriting how-to books, for their approaches to story development. This seems to be as widespread a phenomenon as among their U.S. colleagues. Some German television executives and some theatrical movie producers appeared to believe they had perfected the “craft” of developing a screenplay. Like a number of U.S. manual authors, they emphasized the craft of screenwriting and were foregrounding the mechanics of storytelling. This seems to be diametrically opposed to the auteur theory and—like the auteur theory—questionable. The founding father of the UCLA Film and Television Producing Program Howard Suber typically ends his UCLA story structure course, legendary in the entertainment industry, with the caveat that if participants in the course want to write screenplays, they will need to forget everything that he taught them in his course, because the

³⁰⁹ Translated by author.

process of writing and the process of analyzing films are completely different.³¹⁰ Truly outstanding screenwriters seem to work differently. They tend to allow their intuition to guide and create what the head of the UCLA Screenwriting Program Richard Walter and co-chair Hal Ackerman call “puke drafts” and then—during the rewrite process—use analytical thinking and apply all the storytelling and development techniques they were taught in the program.³¹¹ Sketching out a story from scratch without ever accessing the right side of the brain might work for some, but rarely results in truly outstanding films.

From what I gathered through conversations with German industry professionals, some of the most talented German writers are working in television, where they are often encouraged to work in a highly formulaic fashion, or as one television writer told me, making sure they “serve the formula.” Salaries in the German television industry are typically higher and development periods shorter than in the film industry. Feature film writing in Germany is an underpaid profession, as there is no powerful union for writers in Germany that can compare to the Writers Guild of America (WGA).³¹²

German Transnational Historical Dramas in the 2000s

When looking at the genres of the majority of exportable, transnational properties of German cinema in the 2000s—both co-productions with Germany as a majority co-production partner and German single nation productions—several genres stand out. One of the most popular German export genres throughout the 2000s were historical dramas, especially narratives about the Nazi era. The most internationally successful films from that category in the 2000s, briefly addressed in the following sections, were *Nirgendwo in Africa* (*Nowhere in Africa*, 2001), *Der Untergang* (*Downfall*, 2004), *Sophie Scholl - Die letzten Tage* (*Sophie Scholl – The Final Days*, 2005), *Die Fälscher*

³¹⁰ Quote from Howard Suber’s course on Story Structure at the UCLA School of Theater, Television and Film, attended by the author.

³¹¹ Information from screenwriting courses I attended at the UCLA School for Theater, Film and Television.

³¹² The Verband Deutscher Drehbuchautoren e.V. (German Screenwriters’ Guild) pales in comparison to the bargaining power of the Writers Guild of America (WGA).

(*The Counterfeiters*, 2007) and *John Rabe* (2009). Also addressed, is *Der letzte Zug* (*The Last Train*, 2006), as an example for a historical WWII drama that failed to connect with international audiences. *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex* (*The Baader Meinhof Complex*, 2008), a historical drama, set in the 1970s, will be briefly discussed at the end of the following section.

The first successful German historical drama in the 2000s was *Nirgendwo in Afrika* (*Nowhere in Africa*, 2001). The film about a Jewish family fleeing Nazi Germany and seeking refuge in Kenya was written and directed by Caroline Link, based on an autobiographical novel by Stefanie Zweig. It was produced by Peter Herrmann and co-produced by Bernd Eichinger, Sven Ebeling and Thilo Kleine. Caroline Link says about her adaptation of Zweig's novel:

[...] in my version of the story I am focusing on the relationship between the parents and their love for each other. Under difficult circumstances their relationship becomes shaky and has to be regained. Stefanie Zweig tells the novel more from the perspective of the child and describes her experiences and memories of her own childhood. But for me the most interesting character is Regina's mother Jettel. Her development into an independent and grown-up woman, who has to re-evaluate not only herself, but also the relationship to her family, as well as her own priorities. (Rebhan 2004)

Link's skills to turn the novel into a widely appealing narrative paid off. Among a large number of awards and nominations, the film was nominated for a Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film and won the 2003 Academy Award in the same category. *Nirgendwo in Afrika*, produced for a budget of an estimated €7 million and grossed \$10,259,553 at the German box office. It was subsequently acquired for U.S. distribution by U.S. art house distributor Zeitgeist Films and grossed \$6,180,200 at the U.S. box office.³¹³

Der Untergang (*Downfall*, 2004), directed by Oliver Hirschbiegel and produced by Bernd Eichinger, also turned into a transnational property. Eichinger wrote the

³¹³ Box Office Mojo, "Nowhere in Africa: Foreign," accessed on 11/7/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=nowhereinafrica.htm>

script.³¹⁴ *Downfall* is a fictionalized account of the last weeks of German dictator Adolf Hitler. Made for a budget of €13.5 million, it had 9,475,758 European admissions, making it the 5th most attended European co-production at the European box between 2001 and 2007 (Kanzler 2008: 30). It was nominated for a 2005 Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film and won the British Independent Film Award for Best Non-American Film, the British Independent Film Award for Best Foreign Film and was nominated for and won several other international awards. *Downfall* received U.S. theatrical distribution by Newmarket Films. It opened on February 18, 2005 in one theatre and generated \$18,195 on its opening weekend. Running for 17 weeks, with its widest release being 174 theaters, it grossed \$5,509,040 theatrically in the U.S.³¹⁵ The film received mostly positive reviews both in Europe and internationally. *Variety* critic Derek Elley (2004) gave the film a favorable review but raised some issues about the film's marketability:

Headlined by a tightly-wound, pugnacious perf from Swiss actor Bruno Ganz as Hitler, but with a roster of thespians reading like an A-Z of the German industry, pic will undoubtedly raise discussion in some quarters for its coolly objective, humanistic approach to the characters and subject-matter. But as thoughtful entertainment, cast in depth and going for the long burn, this is classy upscale fare. (Elley 2004)

Despite his praise for the film, Elley correctly assessed that *Downfall* remained a “tricky theatrical proposition, despite its merits, outside German-speaking territories. However, strong critical support could generate some biz as a niche attraction, with small-screen sales down the line” (Elley 2004).

³¹⁴ The story is based on Joachim Fest's non-fiction book *Der Untergang (The Downfall: Inside Hitler's Bunker, The Last Days of the Third Reich)*; the non-fiction book *Bis zur letzten Stunde* by Traudl Junge and Melissa Müller; and Andre Heller's documentary *Blind Spot: Hitler's Secretary* (2002). *Downfall* was co-produced for German broadcaster WDR by Wolf-Dietrich Brücker, for German broadcaster NDR by Doris J. Heinze and for German broadcaster ARD's production company Degeto Film Jörn Klamroth. Christine Rothe was the film's executive producer. Production companies involved were Bernd Eichinger's Constantin Film Produktion, EOS Entertainment, Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR), Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR), Degeto Film, Italian production company Rai Cinemafiction, and Austrian broadcaster Österreichischer Rundfunk (ORF).

The 2005 film *Sophie Scholl - Die letzten Tage* (*Sophie Scholl: The Final Days*) portrayed the fate of the members of the German resistance group Die weiße Rose (The White Rose) during the Third Reich. This was the same group that Michael Verhoeven had made his 1982 film *Die weiße Rose* (*The White Rose*) about. *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days* was directed by Marc Rothemund and written by Fred Breinersdorfer.³¹⁶ The film performed reasonably well at the German box office, grossing \$7,444,254. It played all over Europe as well as in the biggest markets internationally. It performed best in Italy, where it grossed \$1,109,815, and Austria, where it grossed \$429,377. *Sophie Scholl - Die letzten Tage* won a number of European awards and was also nominated for a 2006 Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film. Subsequently, it received U.S. theatrical distribution by Zeitgeist and grossed \$680,331 at the U.S. box office.³¹⁷

Der letzte Zug (*The Last Train*, 2006) was directed by Joseph Vilsmaier and Dana Vávrová and written by Artur Brauner and Stephen Glantz. The drama, portraying the journey on a deportation train from Berlin to the Auschwitz concentration camp, was produced by Artur Brauner and co-produced by Ivo Pavelek. While the €3.5 million³¹⁸ European co-production at a first glance appears to fulfill a number of strategic requirements for a film to be marketable across borders, it fell short of both awards honors, as well as U.S. distribution. The German/Czech co-production drew 80,737 people into European movie theaters. It performed best in Spain, where it had 46,763 admissions.³¹⁹

In 2008, the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film went to *Die Fälscher* (*The Counterfeiters*, 2007), directed by Stefan Ruzowitzky. *Die Fälscher* was an

³¹⁶ *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days* was produced by Fred Breinersdorfer, Sven Burgemeister, Christoph Müller and Marc Rothemund and co-produced by Ulrich Herrmann for broadcaster SWR, Jochen Kölsch for broadcasters BR/Arte, Andreas Schreitmüller for Arte and Bettina Reitz and Hubert von Sprei for broadcaster BR.

³¹⁷ Box Office Mojo 2010, "Sophie Scholl - The Final Days," accessed on 1/15/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=sophiescholl.htm>

³¹⁸ IMDb 2011, Box office / business for *The Last Train* (2006)," accessed on 7/2/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0460492/business>

³¹⁹ Lumiere Database, accessed on 7/2/2011, from http://lumiere.obs.coe.int/web/film_info/?id=26097

Austrian/German co-production with Austria as a majority co-producer. The film, theatrically distributed by Sony Pictures Classics in the U.S., crossed the \$5 million mark at the U.S. box office, grossing \$5,483,549 by August 17, 2008. Its screenplay was workshopped at Equinoxe, Germany. Laurie Hutzler, UCLA screenwriting professor and international screenplay consultant, was one of the script consultants for Equinoxe, Germany who worked on *The Counterfeiters* during a workshop held in Paris. Hutzler has been working as a consultant for Fremantle Media in Germany, Australia, U.K., Hungary and Finland, working on Fremantle's "big television dramas" and consulted on "some of their entertainment shows." She has also done consulting work on drama development for the BBC and ITV. Hutzler was recruited by Ellen Winn-Wendel, who started and has been running Equinoxe Germany and, according to Laurie Hutzler, has been involved in film development in Europe for many years (L. Hutzler, personal interview, December 14, 2010). Hutzler read the script of *The Counterfeiters*, spoke with the director and "gave advice in terms of how that film needed to be rewritten." The Equinoxe workshop was started in France. Equinoxe, Germany, according to Hutzler, collaborated with French Equinoxe by sending some of its projects to Paris-based Equinoxe until the two groups split "for a number of legal and financial reasons" (ibid.). Hutzler considers the Equinoxe workshop program as "one of the finest examples of an international development experience that I've ever run across." She describes the basic workflow of the workshop as follows:

Basically, what Ellen does at Equinoxe, is bringing together American and European advisers to advise on European films that have some sort of attachment. Usually they have already a director attached or they have some money or they have a producer and I believe the requirement is that the filmmakers have made one previous film, it can be a short, but they have to have some sort of filmmaking portfolio, and then the advisers get together and discuss the projects, and there's no writing that really occurs. People just listen to what the advisers have to say about the film, and then, the last day, the producers come and discuss with the writers what insights they've had into the story or the script and what the writer believes is necessary to [...] move the script to the next level. Then the producers have an opportunity to question or speak with the advisers and also get the benefit of the writer having attended the workshop. (L. Hutzler, personal interview, December 14, 2010)

Hutzler summarizes the impact of the workshop on European development as follows:

It's an interesting project because there just isn't a tradition in Europe of development as there is in the United States, and I mean, is that a bad thing? Is that a good thing? Hard to tell. The reason that I'm so interested in working on European film is that I think we are moving towards a world cinema or a world narrative, and what's interesting to me about European film, is that sense of corkiness, of individual voice, of not everything necessarily being tied up in a neat package, a certain amount of ambiguity and complexity that often is missing in American films. That's the good news, but a character's greatest strength is also his or her greatest weakness, so European films can be so sort of idiosyncratic, personal and quirky that no one else cares, so that the film doesn't have any sort of universal resonance. What American film I think does really well, is that it has always been looked at as mass entertainment, and so there is a sense of clarity of story and production values, and this sense of having worked on the script to really sharpen what the film is, so that you can, as we were taught at UCLA, get the essence of the film on a poster. So that's the good news for American film. Again, your greatest strength is your greatest weakness, that can also lead to a film being overly simplistic, sort of overdeveloped, shallow, superficial and all production values and no art, no individuality, no voice, no authenticity. So what you want to do is, you want to take the best of both worlds and create narratives that have cultural specificity, that are about a point of view but somehow can also speak to the world [...] So to me that challenge of taking something that is culturally true to one specific area that speaks to the world is the goal, and that's what I'm most interested in doing [...] and I think that's what really good development does. It's always much less interesting to watch a film about 'Anywhere USA' or 'Anywhere Germany' than a story that's about a particular community, because the more specific something is, the more universal it is. (L. Hutzler, personal interview, December 14, 2010)

Asked about her impressions of the script of *The Counterfeiters*, Laurie Hutzler said:

I think everybody thought it was an extremely strong script [...] The projects that come to Equinoxe are the cream of the crop of Europe, so that's usually a luxury. Usually the projects are recommended by a funding organization, by a ministry of culture, so they are top notch projects when they come in. Ellen and the two other women that work with Ellen in Germany really have a nose for talent and have a nose for things that are interesting, that really have some sort of life; and Equinoxe has an incredibly high percentage of films that not only get produced but also win awards. (ibid.)

Laurie Hutzler remembers the experience of working on *The Counterfeiters* as interesting. According to Hutzler, “most of the projects are quite far along when they get to Equinoxe and oftentimes a director or writer/director uses the opportunity at Equinoxe to sort of put the last polish on the project” (ibid.).

A transnational property by its nature, yet falling short of its inherent potential at the international box office, was *John Rabe* (2009), written and directed by Florian Gallenberger. The story is loosely based on the diary of German businessman John Rabe, who helped to protect Chinese civilians during a brutal attack by the Japanese army on Nanking, China in 1937. *John Rabe* was produced by Benjamin Herrmann, Mischa Hofmann and Jan Mojto, co-produced by Christoph Menardi and Nicolas Traube and executive produced by Mathias Schwerbrock.³²⁰ It premiered at the 2009 Berlin Film Festival and subsequently grossed €909.536 at the German box office. Releases in several international territories, like China, Belgium and the Netherlands followed, and the film was eventually picked up by Strand Releasing for the U.S. market. *Variety* critic Derek Elley (2009)—while complimenting the performance of Ulrich Tukur, who played John Rabe—correctly assesses the film’s international potential:

Despite the emotive subject matter, pic is often too sluggish dramatically, and never knits together its stock Western characters into a satisfying whole. With at least one more version coming down the pike (Mainland director Lu Chuan’s ‘Nanjing Nanjing’), ‘Rabe’ looks unlikely to make much impression beyond German-speaking territories. (Elley 2009).

As predicted by Elley, the film failed at the U.S. box office. Playing for five weeks in less than seven theaters, it grossed only \$67,519.³²¹

More successful internationally was *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex* (*The Baader Meinhof Complex*, 2008), telling the story of the early years of the Red Army Faction, a

³²⁰ Production companies involved were Hofmann & Voges Entertainment GmbH, EOS Entertainment, Majestic Filmproduktion, Huayi Brothers & Taihe Film Investment, Pampa Production and German broadcaster Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF).

³²¹ Box Office Mojo 2011, “John Rabe: Summary,” accessed on 7/2/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=johnrabe.htm>

group exercising left-wing armed resistance in 1970s Germany. Bernd Eichinger produced and co-wrote the story, based on a non-fiction book by Stefan Aust, with Uli Edel, who also directed it. *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex* was one of Bernd Eichinger's passion projects and took a long time to develop (Huffman 2008). Eichinger says that, while the Stefan Aust's book was published in 1988, he could not have made the film any earlier. Back then, Eichinger says, he "was in a completely different headspace. And my own headspace is what drives me as a filmmaker not what I think other people might find interesting or timely" (ibid.). Eichinger took creative risks with both *Das Parfum* and *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex*. Both break with some of the conventions of mainstream commercial storytelling. Eichinger states:

Both films work via fascination rather than identification. You do not identify with the protagonists in either movie, but you find yourself compelled to watch them. This dispenses with one of the basic rules of script writing, which says that the viewer should always be able to root for a protagonist. It was fun to try a different way of story telling. I already tried to do so in "Downfall," but not to such an extreme extent. (Huffman 2008)

Made for an estimated budget of €20 million,³²² *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex* drew 2.6 million audience members into German theaters by its fifth week of release. The response to the film in Germany was mixed. According to Andrea Dittgen (2009), "public reaction to the film was ambivalent; young audiences were enthusiastic, while RAF victims and those who witnessed what happened were infuriated" (173). Eichinger recalls it as the film sparking the biggest "controversy" of his filmmaking career, but said the strong media reactions were limited to Germany (Huffman 2008). Despite the negative press response in its country of origin, the film proved marketable on a pan-European level, drawing an audience of 2,991,616 into EU theaters.³²³ While they might not have been familiar with that particular period of German history, the subject matters of terrorism and armed resistance have been a part of the popular imagination

³²² IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for The Baader Meinhof Complex (2008)," accessed on 1/17/2010, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0765432/business>

³²³ Data from the Lumière database, accessed on 11/5/2011, from http://lumiere.obs.coe.int/web/film_info/?id=30226

of people in the U.S. as well as in Europe ever since the Lockerbie plane bombing in 1988, the 9/11 incident in New York City in 2001, the 2004 Madrid train bombings and the London underground bombings in 2005. However, despite being nominated for a Best Foreign Language Oscar and a BAFTA Award for Best Film Not in the English Language, the film's U.S. performance was unimpressive. Distributed theatrically by Vitagraph Films in the U.S., it grossed only \$476,270 by December 6, 2009.³²⁴

German Transnational Dramas and Comedies about Life in the GDR

Among a number of films of various genres set in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), two movies in the 2000s turned out to be viable transnational properties. Those were the comedy *Good Bye Lenin!* (Wolfgang Becker, 2003) and the drama *Das Leben der Anderen* (*The Lives of Others*, Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, 2006).

Good Bye Lenin! (*Goodbye Lenin!*) in 2003 turned into one of Germany's most successful films at the German box office, grossing \$41,451,777,³²⁵ and into one of its most exportable properties. The comedy about a son who tries to protect his ailing mom, who fell into a coma right before the Berlin wall came down by pretending that the GDR was still in existence, was directed by Wolfgang Becker, written by Bernd Lichtenberg, co-authored by Wolfgang Becker, and produced by Stefan Arndt, Katja De Bock and Andreas Schreitmüller. Describing his research process on *Good Bye Lenin!*—in an interview with Stephen Applebaum—Becker says that him and Lichtenberg,

[...] met young people who were about the age of our hero when the Wall came down, and asked them a few questions. We found out very fast that there is not a prototype biography in the GDR [German Democratic Republic]. Some people felt like they were in a big prison, other people were ok with the situation, some people suffered a lot under the political circumstances, other

³²⁴ Box Office Mojo 2010, "The Baader Meinhof Complex," accessed on 03/12/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=baadermeinhofcomplex.htm>

³²⁵ Box Office Mojo 2011, "Good Bye, Lenin!," accessed on 10/5/2011, from <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=goodbyelenin.htm>

people did not care about politics. After that we felt pretty much free about making up our own characters. (Applebaum 2001)

Becker explains the success of the film in Germany by saying, “a lot of East Germans still have this inferiority complex, so how could they get along with their own history? With their own past?” Becker describes his film as “a symbolic funeral in dignity to all that,” and adds, “it hit a nerve” (Applebaum 2001).

XFilme producer Stefan Arndt, in an interview on the *Good Bye Lenin!* promotional website of XFilme, talks about the origins of the project. He says that a couple of years after German reunification XFilme was offered a substantial number of stories with similar scenarios to *Good Bye Lenin!* (“Good Bye Lenin: Interview mit Produzent Stefan Arndt” 2003). Arndt points out that most of these stories were “quite good,” however, none of them created “a spark,” making the XFilme producers feel “that it was THE film on the subject matter.”³²⁶ That changed, however, when Lichtenberg approached them with a five-page exposé that Arndt remembers discussing with him and Becker. Arndt says, “suddenly, there was this energy, and we knew exactly, that we could tell everything through this that we wanted to tell.” Talking about the collaboration with director Wolfgang Becker, Arndt points out that making a film with Becker is not easy and “one has to know exactly why to do it.” According to Arndt,

[...] in the end it is all about grabbing people by their emotions and you think about how to tell it for a very long time. What is the constellation within that family? [...] And then one deals with the development of the story and the historical timeline. And finally, how to manage combining the emotions with the history. That’s all not coincidence. That is an extremely long and insanely carefully developed script. (“Good Bye Lenin: Interview mit Produzent Stefan Arndt” 2003)³²⁷

Lichtenberg says that he had written the exposé to the story already in the early 1990s, but only after seeing Becker’s 1997 film *Das Leben ist eine Baustelle* did he realize that Becker’s style would suit his story (“Good Bye Lenin: Interview mit Autor Bernd

³²⁶ Translation by the author.

³²⁷ Translation by the author.

Lichtenberg” 2003).³²⁸ Once Becker and XFilme were on board, Lichtenberg wrote treatments and three screenplay drafts by himself, however, “in close contact with Wolfgang Becker.” According to Lichtenberg, Becker from the beginning of the development process, voiced “harsh criticism, especially regarding the characters.” Lichtenberg says,

That’s what connects us and what’s important to us both: to tell the story through the characters. And there also have been situations, in which Wolfgang said, I can’t direct certain things, I can’t think of anything related to that, there’s a lack of substance in that scene, you have to have another go at that. By the end we really wrote together. And then Wolfgang made me a part of the production process. (“Good Bye Lenin: Interview mit Autor Bernd Lichtenberg” 2003)

Körte considers *Good Bye Lenin!* as “a symbol of a broader cultural pattern, as a new, self-confident generation of writers and film-makers went down memory lane to come to terms with their recent past, in some way closing off the era of 1968 and all that—and accepting, without too much nostalgia, that they had grown up” (Körte 2005: 148). *Good Bye Lenin!* grossed \$75,320,680 at the worldwide box office (non-U.S.), and was picked up by Sony Pictures Classics for U.S. theatrical distribution, generating \$4,063,859 at the U.S. box office by August 1st, 2004.³²⁹

Also a successful export property set in East Germany, yet before German reunification, was *Das Leben der Anderen* (*The Lives of Others*, 2006), directed by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck. The project originated as a film school thesis project at the Munich Film School (HFF München), which was unusual. The only other feature-length thesis project from a German film school that had received international distribution, was Roland Emmerich’s *Das Arche Noah Prinzip* (1984). *Das Leben der Anderen*, in 2006, ranked 5th among European films at the European box office with 4,057,710 admissions. It also won the 2007 Best Foreign Language Film Oscar and was picked up for U.S. theatrical distribution by Sony Pictures Classics and made

³²⁸ Translation by the author.

³²⁹ IMDb 2009, “Box office / business for Good Bye Lenin! (2003),” accessed on 11/10/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0301357/business>

\$11,286,112 at the U.S. box office by September 13, 2007.³³⁰ According to Shane Danielsen, a former artistic director of the Edinburgh International Filmfestival, von Donnersmarck's success at the Academy Awards,

[...] only confirmed for American cinemagoers what many in Europe had understood for some time - that after long years of stagnation and fatigue, Germany was once again in the midst of a filmmaking renaissance. Not quite as profound, perhaps, as the New German Cinema of the 1970s, the decade that introduced a small, bright constellation of unclassifiable talents (Werner Herzog, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Wim Wenders, Volker Schlöndorff, et al.), but appreciable and refreshing nonetheless. (Danielsen 2008: 52)

Von Donnersmarck subsequently moved with his family to LA, where he signed on to write a U.S. remake of *Das Leben der Anderen* for Mirage Enterprises and The Weinstein Company, supposedly substituting the former GDR's spying activities portrayed in the original film with those of the CIA in the remake.³³¹ The first U.S. movie he directed, was the romantic action adventure *The Tourist* (2010), starring Angelina Jolie and Johnny Depp.

German Transnational Cinema Based on European Bestselling Novels

In the 2000s, German producers continued to use European fiction bestsellers as source material for films targeted at a pan-European audience. One of the most successful examples of that practice was Bernd Eichinger's effort to turn the bestselling novel *Das Parfum* by German author Patrick Süskind, first published in 1985, into a movie. The 2006 movie *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* was directed by Tom Tykwer, and written by Andrew Birkin,³³² Bernd Eichinger and Tom Tykwer.³³³ The

³³⁰ IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for *Das Leben der Anderen* (2006)," accessed on 11/10/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0405094/business>

³³¹ IMDbPro 2010, "The Lives of Others (2011): In Development," accessed on 6/17/2010, from <http://pro.imdb.com/title/tt0976234/>

³³² Birkin is a British writer whose credits include *The Messenger: The Story of Joan of Arc* (Besson, 1999) and *Der Name der Rose* (*The Name of the Rose*, Annaud, 1986).

³³³ The film was produced by Bernd Eichinger, co-produced by Gigi Oeri and executive produced by Martin Moszkowicz, Andreas Schmid, Andreas Grosch, Samuel Hadida, Manuel Cuotemoc Malle and Julio Fernández.

German/French/Spanish co-production³³⁴ was a passion project of Bernd Eichinger, who pursued the rights to the book for 15 years. When Patrick Süskind finally sold the rights to Eichinger, the producer—who was known for his persistency—says, “in the end, every tree falls. You just have to saw long enough” (Rehfeld 2002). *Perfume* illustrates the level of Eichinger’s creative involvement in his projects. Originally, he was considering directing the film himself, but says that would have meant being “away from the slope for two years and I can’t really afford that. I would have to be convinced that there’s nobody better suited for the material and I don’t know if I can say that” (Rehfeld 2002). Together with Andrew Birkin—whom he had worked with previously on *Der Name der Rose*—he developed a first draft of the screenplay and offered the film to Tom Tykwer to direct. Tykwer considered the screenplay upon his hiring as “already quite impressive” (Brooks 2007). According to Tykwer, they then, together “went through another 20 or so drafts to get to the shooting script.” Tykwer says that while the story of *Perfume* felt like “a fantastic concept for a movie,” the novel turned out to be “a nightmare to adapt for a movie” (ibid.). He says that he never had any ambitions to make a period film until he came across this project. Asked about the biggest challenges during either development, production or distribution, Tykwer names “the darkness of the material and at the same time the relatively big scale of the production,” along with finding a suitable main actor as the main challenges of developing *Perfume*. He stresses that getting the film into production involved “a very long and bumpy road in financing” (ibid.). U.K. actor Ben Whishaw was cast for the lead, and among the supporting actors with transnational caché were U.S. actor Dustin Hoffman and U.K. actor Alan Rickman. As previously mentioned, the film turned into the most successful film at the European box office to date and grossed \$132,816,650 at

³³⁴ Production companies involved were German production company Constantin Film Produktion, German media fund VIP 4 Medienfonds, French production companies Davis-Films and Nouvelles Éditions de Films (NEF) (co-production), Spanish production companies Castelao Producciones (co-production), Ikiru Films (delegate production).

the international box office (non-U.S.). DreamWorks SKG theatrically distributed the film in the U.S., where it grossed \$2,223,293.³³⁵

Following a U.S. model of developing franchises based on popular teen books, Studio Hamburg in the mid-2000s acquired the worldwide motion picture rights to the teen detective franchise *The Three Investigators* by Robert Arthur. The series was an enormous success in Germany. After Arthur's death in 1969 and the subsequent termination of the U.S. books series in the 1980s, German authors continued writing additional books for the series. Both books and audio versions of the books enjoyed tremendous success in Germany, all the way through the 2000s. 141 audio book titles were produced and over 40 million copies of them were sold by 2010, providing the series with a massive and extremely loyal fan base (Kringiel 2010). The series had not only survived the death of its original author, but also a long and strenuous legal battle between the series' German publisher Kosmos and Sony/BMG about the rights to the audio versions of the books, resolved in 2008 (ibid.). Studio Hamburg in the mid-2000s had acquired the worldwide motion picture rights to the property. The first film of the franchise was *Die drei ??? - Das Geheimnis der Geisterinsel (The Three Investigators and the Secret of Skeleton Island, Florian Baxmeyer, 2007)* (ibid.). Apparently following a Hollywood model of development, four screenwriters were involved in the development of the script: David Howard, Ronald Kruschak, Philip LaZebnik and Thomas Oliver Walendy. Producers on the film were Malte Grunert and Sytze Van Der Laan. The latter, the head of Studio Hamburg at the time, is a graduate of the USC School of Cinema and Television. Sytze Van Der Laan is a proponent of the U.S. way of developing films and considers the way the German film industry has been treating the development process in the past in need of improvement (Van Der Laan, personal communication, Berlin, 2/13/2008). *Die Drei ??? - Das Geheimnis der Geisterinsel*

³³⁵ Box Office Mojo 2011, "Perfume - The Story of a Murderer," accessed on 7/23/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=perfume.htm>

was shot for an estimated budget of €11.8 million³³⁶ and had 732,754 admissions in Germany by December 9, 2007.³³⁷

In 2009, the next film of the franchise appeared on German big screens: *Die Drei ??? - Das verfluchte Schloss (The Three Investigators and the Secret of Terror Castle*, Florian Baxmeyer, 2009). The latter was penned by Philip LaZebnik and Aaron Mendelsohn. Like the first installment of the franchise, the sequel was a German/British/South African co-production between Studio Hamburg International, Saltire Entertainment and Two Oceans Production. Both films were shot in South Africa and produced by Malte Grunert and Sytze Van Der Laan.

German Transnational Sci-Fi and Horror Films in the 2000s

High-profile transnational German science fiction and horror films have been rarities in German post-WWII cinema. Among the few titles in the 2000s was the *Resident Evil* franchise, initiated and produced by Constantin Film with several international partners. *Resident Evil* (2002), the first film of the video game-based franchise, was directed by U.K. director Paul W.S. Anderson, produced by Anderson, Jeremy Bolt, Bernd Eichinger and Samuel Hadida.³³⁸ Produced for an estimated budget of \$32 million, *Resident Evil* was theatrically distributed in the U.S. by Dreamworks SKG. The film opened on 2,528 screens, earning \$17,707,106 at the U.S. box office on its opening weekend and grossed \$40,119,709,³³⁹ making it the most successful German-originated film in the U.S. market to date. In an interview with Nina Rehfeld (2002), Eichinger says about his first video game adaptation: “for the first time in 25

³³⁶ It was a German/UK/South African co-production between German Studio Hamburg International and Medienfonds GFP, UK's Saltire Entertainment and South Africa's Two Oceans Productions.

³³⁷ IMDb 2011, “Box office / business for The Three Investigators and the Secret of Skeleton Island,” accessed on 3/20/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0476603/business>

³³⁸ It was co-produced by Chris Symes and executive produced by Victor Hadida, Daniel S. Kletzky, Robert Kulzer and Yoshiki Okamoto. Constantin Film partnered with French production company Davis-Films and British production companies New Legacy and Impact Pictures on the movie.

³³⁹ IMDb 2011, “Box office / business for Resident Evil (2002),” accessed on 1/14/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120804/business>

years of my professional career I dared to approach such a genre [...] I realized that I didn't bring any experience and that I had to once more completely reposition myself."³⁴⁰ Asked about the commercial considerations involved when basing a film on a video game that sold over 17 million copies worldwide, Eichinger insists that his original interest was not based on the box office prospects related to the video game's large customer base, "at least not in the beginning." According to Eichinger, "it would be insanity if I—before something actually interests me—would start with thoughts about marketing. That would be wrong and would lead to guaranteed failure." Instead, he says, "one starts by saying, that's actually an interesting environment," and points out, "you have to understand and like the universe of a game." Eichinger says that he always wanted to make a Zombie film, as he considers Zombies "the ultimate nightmare." He says, "you shoot something down and it gets up again. Whatever you do, it doesn't disappear. That's simply very suitable for the cinema" (ibid.). Eichinger admits about drawing his inspiration from Hollywood, since "the majority of pioneering films are coming from there," but he says he "can also learn from a film from Sweden or Denmark" (Rehfeld 2002).

German Transnational Action Adventure Films in the 2000s

Few German producers and directors in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s dared to make films in the usually cost-intensive and Hollywood-dominated action adventure genre, despite it being one of the best-selling genres in the global marketplace. Among the few efforts in the 2000s was Uwe Boll's *In The Name of the King: A Dungeon Siege Tale* (2007). Budgeted at an estimated \$60 million,³⁴¹ it was designed to become a global blockbuster. While the film's U.S. box office gross was more than twice of *Perfume*'s, its European numbers were marginal compared to the latter. In fact, both its U.S. as well as its international performance fell far short of Boll's expectations. *In The*

³⁴⁰ Translation by the author.

³⁴¹ IMDb 2011, "Box office / business for In the Name of the King: A Dungeon Siege Tale (2007), accessed on 8/25/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0460780/business>

Name of the King, written by Doug Taylor with story credits by Taylor, Jason Rappaport and Dan Stroncak and produced by Boll and Canadian producer Shawn Williamson for an estimated budget of \$60 million, the film featured Ray Liotta, Leelee Sobieski, Burt Reynolds and Claire Forlani. Theatrically released by Freestyle Releasing in the U.S., it made a disappointing \$4,775,656 at the box office and grossed \$8,322,259 internationally.³⁴² Reviews for the film were overwhelmingly negative. The film scored a meager 5% on Rotten Tomatoes and none of its tallied “top critics” reviewed it favorably.³⁴³

CONCLUSION: GERMAN TRANSNATIONAL CINEMA IN THE 1980s, 1990s AND 2000s

Emerging from a period of artistic innovation in the late 1960s to the early 1980s, parts of the German film industry slowly transitioned into an era of commercialization, hybridization, Europeanization and globalization. Adapting to a changing domestic political environment, to a de-regulated television sector, to evolving European cultural policies, and to sea changes in the international film industry, parts of the German film industry shifted towards more commercial models of filmmaking. European and international co-productions in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s raised the number of pan-European and international narratives with German participation. An increase in English-language productions and choices of subject matters and narratives conducive to border-crossing performance led to a transformation of the German production landscape. U.S. direct involvement in the German film industry by Global Conglomerate Hollywood’s control of a substantial part of the distribution sector and the establishment of U.S. studio subsidiaries in the 1990s and 2000s, geared at participation in domestic production, helped fuel the move towards increased commercialization and—to a certain extent—global orientation of sectors of the

342 Box Office Mojo 2010, “In the Name of the King: A Dungeon Siege Tale,” accessed on 10/10/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=inthenameoftheking.htm>

343 Rotten Tomatoes 2010, “In the Name of the King: A Dungeon Siege Tale (2008),” accessed on 10/10/2010, from <http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/in-the-name-of-the-king-a-dungeon-siege-tale/>

German film industry. Tax loopholes led to a mushrooming of German film funds in the late 1990s and subsequently to a landslide of German investment into U.S. productions and U.S./German co-financing ventures. This new investment culture exposed many producers, financiers and investors, and even a portion of average German taxpayers, to the functioning of the Hollywood film industry. In the process, it also increased the focus on developing border-crossing transnational films.

German film school education, since the 1990s, saw a more commercially driven approach. Exposing their students to the Hollywood film industry, not only in the classroom but also through training programs in Los Angeles, led to increased openness among future film professionals to pursuing transnational projects and incorporating U.S. development models and strategies.

With substantial shifts taking place in German society, politics and economy after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent reunification of Germany, the film industry followed suit. Reinvigorating the Babelsberg studios in Berlin and introducing incentives to shoot international productions there, contributed to a coordinated effort to increase the German film industry's competitiveness in the international marketplace. Changing film support structures in the 1990s and the establishment of a new German national film fund in the 2000s, open to commercial productions of both domestic as well as international origins, made the German film industry more competitive in the international market.

While creative influence of German producers on many of the international co-financing ventures of the 1990s and 2000s appears to be limited at best, the exposure to Hollywood development strategies very apparently left their mark on a number of German producers. Many of them went on to produce European-based projects, putting some of the newly-gained knowledge to the test; some managed to transition into the Hollywood film industry; and a few have been able to succeed in both worlds.

Efforts by an increasing number of German producers to cater to the pan-European and international market in many instances led to an adaptation of U.S. development strategies and practices. European co-productions enabled higher

production budgets; the casting of international stars furthered the potential for attracting international audiences, and a string of literary adaptations, based on well-known European book properties, showed success at the European box office. Films dealing with the German past, in particular the Third Reich era, but also with the former GDR and a variety of other historical subject matters, turned into projects that received international attention.

By the early 2010s, the German film industry was still performing relatively well. It has been a vital part of the European film industry, yet maintained its ties to the U.S. film industry and used its financially very capable government support structures not only to support domestic productions, but also to attract international productions. Whether the German film industry will be able to weather the global financial crisis, remains to be seen. Increasingly, German film producers' long-term strategies seem to encompass transnational film production and alternative financing models.

To answer the question of how the German film industry's development strategies and practices will evolve in the future, it seems safe to say that a significant part of the industry has already switched to U.S. development models and that more and more companies will adopt those models.

Chapter Six: Italy

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSNATIONAL FILMS IN ITALY IN THE 1980S

U.S. influence on the Italian film industry goes back to World War I, but became particularly prominent in the post World War II era, when Italian theaters were flooded with Hollywood productions, including a backlog of Hollywood movies that had been blocked from distribution in Italy during the 1930s. The American studios, supported by the Motion Picture Export Association of America, were using distribution practices of “block-booking and blind bidding” in Italy, ensuring a dominant market position and suppressing the Italian film industry (Treveri Gennari 2009: 7). Two film genres in post-WWII Italy proved to be exportable transnational properties: Neorealist films from the 1940s to early 1950s, primarily in international art house circuits, and Spaghetti Westerns during the 1960s and 1970s, in the international mainstream arena. The exportability of Italian cinema dropped again in the 1980s. According to Carlo Testa (2002), “the 1980s were certainly among the most difficult years in the history of Italian cinema, and they have been characterized by more than one observer as the most forgettable of them all” (119). As Italian television stations in the 1980s began programming imported films, the availability of financing for domestic films declined. This, according to Testa, resulted in a substantial decrease in the number of films produced in Italy and a drastic reduction of production budgets, leading for the most part to a minimalist 1980s cinema that raised “small expectations” and dealt with “almost inevitably small issues” (ibid.).

Pierre Sorlin (1996) describes the Italian film industry’s situation in the 1980s as “somewhat contradictory” and points out that most filmmakers “felt uneasy about it” (162). Like the other Big Five European film industries, the Italian film industry in the 1970s and 1980s became heavily influenced by television. This, according to Sorlin, was a double-edged sword. On one hand, it made the productions, that were now geared

more towards a small screen, less cinematic, while, on the other hand, it ensured the survival of the film industry per se. Sorlin writes that Italian cinema during the 1980s was able to uphold a relatively high production volume, thanks to state subsidies. However, the majority of movies did not see a theatrical release or, if released, had remarkably small audience numbers. Collaboration with television was the only option for Italian filmmakers to reach wider audiences. This not only led to the adoption of a small-screen aesthetic, but also to frustration among filmmakers, resulting in films that were reflecting their negative emotions, as the filmmakers—according to Sorlin—“mourned the glorious years of Cinecittà” (162-163). As in most other film industries in Europe, television played a crucial role not only in what films were made, but also in how these films were developed. According to Sorlin, filmmakers in 1980s Italy were rather pragmatic. He says that to them “filmmaking was a job, not a mission” and that filmmakers, except for Roberto Benigni and Nani Moretti, generally were not as well known to the public as the previous generation of Italian filmmakers (163). Possibly driven by the pragmatism in the Italian film industry, film production in the second half of the 1980s shows a rise in production from 89 films in 1985 to 125 films in 1988. The increase in production activity, however, only temporarily boosted the domestic box office success Italian films. The national film share rose from 31.8% in 1985 to 34.1% in 1987, however, dropped to 21.7% in 1989, while the U.S. film share increased from 48.1% in 1987 to 63.1% in 1989 (See Table 6.1.).

Table 6.1.: Film Production in Italy — 1985 - 1989

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Feature-length films produced	89	109	116	124	117
First-run films	356	416	497	524	482
Screens ¹	4,885	4,431	4,143	3,871	3,586
Admissions (millions)	123.1	124.9	108.8	93.1	94.8
Box-office receipts (million €)	258.4	302.1	282.4	266.7	295.3
National film share (%)	31.8	31.6	34.1	28.5	21.7
US film share (%)	48.6	51.3	48.1	57.2	63.1
European film share (%) ²	-	-	-	-	-

¹ From 1997 to 1999, theaters open more than 60 days a year; from 2000, figures compiled by CNC from data from the Osservatorio Italiano dell' Audiovisivo, source ANICA.

² In terms of admissions, except national film, according to the EAO's Lumière database. Includes films produced in Europe, mainly in the United Kingdom, by means of American investments.

Source: CNC³⁴⁴

To overcome the flaws of the Italian funding mechanisms, some of Italy's filmmakers started to reach out to producers outside of Italy's borders to get their films made. Italian broadcaster RAI, for example, passed on *The Last Emperor* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1987) because of budgetary concerns (Sorlin, 1996: 148). Bertolucci consequently looked somewhere else for funding and the film was eventually made as a U.K./U.S./Canadian/French co-production.³⁴⁵ The historical drama, based on the autobiography of Aisin-Gioro Pu Yi, was produced by U.K. producer Jeremy Thomas. Bertolucci collaborated on the screenplay originally with Enzo Ungari and later with Mark Peploe. Produced for an estimated budget of \$23 million, it won nine Academy Awards in 1988, including the awards for Best Film, Best Director and Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium. *The Last Emperor* received U.S. theatrical distribution by Columbia and grossed \$43,984,230 at the U.S. box office.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ CNC World Cinema Statistics, from <http://www.cnc.fr/web/en/sectoral-statistics>

³⁴⁵ Companies involved were U.K. production companies Recorded Picture Company (RPC), Hemdale Film, Canadian company Yanco Films Limited, U.S. company TAO Film, U.K. company Screenframe and French company AAA Soprofilms.

³⁴⁶ Box Office Mojo, "The Last Emperor: Summary," accessed on 5/18/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=lastemperor.htm>

Bertolucci, in a BBC interview, talks about the aftermath of his success at the Academy Awards:

You know for a European director the Oscar is a kind of very remote ceremony. It is something that it doesn't belong to us. Of course, the moment you get nine of it, the things change; so I felt suddenly sucked into a world, a universe, which is not my universe, which is a kind of legendary Hollywood universe. (Isaacs, 1989)

Bertolucci says he was surprised about the success of the film in the U.S. and quotes American film industry executives, congratulating him on his Oscar success, for saying that *The Last Emperor* “will make us think of the reason why we decided to be in [the] movie business” (ibid.).

While RAI’s decision against funding *The Last Emperor* backfired, reflecting conservative and somewhat counterintuitive decision-making among Italian broadcasters at the time, RAI’s decision to fund *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* (1988) showed foresight. The poetic coming of age drama, chronicling a young boy’s love for cinema and his friendship with his hometown’s movie theater projectionist, was produced by Franco Cristaldi and Giovanna Romagnoli. Gabriella Carosio was the delegate producer for RAI. Production company was Cristaldifilm, whose credits include a co-producing credit on the 1986 transnational success *Der Name der Rose*.³⁴⁷ Miramax acquired *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* for U.S. theatrical distribution at the 1989 Cannes Film Festival, where — according to Peter Biskind (2005) — “nobody else wanted it.” The over two-and-a-half hour director’s cut of the film had been unsuccessful at the Italian box office and was shortened by the Weinstein Brothers to two hours for its U.S. release (86). The film, released in the U.S. on February 2, 1990 on one screen, made \$16,552 on its opening weekend, had its widest release in 124 theaters and grossed \$11,990,401 at the U.S. box office.³⁴⁸ *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* was

³⁴⁷ Co-producer on the film was Les Films Ariane, who also was a co-producer on *Der Name der Rose* (1986). Associate producers were broadcaster Radiotelevisione Italiana, TF1 Films Production and Forum Picture.

³⁴⁸ Box Office Mojo 2009, “Movies: Cinema Paradiso: Summary,” accessed on 7/29/2009, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=cinemaparadiso.htm>

nominated for a Golden Palm and won the Grand Jury Price at the Cannes Film Festival. It also won the Special Prize of the Jury at the European Film Awards; and the shortened Weinstein version went on to win an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 1989.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSNATIONAL FILMS IN ITALY IN THE 1990S

The close artistic, as well as financial, ties between the film and television industry continued into the 1990s and many Italian films by then shared some of their characteristics with television. According to Sorlin (1996),

Most films in the 1980s and early 1990s were intended to be suitable for television, partly because broadcasting was the best way of finding an audience but mostly because many directors, long used to watching television programmes, had learned something from the small screen. (159)

Television turned out to play a substantial role in the transformation of the Italian media landscape. By the 1990s, the number of movie tickets sold in Italy had declined from 500 million in the mid-1960s to 100 million (147). The number of screens was significantly reduced as thousands of small theaters in the urban periphery closed down (*ibid.*). The Italian distribution landscape was dominated by U.S. distributors and despite Italian production levels were maintained at about 100 films per year, the majority of Italian films saw only extremely short releases in selected theaters and one-third of Italian films never even made it into movie theaters (*ibid.*). While Italian theatrical audiences—from what Sorlin defines as “the fifth generation”—preferred U.S. blockbuster films, leading to Hollywood taking a 70 percent share of the Italian box office in the early 1990s—television audiences favored Italian productions (*ibid.*). In fact, to satisfy the demand of Italian television audiences, in addition to programming U.S. sitcoms, Italian television stations also programmed a plethora of Italian film classics, which—in conjunction with the evolving video market—according to Sorlin, resulted in the fifth generation of Italian audiences becoming “much more acquainted with the past and the evolution of cinema than any previous generation” (Sorlin 1996: 147). In 1990 one-third of the films produced in Italy had financing

elements from television, and as Sorlin points out, “without television, most studios would have been obliged to close down” (147-148). Support from television not only benefited established directors but also served as careers-starters for soon-to-thrive Italian directors like Maurizio Nichetti and Gabriele Salvatores (148).

The number of feature films produced in Italy in the 1990s ranged from 87 to 129 films. The national film share ranged from as low as 17.3% to 24.9% in 1996. The U.S. film share at the Italian box was as high as 70% in 1990 and as low as 46.7% in 1997. European films had a box office share of up to 15.5% in 1997 (See Table 6.2).

Table 6.2.: Film Production in Italy — 1990 – 1999

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Feature-length films produced	119	129	127	106	95	75	99	87	92	108
First-run films	495	430	437	397	373	343	390	382	396	404
Screens ¹	3,293	3,338	3,522	3,567	3,617	3,816	4,004	2,456	2,619	2,839
Admissions (millions) ²	90.7	88.6	83.6	92.2	98.2	90.7	96.5	102.8	118.5	103.5
Box-office receipts (million €)	313.8	339.8	342.5	391.9	425.4	411.8	425.0	496.5	589.3	532.9
National film share (%)	21.0	26.8	24.4	17.3	23.7	21.1	24.9	32.9	24.7	24.1
U.S. film share (%)	70.0	58.6	59.4	70.0	61.4	63.2	59.7	46.7	63.8	53.1
European film share (%) ³	-	-	-	-	-	13.8	11.5	15.5	12.4	14.3

¹ From 1997 to 1999, rooms opened more than 60 days a year; from 2000,, figures compiled by in from data from the Osservatorio Italiano dell' Audiovisivo, source ANICA.

² In terms of admissions, except national film, according to the EAO's Lumière database. It includes films produced in Europe, mainly in the United Kingdom, by means of American investments.

Source: CNC³⁴⁹

One of the substantial problems of the Italian film industry in the first half of the 1990s was in the exhibition area. According to Sorlin, “distribution was dominated by American companies, which supplied 60 per cent of the exhibitors and favoured American films.” Sorlin points out that “a third of Italian movies were never released and a third were only presented in down-town cinemas for a few days.” Sorlin says that producers and filmmakers put the blame for the dire situation on the television networks, which showed as much as 100 films per week (ibid.). The actual cause for the decline, however, according to Sorlin, can be found in “important sociological changes” in audience demographics between the 1960 and the 1980s. According to Sorlin,

[...] spectators, in the fifth generation, belonged in the main to the middle class and were mostly young and had a secondary school education. They did not

³⁴⁹ CNC World Cinema Statistics, from <http://www.cnc.fr/web/en/sectoral-statistics>

despise television, they bought or hired video cassettes and CDs, and felt at home in the ‘commercialized’ culture. Unlike the members of the fourth generation, they were neither highly interested in the history or theory of cinema nor fond of intellectual, sophisticated films. What they liked most were American spectaculars, *Jurassic Park*, *Forrest Gump* and *Batman Forever* [...] (147)

In terms of transnational quality of Italian cinema in the 1990s, Italian filmmakers expressed an interest in working on European stories—based on European literature originating outside of Italy. Carlo Testa (2002) states that the 1990s saw a “quantitative and qualitative revival in productions,” a number of them “inspired by European literary texts.” Among the films with links to French literature, he names *Il portaborse* (*The Footman*, Daniele Luchetti, 1991), *Morte di un matematico napoletano* (*Death of a Neapolitan Mathematician*, Mario Martone, 1992), *L'uomo che guarda* (*The Voyeur*, Tinto Brass, 1994), the aforementioned *Al di là delle nuvole* (*Beyond the Clouds*, Michelangelo Antonioni & Wim Wenders, 1995), *The Novel of a Young Man in Poverty* (1995) and *Esercizi di stile* (*Exercises in Style*, Sergio Citti et al., 1996). Among the films with links to German literature, he addresses *Mio caro dottor Gräsler* (*The Bachelor*, Roberto Faenza, 1991), *Le affinità elettive* (*Elective Affinities*, Paolo & Vittorio Taviani, 1996), *Il sogno della farfalla* (*The Butterfly's Dream*, Marco Bellocchio, 1994), *Il principe di Homburg* (*The Prince of Homburg*, Marco Bellocchio, 1997) and *Viol@* (Donatella Maiorca, 1998). Two films during the period, according to Testa, drew on Russian literature traditions: *Il sole anche di notte* (*The Sun Also Shines at Night*, Paolo & Vittorio Taviani, 1990) and *Lamerica* (Gianni Amelio, 1994) (182).

From 1992 to 1995, the number of Italian national productions was in steady decline, decreasing from 114 in 1992 to 60 in 1995 (EAO 1998: 32). 1993 marked a historic low for Italian film production. The domestic box office share of Italian films dropped to 16% and only one Italian film, Gabriele Salvatores' *Puerto Escondido*, made it into the Top 10 at the Italian box office. The three by far most successful films at Italy's box office in 1992 were the U.S. imports *Beauty and the Beast* (Gary

Trousdale & Kirk Wise, 1991), *Basic Instinct* (Paul Verhoeven, 1992) and *The Bodyguard* (Mick Jackson, 1992) (223).

While the development phase, by the mid-1990s, still was a stepchild of the film funding bodies in most of the Big Five film producing countries, it was especially neglected in Italy. The latter, according to Angus Finney (1996) had no development support at all. Funding for development was only available through “Premio Solinas,” a privately-operated fund giving money to only five screenwriters a year (33). While a new film law passed in 1994, which provided production finance support for 15-20 films per year, this situation did not change, as no development funding was added to the film subsidy system (ibid).

A generally adverse funding environment in the 1990s, characterized by film producers’ dependence on television financing, resulted in some of the more significant “Italian” films of the 1990s being made outside of Italy. An example is Bertolucci’s film *The Sheltering Sky* (1990), which, like *The Last Emperor*, was produced without any support from Italian funding entities. Based on the 1949 novel by Paul Bowles, *The Sheltering Sky* was co-written by Mark Peploe and Bernardo Bertolucci and featured Debra Winger, John Malkovich and Campbell Scott. Like *The Last Emperor*, the film was produced by Jeremy Thomas.³⁵⁰ *The Sheltering Sky* can be considered as one of the outstanding transnational properties originating from Europe. It was nominated for a 1991 Golden Globe for Best Director, won a Golden Globe for Best Original Score, received U.S. theatrical distribution by Warner Bros. and generated \$2,075,084 at the U.S. box office.

Critically acclaimed as well, yet falling short at the U.S. box office, was the Italian production *Porte aperte* (*Open Doors*, 1990). Directed by Gianni Amelio, written by Amelio, Vincenzo Cerami and Alessandro Sermoneta,³⁵¹ and produced by

³⁵⁰ Production companies involved were U.K. companies Recorded Picture Company (RPC) and Film Trustees Ltd., U.S. studio Warner Bros. Pictures, and U.S. companies Aldrich Group, Sahara Company and TAO Film.

³⁵¹ Based on a novel by Leonardo Sciascia.

Angelo Rizzoli Jr.,³⁵² *Porte Aperte* was nominated for an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film and theatrically released in 1991 by Orion Classics, grossing \$123,470.³⁵³

More successful in the U.S. was Giuseppe Tornatore's follow-up to *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* (1988), the Italian/French/U.K. co-production *Stanno tutti bene* (*Everybody's Fine*, 1990). The drama, starring Marcello Mastroianni, Michèle Morgan and Valeria Cavalli, was written by Massimo De Rita, Tonino Guerra and Giuseppe Tornatore and produced—like *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* and *Porte Aperte*—by Angelo Rizzoli Jr.³⁵⁴ Like *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso*, *Stanno tutti bene* was picked up by Miramax for U.S. theatrical distribution, and grossed \$1,745,470 at the U.S. box office.

The moderate global success of European co-productions like *Stanno tutti bene* encouraged a further increase of investment in films with transnational potential. In 1991 Italian investment into international co-productions, which had been growing during the 1980s, reached its peak at LIT 556 million (EAO 1998: 93). However, transnational success was not reserved for European co-productions alone. Italian cinema's potential for international marketability became apparent again when *Mediterraneo* in 1992 won the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film. *Mediterraneo* was directed by Gabriele Salvatores, written by Enzo Monteleone and produced by Silvio Berlusconi, Mario Cecchi Gori, Vittorio Cecchi Gori and Gianni Minervini.³⁵⁵ The R-rated film was picked up by Miramax Films for U.S. distribution and made \$4,532,791 at the U.S. box office. However, according to Lorenzo Codelli (1993), "the 'Oscar effect,' beyond the avalanche of self-congratulations and contrary to what

³⁵² Production companies associated with the film were Erre Produzioni, Istituto Luce, whose producing activities date back to 1927, and veteran production company Ital-Noleggio Cinematografico, Italian broadcaster Radiotelevisione Italiana (RAI), production and distribution company SACIS and production company Urania Film.

³⁵³ IMDb, "Box office / business for Open Doors (1990)," accessed on 7/2/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0100389/business>

³⁵⁴ Production companies involved were Italian production companies Erre Produzioni, Silvio Berlusconi Communications, U.K. production company Sovereign Pictures and French companies Les Films Ariane and TF1 Films Production.

³⁵⁵ Production companies involved were A.M.A. Film, Penta Film and Silvio Berlusconi Communications.

happened only two years ago for *Cinema Paradiso's* award, did not induce any illusions of possible renaissance in a thoroughly disaffected industry" (235).

Among other outstanding transnational films at the Italian box office in 1992 was Roberto Benigni's romantic crime comedy *Johnny Stecchino*, one of the highest grossing films in Italian box office history (Codelli 1993: 234). The film was written by Roberto Benigni and Vincenzo Cerami and produced by Mario and Vittorio Cecchi Gori. Production companies involved were Cecchi Gori Group Tiger Cinematografica, Penta Film and Silvio Berlusconi Communications. The film received U.S. theatrical distribution by New Line Cinema, yet fell short at the U.S. box office, generating only \$626,057.

L'uomo delle stelle (*The Star Maker*, 1995), directed by Giuseppe Tornatore, written by Fabio Rinaudo and Giuseppe Tornatore and produced by Vittorio Cecchi Gori and Rita Rusic, received an Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Language Film. *The Star Maker* was picked up by Miramax Films and grossed \$371,674 at the U.S. box office.³⁵⁶ The relatively modest U.S. box office results showed that the tremendous transnational success of *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* was not easily repeatable for Tornatore. The reviews of the film were mixed. *Variety* film critic David Rooney reviewed the film rather harshly, but in terms of box office results quite accurately. He called it a "gorgeously produced tourism commercial for the Italian island, this threadbare tale of a cocky con man's painful comeuppance has very little heart and, consequently, conjures few real emotions." Rooney suggested that by "tightening of its rambling midsection, the Miramax pickup may be improved, but its commercial constellation looks limited" (Rooney 1996). *New York Times* Film critic Janet Maslin, while calling it "an homage to cinema and Sicily, both well worthy of such fond attention," criticized the film for its fundamental narrative problems. According to Maslin, "it's not the coherent narrative it appears to be, since the screenplay by Tornatore ('Cinema Paradiso') and Fabio Rinaudo isn't much more than an occasion for

³⁵⁶ Box Office Mojo 2009, "Movies: The Star Maker," accessed on 7/29/2009, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=starmaker.htm>

stringing together anecdotes and gentle observations” (Maslin 2006). Maslin’s criticism seems to reiterate the importance of a well-developed story for a movie’s international success. The weak box office performance of *L'uomo delle stele*, compared to *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso*, also suggests that the Weinstein’s editing efforts might have substantially contributed to the latter’s success in North America.

Tornatore’s next film *La leggenda del pianista sull'oceano* (*The Legend of 1900*, 1998) also flopped at the U.S. box office. The film was written by Tornatore and Alessandro Baricco, produced by Francesco Tornatore and executive produced by Marco Chimenz and Laura Fattori.³⁵⁷ The \$9 million³⁵⁸ period drama *La leggenda del pianista sull'oceano* tells the story of a baby left on a turn-of-the-century cruise liner, which was raised by the crew and grew up to become one of the greatest pianists of its time, without ever leaving the ship. Like with Tornatore’s other films, the version released in the U.S. was a shortened one. American critics were split about the film: Some loved it, others hated it. The lack of critical support might have hurt the film. *La leggenda del pianista sull'oceano* was produced for an estimated \$9 million and drew 1,036,850 viewers into theaters in the European Union.³⁵⁹ Theatrically distributed by Fine Line features in the U.S., it grossed only \$167,435.³⁶⁰

Produced in the same year as *La leggenda del pianista sull'oceano*, another Italian film managed to put Italian cinema into the global spotlight again. The film was the romantic comedy drama *La vita è bella* (*Life Is Beautiful*), directed by Roberto Benigni, written by Vincenzo Cerami and Roberto Benigni and produced by Gianluigi Braschi, Elda Ferri and John M.Davis, the producer of the English-language version. *La vita è*

³⁵⁷ Production companies involved were Italian companies Medusa Produzione and Sciarlò.

³⁵⁸ Box Office Mojo 2011, “The Legend of 1900,” accessed on 7/11/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=legendof1900.htm>

³⁵⁹ Lumiere, “La leggenda del pianista sull'oceano,” accessed on 7/11/2011, from http://lumiere.obs.coe.int/web/film_info/?id=8143

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

bella was nominated for seven Academy Awards,³⁶¹ making it one of the most successful foreign films in Oscar history. *Life Is Beautiful* not only resonated well with the members of the Academy, but also with American audiences. Distributed by Miramax, it grossed \$57,247,384 at the U.S. box office.³⁶² While this made it a true success story for an Italian movie in the U.S., the film's international performance was even more impressive. *La vita è bella* grossed \$171.6 million worldwide theatrically (non-U.S.)³⁶³ and significantly helped to boost the Italian box office that year. The market share of Italian cinema in 1998 ended up being 27 percent (Codelli 1998: 198).

Overall, the second half of the 1990s was a relatively unstable period for the Italian film industry. Feature film production in 1997 went down to 87 films from 99 in 1996. Italian investment in co-productions in 1997 decreased to 321.9 billion (EAO 1998: 33). During the late 1990s, individual films kept creating new sparks of excitement for the volatile Italian film industry. In 1997, for example, the Italian romantic comedy *Fuochi d'artificio* (*Fireworks*, Leonardo Pieraccioni, 1997) ranked number one at the Italian box office and, the aforementioned, *La vita è bella*, ranked third. Among other films, successful at the Italian box office that year, were comedy drama *Ovosodo* (*Hardboiled Egg*, Paolo Virzì, 1997), ranked ninth; adventure comedy *A spasso nel tempo: l'avventura continua* (Carlo Vanzina, 1997), ranked 13th; and comedy *Uomo d'acqua dolce* (Antonio Albanese, 1997), ranked 17th (EAO 1998: 44). What these films showed, was that Italian comedies, romantic comedies and comedy dramas were able to compete with their U.S. counterparts at the Italian box office, and—in the cases of *La vita è bella* and *Fuochi d'artificio*³⁶⁴—work as pan-European and global properties. In 1999, for the first time since 1993, more than 100 films were

³⁶¹ Including Best Director, Best Film Editing, Best Picture, Best Writing - Screenplay Written Directly for the Screen, and won three Academy Awards for best Foreign Language Film, Best Music - Original Dramatic Score, and Best Actor in a Leading Role.

³⁶² Box Office Mojo 2009, "Life is Beautiful," accessed on 7/29/2009, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=lifeisbeautiful.htm>

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ U.S. distributor Milestone released *Fuochi d'artificio* in a total of 12 theaters leading to a U.S. theatrical gross of \$500,000. Box Office Mojo, 2011, "Fireworks: Summary," accessed on 11/27/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=fireworks.htm>

produced in Italy, 92 Italian national films and 16 co-productions (EAO 2000: 35). Overall, Italian cinema during the course of the 1990s was predominantly domestically oriented. This might be partially attributable to the dependence of cinema on television financing resulting in a focus on the small, domestic screen.

The following section looks at whether a change to that situation can be observed in the first decade of the new millennium.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITALIAN TRANSNATIONAL FILMS IN THE 2000S

As Table 6.3. shows, the number of feature film produced in Italy in the 2000s ranged from 103 in 2000 and 2001 to 154 in 2008. The national film share ranged from 17.5% in 2000 to 29.3% in 2010. The U.S. film share declined from 69.5% in 2000 to 60.2% in 2008. The European film share at the Italian box office was as high as 21.1% in 2005 and, while primarily in the 12% to 14% range, overall considerably higher than in Spain, the U.K., Germany and France.

Table 6.3.: Film Production in Italy — 2000 - 2010

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010 ¹
Feature-length films produced	103	103	130	117	134	98	116	121	154	131	141
First-run films	435	410	393	428	392	430	385	370	376	355	380
Screens ¹	2,496	2,662	2,839	3,038	3,171	3,280	3,062	3,092	3,141	3,276	3,217
Admissions (millions) ²	104.2	113.3	115.6	110.5	116.3	105.6	106.1	116.4	111.6	111.2	123.4
Box-office receipts (mill.€)	545.8	600.7	654.0	614.8	660.5	602.0	606.7	669.9	645.0	676.1	797.2
National film share (%)	17.5	19.4	22.2	21.8	20.3	24.7	24.8	31.7	28.9	23.4	29.3
U.S. film share (%)	69.5	59.7	60.2	64.5	61.9	53.8	61.9	55.4	60.2	63.5	60.2
European film share (%) ³	12.6	19.3	16.3	12.3	10.7	21.1	14.2	14.8	8.9	12.5	n.d.

¹ Provisional data.

² From 1997 to 1999, rooms opened more than 60 days a year; from 2000, numbers from the Osservatorio Italiano dell' Audiovisivo, source ANICA.

³ In terms of admissions, except national film, according to the EAO'S Lumière database. Includes films produced in Europe, mainly in the U.K., by means of U.S. investments.

Source: CNC³⁶⁵

In the early 2000s, the amount of government subsidies for Italian films, due to a mandatory 10 percent contribution of free TV's ad revenues, was substantial. Between 2001 and 2005, €428 million of film subsidies were paid out to Italian producers (Betts 2007). The 243 films made that were supported by these subsidies, however, only made €76 million back and €83 million were spent on films that never even got a release (ibid.). Investment in film production, however, increased from €211 in 2001 to €278 in 2002, partially spurred by the newly implemented subsidy structures, and the number

³⁶⁵ CNC World Cinema Statistics, from <http://www.cnc.fr/web/en/sectoral-statistics>

of films produced in Italy rose to 130 films in 2002. 96 national films and 34 co-productions were associated with the increase in production activity (EAO 2003: 35).

Until the mid-2000s, the Italian film industry kept its steady output of primarily national films, geared at the Italian market, interspersed with European co-productions, targeted—with mixed success—at both the Italian and the pan-European markets. While a number of films—mostly structured as European co-productions—appeared specifically targeted at the global film market, the share of these films is comparatively low compared to the other Big Five film industries. While Italy has a long tradition of creating transnational properties, it fell surprisingly short in that area during the 1990s and 2000s, most likely hindered by adverse industry conditions and a detrimental political regime.

U.S. STUDIO SUBSIDIARY ACTIVITY IN ITALY

Like in other European markets in the 1990s and 2000s, U.S. studios' interest in operating subsidiaries in Italy, both in the distribution as well as the production area, was manifested at individually varying levels. Throughout the 1990s and up to the late 2000s, U.S. studio engagement in Italy had been primarily in the distribution area. Warner Bros. for example pre-bought and released *Giorni e nuvole (Days and Clouds)*, Silvio Soldini, 2007). It invested \$1.6 million into marketing the film, leading to an Italian box office gross of \$6 million. The film's Italian producer Lionello Cerri valued Warner Bros. as “an attentive partner.” He says, “the film was launched very well, the trailer and posters were perfect and they selected the right cinemas to place it in” (Jennings 2008).

The involvement of the U.S. studios in both distribution as well as production in Italy is driven by the goal to participate in the broader trend of local productions regaining domestic market share in many European film markets. The U.S. studios' involvement at both the production and distribution stages in the Italian film industry in the late 2000s, indicates a certain level of U.S. influence, not only on a share of productions emerging from Italy, but also on the Italian production culture and in

particular on development models of Italian films. Italian film producer Riccardo Tozzi says, the U.S. studio presence in Italy “enriches Italian distribution and is very positive for us.” Tozzi, whose film *My Brother Is An Only Child* (2007) was distributed by Warner Bros. in Italy, says, “the first contract with a US major is complicated,” but after completion of the initial paperwork, he describes the interactions with the studio as “very smooth” (Jennings 2008). Warner Bros. Entertainment Italia can be considered as the most active U.S. studio subsidiary in Italy. The studio subsidiary’s president Paolo Ferrari says that they “are open to all formulas [...] from distribution to the development of screenplays, to partial financing or total financing of various projects” (ibid.). Films with Warner Bros. participation are primarily targeted at the Italian market, according to Ferrari (Jennings 2008). The strategy of creating blockbuster films at the national level, is the most common for U.S. subsidiaries involved in the Italian as well as the other Big Five European film industries. That it does not always live up to expectations, demonstrates the Warner Bros. release of *Amore, bugie e calcetto* (*Love, Soccer And Other Catastrophes*, Luca Lucini, 2008). The romantic comedy was shot for an estimated budget of €4 million and grossed €1,400,133 at the Italian box office.³⁶⁶ Despite falling short of projected revenues, the U.S. major stuck to its strategy. According to the president of Twentieth Century Fox Italy, Osvaldo De Santis, Fox’s Italian subsidiary has “a mandate from (parent company) News Corp to increase all manner of investment in local product” (Jennings 2008).

Among other U.S. film industry entities active in the Italian film industry, has been the Walt Disney Company through its distribution subsidiary Buena Vista International Italia Distribution. Its senior VP and general manager Paul Zonderland says, “it’s my goal to marry the Disney brand and the Italian brand. Both are cinemas with strong emotions and a strong heritage” (Jennings 2008). Disney quickly established itself as a regular contributor to the Italian box office. For example, it acted as a co-production partner on the comedy *Questa notte è ancora nostra* (Paolo

³⁶⁶ IMDb 2011, “Box office / business for Amore, bugie e calcetto (2008),” accessed on 3/19/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1073655/business>

Genovese & Luca Miniero, 2008), about a mortician's journey of changing trades and forming a local pop group. The 12 writing credits on the film suggest a Hollywood-style development process, or, even more so, "Development Hell." *Questa notte è ancora nostra* made €3,185,600 at the Italian box office. Despite Disney's involvement, there was no apparent effort made to bring the film to U.S. theaters and even within Europe the film played primarily in Italian theaters. The only other European country the film opened in was Switzerland, where it only had 514 admissions.³⁶⁷

Italian Transnational Romantic Dramas, Comedic Dramas and Comedies in the 2000s

Giuseppe Tornatore, one of the few internationally marketable Italian directors in during the 1980s and 1990s, started the new millennium with *Malèna* (2000), another internationally marketable film, albeit not quite as successful as some of his past titles. The romantic drama is based on an idea that was pitched to Tornatore in the late 1980s (Mottram 2000).³⁶⁸ Giuseppe Tornatore wrote the screenplay, based on the story by Luciano Vincenzoni, and Carlo Bernasconi and Harvey Weinstein produced the film.³⁶⁹ When asked about his working relationship with the latter, Tornatore says:

I know Harvey very well, though this is the first movie I have done with him as producer. He has already distributed three of my movies. But whether he is the producer or distributor, it's the same because when he decides to love a movie it belongs to him! It's a good relationship. There is a great respect for each another [sic]. (Mottram 2000)

Malèna was nominated for two Golden Globes, one of them for Best Foreign Language Film; two Oscars, one for Best Music—Original Score, and one for Best

³⁶⁷ Lumiere Database, accessed on 7/7/2011, from http://lumiere.obs.coe.int/web/film_info?id=30708

³⁶⁸ When Tornatore later shot a commercial with model Monica Bellucci, he felt inspired to make a movie with her. Tornatore pitched the story to Bellucci, who liked it, and five years later Tornatore called her and cast her for the movie (Mottram 2000).

³⁶⁹ Production companies on *Malèna* were Italian companies Medusa Produzione, Pacific Pictures, Tele+, and U.S. production/distribution company Miramax Films.

Cinematography; a BAFTA award for Best Film not in the English Language; a Golden Bear and a number of other European and international awards. Theatrically distributed in the U.S. by Miramax, it grossed \$3,448,233 at the U.S. box office and \$11,045,051 internationally (non-U.S.).³⁷⁰

Somewhat of a surprise hit was the romantic drama *Pane e tulipani* (*Bread and Tulips*, Silvio Soldini, 2000). The co-production between Italian entities Istituto Luce, Rai Cinemafiction, Monogatari and Swiss entities Amka Films Productions, Televisione Svizzera Italiana (TSI) not only won awards in its home territory, but also performed well on a pan-European as well as on a global level. The film was picked up in the U.S. by niche distributor First Look and made \$5,318,679 at the U.S. box office.³⁷¹ *Pane e tulipani* tells the story of a woman breaking out of her everyday routine and deciding to take life into her own hands. The film's protagonist, when accidentally left behind at a rest stop during a family vacation, sets out on a vacation on her own and eventually ventures into a new life with a new partner, abandoning her nuclear family. It is conceivable that the film's U.S. success can be attributed to a lack of stories with strong middle-aged female protagonists in the U.S. market, and that *Pane e tulipani* filled a niche in a market that is generally more focused on younger, male audiences.

Similarly successful internationally was *L'ultimo bacio* (*The Last Kiss*, Gabriele Muccino, 2001), a romantic comedy drama about a late-twenties group of friends, one of them a father-to-be, who, afraid of the ultimate commitment, embarks on a fling with another woman. The film, written and directed by Gabriele Muccino, was an Italian national production, produced by Domenico Procacci for Fandango and Medusa Produzione. It not only ranked number three at the Italian box office in 2001, with 2,338,102 admissions, but was also a modest transnational success, generating

³⁷⁰ Box Office Mojo, 2011, "Malena," accessed on 11/27/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=malena.htm>

³⁷¹ Box Office Mojo, 2011, "Bread and Tulips: Summary," accessed on 6/2/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=breadandtulips.htm>

\$17,720,347 at the global box office, \$1,048,950 of which from the U.S. market.³⁷² The film won the Audience Award in the World Cinema category at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival and turned Gabriele Muccino into an internationally marketable director and led to a development deal with Miramax (Cavagna 2004). The story's universal nature and its appeal to a 20s demographic most likely contributed to the film's success in the U.S. and it inspiring a U.S. remake.³⁷³

Muccino's next film, *Ricordati di me (Remember Me, My Love, 2003)*, a romantic comedy drama about unfulfilled married life and ways of coping—featuring Monica Bellucci in a supporting role—skewed slightly older. The film, written by Muccino and Heidrun Schleef, and produced by Domenico Procacci, grossed €2,976,745 at the Italian box office, but only \$223,878 at the U.S. box office.³⁷⁴

Muccino is an interesting case: he makes Hollywood-style movies in an Italian setting and—by making some of them universal enough—also has a certain degree of success in the U.S. This success led him to offers from Hollywood, as U.S. production are known to be open to working with talented European directors. Hollywood appreciates European directors not only for bringing new perspectives to big budget blockbuster movies, but also considers them “easier to control” than their more established U.S. counterparts.³⁷⁵ Muccino's subsequent two features were set in the U.S., and produced by U.S. producers and written by U.S. writers. The first one, *The Pursuit of Happyness* (2006), starring Will Smith, Thandie Newton and Jaden Smith, was written by Steve Conrad and produced by Columbia Pictures, Relativity Media, Overbrook Entertainment and Escape Artists. The second one, *Seven Pounds* (2008),

³⁷² Box Office Mojo 2011, “The Last Kiss: Summary,” accessed on 3/7/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=lastkiss.htm>

³⁷³ Its U.S. remake *The Last Kiss* (2006) was directed by Tony Goldwyn, starring Zach Braff, Jacinda Barrett and Rachel Bilson, which was adapted from the original by Academy Award winning screenwriter/director Paul Haggis.

³⁷⁴ IMDb 2011, “Box office / business for *Remember Me, My Love* (2003),” accessed on 11/3/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0323807/business>

³⁷⁵ According to several industry sources I conversed with.

produced by the same production companies, starring Will Smith, Rosario Dawson and Woody Harrelson, was written by Grant Nieporte.

Both movies were shot for substantially higher budgets than his previous movies, both for an estimated \$55 million, and also grossed substantially more, \$163,566,459 and \$69,951,824 at the U.S. and \$304,850,102 and \$168,167,691 at the worldwide box office, respectively. Talking about his experiences of working in the U.S. film industry, Muccino says, “It’s like working [in] two different lanes—one is Italian, which is definitely easier.” In the U.S., he says:

I never would have done four movies in six years. The system is very complicated. It's very heavy; it's very slow. Too many managers, too many agents, too many interests. You can't just pick up the phone and call your actor and say, ‘Do want to make it?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘Okay, it's done.’ This is how it works in Europe, basically. (Cavagna 2004)

Nevertheless, Muccino says, he wants to make movies in the U.S. and adds, “I hope it's going to happen. I'll be working for that.” However, he stresses, that for his “[...] sanity, I need to keep working in Europe, because it's easier, and then I also have an audience waiting for my movies, and I don't want to keep them too long without any” (ibid.).

Muccino, reflecting on the relatively universal nature of his narratives, offers some interesting observations. He says that the audience reactions to his movies at film festivals in the U.S. are similar to the audience reactions he experienced in France and Italy. Muccino says, “last night [at a screening] at the Egyptian [Theater in Hollywood], I even noticed that they were catching little details that were not caught in Italy. Being distant from the culture [allows] you to see even more things, paradoxically.” He concludes,

[...] obviously we are becoming very much globalized, so we have the same problems; we have the same TV shows; we have the same terror problems. Obviously, the background, the cultures are still different, but not so much. The families' problems are mainly the same. (ibid.)

Asked about distribution prospects of Italian cinema in the U.S., Muccino talks about the difficulties involved for Italian films to find U.S. distribution. According to him, the reason is that U.S. distributors “don't know how to promote the contemporary stories of Italian cinema” (ibid.). As examples, he mentions the challenges of finding U.S. distribution for his movies *Come te nessuno mai* (*But Forever in My Mind*, 1999) and *L'ultimo bacio* (*The Last Kiss*, 2001). Muccino says, *L'ultimo bacio* was passed on by Miramax, Sony Pictures Classics, Paramount Classics and Fine Line, and was finally acquired by ThinkFilm, which bought it for one of the reasons the other companies had rejected it for: “because it wasn't portraying the idea of Italy that American audiences have” (Cavagna 2004). Muccino says, “if you set a movie in a very exotic island in Italy, or Sicily, or Naples, that kind of Mediterranean [setting], it's easier for them to promote it” (ibid.). Muccino stresses the importance for Italian filmmakers to create a new “tradition” at the U.S. box office. If films like his will start to succeed in the U.S., he says, “then suddenly we'll be like the French cinema. It will be easier. But for now it's easier for them to promote films like *Il Postino* than this one” (ibid.).

Italian Co-Productions and Transnational Reach in the 2000s

The chances of co-productions with Italian involvement turning into transnational properties in the 2000s continued to be higher than for Italian national productions. An example of a successful European co-production with Italy as a majority co-producing partner is the Italian/French co-production *La stanza del figlio* (Nanni Moretti, 2001), which, with 1,153,619 admissions, ranked number 15th at the Italian box office (EAO 2002: 35) and made \$11,767,402 at the global box office, \$1,016,340 of which earned from a Miramax release in the U.S.³⁷⁶

Even more prominent among Italian co-productions in the early 2000s was the Italian/French/German co-production *Pinocchio* (Roberto Benigni, 2002), budgeted at

³⁷⁶ Box Office Mojo 2011, “The Son's Room: Summary,” accessed on 7/11/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=sonsroom.htm>

€40 million.³⁷⁷ The adaptation of the European children's book classic of the same name, was directed by Roberto Benigni and written by Vincenzo Cerami and Roberto Benigni, based on the novel by Carlo Collodi. The English version of the script was written by Brendan Donnison. Gianluigi Braschi, Nicoletta Braschi and Elda Ferri produced *Pinocchio*.³⁷⁸ A dubbed version of the film was theatrically released by Miramax Films in the U.S., where it grossed \$3,684,305 U.S.,³⁷⁹ falling far short of Miramax's expectations. The Italian/French/German co-production only performed at blockbuster level in Italy, where it grossed \$25,654,379 at the box office.³⁸⁰ Its performance in the territories of its co-producing partners, with \$143,062 in Germany and \$1,352,731 in France respectively, fell similarly short.³⁸¹ The discrepancy between the film's Italian, pan-European and U.S. box office raises intriguing questions about the factors contributing to the film's uneven performance. *Pinocchio* received extremely negative U.S. reviews, scoring 0% on Rotten Tomatoes. None of the fifty reviews Rotten Tomatoes used to calculate this score saw the film in a favorable light, which is a rather rare occurrence. Interestingly, the perceived poor quality of the film, to some extent was attributed to the dubbing of the film. Jonathan Rosenbaum, film critic for the *Chicago Reader*, writes:

The recut American version is truly awful, but a good 75 percent of the awfulness is attributable to Miramax, the film's distributor. Collodi's *The Adventures of Pinocchio* is so quintessentially Italian that it loses much of its meaning and most of its flavor when its Italianness is removed — which is precisely what's accomplished by the slipshod and badly lip-synched dubbing here, leaving the remainder of the film a wreck. (Rosenbaum 2002)

³⁷⁷ IMDb, "Box office/business for *Pinocchio* (2002)," accessed on 11/27/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0255477/business>

³⁷⁸ Production companies involved were Melampo Cinematografica and Cecchi Gori Group in collaboration with Buena Vista International.

³⁷⁹ Box Office Mojo 2009, "Movies: *Pinocchio*: Summary," accessed on 7/30/2009, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=pinocchio02.htm>

³⁸⁰ Box Office Mojo, 2011, "*Pinocchio*: Foreign," accessed on 11/27/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=pinocchio02.htm>

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

The failure of *Pinocchio* at the U.S. box office could support the common notion of film industry professionals that American audiences dislike dubbed films. However, the problem with the film does not necessarily seem to lie in the fact that the film was dubbed, but in the fact that it was *poorly* dubbed. Considering that the film was well received in Europe, the question arises, whether the weak performance and reception had to do with poor dubbing or whether the film just did not translate. For Benigni the question would most likely appear more or less academic. The failure of *Pinocchio* in the U.S. had severely harmed his reputation delivering critically acclaimed, award-winning and highly profitable transnational properties.

Italian Transnational Thrillers in the 2000s

The first half of the 2000s saw a number of Italian screen adaptations of popular books. The Italian/Spanish/U.K. co-production *Io non ho paura (I'm Not Scared)*, Gabriele Salvatores, 2003) is one of them. The thriller was directed by director Gabriele Salvatores, written by Niccolò Ammaniti and Francesca Marciano, based on the bestselling novel by Niccolò Ammaniti, and produced by Marco Chimenz, Giovanni Stabilini, Maurizio Totti and Riccardo Tozzi. The story is about a rural Italian boy who discovers a kidnapping plot and soon realizes that he can trust nobody, not even his own family. Salvatores, asked about what attracted him to the story, says,

This particular book became a bestseller in Italy and it was a point of reference for many young people in Italy. What I really liked about this novel was the possibility to express the rite of passage from childhood to adulthood as if it were a thriller. There is certainly something frightening about the loss of innocence. (Chau 2004)

Asked about whether the relatively literal adaptation from the novel to the film was Salvatores' intention, he responds:

In past films, it was necessary to go against the book in a certain way and not be as faithful to the original novels. As in a love affair, sometimes having to be unfaithful can fix things a little bit. (Laughs) But when things go well, as in true in this case, it is unnecessary to be unfaithful. (Chau 2004)

He says that he had “actually asked Niccolo Ammaniti, the author of the novel, to write the screenplay so I could remain as faithful as possible to the original idea of the story” (ibid.). Asked about the level of creative influence he had in the creation of Ammaniti’s screenplay, Salvatores says that he,

[...] did have the opportunity to work with Niccolo on the screenplay even if he was the one responsible for the screenplay. For example, I asked Niccolo to remove all the scenes where Michele and the protagonist were not present because I wanted everything to be discovered through the eyes of the protagonist. We also decided together to make the end clearer than what it was originally thought to be. Niccolo wasn’t happy the way the public saw the end of the novel and he wanted [...] the public to be sure of his vision. (Aames 2004)

Unlike many European auteur filmmakers, Salvatores did not take co-writing credit for the screenplay and—according to his own statements about the creative process—kept the changes to the screenplay relatively minimal. Salvatores’ way of working suggests a more Hollywood-style collaboration process between the director and the screenwriter, instead of an auteur approach. *Io non ho paura* was very well received, not only in Italy, but also on a pan-European level and even made some inroads into the U.S. market. It grossed \$7,354,418 theatrically worldwide and was distributed by Miramax in the U.S., where it grossed \$1,615,118 at the box office. The films’ success supports the notion that films in the thriller genre typically travel well internationally.

Italian Comedies and Comedy Dramas in the 2000s

Among transnational comedies originating in Italy in the 2000s was the Italian/U.S. co-production *La tigre e la neve* (*The Tiger and the Snow*, Roberto Benigni, 2005). The romantic comedy drama tells the story of an Italian poet’s journey to Iraq during the first Gulf War in a comical, as well as somewhat epic, quest for the woman of his dreams. The film was directed by Roberto Benigni, written by Benigni and

Vincenzo Cerami and produced by Nicoletta Braschi.³⁸² Budgeted at an estimated \$35 million, it grossed \$25,460,023 worldwide theatrically. The highest grossing territories for the film were Italy with \$17,451,649, France with \$2,806,686 and Spain with \$2,590,529. *La tigre e la neve* was picked up by U.S. art house distributor Strand Releasing for U.S. distribution and grossed \$10,167 at the U.S. box office. The abysmal U.S. box office performance somewhat supports the notion of a complete lack of U.S. audiences' interest for Roberto Benigni films, dubbed or subtitled, after *Life Is Beautiful*. While critics' reactions were not quite as negative as in the case of *Pinocchio*, the majority of U.S. film critics disliked *La tigre e la neve*.³⁸³ *LA Times* critic Kevin Thomas wrote that, "with 'The Tiger and the Snow,' [...] Benigni consolidates his position as the most self-indulgent and altogether insufferable showoff in the movies" (Thomas 2006). Thomas goes as far as calling some of the film's plot elements "shameless, utterly predictable and grimly unfunny nonsense" (ibid.). *New York Times* critic Jeannette Catsoulis (2006) calls it "a scorching affront to Italians, Iraqis and the intelligence of movie audiences everywhere." As the European box office numbers suggest, however, the film did work in a European context. The film's Italian production company Melampo Cinematografica, which had been involved in the pan-European successes *Pinocchio* (2002), *The Monster* (1994), *Astérix et Obélix contre César* (1999) and the global success *Life is Beautiful* (1997)—while unable to repeat the global success of the latter—continued succeeding on a pan-European level.

Italian Transnational Biopics in the 2000s

As political battles about new cinema incentives in the late 2000s raged off-screen, an Italian movie, more successfully, dealt with politics on-screen. The film was *Il Divo* (2008), a biopic about the life of Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti,

³⁸² Production companies involved were Melampo Cinematografica and U.S. company Post Media, who was also a producer on the European production *Transporter 2* (Louis Leterrier, 2005).

³⁸³ It received a 17% on Rotten Tomatoes. Out of 23 reviews tallied, only 4 were "fresh." Rotten Tomatoes, "The Tiger and the Snow (2006): Top Critics," accessed on 7-30-2009, from http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/tiger_and_the_snow/?critic=creamcrop

written and directed by Paolo Sorrentino. The film was produced by Francesca Cima, Nicola Giuliano and Andrea Occhipinti and co-produced by Fabio Conversi and Maurizio Coppolecchia for an estimated budget of \$5.7 million.³⁸⁴ Production companies involved were Italian companies Indigo Film, Lucky Red, Parco Film, Sky, and French co-producers Babe Film, StudioCanal and arte France Cinéma. The film was supported by Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali (MiBAC), Centre National de la Cinématographie (CNC), Eurimages, Film Commission Torino-Piemonte and Campania Film Commission. Among several other awards and nominations, *Il Divo* was nominated for a Golden Palm and won the Jury Prize at the 2008 Cannes Film Festival. It was distributed in the U.S. by Music Box Films and released on 2 screens on April 26, 2009, grossing \$13,867 on its opening weekend. Failing to catch on with U.S. audiences, the film grossed a total of only \$208,510 at the U.S. box office.³⁸⁵

Italian Transnational Dramas in the 2000s

The Italian mystery drama *La bestia nel cuore* (*Don't Tell*, 2005) grossed \$5,859,312 at the Italian box office and showed promise of turning into a transnational property when it received a Best Foreign Language Oscar nomination. The film — about a woman's journey to deal with emotional issues caused by sexual abuse as a child — was directed by Christina Comencini and written by Francesca Marciano, Giulia Calenda and Christina Comencini, based on a novel of the latter. It was produced by Marco Chimenz, Giovanni Stabilini and Riccardo Tozzi and co-produced by Fabio Conversi, Terence S. Potter and Jacqueline Quella.³⁸⁶ Following its Academy Award nomination, *La bestia nel cuore* was picked up for U.S. theatrical distribution by Lions Gate Films, which released the film on March 16, 2009 in 5 theaters. It made \$13,805

³⁸⁴ IMDb, "Box office / business for *Il divo* (2008)," accessed on 7/30/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1023490/business>

³⁸⁵ IMDb 2011, "Box office / business for *Il divo* (2008)," accessed on 7/30/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1023490/business>.

³⁸⁶ Production companies involved were Italian production companies Cattleya and Rai Cinema, French production company Babe Film, U.K. production company Aquarius Films and Spanish production company Alquimia Cinema.

on its opening weekend, stayed in theaters for two weeks and then disappeared. The widest release of the film was in five theaters, and the film's total U.S. box office gross was a meager \$29,015.³⁸⁷

More successful internationally was the Italian crime drama *Gomorra* (titled *Gomorrhah* in its U.S. release, 2008), directed by Matteo Garrone and produced by Domenico Procacci for an estimated €5,532,000.³⁸⁸ Based on a book on the notorious Italian crime syndicate Camorra, by journalist Roberto Saviano, the gritty, realist crime drama portrays how the crime syndicate influences and affects the lives of an ensemble of people in a housing project in Naples, Italy. The film is especially interesting in regards to its writing credits, as six writers are credited for working on the script: Director Matteo Garrone, Maurizio Braucci, Ugo Chiti, Gianni Di Gregorio, Massimo Gaudioso and Roberto Saviano. This practice reminds of Global Conglomerate Hollywood's common practice to employ writing teams and of sequential development work, using multiple writers. *Gomorra*'s producer, Domenico Procacci, one of the most prolific independent Italian producers in the 1990s and 2000s, says, "an independent producer must have a very broad perspective. He or she must believe in their path and not stop at just one film" (de Marco 2008). Procacci's vision paid off, as the film was nominated for and won over 40 international awards.³⁸⁹ A-List festival awards, at least to a certain extent, can help a film's marketability. Procacci, stresses the importance of marketing for the international success of films. He says,

There is work to be done that goes beyond our individual international relationships. There is the work of the promotional agencies, such as FilmItalia [...] I studied foreign marketing strategies with them. This kind of promotion should be increased: cinema should be seen, it is a slow by continuous operation. (de Marco 2008)

³⁸⁷ Box Office Mojo 2009, "Don't Tell: Summary," accessed on 7/30/2009, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=donttell.htm>

³⁸⁸ IMDb 2011, "Box office / business for Gomorrhah (2008)," accessed on 6/1/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0929425/business>

³⁸⁹ Most prominently, it was nominated for a Golden Palm and won the Grand Jury Prize at the 2008 Cannes Film Festival, and won five 2008 European film awards. It was also nominated for both a 2009 BAFTA Award and a Golden Globe in their respective Best Foreign Language Film categories.

The global marketing campaigns for *Gomorra* were relatively successful. The film sold to over 30 territories and grossed \$33,282,383 internationally (non-U.S.), the majority of that—\$17,665,830—in its home territory Italy, followed by \$4,301,513 in France, \$3,282,402 in Spain, \$1,386,619 in the U.K. and \$1,231,245 in Germany.³⁹⁰ Martin Scorsese supported the U.S. release of the film, reflected in the opening credits by a “Martin Scorsese presents” card. Scorsese calls the film “a tough, forceful look at the Neapolitan underworld,” and considers the film as “despairing but also enlightening and, because of its frankness, strangely heartening” (“Mob drama gets Scorsese backing” 2009). He says, “I admire the bluntness of this picture and the devotion of Garrone and his actors in their pursuit of the terrible truth” (ibid.). Matteo Garrone voiced his admiration for Scorsese, pointing out that “of all directors, he is one of the most important in my development as a film-maker” (ibid.). With Scorsese’s endorsement, the film, made for an estimated budget of €5,893,000, was theatrically distributed in the U.S. by IFC Films and grossed \$1,577,639 at the U.S. box office.³⁹¹

Medusa’s Transnational Productions

By the end of the 2000s, efforts of maintaining a flow of transnational films were still alive. Medusa Film, for example, a company with production and distribution credits dating back to 1916, was at the forefront of producing films targeted at the Italian box office, the European box office as well as the global box office.³⁹² Among projects with potential of succeeding in the global market was the third installment of

³⁹⁰ Box Office Mojo 2011, “Gomorra: Foreign,” accessed on 7/13/2011, from <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=gomorra.htm>

³⁹¹ IMDb 2009, “Box office / business for Gomorra (2008),” accessed on 11/10/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0929425/business>

³⁹² Among the projects Medusa Film was involved with in the 2000s turning into Italian domestic box office hits, was *Che bella giornata (What a Beautiful Day)*, Gennaro Nunziante, 2011), grossing €31,479,526 at the Italian box office. IMDb 2011, “Box office / business for What a Beautiful Day,” accessed on 3/19/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1808015/business>

the *Madre (Mother)* supernatural horror trilogy by director Dario Argento.³⁹³ However, despite the prevailing film industry notion of the universality of horror, the Italian/U.S. co-production *La terza madre (Mother of Tears)*, Dario Argento, 2007) grossed only \$3,119,957 worldwide, \$58,669 of those at the U.S. box office.³⁹⁴ Twentieth Century Fox theatrically distributed *Inferno*, shot for an estimated budget of \$3 million, in the U.S. *Inferno* is an English-language film, set in New York, featuring an international cast and can be considered as one of the most recent Italian attempts at targeting the global film market. Its writer/director Dario Argento had been involved with a number of transnational properties by then: He had worked as a writer (story) on Sergio Leone's spaghetti western *C'era una volta il West (Once Upon a Time in the West)*, 1968), as a co-writer on the spaghetti western *Oggi a me... domani a te! (Today It's Me)*, 1968), and he co-wrote and directed the horror murder mystery *Profondo rosso (Deep Red)*, 1975). All of these films received U.S. distribution, with varying degrees of box office success, and established Argento as an internationally marketable genre artist.

Medusa Film, in the late 2000s, took on what most likely looked like a promising transnational property, due to the track record of its director: The Italian/French co-production *Baaria* (2009), directed by Giuseppe Tornatore. Medusa had previously been involved with several transnational properties that Tornatore directed: the Italian production *La leggenda del pianista sull'oceano (The Legend of 1900)*, 1998), the Italian/U.S. co-production *Malèna* (2000) and the Italian/French co-production *La sconosciuta (The Unknown Woman)*, 2006). All of these projects were ambitious projects, produced for relatively sizable budgets that required significant Italian box office results and international sales potential for recoupment of costs. *Baaria*—with an estimated budget of €28 million³⁹⁵ one of the most expensive films ever initiated by an

³⁹³ The first two movies, *Suspiria* and *Inferno* were made in 1977 and 1980 respectively. The third installment was the Italian/U.S. co-production *La terza madre (Mother of Tears)*, Dario Argento, 2007).

³⁹⁴ Box Office Mojo 2011, "Mother of Tears: Summary," accessed on 3/19/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=motheroftears.htm>

³⁹⁵ IMDb 2011, "Box office / business for *Baaria* (2009)," accessed on 7/13/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1081935/business>

Italian production company—seemed especially dependent on its domestic as well as international box office potential. Hence, not surprisingly, according to Giampaolo Letta, the vice president and CEO of Medusa Film, “from the start, this was conceived as an international project with the potential for important sales” (Venice set for Sicilian tales, 2009). According to Letta “projects like this can't be done every year but a big company like Medusa has to invest, believe in and risk high-level projects that have the potential to be sold abroad. And we think it can also do well at the Italian box office” (ibid.). The project’s international viability, however, turned out to be wishful thinking. *Baaria*, chronicling the lives of three generations of Sicilians in a small town, according to Tornatore “his most personal film” (Venice set for Sicilian tales, 2009), might have been too culturally specific to qualify as a truly transnational property. *Baaria*’s international sales agent Summit Entertainment was able to pre-sell the film to numerous European as well as international territories, including Germany, France, Spain, Latin America, South Korea and Greece. However, David Gerret, head of Summit’s international sales operation—potentially anticipating the shortcomings of the film’s international performance—called the film “obviously a labour of love” (Venice set for Sicilian tales, 2009). Grossing €2,105,181 at the Italian box office and \$4,900 at the U.S. box office,³⁹⁶ the film — from a commercial perspective — can be considered an ill-conceived venture. *Baaria*’s Golden Globe nomination for Best Foreign Language Film did not appear to make enough of a difference to increase its marketability in the U.S. Overall, *Baaria* can be seen as an example for European producers overestimating the international potential of relatively large scale films, with stories too culturally specific to appeal to international audiences.

³⁹⁶ IMDb 2011, “Box office / business for *Baaria* (2009),” accessed on 7/13/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1081935/business>

CONCLUSIONS FOR TRANSNATIONAL ITALIAN CINEMA IN THE 1980s, 1990s AND 2000s

As became evident in the previous sections, Italian films, in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000—with a few notable exceptions—were struggling to cross Italy's borders. For those properties that did, box office results—both pan-European and especially in the highly coveted U.S. market—were generally modest. The only two Italian films in the 1990s and 2000s able to cross the \$10 million mark at the U.S. box office were *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* (*Cinema Paradiso*, Giuseppe Tornatore, 1988) and *La vita e bella* (*Life is Beautiful*, Roberto Benigni, 1998). Among the few films crossing the \$2 million mark were *Mediterraneo* (Gabriele Salvatores, 1991) and *Pinocchio* (Roberto Benigni, 2002). Financing for Italian motion pictures was closely connected to Italian media conglomerates, focused primarily on television production. Unlike other Big Five European film producing countries like the U.K. and Germany and—more recently—France, Italy's efforts to attract Hollywood productions to shoot in Italy were relatively limited, so that the symbiosis between Hollywood and Italian domestic production was relatively negligible. U.S. studio subsidiaries' efforts to participate in local productions were less prominent than in Germany and Spain. Overall, film production in Italy seems to reflect the desolate state of Italy's economy and its worrisome political arena. A combination of these issues might in part explain the overall relatively disappointing international performance of Italian films during the 1990 and 2000s. It remains to be seen how the forced political changes caused by Italy's severe fiscal problems in the early 2010s, will affect Italy's film industry and whether a more international orientation will follow the more than problematic era of the Berlusconi regime.

Chapter Seven: Spain

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPANISH TRANSNATIONAL FILMS IN THE 1990s

Spain, after Franco's death in 1975, turned into a democracy, joined NATO in 1982 and the European Community in 1986. Moving from the dictatorship under Franco to a socialist democracy under the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE), ruling from 1982 to 1996, undoubtedly influenced the Spanish cultural sector, and film production as a key part of it. Barry Jordan and Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas (1998), addressing developments within post-Franco cinema in Spain, observe:

[...] With the death of the dictator in 1975, Spain embarked on a dizzying, headlong rush to join the communications revolution and the global capitalist marketplace. Spain was no longer so 'different' and in order to affirm their rejection of past repressions, Spain's younger generations seized upon, reworked and translated into their own terms numerous contemporary American and European trends in music, fashion, identity politics, drug cultures, etc. (80-81)

The dominant genre in Spanish cinema after Franco's death has been comedy, followed by films within various variations of the thriller genre. Less prominent have been films of the melodrama, science fiction, fantasy and adventure genres (63). Spanish cinema in the 1980s suffered from numerous ailments. Cinema attendance from the late 1970s to the late 1980s was in constant decline, and between 1977 and 1987 dropped by 136.3 million (Guarner 1988: 294).³⁹⁷

In 1982, Spanish screenwriter and director Pilar Miró, was made the director of the DGC, following demands by members of the Spanish film industry for assistance to re-establish a sustainable national film industry (Bentley 2008: 137). Miró re-shaped the Spanish film industry through reforms of the DGC, which in 1984 was renamed into Instituto de la Cinematografía y de las Artes Audiovisuales (Institute for Film and Audiovisual Arts, ICAA). These reforms included making co-production regulations

³⁹⁷ By 1977, Spanish films only had a 14.7 percent share at the Spanish box office. In 1987, 69 films were produced in Spain, 7 of them were co-productions with other countries. While some of these Spanish films did well at the local box office, the majority lost money (Guarner 1988: 294).

more stringent, the creation of stronger ties between film and television and the overhaul of government funding mechanisms (Bentley 2008: 137). Believing that increased funding for a smaller number of films would make Spanish movies more competitive with films from Hollywood and other countries, the focus of support shifted to literary adaptations, movies for children and experimental cinema, with an emphasis on high production values (ibid.). The new funding models initiated by Miró were inspired by the French *Avance sur Recettes* model. Two committees made the funding decisions, based on the scripts submitted (ibid.). The new support system was able to raise the production values of Spanish films, making them more competitive with their Hollywood counterparts. However, the committee's funding decisions under Miró's leadership were controversial, and she eventually resigned from the ICAA in 1986 (ibid.). Miró's successor, writer/director/producer Fernando Méndez Leite, while basically following the funding strategies that Miró had established, increased the number of films funded by lowering the individual support sums. Two years later, as the modified system failed to deliver the desired results, he also had to resign (Bentley 2008: 137). José Luis Guarner (1988) points out that, triggered by the general absence of Spanish films at the 1988 Cannes Film Festival, Méndez-Leite "publicly recognised that his policy of subsidies, which had earned severe criticism from all quarters, had 'excessively' favoured films by new film-makers, 70% of which, according to the harsh verdict of veteran Spanish director Luis Berlanga, were 'unbearable'" (295). The system also led to a decrease in the number of films produced. A look at Table 7.1 shows that the number of films produced in Spain dropped from 77 in 1985 to 47 in 1989. The Spanish national film share decreased from 16.2% in 1985 to 7.3% in 1989, while the U.S. share increased from 58.7% to 71.4%.

Table 7.1.: Film Production in Spain – 1985 to 1989

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Films produced	77	60	69	63	47
First-run films	315	313	270	265	226
Screens	3,109	2,640	2,234	1,882	1,802
Admissions (millions)	101.1	87.3	85.7	69.6	78.1
Box-office receipts (M€)	152.1	146.4	153.4	138.9	168.0
National film share (%)	16.2	12.4	14.3	11.1	7.3
U.S. film share (%)	58.7	65.0	58.4	64.2	71.4
European film share (%) ²	-	-	-	-	-

² Based on admissions, with the exception of national film. The numbers are based on data from the Lumière database. The share includes U.K. productions financed by U.S. entities.

Source: CNC³⁹⁸

Yet, while the production climate was unfavorable to both domestic as well as transnational productions, a number of Spanish producers and filmmakers stepped up to the plate and distinguished themselves from the crisis-ridden Spanish film industry of the 1980s. The result was a variety of films not only showing success at the domestic box office but also demonstrating their transnational potential. The most successful film at the Spanish box office in 1988, grossing £2 million was *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* (*Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, 1988) (Guarner 1988: 295). The film was produced, directed and written by Pedro Almodóvar, based on the play *La voix humaine* by Jean Cocteau. The production companies involved were El Deseo S.A. and Laurenfilm. *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* was a sweeping success for Almodóvar and laid the foundation for his international career, receiving close to 40 wins and nominations, including Oscar, Golden Globe and BAFTA nods.³⁹⁹ Shot for an estimated budget of \$700,000, it received theatrical distribution by Orion Classics and grossed \$7,179,298 at the U.S. box office.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁸ CNC World Cinema Statistics, from <http://www.cnc.fr/web/en/sectoral-statistic>

³⁹⁹ Among the key awards and nominations were the New York Film Critics Circle Award, the National Board of Review Award for Best Foreign Language Film, the nomination for an Oscar, a Golden Globe and a BAFTA Award in the respective Best Foreign Language Film categories, and a

Almodóvar's international success goes hand in hand with his films becoming less culturally specific. As Marvin D'Lugo points out, "Beginning with *¡Átame! [Tie me up! Tie me down!]* (1989) these Spanish subtexts begin to disappear, till finally in *Kika* (1993) the story, save passing cultural references, seems unbound by any qualities that might distinguish it as a Spanish film" (D'Lugo 1997: 117). However, with *La flor de mi secreto* (*The flower of my secret*, 1995), he "blended that international style with culturally-specific narrative elements that highlighted Spain's gradual integration within a new European culture" (ibid.).

Old-school by comparison was Carlos Saura's historical epic *El Dorado* (1988). The European co-production was presumably a calculated co-production attempt to create a European blockbuster with international appeal. It chronicles the 1560 expedition of Spanish soldiers led by Francisco Vasquez de Coronado in their brutal and futile quest for the legendary Seven Cities of Gold. It was written by Carlos Saura and produced by Andrés Vicente Gómez. The film was a Spanish-French-Italian co-production.⁴⁰¹ With an estimated budget of \$10 million, it was the most expensive Spanish film ever made at the time of its release (Guarner 1988: 295). *El Dorado* was nominated for seven 1989 Goya Awards and a 1988 Golden Palm. While it marked an effort to produce a—for the Spanish film industry at the time—relatively expensive movie with transnational appeal, *El Dorado* did not receive U.S. distribution. Its producer Andrés Vicente Gómez, however, can be considered one of the most influential and prolific producers in the post-Franco period of Spanish cinema and

nomination for 16 Goya Awards of which it won 5. The Goya Awards had been established by the ICAA in 1987 as a Spanish equivalent to the Academy Awards in the U.S., the French César Awards and the BAFTA awards in the U.K.

⁴⁰⁰ IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* (1988)," accessed on 7/31/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0095675/business>

⁴⁰¹ Companies involved were French Canal+, Chrysalide Film, France 3 Cinéma and Union Générale Cinématographique (UGC), Spanish Compañía Iberoamericana de TV, Iberoamericana Films Producción, Televisión Española (TVE) and Italian Radiotelevisione Italiana and SACIS.

would continue to be a vital contributor to Spanish transnational popular cinema in the 1990s and beyond.⁴⁰²

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPANISH TRANSNATIONAL FILMS IN THE 1990s

The 1990s saw an increase in Spanish feature film productions from 45 in 1990 to 82 in 1999. The national film share ranged from between 7.1% in 1994 and 13.9% in 1999. Similarly, the European film share rose between 1995 and 1999, and ranged from 7.3% to 14.2%. By comparison, U.S. film share varied between a high of 78.3% in 1996 to a low of 64.2% in 1999 (See Table 7.2).

Table 7.2.: Film Production in Spain — 1990 – 1999

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Films produced	45	64	52	56	44	59	91	80	65	82
First-run films	218	226	-	253	345	417	421	481	501	471
Screens	1,776	1,805	1,807	1,791	1,930	2,090	2,372	2,565	2,997	3,343
Admissions (millions)	78.5	79.1	83.3	87.6	89.0	94.6	104.2	105.0	112.1	131.3
Box-office receipts (M€)	169.9	186.0	218.4	243.9	261.8	289.9	332.3	352.8	401.3	495.9
National film share (%)	10.4	11.0	9.3	8.5	7.1	11.9	9.3	13.1	11.9	13.9
US film share (%)	72.5	68.7	77.1	75.7	72.3	72.1	78.3	68.2	78.5	64.2
European film share (%) ²	-	-	-	-	-	14.2	8.9	12.2	7.3	13.1

² Based on admissions, with the exception of national film. Calculation is based on data from the Lumière database. The share includes U.K. productions financed by U.S. entities.

Source: CNC⁴⁰³

⁴⁰² Director Carlos Saura said of Gómez: “ In the celluloid universe, there are producers who love cinema as much as they love risk [...] Andres is like one of those legendary adventurer who conquers new lands, crossing surging rivers and climbing the highest mountains. He has sold his soul to the cinema. (Mandelberger 2007)

⁴⁰³ CNC World Cinema Statistics, from <http://www.cnc.fr/web/en/sectoral-statistics>

Spain's Private Broadcasters and Transnational Productions in the 1990s

One of the key influences on Spanish film production from the late 1980s onward has been the rapid expansion of private broadcasting entities. According to Tatjana Pavlović et al. (2009), “besides creating a new cultural and media landscape, along with a global audience unified by satellite transmission, TV also became one of the main film industry clients” (182). Pavlović et al. point out that by the late 2000s pre-sales of films to television made up for 35 percent of films’ budgets (182).⁴⁰⁴ While the majority of Spanish films supported by Spanish broadcasting entities in the 1990s and 2000s has been geared towards the Spanish market, a growing segment of productions began targeting the pan-European and international markets. Some of the Spanish films that turned out to be transnational properties were supported by Spanish Canal+ subsidiary Canal+ España.

In the 1990s, Canal+ through its Spanish subsidiary Canal+ España served as a producer on 85 movies in Spain,⁴⁰⁵ making it a substantial driving force in the Spanish film business. A number of titles succeeded beyond Spain’s borders. Among Canal+ España’s most successful movies in the 1990s were the French/Spanish co-production *La cité des enfants perdus* (*The City of Lost Children*, Marc Caro and Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 1995), budgeted at an estimated \$18 million and grossing \$1,513,028 at the U.S. box office; Roman Polanski’s horror movie *The Ninth Gate* (1999), with an estimated budget of \$38 million, starring Johnny Depp, Frank Langella and Lena Olin, theatrically released by Artisan in the U.S. and grossing \$18,661,336 at the U.S. box office and \$39,740,562 internationally (non-U.S.); and *La lengua de las mariposas* (*Butterfly Tongues*, José Luis Cuerda, 1999), theatrically distributed in the U.S. by Miramax, grossed \$2,086,098 at the U.S. box office. Canal+ España also produced *Abre los ojos* (*Open Your Eyes*, Alejandro Amenábar, 1997), theatrically distributed in the U.S. by Artisan. Despite grossing only \$370,720 at the U.S. box office, it was

⁴⁰⁵ Based on a credit count on IMDb. IMDb 2011, “Canal+ España [es],” accessed on 7/14/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/company/co0071913/>

remade into *Vanilla Sky* (Cameron Crowe, 2001), budgeted at an estimated \$68 million and starring Tom Cruise, Cameron Diaz, Penelope Cruz and Kurt Russell.⁴⁰⁶

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPANISH TRANSNATIONAL FILMS IN THE 1990s

While the production of transnational popular cinema in Spain was on the rise in the late 1980s and early 1990s, consistent output of films with border-crossing potential was far from becoming a reality, and the development aspect of Spanish cinema was still a highly neglected part of the filmmaking process. Finney (1996b) portrays the development situation in Spain in the 1990s as rather bleak, pointing out a considerable lack in public development funding compared to the UK, France and Germany. According to Finney, “in essence, the development financier is the screenplay writer who either defers payment or is simply not paid for his or her work” (30). To combat the perceived shortcomings of the Spanish film industry, the Spanish cultural ministry overhauled the government film funding policies, and introduced a new policy in 1994, modeled after the SCRIPT funding scheme for film slates. According to Finney, the new policy, despite shifting from funding individual projects to a slate-funding approach, could still not be considered as “development finance,” but rather still functioned on the basis of advances for pre-production funding (30). Spain, however, kept adjusting its funding mechanisms and in 1995 new regulations added support for first-time and less-established filmmakers and lower budget films. The goal of these new regulations was to reduce the reliance of established Spanish producers on government subsidies and instead to work with international and private equity finance (31).

These new approaches seemed to reinvigorate the Spanish film industry, as almost 100 films were produced in 1996 (Besas 1998: 280). Some of them received international recognition, but that did not always translate into international sales. In 1997, for example, *Secretos del corazón* (*Secrets of the Heart*), directed by Montxo

⁴⁰⁶ Theatrically distributed in the U.S. by Paramount, *Vanilla Sky* grossed \$100,618,344 at the U.S. box office and \$102,769,997 at the international (non-U.S.) box office.

Armendáriz was nominated for the 1998 Best Foreign Language Film Oscar.⁴⁰⁷ However, despite *Secretos del corazón*'s numerous international awards and nominations — including an Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Language Film — the film was not picked up for U.S. distribution.

During the 1990s, the aforementioned producer Andrés Vicente Gómez produced over 40 films and a television series.⁴⁰⁸ While the majority of these films were contenders for the Spanish domestic box office and some of them for the pan-European box office, only two of them turned into transnational properties. One was Bigas Luna's Silver Lion winning romantic comedy *Jamón, jamón* (U.S. title: *Jamon, Jamon*, 1992), the big screen debut of Penélope Cruz, which received U.S. theatrical distribution by Academy Entertainment and grossed \$938,473 at the U.S. box office.⁴⁰⁹ The other was Fernando Trueba's period comedy drama *Belle Epoque* (*The Age of Beauty*, 1992), which—apart from winning nine 1993 Goyas in his home territory—won the 1994 Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film, the 1995 BAFTA Award for Best Film not in the English Language, and was nominated for the Golden Bear at the 1993 Berlin International Film Festival. *Belle Epoque* was a Spanish/Portuguese/French co-production. It grossed about \$8.5 million in its home market and—theatrically distributed in the U.S. by Sony Classics—grossed \$5,418,216 at the U.S. box office,⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁷ *Secretos del corazón* was written and directed by Montxo Armendáriz and produced by Andrés Santana and Imanol Uribe. Production companies involved were Spanish production company Aiete Films S.A. and French production company Les Films Ariane.

⁴⁰⁸ Among his 1990s slate of films were comedies like Ana Belén's *Cómo ser mujer y no morir en el intento* (*How to Be a Woman and Not Die Trying*, 1991), dramas like José Luis García Sánchez's *La noche más larga* (*The Longest Night*, 1991), thrillers like Álex de la Iglesia's *Il giorno della bestia* (*The Day of the Beast*, 1995), historic dramas like Manuel Lombardero's *En brazos de la mujer madura* (*In Praise of Older Women*, 1997) and Vicente Aranda's Spanish civil war drama *Libertarias* (*Freedom Fighters*, 1996), Fernando Trueba's historic comedy drama *La niña de tus ojos* (*The Girl of Your Dreams*, 1998) and Carlos Saura's biographical drama *Goya en Burdeos* (*Goya in Bordeaux*, 1999).

⁴⁰⁹ IMDb, "Box office/business for *Jamon, Jamon* (1992)," accessed on 11/27/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0104545/business>

⁴¹⁰ Box Office Mojo, "*Belle Epoque*: Summary," accessed on 11/27/2011, from <http://boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=bellepoque.htm>

supporting Andrés Vicente Gómez's role in extending the reach of Spanish cinema beyond European borders.

In 1996 and 1997, Spain saw a boost in the number of films produced. Peter Besas (1998) attributed this to a "solid industrial infrastructure," due to the support of large financing groups like Sogetel, Telefónica, and national Spanish Television networks such as RTVE and Antena 3 TV, as well as regional TV networks and government subsidies (280). Nevertheless, Spanish films were only able to capture 13.2 percent market share in the first quarter of 1998, well below the market-share for domestic films in France, yet higher than Germany's 7.9 percent that year (Kindred 2008: 150). The market share for Spanish films in 1998 was the highest market share in 13 years (Besas 1998: 280).

Despite Spanish films' increasing local successes at the Spanish box office, Spanish media conglomerates were still focused on U.S. products and U.S. collaborations to fuel their distribution pipelines. Following the notion that U.S. movies would fuel audiences' interest in pay-TV and different video-on-demand offerings, Spanish media giant Sogecable struck an exclusive deal with Warner Bros. The purpose of the deal was to supply Sogecable's digital satellite channels CanalSatellite Digital (CSD) and pay-TV offering Canal Plus España with U.S. studio movies. Sogecable's president Ele Juárez stresses the importance of U.S. content for European broadcasters, saying, "the U.S. remains the king of program contents and it is fundamental for us that Time Warner has chosen us as its companion in its expansion in Spain" (Hopewell and Guider 1997: 33). The estimated \$500 million deal went beyond the mere licensing of U.S. programs for Sogecable's satellite channels and extended into potential co-production activity on Spanish theatrical and made-for-TV movies between Warner Bros. and Sogecable and opened up the doors for Warner Bros. to buy a minority stake in Sogecable's satellite platform (*ibid.*).

Despite television providing the lion's share of financing for Spanish films in the 1990s, a number of Spanish producers, through European co-productions and single-country productions appealing to international audiences, managed to transcend the

small domestic screen. The following sections cover some of the most successful Spanish transnational properties of the 1990s, as divided by genre.

Spanish Transnational Dramas in the 1990s

The most successful film at the Spanish box office in 1997—and the film with the highest domestic box-office gross of any Spanish film at the time—was *Abre los ojos* (*Open Your Eyes*, Alejandro Amenábar, 1997) (Perriam 2004: 209). *Abre los ojos* was Amenábar's second feature after his 1995 debut film *Tesis* (*Thesis*). This mystery drama was written by Alejandro Amenábar and Mateo Gil and produced by Fernando Bovaira⁴¹¹ and José Luis Cuerda. *Abre los ojos* was a Spanish/French/Italian co-production. Companies involved included Canal+ España, Las Producciones del Escorpión S.L., Sociedad General de Televisión (Sogetel), French company Les Films Alain Sarde and Italian company Lucky Red. The film played internationally, including in the U.S., where it was theatrically distributed by Artisan Entertainment and grossed \$370,720 at the box office.⁴¹² *Abre los ojos* subsequently was remade in the U.S. and turned into *Vanilla Sky* (2001), directed by Cameron Crowe and starring Tom Cruise,

⁴¹¹ *Abre los ojos* producer Fernando Bovaria, who had joined Sogecine in 1996, kept producing successful movies in the 1990s and 2000s. Among the films he produced in the remainder of the 1990s was Julio Medem's romantic drama *Los amantes del Círculo Polar* (*Lovers of the Arctic Circle*, 1998), a Spanish/French co-production, that received U.S. theatrical distribution by Fine Line and grossed \$317,422 at the U.S. box office.⁴¹¹ He was also one of the producers of the historical drama *Frontera Sur* (Gerardo Herrero, 1998), a Spanish/German co-production. The film telling the story of European immigrants to Argentina seems to be a classical European co-production as it features actors from several European countries and a subject matter of potentially pan-European interest. The film's concept obviously also lend itself to success in the Argentinean market, which has been traditionally a strong market for Spanish films. While *Frontera Sur*, despite its theoretical transnational potential, failed to attract a U.S. theatrical distributor, *La lengua de las mariposas* (*Butterfly Tongues*, 1999)—executive produced by Bovaria—garnering multiple European and North American award nominations and awards, received U.S. theatrical distribution by Miramax in 2000 and grossed \$2,086,098 at the U.S. box office.

IMDb 2011, "Box office / business for Butterfly Tongues (1999)," accessed on 3/24/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0188030/business>

⁴¹² Box Office Mojo 2010, "Open Your Eyes: Summary," accessed on 03/09/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=openyoureyes.htm>

Cameron Diaz and Penélope Cruz. *Vanilla Sky* made \$100,618,344 at the U.S. and \$102,769,997 at the international box office.⁴¹³

In 1999 *El Abuelo (The Grandfather)*, by José Luis Garci was nominated for the Best Foreign Language Oscar and 13 Goya Awards, including Best Film. *El Abuelo* was directed by José Luis Garci, written by Horacio Valcárcel and José Luis Garci, based on the novel by Benito Pérez Galdós and produced by José Luis Garci. Radio Televisión Española (RTVE) served as the sole production company on the film. The movie was picked up by Miramax Films, who served as the film's U.S. distributor. *Variety* critic Jonathan Holland, gives *The Grandfather* a lukewarm review, correctly anticipating the film's limited commercial appeal by writing that the film is,

[...] typically praiseworthy Garci in its earnestness, intensity and intelligence, but its defiant refusal to bow even slightly to the dictates of film fashion could limit its B.O. options [...] At nearly 2-1/2 hours, pic is hardly edge-of-the-seat stuff. The project stands or falls on its dialogue, characterization and atmospherics, and all are excellent, though the highly literary speechifying, which is drawn from a 19th century Spanish novel, starts to pall after a while (Holland, 1998).

El Abuelo opened on October 8, 1999 in the U.S. and grossed a disappointing \$54,468 at the box office.⁴¹⁴

In 1999, Spanish/French co-production *Todo sobre mi madre (All About My Mother)*, written and directed by Pedro Almodóvar and executive produced by Agustín Almodóvar screened in Spain and soon thereafter internationally.⁴¹⁵ The drama won a remarkable 48 awards, including the 2000 Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film and received 31 award nominations.⁴¹⁶ It was picked up by Sony Pictures Classics before its

⁴¹³ Box Office Mojo 2010, "Vanilla Sky: Summary," accessed on 03/10/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=vanillasky.htm>

⁴¹⁴ Box Office Mojo 2009, "Movies: THE GRANDFATHER: Summary," accessed on 8-1-2009, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=grandfather.htm>

⁴¹⁵ Production companies involved were Spanish production company El Deseo S.A. And Vía Digital (participation), and French production companies Renn Productions and France 2 Cinéma.

⁴¹⁶ Other key wins and nominations were a nomination for the Palm d'Or and a win of the Cannes Award for Best Director and the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury. It also won two 2000 BAFTA Awards and the 1999 Boston Society of Film Critics Award for Best Foreign Language

Oscar win and opened theatrically in the U.S. on November 21, 1999. Grossing \$8,264,530 theatrically made it a fairly successful release for a foreign language film in the U.S.⁴¹⁷

Spanish Transnational Comedies in the 1990s

In 1998, Santiago Segura's comedy *Torrente: el brazo tonto de la ley* (*Torrente, the Dumb Arm of the Law*) turned into a Spanish box office phenomenon, outperforming its U.S. competition (Pavlović 2009: 185). The film was written and directed by Segura and produced by Andrés Vicente Gómez. It was released by U.S. studio subsidiary Columbia TriStar Films de España and grossed €10,902,631 at the Spanish box office.⁴¹⁸ Discussing the film's success, Pavlović et al. suggest, it,

[...] illustrates the radical transformation of Spain's audiovisual cultural industry. Linked with other forms of entertainment, it is a product that fits perfectly with the consumption practices of Spanish youth [...], whose objects of consumption are primarily comic books, hard rock, and videogames. (185)

Pavlović et al. consider *Torrente: el brazo tonto de la ley* and its sequel *Torrente: misión en Marbella* (Santiago Segura, 2001) to be a part of a “*hijos bastardos del postmodernismo*” tendency in Spanish film of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Other films they consider being a part of that trend are *Airbag* (Juanma Bajo Ulloa, 1997), *Abre los ojos* (Alejandro Amenábar, 1997), *Nadie conoce a nadie* (Mateo Gil, 1999), *Días de fútbol* (David Serrano, 2003), *El día de la bestia* (Alex de la Iglesia, 1995), *Muertos de risa* (Alex de la Iglesia, 1999), and *La comunidad* (Alex de la Iglesia, 2000). Pavlović et al. point out that the makers of these films “have significant generational and global ties” with post-modern filmmakers like “Quentin Tarantino,

Film, the British Independent Film Award for Best Foreign Film in a Foreign Language and the 2000 Critics Choice Award of the Broadcast Film Critics Association Awards for Best Foreign-Language Film. In its home country it was nominated for 14 Goya Awards and won 7, including the awards for Best Film and Best Director.

⁴¹⁷ IMDb 2009, “Box office / business for Todo sobre mi madre (1999), accessed on 8/1/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0185125/business>

⁴¹⁸ IMDb 2011, “Box office / business for Torrente, el brazo tonto de la ley (1998),” accessed on 3/24/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120868/business>

David Fincher, Danny Boyle, Tom Tykwer, Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Mathieu Kassovitz” (186).

Spanish Transnational Fantasy and Science Fiction Films in the 1990s

While the transnational potential of the majority of Spanish comedies was limited, the Spanish Fantasy and Science Fiction Film genre showed some promise in terms of international marketability in the 1990s and 2000s. The genre re-emerged in the 1990s after the mid-1980s had technically put a stop to fantasy/fantastic production in the Spanish film industry due to the prohibitively expensive flop of director Fernando Colomo’s *El caballero del dragón* (*Star Knight*, 1985) (Jordan & Morgan-Tamosunas, 1998: 108). Álex de la Iglesia filled that void with his comedic science fiction thriller *Acción mutante* (1993) and his subsequent fantastic crime horror thriller *El día de la bestia* (*The Day of the Beast*, 1995). With estimated budgets of \$2.5 and \$1.5 million respectively,⁴¹⁹ they were financially relatively modest national attempts at creating postmodern transnational genre movies. Production companies involved with *Acción Mutante* were CiBy 2000 and Almodóvar’s El Deseo S.A. *El día de la bestia* was produced by Canal+ España, Iberoamericana Films Producción and Sociedad General de Televisión (Sogetel). Of the two films, only *El día de la bestia* was released theatrically in the U.S., however, on only one screen with a consequently abysmal box office result of \$15,324.⁴²⁰

Spanish English-Language Romantic Dramas in the 1990s

Spanish cinema’s increasing orientation towards the international marketplace becomes evident in the work of Isabel Coixet, who made her first feature film *Demasiado vieja para morir joven* (*Too Old to Die Young*) in 1988. The film, set in Barcelona, flopped both at the Spanish box office as well as with Spanish critics (Vidal

⁴¹⁹ IMDb 2011, “Box office / business for *Acción mutante* (1993),” accessed on 2/27/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0106215/business>, IMDb 2011, “Box office / business for *The Day of the Beast* (1995),” accessed on 2/27/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0112922/business>

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*

2008: 219), but got her a 1990 Goya nomination for Best New Director. Unable to get funding for her next feature from Spanish institutions, she decided to make the romantic comedy drama *Cosas que nunca te dije* (*Things I Never Told You*, 1996) in the U.S. (Vidal 2008: 219). The English-language production was shot in Oregon and starred Andrew McCarthy and Lili Taylor. Coixet's next film was the Spanish/French co-production *A los que aman* (1998), produced by Canal+ España, Canal+, Sociedad General de Televisión (Sogetel) and Sogepaq, with additional funding from the Spanish cultural ministry (Ministerio de Cultura). The former grossed €797,437 and the latter €418,845 at the Spanish box office.⁴²¹ Neither one of them received U.S. distribution. It would not be until a few years later, that Coixet was able to reach international recognition with her next English-language film.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPANISH TRANSNATIONAL FILMS IN THE 2000s

Film scholar David Scott Diffrient (2008) claims that Spanish cinema by the 2000s had become “recognised as one of the world’s most dynamic sites of cultural intermixing and convergence, not to mention a testing ground for narrative experimentation” (179). He notes that some of the more recent films of Almodóvar, Amenábar, Bollaín and Iglesia, “thanks to their generic hybridity and stylistic audacity, not to mention their array of talented transnational stars [...] have helped Spain to emerge from the long shadows cast by its European neighbors and gain a venerated place in the pantheon of national cinemas” (ibid.). The question remains to what extent the Spanish film industry in the 2000s was focused on the national vs. the pan-European and international box office, and in that context whether and to what extent Spanish development processes and strategies were shaped by Global Conglomerate Hollywood. The following sections address this question, by looking at some of the transnational films originating from Spain in the 2000s.

⁴²¹ IMDb 2011, “Box office / business for *A los que aman* (1998),” accessed on 7/14/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0142063/business>, IMDb, “Box office / business for *Cosas que nunca te dije* (1996),” accessed on 7/14/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0115950/business>

In the new millennium, the success of Spanish films at the box office appeared to solidify. As Table 7.3 shows, the number of films produced in Spain in the 2000s more than doubled from 98 in 2000 to 201 in 2010. Spanish and European productions were able to hold Hollywood imports at bay. While the European film share at the Spanish box office was as high as 20.2% in 2005 and the Spanish national film share peaked at 16.7% the same year, the U.S. film share fluctuated between a high of 82.7% in 2000 and a low of 60.3% in 2005 and stabilized in the vicinity of 70% in the late 2000s.

Table 7.3.: Film Production in Spain — 2000 - 2010

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010 ¹
Films produced	98	106	137	110	133	142	150	172	173	186	201
First-run films	523	516	567	529	530	583	575	592	552	556	No data
Screens	3,500	3,770	4,039	4,253	4,390	4,383	4,299	4,296	4,140	4,082	4,080
Admissions (millions)	135.3	146.8	140.7	137.5	143.9	127.6	121.6	116.9	107.8	110.0	101.6
Box-office receipts (in million €)	536.3	616.4	625.9	639.4	691.6	635.0	636.2	643.7	619.3	671.0	662.3
National film share (%)	10.1	17.9	13.7	15.8	13.4	16.7	15.4	13.5	13.3	15.9	12.7
US film share (%)	82.7	62.2	66.1	67.3	69.8	60.3	71.2	67.6	71.5	70.6	69.2
European film share (%) ²	7.2	10.8	10.2	9.3	9.8	20.2	12.2	15.0	10.9	12.2	No data

¹ Provisional data.

Source: CNC⁴²²

Some of the most notable Spanish productions and co-productions that qualify as transnational properties in the 2000s enjoyed an international success, addressed in the following sections.

⁴²² CNC World Cinema Statistics, from <http://www.cnc.fr/web/en/sectoral-statistics>

Spanish Transnational Romantic Dramas in the 2000s

Lucía y el sexo (*Sex and Lucia*, 2001), written and directed by Julio Medem, can serve as an example for a Spanish transnational romantic drama. The Spanish/French co-production was produced by Fernando Bovaira and Enrique López Lavigne.⁴²³ It grossed \$4,287,666 at the Spanish box office.⁴²⁴ Like some of the other co-production ventures between Sogepaq, Canal+ España and TVE, *Lucía y el sexo* proved to be successful beyond Spanish borders. It grossed a total of \$6,045,901 internationally (non-U.S.) and received distribution by Palm Pictures in the U.S., where it grossed \$1,594,779 at the U.S. box office.⁴²⁵ The film's director, Julio Medem, is a trained medical doctor, who, since his childhood, wanted to become a psychiatrist. He started to make short films while studying medicine and after graduation decided to abandon his medical career to pursue a career in filmmaking (Thomas 2002). Julio Medem, interviewed about the film during the Sundance Film Festival, says that he tries "to be different in each film" that he makes. Looking at his work, his ambitions and motivations, he falls into the auteur category.⁴²⁶ Medem, from 1974 to 1988, made seven short films before he wrote and directed his first feature, *Vacas* (1992). The period mystery drama about two rivaling families earned him instant recognition in Spain, where Medem won the Goya Award for Best New Director and received a Goya nomination for Best Screenplay. After primarily domestic successes with his films *La ardilla roja* (1993) and *Tierra* (*Earth*, 1993), he received U.S. theatrical distribution by

⁴²³ Production companies involved were Spanish production company Alicia Produce, Sociedad General de Cine (SOGECINE) S.A., Sogepaq, Canal+ España, Televisión Española (TVE) and French StudioCanal.

⁴²⁴ Box Office Mojo, "Sex and Lucia: Foreign," accessed on 12/2/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=sexandlucia.htm>

⁴²⁵ Box Office Mojo, "Sex and Lucia: Foreign," accessed on 12/2/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=sexandlucia.htm>

⁴²⁶ For Medem filmmaking is about exploring himself and the work around him. Medem says, "I want my own experience with each film to be new, so I try to run away fully from the film I made before and make something completely different. But in reality it's just an illusion, it's something I'm trying to do that I can never really quite accomplish" (Thomas 2002).

Fine Line Features for his romantic mystery drama *Los amantes del Círculo Polar* (*Lovers of the Arctic Circle*, 1998), which grossed \$504,223 at the U.S. box office.⁴²⁷

Spanish Transnational Dramas and Heritage Films in the 2000s

Evolving into a transnational property, albeit with only modest international success, was the Spanish drama *Los lunes al sol* (*Mondays in the Sun*, 2002), directed by Fernando León de Aranoa, written by León de Aranoa and Ignacio del Moral and produced by Elías Querejeta and Jaume Roures.⁴²⁸ The Spanish-French co-production drew 2,424,106 viewers into European theaters and ranked 37th at the European box office, among co-productions originating from the Big Five European countries between 2001 and 2007 (Kanzler 2008: 30). Produced for an estimated budget of \$4 million, it was picked up by Lions Gate Films for U.S. distribution and released on seven screens on July 27, 2003 grossed \$146,402 theatrically.⁴²⁹

Ambitious in scope—yet less so in transnational appeal—was the historical biopic *Juana la Loca* (*Mad Love*, 2001) about Spanish queen Juana of Castille, written by Vicente Aranda and Antonio Larreta based on a play by Manuel Tamayo y Baus, and produced by Enrique Cerezo.⁴³⁰ The Spanish/Italian/Portuguese co-production drew 2,133,779 viewers to the European box office and was number 41 of the Top 50 co-productions from the Big Five. Produced for an estimated budget of \$5.6 million,⁴³¹ it was picked up for U.S. theatrical distribution by Sony Pictures Classics. *Juana la*

⁴²⁷ IMDb 2011, “Box office / business for Lovers of the Arctic Circle (1998),” accessed on 7/15/2011, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0133363/business>

⁴²⁸ Production companies involved were Spanish broadcasters Antena 3 Televisión, Televisión de Galicia (TVG) S.A., Spanish production companies Elías Querejeta Producciones Cinematográficas S.L., Mediapro, Sogepaq and Vía Digital, Italian production company Eyescreen S.r.l. and French production company Quo Vadis Cinéma.

⁴²⁹ IMDb 2009, “Box office / business for Los lunes al sol (2002),” accessed on 8/1/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0319769/business>

⁴³⁰ Production companies involved were Canal+ España, Spanish production companies Enrique Cerezo Producciones Cinematográficas S.A., Pedro Costa Producciones Cinematográficas S.A., Sogepaq, Italian production company Production Group and Portuguese production company Take 2000. The film also received funding from Eurimages.

⁴³¹ Based on IMDb information and author’s calculations using historical exchange rate data on OANDA.com.

Loca opened on 3 screens on September 1, 2002, made \$31,417 on its opening weekend, and went on to gross \$279,605.⁴³²

While movies like *Juana la Loca* and *Los lunes al sol* were primarily geared towards the Spanish and the pan-European box office, Pedro Almodóvar's melodrama *Hable con Ella* (*Talk to Her*, 2002) performed like a truly transnational property, as Almodóvar, due to his track record, has been an extremely marketable director internationally. The Spanish/U.S. co-production was written and directed by Pedro Almodóvar and produced by Agustín Almodóvar.⁴³³ It was picked up by Sony Pictures Classics and grossed \$9,284,265 theatrically in the U.S.⁴³⁴ In Europe *Hable con Ella* had 6,721,718 admissions, making it the number 14 ranked national film from 2001 to 2007. It received an impressive number of awards and nominations, among them two 2003 Oscar nominations, one for Best Director and one for Best Writing, Original Screenplay, which it won.⁴³⁵ Almodóvar's films increased the international visibility of Spanish cinema and helped reinvigorate the Spanish film industry.

Spanish Transnational English-Language Films in the 2000s

One early 2000s example of English-language transnational properties originating from Spain, is the Spanish/Canadian English-language production *Mi vida sin mí* (*My Life Without Me* 2003), written and directed by Coixet, based on the book *Pretending the Bed is a Raft* by Nanci Kincaid. The romantic drama, about a woman faced with

⁴³² IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for *Juana la Loca* (2001)," accessed on 8/1/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0270480/business>

⁴³³ Production companies involved were Spanish production companies El Deseo S.A., Vía Digital, Spanish broadcaster Antena 3 Televisión and U.S. production company Good Machine.

⁴³⁴ IMDb 2009, "Box office / business for *Hable con ella* (2002)," accessed on 8-1-2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0287467/business>

⁴³⁵ It also won the 2003 BAFTA Awards for Best Film not in the English Language and for Best Original Screenplay, won a César for Best European Film, and was nominated for seven European Film Awards, of which it won the Audience Awards for Best Director and Best Actor and the European Film Awards for Best Film, Best Director and Best Screenwriter. The film's universal appeal was reflected by its critical acclaim in the U.S. It won the 2003 Critics Choice Award for Best Foreign Language Film by the Chicago Film Critics Association and the 2003 Critics Choice Award for Best Foreign Language Film by the Broadcast Film Critics Association (IMDb 2009).

terminal cancer, breaking out of her daily routine and embracing the little time she has left with abundant joy and passion, was produced by Esther García and Gordon McLennan and executive produced by Pedro and Agustín Almodóvar and Ogden Gavanski. The film, with its cross-culturally accessible narrative, and U.S. setting and cast, featuring Sarah Polley, Scott Speedman and Mark Ruffalo, seemed like a viable property for the international and specifically the North American market. However, while *Mi vida sin mí* received U.S. theatrical distribution by Sony Pictures Classics, it made only relatively disappointing \$400,948 at the box office.⁴³⁶ The film, however, sold reasonably well to a number of international territories. It was most successful in Japan, where it grossed \$5,391,959 at the box office, followed by Coixet's home country Spain, where it grossed \$2,441,378, and Germany, where it grossed \$453,328.⁴³⁷ It was well enough reviewed to cement Coixet's reputation as a viable transnational filmmaker in the eyes of producers and distributors. Her next movie, *The Secret Life of Words* (2004)—also executive produced by Pedro and Agustín Almodóvar—received numerous European award nominations and awards. It performed best in Spain, grossing \$4,092,793 theatrically by May 21, 2006 and had a total international box office (not counting the U.S.) of \$6,389,380.⁴³⁸ It was picked up for U.S. distribution by Strand Releasing, who released it in two theaters on December 16, 2006. Its total U.S. box office gross was \$20,678 by its closing date of May 10, 2007.⁴³⁹ Despite its lackluster performance in the U.S. market, the question arises: what makes Coixet's films more transnational and less "Spanish" than the work of other Spanish filmmakers? Is it just the fact that she is making English-language films? Film scholar Belén Vidal (2008), addressing the issue of the cultural identity of Coixet's films, points out that, "in terms of industrial make-up, themes and style, the

⁴³⁶ Box Office Mojo 2010, "My Life Without Me: Summary," accessed on 1/20/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=mylifewithoutme.htm>

⁴³⁷ Box Office Mojo 2010, "My Life Without Me: Foreign Box Office," accessed on 1/20/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=mylifewithoutme.htm>

⁴³⁸ Box Office Mojo 2010, "The Secret Life of Words," accessed on 1/20/2010, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=secretlifeofwords.htm>

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*

‘Spanishness’ of Coixet’s films remains, at best, elusive.” Vidal points out that Coixet, “has fashioned herself as the auteur-star at the centre of independently produced projects written in ‘accented’ global English” (220). She argues that Coixet’s opus “deliberately confounds national markets” and says that the transnational success of her English-language films “raises intriguing questions regarding film authorship in Spain, and the relocation of the construct ‘Spanish national cinema’ as a transnational phenomenon” (219-220). To Coixet, making English-language films feels natural. In an interview with *Barcelona Writing*, she says that she made her first film in Spain because she was living in Spain at the time and hence wrote a story based in Spain. After living and working in the U.S. for two years, she wrote *Cosas que nunca te dije* (*Things I never Told you*, 1996) which, she says “is a story about all the people I knew in that moment in my life.” According to Coixet making films in an English-speaking environment to her felt “natural.” She says that “it was after when everyone was asking ‘why do you want to do a film in English?’ that I realised ‘Ah? It’s weird? Why not?’” (Interview with Isabel Coixet 2009)

Other Spanish filmmakers developed a seemingly similar ease of directing English-language films. Alejandro Amenábar’s made his English-language debut with *Los Otros* (*The Others*, 2001). The Spanish/U.S. co-production, starring Nicole Kidman, Fionnula Flanagan and Christopher Eccleston was produced by Spanish entities Sociedad General de Cine (SOGECINE) S.A., Las Producciones del Escorpión S.L., and U.S. company Cruise/Wagner Productions in association with Dimension Films. Fernando Bovaira, José Luis Cuerda and Sunmin Park produced *Los Otros*. Executive producers on the film were Tom Cruise, Rick Schwartz, Paula Wagner, and Bob and Harvey Weinstein. *Los Otros* turned into one of the most successful Spanish/U.S. co-productions of the 2000s. Theatrically distributed by Miramax in the U.S. it grossed \$96,522,687 at the U.S. box office and \$113,424,350 internationally (non-U.S.).⁴⁴⁰ It turned Amenábar into one of the most internationally marketable

⁴⁴⁰ Box Office Mojo, “The Others: Summary,” accessed on 07/08/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=others.htm>

Spanish filmmakers. How is it that Amenábar manages to make films that appeal to global audiences? Film scholar Ernesto Acevedo-Muñoz (2008) writes that *Los Otros*, was “built upon the director’s prestige as a young, energetic and original director for marketing the Nicole Kidman vehicle” (202). According to Acevedo-Muñoz “through the adaptation of classic conventions of genre, Amenábar is able to mould an essentially Spanish narrative into an elastic generic form whose national context is even underscored by the non-specificity of its setting” (ibid.).

Inspired by transnational successes like *Los Otros* and possibly also Coixet’s films, the number of English-language films shot in Spain in the 2000s kept increasing. Among the more prominent English-language productions in the mid-2000s was *The Machinist* (Brad Anderson, 2004). Set in the United States, it was shot in Barcelona, starring Christian Bale and Jennifer Jason Leigh.⁴⁴¹ Its producer was Julio Fernández, a Spanish producer with a long track record of genre films. Fernández also produced English-language picture *Transsiberian* (Brad Anderson, 2008), starring Woody Harrelson, Emily Mortimer and Ben Kingsley.⁴⁴² Shot for an estimated \$15 million, *Transsiberian* grossed \$5,924,914 worldwide, \$2,206,40 of those in the U.S., where it got theatrical distribution through First Look Features.⁴⁴³

Another English-language film co-produced by Spanish and U.S. production companies in the 2000s was *Goyas’s Ghosts* (Miloš Forman, 2006), written by Forman and Jean-Claude Carrière and produced by U.S. producer Saul Zaentz. Three Spanish co-producers complemented Zaentz’s U.S. production company: Kanzaman, Antena 3

⁴⁴¹ Production companies involved were the Filmax Group (as Filmax Entertainment) and Castelao Producciones, Canal+ España, the Instituto de la Cinematografía y de las Artes Audiovisuales (ICAA) and ICF.

⁴⁴² Production companies of *Transsiberian* were Filmax International, Canal+ España, Filmax Group (as Filmax Entertainment) and Castelao Producciones (as Castelao Productions). Co-production partners were German production company Universum Film (UFA), Spanish Telecinco Cinema, U.K. company Future Films, Lietuvos Kinostudij, and U.S. production company Scout Productions.

⁴⁴³ Box Office Mojo 2011, “Transsiberian: Summary,” accessed on 2/24/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=transsiberian.htm>

Televisión and Xuxa Producciones S.L. *Goya's Ghosts* made \$9,448,082 worldwide theatrically, \$1,000,626 of in which came from the U.S. market.⁴⁴⁴

A theatrical success primarily in the Spanish market with 1,422,259 admissions⁴⁴⁵ was the Spanish/U.K./French co-production *The Oxford Murders* (Álex de la Iglesia, 2008). The murder mystery, starring Elijah Wood, John Hurt and Leonor Watling, was produced by Álex de la Iglesia and Gerardo Herrero.⁴⁴⁶ It was picked up for U.S. distribution by Magnolia and released in two theaters for two weeks, resulting in a total U.S. box office gross of \$4,803.⁴⁴⁷

In 2009, English-language film *Agora* (2009), an epic historical biopic, written by Amenábar and Mateo Gil and produced by Álvaro Augustín and Fernando Bovaira hit European screens. The film, budgeted at \$70 million,⁴⁴⁸ was a Spanish national production, but featured a cast of English-language actors, including U.S. actress Rachel Weisz and U.K. actors Max Minghella and Rupert Evans. *Agora* was the most successful film at the Spanish box office in 2009, grossing \$29,609,470. Its total worldwide theatrical gross was \$39,041,505.⁴⁴⁹ Outside of Spain, the film was most successful in Italy and France, where it grossed \$2,819,873 and \$2,328,651 respectively.⁴⁵⁰ Theatrically released in the U.S. by Newmarket, it grossed \$619,423 at the box office. Recouping its \$70 million budget,⁴⁵¹ might be a challenge, but *Agora* is

⁴⁴⁴ Box Office Mojo 2011, "Goya's Ghosts: Summary," accessed on 2/25/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=goyasghosts.htm>

⁴⁴⁵ Lumiere Database, accessed on 11/15/2011, from http://lumiere.obs.coe.int/web/film_info/?id=30123

⁴⁴⁶ Production companies involved were Tornasol Films, Estudios Picasso Fabrica de Ficcon, La Fabrique de Films and Future.

⁴⁴⁷ Box Office Mojo 2011, "The Oxford Murders: Summary," accessed on 01/23/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=oxfordmurders.htm>

⁴⁴⁸ Box Office Mojo 2011, "Agora: Summary," accessed on 11/14/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=agora.htm>

⁴⁴⁹ Among European territories the film performed well in were Italy, where it grossed \$2,819,873 and France, where it grossed \$2,328,651. Box Office Mojo 2011, "Agora: Foreign," accessed on 11/14/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=agora.htm>

⁴⁵⁰ Box Office Mojo 2011, "Agora: Foreign," accessed on 11/14/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=agora.htm>

⁴⁵¹ Box Office Mojo 2011, "Agora: Summary," accessed on 11/14/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=main&id=agora.htm>

can be considered as an indicator for a new era of Spanish cinema, in which an increasing number of English-language films aimed at global audiences are being made.

Transnational Spanish-Language Films in the 2000s

While some of Spain's English-language productions and co-productions showed varying levels of success in the international marketplace, a steady supply of Spanish-language films by some of Spain's most prominent directors proved their international marketability. Prominent examples were Pedro Almodóvar's *La mala educación* (*Bad Education*, 2004) and *Volver* (2006), and Alejandro Amenábar's *Mar adentro* (*The Sea Inside*, 2004). While both of Almodóvar's films were Spanish national productions with the participation of Canal+ España, Amenábar's *Mar adentro* was a Spanish/French/Italian co-production. All three films were picked up for U.S. theatrical distribution. *La mala educación* and *Volver* by Sony Pictures Classics and *Mar adentro* by Fine Line Features. Of the three films, *Volver*, with a worldwide theatrical gross of \$85,585,177, was the most successful internationally, followed by *La Mala Education*, grossing \$40,273,930 worldwide and *Mar Adentro*, grossing \$38,535,221. The three films grossed \$12,899,867, \$5,211,842 and \$2,104,923 respectively at the U.S. box office.⁴⁵²

U.S. Studio Subsidiaries' Local Production Activities in Spain in the 2000s

As the 2000s progressed, so did U.S. efforts to partake in local Spanish production ventures. One of the most prominent examples for this is Warner Bros. Pictures de España's involvement in the Spanish/French/U.S. coproduction *El Orfanato*

⁴⁵² Box Office Mojo 2011, "Volver: Summary," accessed on 11/14/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=volver.htm>, Box Office Mojo 2011, "The Sea Inside: Summary," accessed on 11/14/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=seainside.htm>, Box Office Mojo 2011, "Bad Education: Summary," accessed on 11/14/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=badeducation.htm>, Box Office Mojo 2011, "The Sea Inside: Summary," accessed on 11/14/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=seainside.htm>

(*The Orphanage*, 2007).⁴⁵³ The psychological thriller was directed by Juan Antonio Bayona, written by Sergio G. Sánchez and produced by Álvaro Augustín, Joaquín Padró, Mar Targarona and Guillermo del Toro. *El Orfanato* had a worldwide box office of \$78,638,987.⁴⁵⁴ In the U.S., it was theatrically distributed by Picturehouse and grossed \$7,159,147.⁴⁵⁵

Transnational successes like *El Orfanato*, however, were the exception and not the rule in Spanish cinema in the 2000s. U.S. subsidiaries' involvement in Spanish productions in most cases resulted in films targeted at the Spanish domestic box office. An example is Sony's Spanish subsidiary Columbia Films Productions' comedy *Di que sí* (2004), produced in conjunction with Zebra Producciones. The film was solely distributed in Spain, where it had 616,962 admissions.⁴⁵⁶ In 2005, Warner Bros.' Spanish subsidiary Warner Bros. Pictures de España produced Manuel Gómez Pereira's romantic comedy *Reinas* (*Queens*, 2005). *Reinas* grossed \$2,531,80 at the Spanish box office, played in several foreign territories and was theatrically distributed by Regent Releasing in the U.S., grossing \$140,417 at the box office.⁴⁵⁷

Spanish Transnational Animation in the 2000s

Considering that family films tend to be the largest box office earners, Spain's involvement in family animation film production, from the late 1990s on, increased substantially. While the new wave of Spanish animated films did very well in their home market, it took until the late 2000s, for them to catch on internationally. The breakthrough film in the transnational segment—being a pan-European success and

⁴⁵³ Production companies involved in *Volver* were Spanish entities Grupo Rodar, Rodar y Rodar Cine y Televisión, Telecinco Cinema, Telecinco, Warner Bros. Pictures de España and Spanish broadcaster Televisió de Catalunya (TV3), Esta Vivo! Laboratorio de Nuevos Talentos and French company Wild Bunch.

⁴⁵⁴ IMDb, "Box office / business for El orfanato (2007)," accessed on 8/2/2009, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0464141/business>

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Lumiere Database, accessed on 11/14/2011, from http://lumiere.obs.coe.int/web/film_info/?id=22520

⁴⁵⁷ Box Office Mojo 2011, "Queens: Summary," accessed on 11/14/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=queens.htm>

doing moderately well in the highly coveted U.S. theatrical market—was the 2009 production *Planet 51*. The animated film comedy is set on another planet and tells the story of Planet 51’s inhabitants’ comedic encounters with an “alien” visitor, a U.S. astronaut from planet Earth, whose efforts of returning to earth are supported by a cheerful and chronically misunderstood local teenager. *Planet 51* was produced by Spanish animation company Ilion Animation and U.K. production company HandMade Films. Co-Production partner was Danish production company A. Film. *Planet 51* was produced in collaboration with Canal+ España, the Irish Film Board, Telefilm Canada’s Equity Investment Program, U.K. production company Future Films and The Danish Film Institute.⁴⁵⁸ *Planet 51*, budgeted at an estimated \$70 million,⁴⁵⁹ can serve as an example for the transnational synergy during the development process of European films, modeled after U.S. productions, and the use of U.S. writing talent for European films. The film was directed by video game developer Jorge Blanco, co-directed by video game developers Javier Abad and Marcos Martínez, produced by Spanish video game producer Ignacio Pérez Dolset and U.K. industry veteran Guy Collins and written by U.S. writer Joe Stillman, based on an original idea and story by Jorge Blanco. Stillman’s writing credits include *Beavis and Butt-Head Do America*, and *Shrek* and *Shrek 2*. Jorge Blanco, Javier Abad and Marcos Martínez had worked for Ignacio Pérez, president of Spanish video game company Pyro, known for the video game series *Commandos*. Blanco says that,

After finishing *Commandos 2*, Ignacio Pérez, president of Pyro, told us about his plans to build up an animation studio and we could not resist to the idea. Videogames were not challenging enough anymore from an artistic point of view. So the 4 of us spent 8 months looking for a good story so we could settle the foundations of the animation studio. (Diaz 2010)

⁴⁵⁸ Among other entities associated with the production of the film were Spanish production companies ICF, Spanish bank Instituto de Crédito Oficial (ICO), the Spanish Cultural Ministry Ministerio de Cultura (ICAA), U.K. company Future Films, Norwegian financing and production company Nordisk Film- & TV-Fond, Hong Kong company Imagi Animation Studios, Irish production company Magma films, French production company Slot Machine, French distributor TFM Distribution and German production company Ulysses.

⁴⁵⁹ Box Office Mojo 2011, “Planet 51: Summary” accessed on 1/2/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=planet51.htm>

Addressing the—for a Spanish animation film—unprecedented budget level of an estimated \$70 million, Blanco says that, “the good thing about such a big budget is that you can really work with the necessary tools and resources to achieve the average quality of a great animation production” (Diaz 2010). Talking about the creative origins of the project, Blanco says, his

[...] professional life has been linked from the beginning to Ignacio Pérez Dolset. These huge projects were foreseen by Ignacio, so my merit is just about to take them and try to finish them successfully. For example, with *Planet 51*, the idea at the beginning was just creating a short movie, but Ignacio pushed us directly to turn it into an international film. (Diaz 2010)

Talking about the collaborative process on *Planet 51*, Blanco says that,

[...] working with Javier, Marcos and Ignacio was really a big thing in this project [...] We work very well as a team, everyone in our own responsibilities and fields, and this was a key point for *Planet 51* shining artistically. Work was always made as a team, and then I had the final word for trying to move on in artistic decisions that would not be shared by everyone. (ibid.)

According to Blanco, “Ignacio created a real “paradisiacal” atmosphere for what we are used to dealing with in the Spanish industry, where we had all the resources and support needed to complete *Planet 51*” (ibid.). Addressing development of the script and the involvement of Joe Stillman in the writing process, Blanco says that, after producing several sequences of the movie, they showed it to Joe Stillman, who “fell in love with the idea of the film.” Blanco says that, “working with Joe has been really wonderful. He has been involved in the project 100% and offered us a continuous help” (ibid.).

Planet 51 received theatrical distribution in key territories around the world, including the U.S., where TriStar Pictures distributed it. It generated \$42,194,060 at the U.S. box office and a total of \$63,453,042 internationally (non-U.S.).⁴⁶⁰ On the key co-production partners home turfs Spain and the U.K. it generated \$15,762,612 and

⁴⁶⁰ Box Office Mojo 2011, “*Planet 51*: Summary” accessed on 1/2/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=planet51.htm>

\$7,368,928 respectively.⁴⁶¹ While performing respectably at the U.S. box office, especially considering that it was a film originating from Europe, *Planet 51* was not met with a lot of enthusiasm by U.S. reviewers.⁴⁶² *USA Today* film critic Claudia Pulik, for example, wrote that the film “had the directionless, recycled feel of a script by committee,” *Boston Globe* critic Ty Burr wrote that “young children and adults with high pain thresholds will enjoy the movie during its brief pause on the way to your On Demand menu,” *New York Times* critic Stephen Holden wrote that “the agreeable but flagrantly unoriginal *Planet 51* belongs to the mix-and-match school of animated moviemaking,” *Village Voice* movie critic Brian Miller wrote that “*Planet 51* mainly succeeds at reminding you of all the better movies that inspired it,” and *Chicago Sun-Times* critic Roger Ebert, giving the film 2 ½ stars, wrote that “although not bowling me over, *Planet 51* is a jolly and good-looking animated feature in glorious 2-D.” He credits it for being “beautifully animated” and considers it to be “perfectly pleasant as kiddie entertainment” (Ebert 2009). There were almost no complaints about the technical aspects of the film or its direction, and the criticism was leveled more at the script itself, and some critics had issues with the references the film made. *Chicago Reader* film critic Cliff Doerksen wrote that “the script lacks wit, and the in-joke references to cinematic sci-fi classics will soar over little kids' heads without pleasing many adults” (Doerksen 2009). Not all critics, however, found fault with the story. *Entertainment Weekly*'s Adam Markovitz, ironically one of the few critics who found fault in the animation quality of the movie, acknowledges that the movie “delivers a few pleasant surprises, including a smart story” (Markovitz 2009).

While *Planet 51* is not *Shrek*, as *Washington Post* critic Michael O'Sullivan, who gave the movie 1½ stars and called it “cute,” accurately observes (O'Sullivan 2009), it was one of the most successful European efforts to conquer an international family

⁴⁶¹ The U.K. gross includes Ireland and Malta. Box Office Mojo 2011, “*Planet 51*: Summary” accessed on 1/2/2011, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=planet51.htm>

⁴⁶² *Planet 51* received a relatively low 22 percent score on Rotten Tomatoes. Rotten Tomatoes 2011, “*Planet 51* (2009),” accessed on 01/02/2010, 01/02/2010, from http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/planet_51/

audience with an animated film that visually almost reached the level of Hollywood animated family films from established U.S. animation studios such as Pixar and Disney. The difference in storytelling between some of the hit films from animation leader Pixar could potentially be found in the long and elaborate development process Pixar undergoes, compared to the development process the relatively inexperienced Spanish team, paired with U.S. screenwriter Joe Stillman went through. Joe Stillman did not write *Shrek* by himself, it was, as is the case for most U.S. animation projects, a highly collaborative effort, involving a number of writers (Personal conversation with Terry Rossio 2007). This is, where *Planet 51* might have benefited from an American home. Considering the development history of *Planet 51* and the relatively few people involved in the writing process, *Planet 51* can be seen as a relatively unique production experience for a film of its kind. However, both content, development and production practices are clearly influenced and inspired by Global Conglomerate Hollywood.

Planet 51 forms the commercial apex for animation films originating in Spain. The late 1990s and 2000s saw a string of animated films from Spain that had been paving the way for *Planet 51*.⁴⁶³ What these films had in common was that they all were written by Spanish writers, and that only a couple of them were based on English-language properties. All of them, with the exception of *Dragon Hill* (Ángel Izquierdo, 2002), were Spanish-language films, and none of them received U.S. theatrical

⁴⁶³ Among those films were Juan Bautista Berasategi's *Ahmed, el principe de la Alhambra* (*Ahmed, The Prince of Alhambra*, 1998), written by Pío Artola, based on the novel by Washington Irving; Txabi Basterretxea and Joxan Muñoz's *La isla del cangrejo* (*Crab Island*, 2000), written by Joxan Muñoz; Ángel de la Cruz and Manolo Gómez' *El bosque animado* (*The Living Forest*, 2001), written by Ángel de la Cruz, based on a novel by Wenceslao Fernández; Ángel Izquierdo's *La colina del dragón* (*Dragon Hill*, 2002), written by Antonio Zurera; Flórez José Pozo's *El Cid: La leyenda* (*El Cid: The Legend*, 2003), written by Jose Pozo; Antonio Navarro's *Los Reyes Magos* (*The Three Wise Men*, 2003), written by Javier Aguirreamalloa, Juanjo Ibañez and Juan Ignacio Peña, with the film's English adaptation by Stephen Hughes; Juan Bautista Berasategi's *El embrujo del Sur* (*The Spell of the South*, 2003), written by Jesús del Río and Manuel Sánchez, based on a novel by Washington Irvin; Ángel de la Cruz and Manolo Gómez' *El sueño de una noche de San Juan* (*Midsummer Dream*, 2005), written by de la Cruz and Beatriz Izo, based on Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Juan Pablo Buscarini's *El ratón Pérez* (*The Hairy Tooth Fairy*, 2006), written by Enrique Cortés.

distribution.⁴⁶⁴ *Planet 51*, seen in that context, clearly marks a departure for the Spanish animation industry, and the country's first truly successful foray into the international marketplace for animated films.

However, innovation in and transnationalization of the Spanish film industry was not limited to the higher budget end of the spectrum. *Buried* (Rodrigo Cortes, 2010), a Spanish/U.S./French co-production serves as an example for an American-style genre movie produced by a Spanish producer, Adrián Guerra, and a U.K.-born producer operating out of the U.S., Peter Safran. *Buried* made it into the lineup of the 2010 Sundance Film Festival and attracted U.S. theatrical distribution by U.S. distributor Lionsgate.⁴⁶⁵ Produced for an estimated \$3 million, it generated \$18,375,438 at the worldwide box office, \$1,044,143 of that in the U.S.⁴⁶⁶

CONCLUSIONS FOR SPANISH TRANSNATIONAL CINEMA IN THE 1990s AND 2000s

Spanish cinema during the 1990s and 2000s has seen an increasing number of European-, as well as international co-productions, including some with the U.S., and an increasing number with countries in South America. The number of English-language pictures, despite on-and-off efforts during this time-period has not turned into a serious driving force for Spanish cinema. However, a significant increase in genre filmmaking—much of it inspired by genre conventions typically found in the Global

⁴⁶⁴ A number of them, however, received theatrical distribution in Argentina, Mexico and several European territories.

⁴⁶⁵ *Buried* started out as a screenplay that U.S. writer/director/producer Chris Sperling intended to direct as a “no-budget” independent feature. Sperling calls the inception of the project a “financial decision.” He says that he “tried to come up with the most contained story I could possibly tell, in addition to being one that involved as few actors as possible” (Reeves 2009). Sperling says that, when he “saw Rodrigo Cortes' first film, *The Contestant*, I knew he was the right person to direct *Buried*” (ibid). While in pre-production on *Buried*, Sperling sent the script to Aaron Kaplan, a manager he had been in contact with. Kaplan liked the script and signed Sperling as a client. Kaplan then sent the script to a number of LA talent agencies and got Sperling signed by Charlie Ferraro and Doug Johnson at L.A. talent agency UTA. From there the script got into the hands of manager/producer Peter Safran, who ended up serving as the U.S. producer of the film (ibid.).

⁴⁶⁶ Box Office Mojo 2011, “Buried: Summary,” accessed on 2/21/11, from <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=buried.htm>

Conglomerate Hollywood era—is noticeable. Spanish cinema made a name for itself in the international marketplace of the 1990s and 2000s with films like *Todo sobre mi madre* (*All About My Mother*, Pedro Almodóvar, 1999), *Hable con Ella* (*Talk to Her*, Pedro Almodóvar, 2002), *El Orfanato* (*The Orphanage*, Juan Antonio Bayona, 2007) and *Volver* (Pedro Almodóvar, 2006). All of these films not only did well at the Spanish box office, but also managed to pull in respectable grosses on a pan-European as well as international scale. However, the Spanish film industry during the 1990s and 2000s had to face many problems and suffered from less than ideal organization. Spanish media conglomerates, some of them under foreign ownership, have significantly influenced the Spanish film production landscape. In regard to development strategies and practices for transnational films, a growing emphasis on the development phase has become evident over the years. To a certain extent this can be attributed to the European Union's various training programs, aimed at making the European film industry more competitive. As part of that development, the importance of the role of Spanish producers has grown within the complex enterprise of film production.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions and Recommendations

To varying degrees, the Big Five European film industries have adopted Global Conglomerate Hollywood development strategies and practices for the development of transnational motion pictures during the past three decades. The most apparent influences be found in the U.K., due to its film industry's close ties to Hollywood. This connection dates back to the post WWII years, when American investment began flowing into the U.K. film industry. While there has been a substantial flow of talent from the U.K. to the U.S., the U.K. has been a desirable foreign production base for the Hollywood film industry. This can be attributed, among other factors, to the common language, shared cultural traits between the two countries, financial incentives, and the U.K.'s strong talent base. As a result, the U.K. film industry has been a principal driving force in the production of transnational motion pictures in Europe over the past three decades. The majority of those transnational films, however, have been collaborations with the U.S. film industry. As U.S. companies have had substantial financial stakes in many of these films, they, in many cases, have been exerting substantial creative control over their development. However, a solid share of U.K. transnational cinema has originated in the U.K. and has been developed and controlled by U.K. film industry professionals. Growth in that area during the 1990s and 2000s was facilitated by numerous factors. Among them was the revision and expansion of the U.K.'s film education and training sector. Changing film education curricula in the U.K. have in many instances been influenced by U.S. models of film education. Furthermore, the focus on the development process has been increased as new training programs have evolved, and as training in screenwriting and screenplay development became more readily available through universities and other public and private institutions. Many of these initiatives were orchestrated by the UK Film Council during the 2000s. Contributing to the increase in transnational productions has been the introduction of lottery funding to the U.K. film industry. This led to a substantial

transformation and a considerable boost, not only in production levels, but also in the marketability of U.K. films, both domestically, as well as internationally. While the U.K. film industry can be considered as the film industry with the closest ties to Global Conglomerate Hollywood, and strongly dependent on the U.S. film industry, the French film industry traditional has liked to portray itself as an entity largely unaffected by, and even opposed to, Hollywood. French public funding support for cinema is still to a large degree influenced by a national cultural agenda. France was spearheading the efforts of establishing the *Television without Frontiers* directive in the 1980s, as well as the cultural exception in the final round of negotiations for the Uruguay round of GATT in 1993. Backed by political efforts to defend its national film culture, and supported by an intelligently designed public funding structure and a strong television industry, the French film industry has been able to maintain the highest production volume of any European country, without losing focus on the cultural importance of the medium. However, the French film industry is also one of the commercial strongholds of European cinema. While the majority of French films are still geared towards the French market, either commercial or art house, an increasing number of transnational productions has made France one of the key players in the global market among European countries. Some of the French film industry's most notable transnational successes, however, have been created by individuals working somewhat outside of the core French film industry. Case in point is Luc Besson's Europacorp., having successfully competed in international markets, yet, while extremely powerful, remained somewhat of a fringe operator within the French film industry. As a new generation of French producers has benefitted from new national, as well as pan-European education initiatives, an increasing number of French production companies has taken advantage of European and international co-production opportunities. At the same time, French involvement in the European film industry, in particular in Spain, the U.K. and Italy, increased. Regarding development strategies and processes, the French film industry still prides itself on fostering an auteur-driven cinema and eyes the global commercial activities of some of its components with skepticism and a bit of

disdain. This, however, does not seem to prevent the French media conglomerates and various individual players, most prominently and successfully EuropaCorp., from focusing on developing projects suitable for the pan-European and global markets.

Post World War II West Germany, on the other hand, can be characterized by a strong financial and ideological dependence on the U.S., as efforts to re-educate the Western German population by the Allies went hand in hand with the Americanization of German Post World War II culture. While West Germany rebuilt a strong commercial film industry, few of the films of the first wave of Western German popular cinema were transnational, let alone global. The exportability of Western German Post War cinema began with the New German Cinema movement in the late 1960s and 1970s. Key films of the New German Cinema era, somewhat characteristic for European art house films, turned out to be more popular outside the country than within its borders. A new wave of commercial, transnational and global cinema began to gain momentum in West Germany in the 1980s, followed by the film industry of the reunified Germany in the 1990s recapturing a part of the screen space previously occupied by Hollywood films. The focus of Germany's subsidy systems shifted gradually from a local, cultural orientation to a more commercial and increasingly international orientation.

Simultaneous to an increasing number of popular German box office successes, a number of German transnational and global films substantially expanded the mainstream reach of German cinema. German investors served as key foreign financing entities for Hollywood films in the late 1990s and early 2000s. As they took advantage of favorable tax laws, Hollywood in turn took advantage of the foreign money, that soon received the nickname "silly money." The latter, because the foreign investors often lacked the necessary U.S. film industry experience to make sound judgments about the films most suitable for investing in. While the flow of German money into Hollywood ebbed with the change of German tax laws, German film subsidies began attracting foreign production entities to Germany. This resulted in another wave of films with German companies as co-producing partners for U.S. productions, but also

led to an increase in pan-European co-productions with German participation. While the commercial cinema of the post-war years was to a large extent producer-driven, the New German Cinema, an auteur cinema movement inspired by the French New Wave, Italian Neorealism and generic conventions of Hollywood, was primarily director and writer/director driven. The 1980s and 1990s saw the emergence of a group of German producers that, in some instances, began to produce films aiming at domestic as well as international box office success, arguably inspired by the New Hollywood and later Conglomerate and Global Conglomerate Hollywood. This coincided and was to some extent fueled by changes in the political arena, leading to modifications in film subsidy regulations. With U.S. studios starting subsidiaries in Germany in the 1990s, primarily to capitalize on a wave of national comedies that conquered the German box office and competed with their own offerings, the production culture in Germany became more international. Its main focus, however, remained on producing properties for the local box office. Talent migration to the U.S., and the subsequent return of some of that talent to Germany, brought fresh perspectives to a cinema in rapid transition. The strong dependency of German cinema on public television in the 1980s and on public and private television in the late 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, has been shaping the way films are developed. The growing opportunities of pan-European and international co-productions in the 1990s and 2000s led a growing number of producers to refocus their development slates on pan-European productions with transnational qualities. As a result, parts of the producer-driven segment of pan-European and global cinema, originating from Germany in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, came to rely on U.S. models of development. This meant more screenplay drafts, more notes from producers, a more mass-audience oriented way of telling stories and a focus on genre films, and recycling of proven narrative formulas found in films of the New Hollywood, Conglomerate and Global Conglomerate Hollywood eras. While a substantial part of German productions—in particular the majority of co-productions with German television stations—were primarily targeted at the domestic market, elements of U.S. commercial

cinema increasingly found their way into hybrid versions of German-Hollywood cinema.

Increased co-production activities with Europe, South-America and the U.S. and a number of English-language productions have made Spain a potent participant in the area of producing transnational film properties in the 1990s and 2000s. Similar to France, Italy, and Germany, the share of transnational feature film productions, while growing, is relatively small, compared to the output of such features by the U.S. film industry. Spanish media conglomerates, some of them foreign owned, have played a significant role in the increase in the number of transnational properties developed in Spain. International players like U.S. studio Sony and French Canal+ had pursued options of making Spain a production base for transnational films. While Sony's activities in Spain were short-lived, Canal+ remained involved in the Spanish market and contributed to a number of Spanish productions. Spanish films like Pedro Almodóvar *Todo sobre mi madre* (*All About My Mother*, 1999), *Hable con Ella* (*Talk to Her*, 2002) and *Volver* (2006), and Juan Antonio Bayona's *El Orfanato* (*The Orphanage*, 2007) raised the international prestige of the Spanish film industry and demonstrated the commercial potential of Spanish cinema in the international marketplace. In the 2000s, Spanish film companies also made efforts to establish themselves in the animation sector. Among those attempts, the 3D animated family movie *Planet 51* (Jorge Blanco, Javier Abad & Marcos Martinez, 2009) was the most ambitious one, and was a major leap for the Spanish animation industry. Inspired by Hollywood 3D animated features and written by a U.S. writer, the film exemplifies the international ambitions of the Spanish film industry and the way Spanish producers have adopted U.S. development and production workflows. Looking at the development practices behind some of the most successful transnational properties originating in Spain, it becomes evident that there has been an increased focus on the development phase and on the pursuit of creating transnational films. To a certain extent this can be attributed to the European Union's various training programs, aimed at making the European film industry more competitive, but also to a shift in Spanish

film education and various local training initiatives, very similar to the other Big Five film producing countries. As a result of these changes, the importance and creative influence of Spanish producers on the filmmaking process has grown. The ability to compete with Global Conglomerate Hollywood at the Spanish domestic box office, as well as the pan-European and international box office, has become a measuring stick for success for those producers of Spanish cinema in the 1990s and 2000s that were developing and producing transnational films.

While Italian cinema has a remarkably rich history of creating transnational film properties, its transnational efforts in the 1990s and 2000s do not seem to live up to that tradition of cinematic innovation. While a number of films during these two decades received international attention and recognition, the majority of productions Italy during the 1990s and 2000s remained limited to the domestic box office, and some of Italy's best regarded Italian directors like Bernardo Bertolucci had to rely on outside financing and production entities to make their films. Development in Italy, like in the other Big Five European film industries addressed here, was shaped by the MEDIA training programs; changes in film school curricula, often inspired by U.S. models; and a number of U.S. training programs pushing into the Italian market in the 2000s. Overall, however, the Italian film industry appears to be less influenced by U.S. development models than the film industries in the U.K., Spain and Germany.

Overall, efforts in all of the Big Five European countries to regain domestic audience share by focusing on the production of popular local cinema have succeeded to varying degrees. However, only a small percentage of the European national blockbuster movies of the 1990s and 2000s were able to make significant inroads at the pan-European or international box office. Yet, as covered in Chapters 3 to 7, each of the five film industries produced an increasing number of films that were able to succeed beyond their respective national markets. As the American majors, during the Global Conglomerate Hollywood era, increasingly focused on franchises aimed at younger demographics; as budgets kept increasing and mid-size pictures were pushed off the studios' development slates; and as the Hollywood studios began closing their

independent divisions in the 2000s, further jeopardizing the already fragile U.S. indie film market, European producers, in fact, were presented with an unprecedented opportunity: to counter Hollywood's global dominance of the theatrical motion picture market by producing films catering to the demographics neglected by the studios and drawing them back into pan-European and global theaters.

With financing for most European productions coming from a multitude of sources, often from multiple countries, and from a mix of public and private funding, producers have come to play a more central role in European film production than they had been in the past. The growing significance of the pan-European and global marketplaces for filmed entertainment in the 1990s and 2000s has called for producers' abilities to maneuver an increasingly complex development and production environment. In order to succeed, European producers need the skills to identify marketable and financeable properties and must be capable of guiding writers and directors to shape them into narratives that are attractive to mainstream domestic, pan-European and global audiences. As Chapters 2 to 7 suggested, the need to be able to maneuver the global marketplace has significantly raised the bar for creators of filmed entertainment content in Europe. The push for European as well as international co-productions has forced producers to look beyond their national boundaries for stories, talent, financing and distribution. A number of award-winning European film directors have established themselves as successful brands that support their films' marketability as well as playability internationally. Directors who helmed pan-European blockbusters or award winning transnational art house movies, unless migrating to Hollywood and being directly absorbed by Global Conglomerate Hollywood, have become much sought after properties in the European film industry. This can be attributed to a growing number of European producers, who are increasingly relying on talent with a transnational perspective, capable of catering to pan-European and international audiences. Producers, operating at a pan-European or global level, have become parts of transnational networks that meet several times a year at various international film festivals and markets, and function increasingly on a pan-European and global level.

Many of the new generation of producers of European transnational cinema are film-school trained, and often very familiar with all aspects of the filmmaking process. Hence, they can confidently assert their creative authority in a writer/director/producer relationship. While directors of European films are also often writers or co-writers of their films, a growing number of screenplays originate from writers hired by producers prior to the involvement of a director, and in some instances are even co-written by the producers themselves.

When looking at the influence of Global Conglomerate Hollywood on the Big Five European film industries, one has to keep in mind the historical, cultural, and political differences between the different countries, which shaped the ways these industries evolved or re-evolved as producers of transnational or global motion pictures. To a substantial degree, however, the influence of European media policies—introduced with the formalization of the European single market as part of the European Union in 1993—created a more pan-European cinema. It also encouraged an increase in focus of European production entities on a pan-European, transnational and ideally global cinema. With the agendas of the European Union encompassing both cultural and economic goals, the fostering of a more competitive, transnationally and ideally globally oriented film industry goes beyond the econocentric global expansion strategies of Global Conglomerate Hollywood. However, as Chapters 3 to 7 suggested, the different histories and production cultures of the Big Five film industries led to different adaptation patterns of these cultural as well as commercial pan-European agendas. Despite these individual differences, the European film industries are closely tied to the European Union itself. Numerous pan-European initiatives have created an extensive framework for pan-European collaboration in the film industry. As European training programs have educated a new generation of film professionals, film production has increasingly turned from an artistic and cultural enterprise into a more economically focused venue.

With the future of European institutions like MEDIA somewhat uncertain, and government film subsidies in three of the Big Five film producing countries under

pressure, it remains to be seen to what extent the European film industry will be able to remain competitive on an international level. Most European producers of films with medium to high budgets tend to rely on substantial components of public and/or commercial television financing and public film subsidies money. Should the availability of these components decrease, budgets will most likely need to shrink, and producers will have to think of new ways to finance their films. With a number of European countries in the early 2010s at the verge of fiscal bankruptcy, government subsidies for the arts and entertainment industries will be harder to justify. Unless films supported by the national funding agencies will generate more economic opportunities for the struggling countries than they cost their funding bodies, these funding structures might eventually have to be drastically reduced or even eliminated. With European producers accustomed to producing films financed with substantial subsidy components, the disappearance of some of these sources would most likely lead to a substantial reduction of production output in most European countries and to the U.S. film industry quickly reclaiming lost European market share.

Considering the challenges facing the European film industry in the 21st century, the development and production of transnational properties will continue to be a part of the survival arsenal of European production entities. The ongoing evolution of the pan-European development and production activities in the various European film industries, often closely interconnected with Global Conglomerate Hollywood, is an interesting subject for further exploration. Considering European producers' increasing focus on transnational films, a research approach that looks at the European film industry from a global perspective, seems suitable to gain a better understanding of the working mechanisms of the European film industries and their relationship with Global Conglomerate Hollywood. The analysis of development strategies and practices of transnational films is a research topic that deserves further attention, as decision-making and creative collaboration at this stage influence the shaping of a film to a similar extent as do decisions made by the director during the production phase.

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