

***Terms of Enjoyment***

*Film Classification and Critics' Discourse in Comparative Perspective*

Annemarie Kersten

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***Terms of Enjoyment***

*Film Classification and Critics' Discourse in Comparative Perspective*

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***Voorwaarden van vermaak***

*Filmclassificatie en kritisch discours in vergelijkend perspectief*

Thesis

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# Contents

Acknowledgments	7
Tables and Figures	9
Chapter 1	
<b>Introduction</b>	
1.1 The Construction of Value and Taste	11
1.2 The Field of Film Production	16
1.3 Four Studies on the Social Valuation of Film	24
Chapter 2	
<b><i>Boundaries between Prestige and Popularity of Film: Film Art and the Commercial Movie in Cross-National Perspective, 1955-2005</i></b>	
2.1 Introduction	29
2.2 Field Theory and Film	30
2.3 The Legitimation of Film	32
2.4 Boundaries in Cross-National Perspective	34
2.5 Data and Methods	38
2.6 Findings	41
2.7 Conclusion	47
Chapter 3	
<b><i>Dimensions of Conventionality and Innovation in Film: The Cultural Classification of Blockbusters, Award Winners, and Critics' Favorites</i></b>	
3.1 Introduction	51
3.2 Classification of Film	53
3.3 Innovation and Convention in Hollywood	54
3.4 Data and Methods	58
3.5 Findings	62
3.6 Conclusion	69

## Chapter 4

### ***Film Discourse on the Praised and Acclaimed:***

#### ***Reviewing Criteria in the United States and United Kingdom***

4.1 Introduction	73
4.2 Film Criticism Today	74
4.3 Aesthetic Position and Cultural Goods	75
4.4 Data and Methods	78
4.5 Findings	80
4.6 Conclusion	91

## Chapter 5

### ***National Cultural Repertoires of Evaluation in a Global Age:***

#### ***Film Discourse in France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States***

5.1 Introduction	93
5.2 Cultural Repertoires of Evaluation	95
5.3 Cultural Circumstances	97
5.4 Data and Methods	99
5.5 Findings	101
5.6 Conclusion	110

## Chapter 6

### ***Conclusions***

6.1 Recapturing the Results	113
6.2 Discussion and Implications	119

References	127
------------	-----

Appendices	137
------------	-----

Dutch summary	145
---------------	-----

Curriculum vitae	151
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## Tables and Figures

### Tables

2.1 Percentage of film items focusing on director	42
2.2 Percentage of film items devoted to films by director-screenwriters	43
2.3 Percentage of film items devoted to movies by award winning directors	44
2.4 Percentage of film items devoted to films by directors with success at the box office in past decade	45
2.5 Percentage of film items devoted to films with popular and professional recognition	46
3.1 Types of recognition	60
3.2 Component loadings of 2 main dimensions	63
3.3 Differences between films with popular, critical and professional recognition in two dimensions of material production value	65
3.4 Differences between films with popular, critical and professional recognition in four dimensions of symbolic affordances	66
3.5 The influence of different types of recognition and material film traits on symbolic film traits	68
4.1 Distribution of use of themes across all 194 reviews as percentages by type of film recognition	82
4.2 Obliquely rotated component loadings for fifteen themes	88
4.3 Percentages of reviews linked to factors by type of film recognition	90
5.1 Film production per country in 2009	99

5.2 Obliquely rotated component loadings for fifteen themes	102
5.3 Multiple OLS regression analyses on prominence of discourse components	104

## **Figures**

2.1 Pool of successful directors	40
3.1 Interplay of two dimensions of material practices	64

# Chapter 1

## *Introduction*

### **1.1 The Construction of Value and Taste**

*“The work of art is an object which exists as such only by virtue of the (collective) belief which knows and acknowledges it as a work of art.”*

Pierre Bourdieu (1993: 35)

Film as a cultural genre commands great popularity and exercises influence over today’s Western culture in no small way (Bordwell & Thompson, 1997; McDonald & Wasko, 2008). As such, film is also a sizeable global industry that annually churns out hundreds of new movies in many different countries. The enormous supply contains commercial movies for large mainstream audiences and art films for the specialized few (Tudor, 2007) in an array of genres, subgenres, and styles (Cook, 2007). Film audiences may emerge from preferences for particular directors, actors, screenwriters, composers, genres, styles, series, formulas, or themes. Further, audiences differ with regard to expertise and seek different viewing experiences; movies may meet the need for escapism or provide intellectual challenges (Silvia & Berg, 2011). For example, fans of the romantic comedy genre aim for submersion in an emotionally resonating story, while admirers of director David Lynch’s surrealism look for analysis and interpretation. In other words, they employ different terms of enjoyment.

In order to find the movies that meet their tastes, audiences need to make sense of the mound of choices presented to them. Classification of, or bringing order to, the industry’s supply ensues from audiences exchanging viewpoints and experiences, setting up standards, and applying criteria (DiMaggio, 1987). This dissertation is concerned with the dynamics of value assignment in the film world, here presented in a nutshell, in various national contexts. As elegantly put by Bourdieu (1993) (quoted at the beginning of this

chapter), value is not inherent to a cultural product and then measured according to existing standards. Value is *assigned* to it, only in existence by the grace of the social consensus that results from discussion. Terence Malick's *Tree of Life* (2011) is generally given more merit than David Yates' *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2011) because audiences agree its features are more valuable, not because the film in itself dictates it. The former was honored with symbolic value (prestige or honor) in the shape of a Golden Palm, the award for the best picture of the year at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival, while the latter, being the highest grossing movie of its release year, mainly revealed in economic value (financial resources or the means to obtain them).

Likewise, tastes are constructed rather than natural features. Taste is acquired and determined by one's level of cultural capital - i.e. someone's collection of cultural and social knowledge, skills, experiences, beliefs, and habits, and acquired through socialization and education (Bourdieu, 1984; 1993). Different groups in society represent different levels of such capital and therefore express different tastes. The process of classifying films thus involves various taste groups. One could also say that it implicates different institutions that take up different roles in the film world. A selection of such agents is generally regarded as most crucial in the valuation and classification of film, consisting of general audiences, peer filmmakers, and professional critics (Allen & Lincoln, 2004). These groups vary in their levels of cultural capital, therefore their positions and statuses differ, and consequentially their opinions or consensus are valued differently (Bourdieu, 1993).

Since appreciation by mainstream audiences is not necessarily a function of expertise on moviemaking or specialist intellectual scrutiny, and mainly leads to raised ticket sales and grown market shares, it is primarily categorized as providing films with economic value. Peer filmmakers who have expertise regarding film production practices are considered better suited to separate the mediocre from the good films. Their approval does not necessarily sell tickets but does add prestige. As professional film critics specialize in analyzing and evaluating film, and their job consists of informing and advising audiences, they are expected to exceed their public in expertise (Becker, 1982; Janssen 1997; 1999, Van Rees, 1983; Verboord, 2010). Critical recognition adds honor and prestige to the movie, but does not generally result in economic success. The legitimate (highbrow art) taste of critics is informed by high levels of cultural capital, and is therefore traditionally

dominant in processes of classification. As tastes differ across various institutional agents, the films appreciated by these respective groups supposedly vary too. Popular films require less cultural capital from their audiences than their prestigious counterparts do. This leads to the Bourdieusian (1993) distinction between art film and commercial movie, produced in the opposing “fields of restricted and large-scale film production”.

Whereas the functioning of the different valuating agents in the field of film has been studied in past years (e.g. Allen & Lincoln, 2004; Hicks & Petrova, 2006; Zuckerman & Kim, 2003), it remains unclear whether the value they assign is delivered to films that are in fact inherently different from each other – do these film types display variation in terms of production or content characteristics, and are they perceived as different by audiences? Furthermore, there is the question of how these film types fit into the much-employed dichotomy between art film and commercial movie (Tudor, 2007). This is a particularly relevant issue in a time in which the two seem ever more difficult to define, and the boundaries between them appear to be at stake (Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Janssen, 2005; Prior, 2005). Studies have shown different valuating agents to increasingly value the same products whereas their respective positions suppose differentiation (Allen & Lincoln, 2004; Schmutz, 2005). Also, the institutional logics – i.e. the practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules that frame production (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999) - that govern the discerned fields of film production seem to increasingly intertwine, resulting in resemblances between popular and prestigious films.

### ***1.1.1 Research Focus: The Role of Film Criticism***

This research focuses on professional film criticism, an institution that offers guidance to audiences in their search for films that they might enjoy. Critics play an important role in the social valuation of film as they function as intermediaries between producers and consumers, and strongly influence overall film discourse (Becker, 1982; Bourdieu, 1993). Previous research shows that film criticism has grown into a prominent element of arts and culture coverage of elite newspapers in Western countries over the twentieth century (Janssen et al., 2008; 2011). This study addresses the matters of *which* types of film are covered over time and the manner in which they are discussed.

Film criticism has proven an important factor in film's overall status in the cultural realm; Baumann's analysis of the composition of American film criticism between the 1920s and 1980s demonstrates that the intellectualization of film discourse during the 1960s was partially realized by critics. They introduced highbrow aesthetic criteria that allowed for analysis and interpretation, thereby enabling recognition of artistic merit in film (Baumann, 2001; 2007). This change was instrumental to film's emancipation from mere entertainment to a cultural genre with artistic potential in the United States (U.S.). This dissertation extends Baumann's valuable research in terms of both the examined time period and cultural context. Since the 1980s, trends of commercialization and globalization have gained influence on the international film world, which is bound to affect its discourse (McDonald & Wasko, 2008). Secondly, the American case is not necessarily representative for the Western society as a whole, as the European film worlds, their classification practices, and their film discourses have developed along different lines (Bordwell & Thompson, 1997). The inclusion of other Western countries in investigations of film discourse is likely to result in a broader, more specified overview of film classification and criticism. Also, as evaluation schemas and tastes are dependent on their cultural surroundings (Liebes & Katz, 1993), studying film discourse across countries allows for exploring the sustenance of cross-national differences in the way film is evaluated (Janssen et al., 2011). In times of ubiquitous cultural globalization (Crane et al., 2002), exemplified by the predominance of the Hollywood movie in the Western film world (Barthel-Bouchier, 2011; Lee & Waterman, 2007), national cultural repertoires of evaluation, i.e. culturally determined collections of valuating schemas that people apply in a variety of situations and which orders their assessments on all kinds of matters (Lamont and Thévenot, 2000), seem difficult to maintain but may yet prove to still differentiate film discourse. Furthermore, while the overall film discourse has become more intellectual (Baumann, 2001), this may not undividedly apply to the range of film types that critics encounter. Hence, it is important to take the differentiation of reviewed films into account.

This dissertation builds on previous studies as it examines film criticism, its relations to other institutional agents involved in the valuation of film products, and the alteration of its appearance across time periods, national contexts, and film types. It investigates the types of films appreciated most by mainstream audiences, peer

filmmakers, and critics, the boundaries between these film types, and the discourse surrounding them. The main research question of this book about the social valuation of film is the following:

*In what ways and to what extent can the films appreciated most by the audience, the film industry, and professional critics be distinguished, and how do film critics in various cultural contexts across the Western world classify and make sense of this range of films?*

This thesis considers the development of the boundaries between art films and commercial movies against the backdrop of various trends in the Western film world between 1955 and 2005. It investigates which types of films professional film critics in Dutch, French, German, and U.S. newspapers discussed in this time period, and to what extent these films qualify as “popular” or “prestigious”. The broader trends in film classification lead to inquiry into the particularities of such classifications. One of the questions addressed in the thesis concerns the qualities of the movies presently appreciated most by mainstream audiences, peer filmmakers, and professional critics across various Western countries. It examines whether “popular”, “professional” and “critical” tastes are in fact related to film types that vary according to production and content features. Shifting focus to film discourse, the research addresses whether present-day film criticism can be differentiated according to film type. Are the movies that are valued most by the public, the film industry, and the critics appraised by similar or different criteria? The examination of film discourse employed by critics is then continued with an eye on cross-national similarities and differences. On the one hand, evaluation schemas have been found to vary across national contexts, but on the other hand, trends of cultural globalization have been argued to induce homogeneity. Hence, the question posed is whether film discourses in France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom (U.K.), and the United States can presently be differentiated and typified. The answers to the dissertation’s various questions are recaptured in the final chapter, where their consolidation and revisiting the literature result in a response to the main research question.

### ***1.1.2 A Triad of Comparative Research***

Inspired by various calls for comparative research on cultural production and consumption (Janssen & Peterson, 2005; Peterson, 2005), my research offers a three-folded comparative perspective. It highlights differentiation in various ways and delivers a nuanced and detailed view on the subject matter. First of all, the study features a longitudinal approach (Chapter 2), which allows for the charting of changes in film coverage in national newspapers under influence of successive trends in the film world and the media industries surrounding it. Secondly, I employ a cross-national perspective throughout the book, regarding these nations as distinct cultural contexts that shape the practices of cultural valuation. In Chapters 2 and 5, the cross-national comparison is central to my research; these chapters focus on film classification and discourse across Western national contexts that display many similarities concerning (film) culture as well as distinguishing features. In Chapters 3 and 4, the cross-national perspective is subordinate to the investigation of other differentiations. However, here, the inclusion of various national or cultural contexts fortifies the conclusions drawn, as certain findings appear to be robust across different national settings. Finally, my research takes the variety within the overall film supply into account. The analysis of film valuations focuses on possible differences between film types by drawing comparisons between films that are valued most by mainstream audiences, peer filmmakers, and professional critics. In particular, I investigate whether these film types receive more or less attention in newspaper coverage of film, how these film types can be qualified, and whether criticism takes on different shapes with regard to these film types.

Before I specify the dissertation's four empirical studies, and the particular comparative perspectives they employ, I briefly discuss the main theoretical concepts and notions that support this research.

## **1.2 The Field of Film Production**

A much-employed framework for studies within cultural sociology is found in Pierre Bourdieu's field theory. Bourdieu's (1993) model of the "field of cultural production" presents the domains in which cultural products (e.g. books, paintings, photographs, music, film) are produced as "fields of struggles". Various institutional agents compete in order to



obtain or improve their positions and thus influence the existing hierarchy of producers and their creations within the field. Power enables one to impose norms on the cultural field; norms to which the powerful themselves comply best, which causes their output to be regarded as most valuable. These ongoing power struggles render the field of cultural production subject to constant change, during which the standards of production (e.g. of conventionality and innovativeness) are continually redefined. Such pliability makes for variation in cultural fields across cultural, social, or political contexts (Bever, 2005; DiMaggio, 1987; Janssen et al., 2008; 2011); the battles that are fought are shaped and restrained by their (institutional) surroundings.

According to Bourdieu (1984), the existing social class hierarchy within society is reflected in the varying levels of cultural capital present in different layers of a population. Cultural capital can be defined as a collection of cultural and social knowledge, skills, experiences, beliefs, and habits that one has required through socialization and education. Traditionally, the higher one's position in socio-economic regard, the more advanced one's socialization and education, and the more cultural capital one disposes of. Only persons who possess a high amount of cultural capital have the ability to appreciate art, *decipher* the codes inherent to art (Prior, 2005), and thus express legitimate taste (Bourdieu, 1984). People who lack the required amount of cultural capital are seen to express illegitimate taste and mostly consume products from the "field of large-scale production" (Bourdieu, 1993).

This "field of large-scale (or mass) production" opposes its subfield of "small-scale (or restricted) production". The field of large-scale production produces for the general mainstream public. It functions according to straightforward economic principles, is commercially driven, and thus aims to obtain profit and big market-shares (economic capital). The restricted field of production supplies cultural goods to a specialist public of peer producers and experts, it is more autonomous from economic structures, denies economic principles, and pursues artistic worth and prestige (symbolic capital). Generally, the large-scale field aims at appealing to audiences with average levels of cultural capital at their disposal, while the restricted field targets those that have acquired considerably more cultural expertise and experience. Following, since their goals are far apart, the institutional logics that govern a cultural field differ between the two field segments.

Scholars in organizational studies define institutional logics as socially constructed packages of practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules that provide a framework in which production is organized and business is conducted (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999). Culture producers thus frame their enterprises in different manners; they have different tactics to satisfy their various audiences, e.g. they differ regarding the incorporation of innovative features (Crane, 1976; Dowd, 2004). While these logics can remain stable for long periods of time, they have been seen to go through various phases. Ways of operating may be innovative at first, evolve into notions that are “commonsense”, and finally fade away (Dowd, 2011).

Applied to the film world, Bourdieu’s theory (1993) would position the blockbuster, the Hollywood studios, and like-minded producers opposite the art(house) film and (more) independent filmmakers (Bordwell & Thompson, 1997; McDonald & Wasko, 2008). Indeed, this distinction, whether operationalized through differences in film content, film audiences, or the discourse employed (Kapsis, 1989), is very common in studies on the workings of the film field (Gemser et al., 2006; Heise & Tudor, 2007; Holbrook & Addis, 2008; Tudor, 2005). However, various scholars have pointed out that this strict dichotomy is difficult to maintain when confronted with today’s cultural industries (Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Prior, 2005). Bourdieu’s studies concerned high arts in a particular time and place, and did not address the modern-day large-scale field of cultural production that is dominated by multimedia conglomerates (Hesmondhalgh, 2002). Current trends like commercialization, globalization, and declassification offer circumstances that put Bourdieu’s ideas on the dynamics of cultural fields to the test (Janssen, 2005). In this research, the analysis of the film world is structured by Bourdieu’s model of the field of cultural production, while simultaneously exploring the theory’s applicability in different contexts, across time and place.

### ***1.2.1 Classification and Recognition of Film***

While cultural producers might compete with each other for success and the authority to set standards, the value of their work and the positions these producers can claim in the field are not just for the industry itself to decide. Cultural classification plays a key role in the structuring of a cultural field (Dowd, 2011). Classification processes involve describing,

interpreting, labeling, and evaluating products according to the particular field's logics, and implicate the various agents in the field (DiMaggio, 1987; Janssen et al., 2011). Three agents or institutions are often perceived as most central to the valuation of cultural products: *public*, *critics*, and *peers* (Allen & Lincoln, 2004; Hicks & Petrova, 2006; Lampel & Nadavulakereb, 2009; Schmutz, 2005; Van Rees, 1983). They reward cultural products with, respectively, *popular recognition*, *critical recognition*, and *professional recognition*. In the case of film, popular recognition equals the popularity a film has among mainstream audiences, and may be operationalized as box office results or the number of tickets sold. Critics express critical recognition or acclaim as they pay attention to a film, praise it, or place it on the annual shortlists of their outlets. Professional recognition tends to be articulated through (nominations for) prestigious awards and placement on prominent film festivals' programs. These three types of recognition signal various types of value being assigned to products at the time of their release. Further, the interplay of types of recognition results in the positioning of cultural products between their contemporaries and predecessors. Such cultural consecration follows from the value assigned by the various agents and shapes canons of cultural works generally accepted as containing artistic merit (Schmutz, 2005).

Film audiences play an important role in the valuation of films. The industry's hit-or-miss logic and the sizeable financial investments that filmmaking requires make a production's estimated commercial success a crucial factor in a studio's decisions regarding which projects to set forth (Bielby & Bielby, 1994). Moreover, popular recognition, a movie's success in terms of box office returns, seems crucial to the position its maker can claim in the industry (Allen & Lincoln, 2004). Filmmaking peers accord professional recognition as they reward nominations and prizes set in prestigious ceremonial settings, e.g. the annual Academy Awards ceremony and Cannes Film Festival. Such institutions representing (segments of) the film industry have both grown in numbers and gained prominence in the film world since the 1960s, a time in which film emancipated to a form of art in the United States (Baumann, 2007; English, 2005). The competition that film festivals and award ceremonies generate does not only enable distinctions within the film world, but also adds value to the cultural genre as a whole. In fact, the more general trend of institutionalization of film's practices and resources in this period was shown to

have been instrumental in furthering film's position on the cultural ladder, e.g. the rise of film studies departments at universities and professional film schools (Baumann, 2007). Similarly, film criticism was transformed into a professional occupation; one that was no longer practiced on the side by newspaper journalists, but required specific expertise. Professional critics gained influence and as the industry became more aware of the potential effect of reviews on consumers, movie-marketing strategies increasingly contained the appropriation of critics' appraisal (Baumann, 2002). Film critics assign value to films by paying attention to them in their publications, by doing so in a positive manner, by placing films on publications' or personal annual shortlists, or by rewarding critics' prizes (most notably the international Golden Globes).

These three types of recognition show overlap (Allen & Lincoln, 2004; Lampel & Nadavulakereb, 2009). Various institutions in the film field seem to award merit to the same films or filmmakers, whereas their respective positions in the field suggest a differentiation of classifications. Of course, this also casts doubt on the alleged opposition between the fields of restricted and large-scale cultural production. Apparently, some films produced within large-scale production nevertheless receive large critical acclaim, in the long run (e.g. *The Exorcist* (1973)), in the short run (e.g. *Avatar* (2009)) or large esteem by peers (e.g. *The Dark Knight* (2008)). Alternatively, some films intended for the circuit of restricted production become ultimately recognized by audiences (e.g. *Lost in Translation* (2003)). In addition, films that receive highly regarded Oscar nominations and/or awards seem to gain popular appeal and perform better at the box office in the weeks after the announcements or ceremony (Nelson et al., 2001).

These findings are in line with research that shows that classification systems have grown less hierarchical due to a multitude of developments in Western society (Janssen et al., 2008; 2011). In a "universe of declassification" cultural classification seem to be more complex than the dichotomy between art and commercial culture suggests (Prior, 2005). If various valuating institutional agents make the same choices, the question arises whether films rewarded with popular, professional, and critical recognition are still being distinguished as inherently different. While previous research shows that public, peers, and critics to a large extent appreciate and enjoy the same movies, this research examines whether this appreciation follows from discussions within similar discourses or whether

the terms of appreciation diverge and the negotiations on artistic worth take place along different lines.

### ***1.2.2 Film Discourse and Aesthetic Systems***

The focus of this research lies on film criticism, as this is regarded as a central institution with regard to value assignment in cultural fields (Janssen, 1997; 1999; Van Rees, 1983). Critics traditionally serve as important gatekeepers; they wield the power to make or break artists and art works (Becker, 1982). Further, they protect the field of restricted production from subsiding to a field of commercial (mass) culture production by admitting certain producers, while excluding others (Bourdieu, 1993). Above all, critics function as intermediaries between culture producers and consumers as they inform and advise the public about the supply offered (Verboord, 2010). As such, their way of talking about a cultural genre, their *discourse*, is of influence on the entire field. Moreover, while critics protect cultural fields from degrading by keeping standards in place, they can also help to lift them to higher levels by intellectualizing their discourse and developing legitimizing ideologies to inform that discourse (Baumann, 2007). The status of a cultural genre is not static but can change over time as “aesthetic mobility” allows for development (Bourdieu, 1993).

The way that cultural products are talked about is so influential that the evolution of a cultural genre from a form of entertainment to an art genre can become apparent in a changing discourse (DeNora, 1991; DiMaggio, 1982; Janssen, 1997; 1999; Shrum, 1996). In fact, the development of a legitimating ideology is crucial in the process of a cultural genre becoming a genre that can be viewed as a form of art (Baumann, 2001; 2007; Janssen, 2006). The presence of field-specific aesthetic criteria serves as a rationale by which in this case the cultural genre of film can be recognized as art. As the value of cultural products is assigned rather than assessed and thus quite subjective, socially constructed sets of criteria are needed to make consistent distinctions. Not only do these criteria provide the film field with a justifying logic for the legitimacy of film as art, they also provide the film world with tools for classifications within (Baumann, 2001). The transformation of a cultural field does not solely depend on its discourse; there are various factors that facilitate a change in

symbolic valuation (Peterson & Anand, 2004), but it has been shown to be a crucial factor (DeNora, 1991; DiMaggio, 1982; 1992; Ferguson, 1998; Lopes, 2002; Regev, 1994).

The idea that discourses on cultural products can be differentiated can be traced back to Bourdieu's writings on the field of cultural production (1993) as well as on taste and audiences (1984). In these studies, the aesthetic disposition and the popular aesthetic are discerned; two systems of criteria wielded by different, more or less culturally legitimate, socially defined taste groups. An aesthetic disposition is required to truly appreciate a work of art, to *decipher* the codes inherent to art (Prior, 2005), and thus express legitimate taste (Bourdieu, 1984). This aesthetic disposition entails a focus on form rather than function, a so-called "pure gaze" that implies disconnecting from ordinary life, and the rejection of anything too *human, common, or easy*. The aesthetic disposition transcends mundane matters and creates distance between the work of art and its observer. It inspires a "disinterestedness" that refers to the Kantian aesthetic that separates "that which pleases" from "that which gratifies" (Bourdieu, 1984). Exertion of this disposition is the prerogative of people who possess high levels of cultural capital.

In contrast, a popular aesthetic is defined in relation to its viewer, wherein the distance between audience and cultural good evaporates. This aesthetic system can be defined as the "naïve gaze", wherein the affirmation of continuity between everyday life and art or culture is central, and function rules over form. Those who employ a popular aesthetic seek participation or interaction with the observed. Matters of logic, familiarity, and easy identification are preferred to formal experimentation, symbolism, and ambiguousness in culture (Bielby & Bielby, 2004; Van Venrooij & Schmutz, 2010). As the popular aesthetic emphasizes the continuity between the cultural good and the everyday life of the audience, this manner of appreciating art does not necessitate much cultural capital and is regarded by Bourdieu as expressing illegitimate taste (Bourdieu, 1984).

The importance of differentiated discourses that are characterized by distinct aesthetic systems has already been illustrated in the case of film. In the United States, in contrast to European countries, film had the standing of rather simple-minded mass entertainment during its first decades. However, a number of developments both within and outside the film field led to film's evolution to a cultural genre that can be related to art (Baumann, 2001; 2007). A so-called "changed opportunity space" for film allowed the

cultural genre to reposition itself; e.g. the growing popularity of television and the emancipation of film audiences enabled film to be re-assessed in relation to other cultural genres and audience segments. At the same time, as discussed earlier, an institutionalization of film practices and resources took place, professionalizing and legitimating various elements of the film field. Meanwhile, critics were partially responsible for the intellectualization of the film world as their discourse shifted to a more analytic and interpretive mode and they erected aesthetic standards. Content analysis of film reviews published between 1925 and 1985 shows that reviews increasingly contained high art terms and critical concepts (Baumann, 2001), pointing towards the appliance of the aesthetic disposition. While changes in the film world, developments in its wider societal context and the founding of a legitimizing ideology have resulted in the possibility of film to be regarded as art, this does not mean that all films now belong to that category. Rather, the establishment of film art has supplemented the American large-scale film field with a restricted field of film production (Bourdieu, 1993).

These developments in the film world mainly took place in the 1960s and early 1970s. Since then, many things have changed in the international film field yet again, especially since the blockbuster mode of film production became popular in the mid-1970s (Bordwell & Thompson, 1997) and conglomeration started to characterize the cultural industries in this same period (Hesmondhalgh, 2002). Commercialization has rendered filmmaking an evermore-risky endeavor; the “hit or miss” logic (Bielby & Bielby, 1994) of the field makes business models increasingly complex and expensive. The eminence of the blockbuster movie, whose popularity rose exponentially after the release of *Jaws* (1975) and *Star Wars* (1977), makes the commercial film world one that is ruled by multi-million dollar budgets, movie stars, special effects, all-round marketing campaigns (Bordwell & Thompson, 1997; Drake, 2008), and synergy with other cultural products (McDonald & Wasko, 2008; Wasko, 2001). Making movies in this field of production has become the prerogative of multi-media conglomerates. Meanwhile, despite (or maybe due to) the pervasiveness of commercialization, the lines between commercial and art film production are fading. Major film companies have tapped into the more artistically inspired film genres by forming subdivisions or subsidiaries (Schatz, 2009) such as Fine Line Cinema (Time Warner) and Castle Rock Entertainment (Warner Bros.). These developments prompt the

question whether changes within and without the film world since 1985 have been met by shifts in film discourse once more. How can film discourse be qualified today? And are all films regarded in the same manner or is there a differentiation according to film types? These questions are addressed in this research.

Another development that likely affects film classification and discourse is the expanded international exchange of cultural products. Processes of cultural globalization have resulted in cultural fields that more strongly resemble each other across national contexts (Janssen et al., 2008; 2011; Kuipers, 2011; Kuipers & De Kloet, 2009; Sapiro, 2010). The film world is particularly susceptible to such trends, as film production is governed by a handful of global conglomerates (Barthel-Bouchier, 2011). Hollywood movies prevail on import markets around the world, resulting in seemingly homogenized film fields in which blockbuster series like *Harry Potter* and *Spiderman* dominate (boxofficemojo.com). However, whereas global audiences consume the same cultural products to a large degree, they do not necessarily make sense of them in the same manner across nations (Liebes & Katz, 1993). Tastes and evaluation schemas are socially constructed (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000), therefore reception of cultural objects can vary according to a number of context characteristics (Cheyne & Binder, 2010; Daenekindt & Roose, 2011). Following, national contexts can bear influence on tastes and the assignment of value to cultural products. As various environmental factors increase the probability of individuals making sense of their surroundings in a particular way (Lamont, 1992), global audiences may consume the same movies, but culturally diverse groups across the globe may still interpret and ascribe meaning to these movies in a variety of ways (Liebes & Katz, 1993). Cultural surroundings can differentiate national cultural repertoires of evaluation despite the influence of globalization (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000). This is another issue considered in this thesis.

### **1.3 Four Studies on the Social Valuation of Film**

Now that the key theoretical concepts and previous studies have been addressed, the stage is set for the research that comprises this dissertation. Works on the dynamics of social valuation of film have left particular aspects of film classification and discourse to be investigated, which this research aims to bring to light. The dissertation consists of four



empirical studies, which, taken together, address in what ways and to what extent films enjoyed most by the three main valuating institutional agents in the film field can be distinguished, and how critics in various cultural contexts across the Western world classify and make sense of this range of films.

### ***1.3.1 Boundaries between Prestige and Popularity of Film***

The first study assesses the state of the boundaries between the fields of restricted and large-scale film production over time and in various national contexts through the analysis of film reporting in Western national newspapers. The main question reads: *How and to what extent does the alleged shifting of the boundaries between the restricted and large-scale fields of film production between 1955 and 2005 become apparent in the film criticism published in French, German, Dutch and U.S. newspapers?* In order to perform a quantitative content analysis of film coverage, data was collected on films that were covered in the newspapers in the reference years 1955, 1975, 1995 and 2005. The types of film receiving attention over the years and across national contexts are charted, distinguishing movies according to the type of recognition received (professional or popular) – i.e. their command of symbolic or economic capital (Bourdieu, 1993). The former is operationalized as prestige in the shape of prestigious awards for the relevant films as well as for the responsible director, the latter as the relevant film's popularity expressed in yearly box office reports and the director's prior commercial success. The study demonstrates the shifts in classifications made by professional critics, and changes in the dynamics between critics, audiences, and peer filmmakers via a range of statistical analyses.

### ***1.3.2 Dimensions of Conventionality and Innovation in Film***

Whereas Chapter 2 considers film classification in a broader sense, Chapter 3 zooms in on the film preferences expressed by the film field's three main valuating agents. This study's central query reads: *How do films that are bestowed with popular, professional, and critical recognition differ with regard to their material practices and symbolic affordances, and what is these attributes' relative importance in the various processes of film classification?*

This research question is addressed through the analysis of production traits and viewers' classifications of the movies appreciated most by public, peers, and critics in 2007

in four Western countries, with an emphasis on the conventionality and innovativeness of these features. The data consists of film titles rewarded with the most popular, professional, and critical recognition in France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States in 2007 (measured as, respectively, commercial success, winning or being nominated for prestigious film awards, and placement on yearly shortlist or awards handed out by critics' associations, quality newspapers or specialist magazines). Material practices are operationalized through a number of production attributes, underlying patterns therein are uncovered, and the eminence of these patterns in the three film types is established. The symbolic affordances of the sampled films are examined by means of a questionnaire in which regular film viewers assessed the conventional and/or innovative nature of the titles via four predefined dimensions, which are then put across film types as well. Finally, the interaction of material and symbolic film traits in different film types is tested via multivariate analyses.

### ***1.3.3 Film Discourse on the Praised and Acclaimed***

Chapter 4 investigates whether the film types examined in the previous chapter differentiate today's film discourse. *How can present-day film criticism be characterized and understood? Are films that are ultimately consecrated by popular, professional, and critical recognition appraised by similar or different aesthetic criteria?* This research consists of inductive content analysis of film reviews published by four newspapers of record in the United States and the United Kingdom in 2007. It concerns reviews written about the film corpus that was constructed for Chapter 3. All reviews were coded in terms of the topics they addressed; these codes are distributed into themes, of which the prominence per film type is tested. Factor analysis clusters together the fifteen themes into fundamental discourse components. Subsequently, the respective prominence of the discourse components in reviews of movies with popular, professional, and critical recognition is explored.

### ***1.3.4 National Cultural Repertoires of Evaluation in a Global Age***

Having gained understanding of current film discourse in Chapter 4, the last empirical study explores the differentiation of this discourse across various Western societies. The

question posed is: *To what extent can national cultural repertoires of evaluation be differentiated in present-day Western film discourse?* This research comprises of inductive content analysis of film reviews published in elite newspapers in four national contexts (France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States). It extends the data used in the previous chapter to include film criticism from the France and the Netherlands. The study considers the variety of film types that was scrutinized in Chapter 3. Film reviews were coded for the topics they attended to, which are then collapsed into more general themes. Following, factor analysis establishes four fundamental discourse components. The respective eminence of those discourse components in the four national cultural repertoires of evaluation is then examined by means of a multivariate analysis. The analysis controls for review lengths and for film types.



## Chapter 2

### ***Boundaries between Prestige and Popularity of Film: Film Art and the Commercial Movie in Cross-National Perspective, 1955-2005***

#### **2.1 Introduction**

*Melancholia* (2011) versus *The Hangover* (2009); *Das Weisse Band* (2009) versus *Eat Pray Love* (2010): all comparably well-known films released in recent years. Yet, each falls on one of two sides of a central division in the international film world, which separates the work of film art and the commercial film product. Despite the widely accepted idea that film can be viewed as art (Baumann, 2007), and filmmakers as artists, far from all movies and directors are granted these titles. In fact, the art film and the blockbuster movie seem to represent two opposing paradigms in one cultural field. This notion is in line with Bourdieu's (1993) model of the "field of cultural production", which clearly distinguishes between cultural fields that are concerned with producing either mainstream commodities for mass audiences or works of artistic worth for the selected few. The differences between these "restricted" and "large-scale" fields comprise production processes, goals, ideologies, audiences, and the ways in which products are evaluated and valued (Bourdieu, 1983; 1984).

Due to the ongoing power struggles that characterize the dynamics of cultural-production fields, the film field is an ever-changing entity that shape-shifts over time. In the twentieth century, for example, film experienced periods of both intellectualization (Baumann, 2001; 2007) and commercialization (Bordwell & Thompson, 1997; McDonald & Wasko, 2008). This fluidity also results in film fields varying across national, social, cultural and political contexts (DiMaggio, 1987; Janssen et al., 2008; 2011). Accordingly, the relation between restricted and large-scale film production is subject to change and variation. The extent to which either film art or popular movies impose norms on producers throughout the film world (Bourdieu, 1993) can vary considerably from one

period and one national context to another, and may affect the field's entire structure. As such, the boundary between these two categories of film is at stake. On the one hand, as film develops along artistic lines, this boundary is likely to become more clearly defined, thus adding prestige to the cultural genre. On the other hand, as commercialization takes hold of both the film world and the media landscape surrounding it, the distinction between artistic and popular film is likely to become more blurred.

The aim of this study is to assess the state of the boundaries between the restricted and large-scale film production fields over time and in different national contexts. In order to achieve this, an analysis is performed of film reporting in national quality newspapers from several Western countries. Such newspapers constitute a platform on which the struggle between commercial and artistic forces is clearly manifested. Whereas previous research demonstrates film's growing eminence within arts and culture coverage over the years (Heilbrun, 1997; Janssen, 1999, Janssen et al., 2011) and the intensified international orientation of film coverage (Janssen et al., 2008), this study intends to clarify *which types* of film are reported on over time. Prior studies also provide insight into the development of an art world for film (Baumann, 2001), the distinction between artistic and commercial filmmaking (Barthel-Bouchier, 2011), and the dynamics of value attribution to both (Allen & Lincoln, 2004; Heise & Tudor, 2007; Hicks & Petrova, 2006; Zuckerman & Kim, 2003). Building on these studies, this study examines the *development* of the boundary between the two fields of film production. We study the types of film that receive attention in film reviews in Dutch, French, German, and U.S. quality newspapers between 1955 and 2005 in order to answer the question: How and to what extent do the boundaries between the restricted and large-scale fields of film production between 1955 and 2005 become apparent in film coverage in Dutch, French, German, and U.S. newspapers?

## **2.2 Field Theory and Film**

Bourdieu (1993) regards cultural production fields as being characterized by struggles, in which producers battle for powerful positions and subsequent influence on the existing hierarchy. Each field is divided into two segments; the field of large-scale (or mass) production, opposed by its subfield of small-scale (or restricted) production. The two are distinguished by the degree to which they are autonomous from the "field of power"

(Bourdieu, 1993: 38), i.e. a set of dominant power relations in society, or the “ruling classes”. The large-scale field is strongly dominated by the field of power, is driven by regular economic logics, and is concerned with obtaining the largest market-share possible. The relatively autonomous restricted field is characterized by a denial of economic principles and considers artistic worth as its goal. In other words, the former field is directed at gaining public acclaim, while the latter strives for recognition from peer producers and experts. Both of these segments offer distinct rewards to cultural producers. Large, mainstream audiences provide producers with economic capital (money). However, high levels of economic capital (Bourdieu, 1993) tend to come at the cost of much lower levels of symbolic capital (accumulated prestige, consecration, and honor), which is obtained by appealing to specialist audiences (Zuckerman & Kim, 2003). Following on from this, a clear distinction between restricted and mass production of cultural goods becomes apparent in the prominence of different ways of valuing these goods: symbolic capital is found in nominations, prizes, honors, and acclaim that add prestige, whereas economic capital is acquired from high revenues and large market shares. To give in to commercial pressure would mean acquiring more economic power but a loss of the symbolic capital that characterizes (or even upholds) the restricted field of production. Surrendering to market forces would blur the boundary between the large-scale and small-scale fields. Equally, the field boundary would become less clear if commercial fields were to adapt strategies used in the restricted field.

Several authors have pointed out the limitations of Bourdieu’s work when applied to contemporary cultural production (Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Prior, 2005), arguing that the focus on the high arts and literature make it less adaptable to the cultural industries that are paramount in the current cultural landscape. Hesmondhalgh (2006) suggests that the application of a Bourdieusian analysis to today’s television and other media may demonstrate that large-scale production is more nuanced, with relations between heteronomy and autonomy being more complex, and popularity and prestige not contradicting each other as much as claimed (Zuckerman & Kim, 2003). Nevertheless, the dichotomy between film art and commercial movies has been employed in much scholarly work on the film field (e.g. Allen & Lincoln, 2004; Barthel-Bouchier, 2011; Heise & Tudor, 2007; Hicks & Petrova, 2006; Holbrook & Addis, 2008). Tudor (2005: 138) explains the

difficulty in doing so, stating, “[...] with late modern fragmentation the structuring opposition between art and commerce is not the force that it once was. In a multiplex culture, art is commerce, and the art-movie has become yet another niche product on the shelves of the cultural supermarket.” In this article we aim to qualify this alleged shifting of boundaries.

### **2.3 The Legitimization of Film**

Currently, the idea that film can be appreciated as a serious art form is widely recognized. However, this has not always been the case (Baumann, 2007). In the U.S. in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, film was generally seen as a form of light entertainment for the working-class masses, not as a cultural product of potentially artistic merit (Baumann, 2001). It was not until the 1960s that circumstances allowed film to be promoted as art. In contrast, the idea of film as art was accepted at an early stage in Europe (Elsaesser, 2005; McDonald & Wasko, 2008). In other words, Europe had a restricted field of film production before the U.S. did. Baumann (2007) stresses three major developments crucial to the realization of this legitimate art world for film: changing opportunity space, institutionalization of practices and resources, and the founding of a legitimating ideology.

The intellectualization of the film world was consequential to the aesthetic standards critics put in place (Baumann, 2001). As the “*auteur* theory” traveled from France to the U.S., a new form of American film criticism called “*auteurism*” became influential. This theory recognizes the film director as the sole creative force from whose genius the entire production sprouts (Sarris, 1962). In Europe, this rationale had been deployed since the 1920s, when directors were already largely regarded as *auteurs*. The growing importance of *auteurism* in the American film field has become apparent through the increased prominence of directors in film coverage (Baumann, 2001) and serves as an indicator of the emergence of a restricted film field.

As the overall film field evolved and the outlines of a restricted sector of the field became visible, the struggles over who and what belonged to that sector became full-blown. What is film art and what is not? Most sociologists of the arts have accepted the idea that the legitimization of cultural products results from the interaction between the various actors in a particular field (Becker, 1982; Bourdieu, 1993). Commonly, three main



institutional agents can be identified when it comes to the valuation of cultural products: *public, critics and peers* (Allen & Lincoln, 2004). Their perceptions, selections, judgments and discourses with regard to particular products may be more or less similar, resulting in comparable or very distinct classifications of cultural products according to their alleged meaning, style, quality, effects or other properties. The types of recognition awarded by public, critics, and peers can be defined as, “popular recognition, critical recognition, and professional recognition,” respectively (Allen & Lincoln, 2004; Schmutz, 2005).

Film audiences are all-important in the commercial field of film production; by buying tickets they grant a movie the popular recognition it aimed to achieve. Moreover, a movie’s success in terms of box office returns is crucial to the position its maker can claim in the field (Allen & Lincoln, 2004), as reputation is key in the field’s risky “hit or miss” business model (Bielby & Bielby, 1994; Kapsis, 1989). Since commercial filmmaking requires such large financial investments, predictions about a project’s success may make or break the deal. High levels of economic capital are needed to enter and then stay in the mass production film field.

Likewise, symbolic capital is crucial to filmmakers who strive to be considered part of the restricted film field, and continuing to earn symbolic capital is required so as not to be spat back out into the mainstream field. Appealing to various agents within the film art domain may satisfy this aspiration. As professional critics tend to serve as gatekeepers (Becker, 1982; Bourdieu, 1993; Janssen, 1999; Shrum, 1996) who protect the restricted field from “degrading” to a field of mass culture by embracing some artists while excluding others, their approval serves as an important source of acclaim. This acclaim may take the form of attention paid to particular products, positive valuations, nominations and prizes, or positions on periodic shortlists.

Symbolic capital may also be awarded to films and their makers within the filmmaking community; peer movie professionals are part of artful films’ target audience of experts (Bourdieu, 1993). They reward films with merit through film festivals and award ceremonies (Baumann, 2007; De Valck, 2007; English, 2005), e.g. the Cannes Film Festival and the Academy Awards. Prizes serve as a claim to authority, providing “an institutional basis for exercising, or attempting to exercise, control over the cultural economy, over the distribution of esteem and reward on a particular cultural field – over what may be

recognized as worthy of special notice.” (English, 2005: 51) Moreover, the prize is a tool in establishing the overall cultural field as one that deserves esteem.

Previous research (Allen & Lincoln, 2004) into the dynamics of popular, professional and critical recognition of film concludes that different agents and institutions in the American film field appear to increasingly make similar choices and award merit to the same films or filmmakers. Such a picture also emerges from comparable studies in the fields of literature and music (Janssen, 1997; Rosengren, 1987; Schmutz, 2005). Strikingly, these findings are at odds with the alleged opposition between the fields of restricted and large-scale cultural production. According to Bourdieu’s model, different agents that construct various types of value in distinct manners characterize the two domains. However, this does not seem to be, or no longer seems to be the case.

#### **2.4 Boundaries in Cross-National Perspective**

The film field has witnessed further changes since the emergence of the U.S. art world for film in the 1960s (Baumann, 2007). In the last few decades of the twentieth century, commercialization forced the large-scale film field to continuously come up with new and elaborate strategies to appeal to larger audiences to help them break box office records (McDonald & Wasko, 2008). The expensive blockbuster mode of film production has proven its profitability and remains strong in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Baker & Faulkner, 1991; Bordwell, 2006). Making movies has become the business of major media conglomerates with multi-million dollar budgets that allow for state of the art special effects, the inclusion of star actors, and an array of possibilities for synergy (Wasko, 2001). As no-one is able to predict which of these expensive films will become hits, playing it safe and staying within the borders of mainstream commercial film is often regarded the best option. Independent producers of artistic films struggle to get their risky films financed and distributed. This commercialization also takes place in the wider cultural and media landscape in Western societies (Hesmondhalgh, 2002); newspapers, television broadcasters and other media increasingly have to adjust to the preferences of the public in order to sustain their market share. This means that, in turn, the newspapers reporting on the commercialized film world encounter a working environment that is ever more concerned with appealing to the largest possible audiences.

Meanwhile, the hierarchies between and within cultural genres are seen to crumble (Janssen et al., 2008; 2011), as audiences become more omnivorous in their cultural tastes (Peterson & Kern, 1996; Van Eijck & Knulst, 2005). These trends of commercialization and declassification (Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Prior, 2005) combined result in the exchange of filmmaking strategies and principles between the fields of art film and blockbuster movie. Over time, novelties from the restricted sector make their way to the mainstream filmmakers. Art-house cinema lends strategies, in particular marketing strategies, from the commercial producers in order to survive the increasingly tough economic climate in the cultural industries (Drake, 2008). As a result, several films from the restricted film field have succeeded at the box office in recent years (e.g. *Black Swan* (2010)), while commercial movies have reached critical acclaim in more than one case (e.g. *Avatar* (2009)). Here, we encounter the phenomenon of the cultural fields' differing valuating institutional agents expressing appreciation of the same products.

Another phenomenon leaving an imprint on the film field is the growing cultural globalization (Crane et al., 2002; Tomlinson, 1999). The increased international exchange of cultural products is most visible in Hollywood's domination of the global film world. The sizable American film industry functions as the barely challenged provider of movies in Western society, as the industries of Western Europe can hardly compete with its size and scope (Bordwell & Thompson, 1997; Elsaessar, 2005; Scott, 2000). The European industries lack Hollywood's capability to attract large audiences which results from the enormous and diverse home market the studios have always served. This unequal power balance can be seen in the increasingly similar box office lists across the West. At the same time, media in general tend to become more internationally oriented (Janssen et al., 2008). Newspapers in most Western countries are now more inclined to pay attention to foreign art and culture than they were in the past.

We expect to find both similarities and differences when it comes to the boundaries, and shifts in the boundaries, between the restricted and large-scale film fields in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the U.S. While these four societies have a lot in common, they also have their own social structural and cultural particularities (Bever, 2005; DiMaggio, 1987; Janssen et al., 2008; 2011; Lamont, 1992), which have shaped and continue to influence their cultural fields.

The opportunity space (Baumann, 2001) for film as art was quite different in Europe from the start; social conditions made a group of patrons available who could effectively promote film as art. European film audiences were more diverse than their American counterparts, as not only members of the working-class but also of the middle-class and upper-middle class as well as intellectuals attended the movies (Baumann, 2007). In addition, the European audiences were much smaller; film was not the mass entertainment phenomenon it was in the U.S. Being situated in the cultural market along with theater and music programs instead of cheap nickelodeons, film did not have the inferior image it did in the U.S. Nor has it ever been as commercially driven; the European film industries have never been as financially healthy or organized after WWII, and have never had the advantage of a huge home market due to the European linguistic and cultural diversity (Baumann, 2007; Scott, 2000). The European countries, however, saw the development of an art world for film as early as the 1920s, when intellectuals were already involved in a discourse on film as art.

Another main difference between the European and American film fields is found in the modes of production; whereas Hollywood was mainly focused on producing an impressive quantity of films, the European film industries aimed to produce smaller numbers of more prestigious pictures (Elsaesser, 2005; Jäckel, 2003). Consequently, film in Hollywood earned economic capital in a large-scale film field, while the more restricted film field in Europe was rewarded with symbolic capital. European film production was not characterized by a studio system; alliances between production companies were formed for projects initiated by directors with specific ideas. This is still illustrated by the division of property rights and final say in film production in France and the U.S. (Baker & Faulkner, 1991; Scott, 2000). Under French law, the director has control over the final cut of the film and is the owner of its intellectual property rights, which, in the U.S., belong to the production company. The different appropriation of the director's role shows and was reinforced by the early habit of European directors to be educated in the arts, whereas American directors learned on the job, employed by the studios.

Finally, film criticism had taken an entirely different shape in Europe, especially in France. There, movies were approached and appreciated by the *nouvelle vague* as art works made by true artists; emphasis was on formal elements and interpretation. Auteurism

already influenced European film worlds, but would not arrive in the U.S. until the 1960s (Baumann, 2007; Kapsis, 1992; Sarris, 1962; Tudor, 2005).

Considering these cross-national differences, we anticipate stronger boundaries between restricted and large-scale film fields in the European countries than in the U.S., as well as more dramatic boundary shifts in France, Germany, and the Netherlands because of their different points of departure with regard to commercialization and globalization. We expect the boundary between restricted and large-scale film production to be weaker in the Dutch than in the German and French film fields because of the Netherlands' small size, the associated limitations of the Dutch cultural (film) industries and the resulting openness to cultural products from abroad (Janssen et al., 2008; 2011). The French and German film industries are substantially larger than the Dutch industry and can thus respond themselves to the demand for film to a greater extent. In addition, these two larger European countries are characterized by a more stratified social structure and stricter hierarchy.

Taking stock of the various (contrasting) trends the film world has seen in the twentieth century, the boundaries between the restricted and large-scale film fields are likely to have shifted between 1955 and 2005. Whereas events in the 1960s led to the maturity of the idea of film as art and thus to a more clearly defined restricted film field, commercialization, declassification and globalization might well have affected this restricted field from the 1980s onwards and thus take away from its autonomy. We propose that these shifts can be charted by analyzing film coverage in national quality newspapers, as they present a platform on which the currents of the world are displayed and discussed, including fluxes in the cultural world. The press serves as a crucial institution in matters of legitimacy; its contents give an impression of what a society deems legitimate at a certain point in time (Baumann, 2007; Ferree et al., 2002; Janssen et al., 2008). Our expectations with regard to the visibility of film's changing boundaries are specified as follows:

### *Hypothesis 1*

1a. Between 1955 and 1975, the boundaries between the restricted and large-scale fields of film production become more clearly defined due to the greater autonomy of the art world for film. This will be apparent in our data in two ways:

- The film director is more often the principal feature in the film review, as film is now regarded as the work of an artist, an *auteur*.
- More newspaper coverage of films by prestigious directors.

1b. This trend is most clearly visible in France and Germany, less so in the Netherlands and the least in the U.S.

### *Hypothesis 2*

2a. Between 1975 and 2005, the boundaries between the restricted and large-scale film fields become less clearly defined due to the growing influence of commercialization and globalization. This will be apparent in our data by an increase in newspaper coverage of films by popular (commercially successful) directors.

2b. This trend is most clearly visible in the U.S., less so in the Netherlands, and the least in France and Germany.

## **2.5 Data and Methods**

For our study of the boundaries between the restricted and large-scale fields of film production in France, Germany, the Netherlands and the U.S. between 1955 and 2005, we collected data on films that were covered in the newspapers in four reference years; 1955, 1975, 1995, and 2005.<sup>1</sup> Film coverage in Western national newspapers is considered to reflect the state of the boundary between the domains of film art and commercial movies. We aim to chart the types of film receiving attention over the years and across national contexts, distinguishing movies according to the responsible directors' command of

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<sup>1</sup> Obviously, the year 1965 would also have been an interesting and valuable reference year, in view of the major changes the (American) film field went through in this decade. But given limited resources, we preferred to cover a longer time period, meaning that we had to settle for longer intervals between reference years. While data from newspapers in 1965 might have shown dramatic changes in critical discourse, thus potentially demonstrating the development of the art world for film, it also could have shown an exaggerated peak in trends that we want to chart more generally over time. We expect to see the turbulent times in the (American) film field reflected in the developments between 1955 and 1975. The changes we can track between these two reference years will show trends that have proven to be more persistent.

symbolic or economic capital (Bourdieu, 1993). The former is identified as prestige in the form of prestigious awards, the latter as popularity expressed in annual box office reports.

We selected newspapers that are primarily read by the intellectual and cultural elite because these papers determine to a considerable extent whether and how subjects are discussed within other media and the wider community, and thus fulfill a key role in processes of cultural valorization. Within this category of newspapers, we selected those with a national or supra-national distribution, which had the largest paid circulation and appeared during the entire period studied here: *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* for France; *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* for Germany; *NRC Handelsblad* and *De Volkskrant* for the Netherlands; and *The New York Times* for the U.S.. We focused on four weeks in order to avoid the distortion of our data by the inclusion or exclusion of certain days of the week or seasonal influences. Our data consisted of 1,902 articles about film in total. All articles were then allocated a code for a wide range of variables (the ones relevant to the present analysis will be discussed below). In addition to the sample of newspaper articles, online film databases such as the Internet Movie Data Base (IMDB.com) and Box Office Mojo (boxofficemojo.com) served as important sources of information.

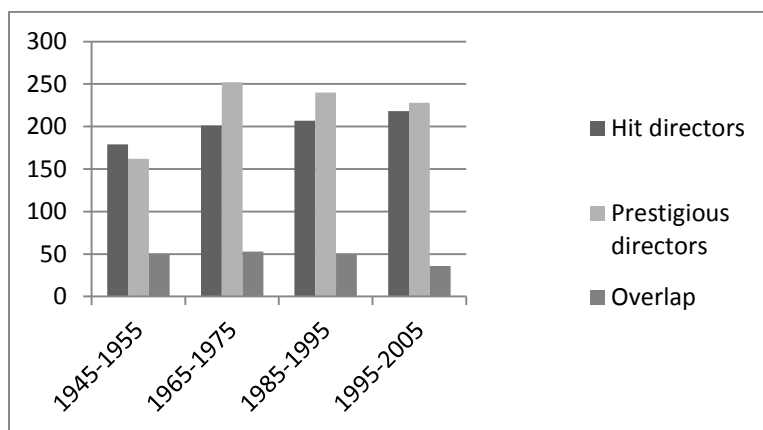
Regarding film directors as the central figures in film production, we focused on the symbolic and economic capital they provide their productions with. We measured a filmmaker's symbolic capital (or prestige) as the amount of film awards and award nominations the director received in the decade prior to the relevant reference year. We included prestigious international awards as well as national film awards of the four countries in our analysis: the Academy Awards (or Oscars, 1929), the prizes of the Cannes Film Festival (1946), the French César Awards (1974), the *Deutscher Filmpreiser* (1951) and the Dutch *Gouden Kalveren* (1981). We included only the three most prestigious prize categories in our analysis: Best Picture, Best Director and Best Foreign (Language) Film.<sup>2</sup> The directors' economic capital (or commercial success) was measured by their previous films' performance on annual box office lists in the decade prior to the relevant reference

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<sup>2</sup> We note that directors were only allocated a code for awards and nominations received in the capacity of director. Unlike all other awards, the Oscar for Best Picture is awarded to a film's producer, not the director. As we are interested in the prestige of the directors, we allocated them a code for awards or nominations for the films they directed. If a director directed a film that won the Oscar for Best Picture (only the prize is officially awarded to the producer), in our data he/she won that award. In addition, if a director received awards or nominations in the capacity of producer in the past, these are not included in our data.

year. We allocated codes for whether the movies these directors made in this period were listed in the American and French box office top 20 in the years of their release<sup>3</sup>. In our research period, the pool of unique successful directors does not show much fluctuation in either respect (see Figure 2.1). The numbers of filmmakers responsible for the largest film hits remain similar, apart from a rise in numbers between the first two periods that is most likely due to the collapse of Hollywood’s Studio System, which allowed directors who were not under contract with one of the major studio’s to make films. Likewise, the numbers of directors who made the most prestigious films (according to the various academies and festival juries) do not change dramatically, despite showing the same increase after the 1950s.

**Figure 2.1** Pool of successful directors France and the United States (N=1498)<sup>4</sup>



As this pool of successful directors remains more or less constant, any shifts in attention for either prestigious or commercially successful filmmakers can be regarded as signaling changes in the dynamics between the restricted and large-scale fields.

<sup>3</sup> Box office lists for Germany and the Netherlands were not available to us for all the reference years.

<sup>4</sup> The figure shows the numbers of directors who were responsible for the box office top 20 lists in France and the United States in the ten years before the reference years; the numbers of directors who were nominated for Academy Awards or Cannes Film Festival prizes in the categories Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Foreign Language Film; and the overlap between these two groups. Data has been abstracted from online sources [boxofficemojo.com](http://boxofficemojo.com), [boxofficereport.com](http://boxofficereport.com), and Wikipedia.



## **2.6 Findings**

We present our results according to our sequential hypotheses, which are composed chronically within our research period. Before doing so, we give a short overview of the overall data sample according to the variables country, and journalistic genre.

Our data sample of the film coverage in France, Germany, the Netherlands and the U.S. between 1955 and 2005 consisted of a total of 1,902 newspaper articles. The French newspapers had the largest share of articles in all reference years except for 1955, when *The New York Times* published almost 50% of all articles; in all other years this paper takes second place. German papers show the least interest in film throughout our research period. They do, however, tend toward the Dutch papers in their share of the total film coverage.

Overall, the most prominent journalistic genre in film coverage is the review (see Appendix A). Only in 1955 did another genre, the news report (often featured in *The New York Times* in this period), take up the highest percentage of articles. Reviews are prevalent in all countries throughout the rest of the period studied here; other journalistic forms employed are news reports, announcements, background articles and interviews. About 90% of all articles dealt with new films. Below, we will only consider the 1,662 articles concerned with new releases, but include all types of articles.

### ***2.6.1 The Strengthening of Boundaries (Hypothesis 1)***

According to our first hypothesis the strengthening of the boundaries between restricted and large-scale fields of film production becomes apparent in the greater prominence of the director in the articles and increasing coverage of films by prestigious directors in the elite newspapers.

### Focus on Director

From the 1970s onwards, the director features as the principal feature in a high percentage of the articles.<sup>5</sup> Between 1955 and 1975, the proportion of film items focusing on the film director greatly increases (Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1** Percentage of film articles focusing on director

A: Differences across time	1955	1975	1995	2005	N	X <sup>2</sup>
All countries	25,5	63,6	55,6	67,3	1,662	***
France	32.3	73.6	50.0	76.0	601	***
Germany	47.1	76.7	80.0	77.1	220	**
Netherlands	37.2	54.4	70.1	63.2	327	***
U.S.	14.7	52.2	37.8	48.5	514	***
N	470	250	367	575		
B: Cross-national differences	1955	1975	1995	2005		
All countries	***	**	***	***		
FR – GE	<.09	ns	***	ns		
FR – NL	ns	**	**	*		
FR – US	***	**	*	***		
GE – NL	ns	*	ns	*		
GE – US	***	*	***	***		
NL – US	***	ns	***	*		

Note: FR = France; GE = Germany; NL = Netherlands; US = United States.

\*p <.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p <.001; ns: not significant (two-tailed chi-square tests).

Despite a clear peak in the 1975 editions of the American newspaper, this trend is most apparent in the European newspapers. In the 1995 and 2005 film articles of the *NY Times*, the director is significantly less prominent than in the European articles.

### Focus on Director-Screenwriters

In view of the increased centrality of the film director in critical discourse, we took a closer look at the director's position. As film increasingly became regarded as the expression of directors' ideas, expectations regarding screenplays also changed; such "personal" artistic vision is less likely to be expressed through adaptations of existing screenplays or cultural

<sup>5</sup> All articles were coded for the person or entity primarily focused on, if any (e.g. actors, directors, production companies, screenwriters).

products. To live up to the idea of the individual *auteur*, directors increasingly wrote their own material. Indeed, our data shows that the covered films feature a “director-screenwriter” to a growing extent. Whereas in 1955 only 15.1% of all discussed films were written and directed by the same individual, by 1975 this percentage had risen to 39.6% (Table 2.2). The frequency of articles about adaptations or remakes of existing material such as novels, plays, musicals and operas drops throughout the years, consistent with the rise of the director-screenwriter.

**Table 2.2** Percentage of film items devoted to films by director-screenwriters (N = 1559)

A: Differences across time	1955	1975	1995	2005	N	X <sup>2</sup>
All countries	17.1	42.3	37.4	43.6	1,559	***
France	24.1	45.5	30.4	44.3	570	***
Germany	23.1	40.7	44.8	43.8	206	ns
Netherlands	25.4	45.9	45.5	44.1	305	*
U.S.	9.7	34.5	37.5	42.1	478	***
N	415	234	350	560		
B: Cross-national differences	1955	1975	1995	2005		
All countries	**	ns	ns	ns		

*Note:* FR = France; GE = Germany; NL = Netherlands; US = United States.  
\*p <.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p < .001; ns: not significant (two-tailed chi-square tests).

Although the more prominent position of the film director is a logical explanation for the merging of the director and screenwriter role, the rise of the blockbuster mode of film production during the 1970s and 1980s also contributed to this development. The blockbuster led to the consolidation of artistic roles (Baker & Faulkner, 1991), as a popular tactic for minimizing the risks of multi-million dollar productions was using proven talent. In this way successful directors and screenwriters had the power to bargain for the best deals that left them in control of both aspects of expensive projects. We therefore have to consider the possibility that the eminence of the director-screenwriter in the last few decades of the twentieth century is not necessarily a sign of a more artistic approach to film. It may point towards the exact opposite trend – that of the prominence of the blockbuster and thus the commercialization in the film world in these years.

### Coverage of Prestigious Directors

As a means of measuring their prestige, we allocated a code for directors of the sampled films who won or were nominated for prestigious awards in the decade prior to the relevant reference year. The percentage of film items devoted to movies by award-winning directors doubles between 1955 and 1975, staying at around 30% of all articles in the following decades (see Table 2.3). This increase in attention for films by prestigious filmmakers indicates the growing importance of the criteria set by the restricted film field and thus a strengthening of the boundary with the commercial film world. This trend is more salient in European papers than in the *NY Times*, which shows no significant shifts between the four sample years. However, the *NY Times*, unexpectedly, does start out with a higher percentage of articles on movies by prestigious filmmakers in 1955. The attention for movies by acclaimed directors generally reaches its peak in the 1970s (with the exception of the French newspapers) and declines slightly afterwards. Nevertheless, this inclination to review films from prestigious directors appears to have taken root and remains present in film criticism throughout the years.

**Table 2.3** Percentage of film items devoted to movies by award-winning directors

A: Differences across time	1955	1975	1995	2005	N	X <sup>2</sup>
All Countries	15.2 (63)	33.8 (79)	28.3 (99)	28.8 (161)	1,559	***
France	12.1 (14)	22.7 (20)	36.2 (50)	28.5 (65)	570	***
Germany	7.7 (2)	40.7 (11)	31.0 (18)	25.3 (24)	206	*
Netherlands	6.0 (4)	47.5 (29)	18.2 (12)	36.0 (40)	305	***
U.S.	20.9 (43)	32.8 (19)	21.6 (19)	25.4 (32)	478	ns
N	416	235	350	560		
B: Cross-national differences	1955	1975	1995	2005		
All Countries (one or more awards/nominations in past decade)	**	*	*	ns		

*Note:* FR = France; GE = Germany; NL = Netherlands; US = United States. Between brackets: absolute numbers. \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001; ns: not significant (two-tailed chi-square tests).

### 2.6.2 The Weakening of Boundaries (Hypothesis 2)

Our second hypothesis is in contrast with the former and presumes that the weakening of the boundaries between the restricted and large-scale film fields will appear in the newspapers as an increase in the coverage of films by popular directors in the third quarter of the twentieth century (cf. Hypothesis 2). We therefore assessed whether the filmmakers responsible for the reviewed films succeeded in producing films that appeared in the annual French and American box office top 20 in the decade prior to the reference year.

#### *Coverage of Films by Directors with Success at the Box Office*

Unexpectedly, we find that the relative attention for movies by commercially successful directors diminishes after 1955, despite an increase in the total absolute numbers (c.f. Table 2.4). In fact, the percentages tend to be halved between 1955 and 2005. This trend is salient in the newspapers of all four countries. In addition, the data show no significant cross-national differences, apart from the difference displayed in 1995 due to the very low number of films by popular directors in German newspapers.

**Table 2.4** Percentage of film items devoted to films by directors with box-office success in the past decade

A: Differences across time	1955	1975	1995	2005	N	X <sup>2</sup>
All countries	39.0 (162)	29.5 (69)	18.0 (63)	18.2 (102)	1,559	***
France	39.7 (46)	26.1 (23)	23.2 (32)	19.3 (44)	570	**
Germany	26.9 (7)	29.6 (8)	5.2 (3)	13.7 (13)	206	**
Netherlands	32.8 (22)	31.1 (19)	13.6 (9)	16.2 (18)	305	**
U.S.	42.2 (87)	32.8 (19)	21.6 (19)	21.4 (27)	478	***
N	162	69	63	102		
B: Cross-national differences	1955	1975	1995	2005		
All countries	ns	ns	*	ns		

*Note:* FR = France; GE = Germany; NL = Netherlands; US = United States.

\*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001; ns: not significant (two-tailed chi-square tests).

Films by commercially successful filmmakers do not gain prominence in film coverage in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the U.S. Thus, our data do not give evidence of the anticipated weakening of the boundaries between art and commercial film (H2).

### *Coverage of Popular and Prestigious Films*

Now that we have looked at the newspaper coverage of popular and prestigious film separately, we turn our attention to these types of film in relation to each other. Are films by directors with either popularity or prestige more often reviewed in the newspapers? And what does the presence of both forms of valuation mean in terms of critical attention? In order to answer these questions, we combined the variables for the symbolic and economic capital of the reviewed films' directors. Table 2.5 provides an overview of the reviewed films whose makers were awarded for neither form of valuation, prestige only, popularity only, and both prestige and popularity.

In the overall dataset, prestigious films have a larger share than their commercial rivals from 1975 onwards. Films whose directors have obtained prestige as well as commercial success take third place in the newspapers, closely behind box-office hits. In 1955, film coverage proportions show the opposite trend.

If we compare the importance of prestige versus popularity across countries, in all European newspapers films by acclaimed directors appear to be more prominent than films by those with commercial success. Attention for movies by popular and prestigious filmmakers is quite evenly divided in *The New York Times*.

**Table 2.5** Percentage of film items devoted to films with popular and professional recognition (N = 1,559)

A. Entire Sample	1955	1975	1995	2005	X <sup>2</sup>
Neither popular nor professional recognition	60.0	51.3	63.8	62.0	
Popular recognition	24.8	15.0	8.3	9.3	
Professional recognition	1.0	19.2	18.6	19.8	
Both popular and professional recognition	14.2	14.5	9.7	8.9	
N	415	234	350	560	***
B. France					
Neither popular nor professional recognition	57.8	61.4	52.9	61.4	
Popular recognition	30.2	15.9	10.9	10.1	
Professional recognition	2.6	12.5	23.9	19.3	
Both popular and professional recognition	9.5	10.2	12.3	9.2	
N	116	88	138	228	***

C. Germany					
Neither popular nor professional recognition	73.1	37.0	69.0	66.7	
Popular recognition	19.2	22.2	-	8.3	
Professional recognition	-	33.3	25.9	19.8	
Both popular and professional recognition	7.7	7.4	5.2	5.2	
<i>N</i>	26	27	58	95	**
D. Netherlands					
Neither popular nor professional recognition	67.2	42.6	72.7	57.7	
Popular recognition	26.9	9.8	9.1	6.3	
Professional recognition	-	26.2	13.6	26.1	
Both popular and professional recognition	6.0	21.3	4.5	9.9	
<i>N</i>	67	61	66	111	***
E. U.S.					
Neither popular nor professional recognition	57.3	51.7	69.3	63.5	
Popular recognition	21.8	15.5	9.1	11.1	
Professional recognition	0.5	15.5	9.1	15.1	
Both popular and professional recognition	20.4	17.2	12.5	10.3	
<i>N</i>	206	58	88	126	***

*Note:* FR = France; GE = Germany; NL = Netherlands; US = United States..

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; ns: not significant (two-tailed chi-square tests).

## 2.7 Conclusion

This study set out to extend our understanding of the shifting of boundaries between the fields of film art and commercial movies in Western society in the second half of the twentieth century. Whereas the inclusion of more countries, reference years, more publications and a greater range of publications would have presented us with an even more elaborate overview, our analysis of the developments in film coverage in French, German, Dutch and U.S. newspapers between 1955 and 2005 has provided significant insight into the effects that trends like intellectualization and commercialization have on such boundaries.

We anticipated a strengthening of the boundaries between restricted and large-scale film fields in the 1960s and 1970s to appear in film criticism in two ways, firstly, increased attention for directors and for films by prestigious directors (H1). From the

1970s onwards, the newspapers paid a lot of attention to film directors; they became the principal feature in the majority of film items. Simultaneously, these directors were increasingly the sole creative talent in charge of these film productions because of the consolidation of the roles of director and screenwriter. The percentage of film coverage devoted to movies by acclaimed directors doubled between 1955 and 1975, staying at around 30% of all articles in the following decades. This trend is more salient in the European papers than in the U.S. and confirms our hypothesis.

Secondly, we hypothesized that the boundaries between the domain of the art film and the territory of the commercial film became less clearly defined between 1975 and 2005. However, we found that the attention for films by commercially successful directors decreased in the four countries' quality newspapers, while the pool of commercially successful directors remained more or less constant over the years. This trend appears in all four countries and does not show significant differences across nations. Thus, our second hypothesis is rejected.

These findings have several theoretical implications. Indeed, while Bourdieu's model (1993) presents a useful way of framing the various strands of film production, its application to the late twentieth century film field does reveal the need to further specify the dynamics between restricted and large-scale cultural production. Our analysis supports Baumann's (2001; 2007) claim that film went through a phase of emancipation during the 1960s; this applies not only to the U.S. film field, but also to the Dutch, French, and German fields. Film gained legitimacy as a cultural product with artistic merit; the ideology supporting this stance, the *auteur* theory, is found to have been ubiquitous in film criticism ever since. As such, we can state that the power struggles that Bourdieu (1993) deems inherent to a cultural field have resulted in the restricted field of film production's ability to impose its norms onto the wider film world. Not only has the art film obtained more prominence in film discourse, the aesthetic standards originating in the film art world reign in discourse on more commercial movies as well. Furthermore, these norms seem to hold despite the occurrence of trends that are likely to undermine them; the rise of the blockbuster appears not to have changed the power balance with regards to film discourse. The boundary between film art and commercial movie is not seen to shift despite commercialization, globalization, or supposed declassification. This does not mean those



trends are fictitious or that they do not show up in film discourse in any way, but more qualitative analysis is needed to gain insight into the ways in which films are discussed (see Chapter 4 and 5).

Leading newspapers in all four countries appear to discuss artistic and commercial movies side by side throughout our research period, implying that both segments of film production have their place in film discourse across place and time despite changing power balance. It does therefore seem safe to say that the dynamics between the restricted and large-scale fields of production in the film industry and by extension the other cultural industries are more complex than Bourdieu (1993) portrayed, and the boundaries, and shifts in the boundaries, are more difficult to capture. Prestige and popularity do not necessarily exclude each other, as they both shape discourse and occasionally show overlap (Zuckerman & Kim, 2003). The boundary between film art and commercial movies is not so much renewed with every new phase in the global film world, but evolves without completely shedding its former appearance. Meanwhile, despite the influential processes of globalization (Crane et al., 2002), the boundaries between artistic and commercial film fields are demonstrated to still differentiate across various Western countries. The described differences between the U.S. and European film worlds render the U.S. boundary to remain the weakest, while Europe, to various extents, tends to uphold stricter distinctions.



## Chapter 3

### ***Dimensions of Conventionality and Innovation in Film: The Cultural Classification of Blockbusters, Award Winners, and Critics' Favorites***

#### **3.1 Introduction\***

In the contemporary film field, the “art house hit” is no longer an oxymoron, as typical art house films like *Amélie* (2001) and *Little Miss Sunshine* (2006) have done very well at the box office in the past decade. Today’s complex and intertwined film world thus seems to upset the dual structure that corresponds with Bourdieu’s (1993) influential categorization of “restricted” and “large-scale” fields of cultural production. Traditionally, film have often been divided into commercial blockbusters versus works of art as specific forms of production seemed to match with specific forms of content (Tudor, 2005). This homologue relationship may be subject to significant changes – resulting in different perceptions of what constitutes valuable film – or, put more generally, culture.

Cultural classification processes – which involve describing, interpreting, labeling and evaluating products according to the particular field’s underlying logics – have evolved in the course of time (cf. Janssen et al., 2011). Not only is there a multitude of institutional agents that offer some form of recognition in the field, their respective positions seem to increasingly overlap. Whereas the functioning of agents such as critics and compilers of all-time greatest films lists has been studied extensively the past years (e.g. Allen & Lincoln, 2004; Hsu, 2006; Zuckerman & Kim, 2003), it is less clear what kind of films receive recognition by relevant agents in the field. This paper examines how films that are bestowed with popular, professional, and critical recognition differ with regard to their production characteristics and content, and what these attributes’ relative importance is in the various processes of film classification.

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Cultural sociologists have studied the range of classifications of cinema made by public, peers, and critics who offer, respectively, popular, professional, and critical recognition (Allen & Lincoln, 2004; Hicks & Petrova, 2006). These various institutional agents' different positions in the field result in different criteria and diverged preferences. Recognition is thus likely to be rewarded to *inherently* different types of film. Simultaneously, film scholarship provides an array of studies on, among others, narrative, genres, national cinema's, movie stars, film experiences, and ideology in film (e.g. race, class, sexuality, feminism) as well as work on specific directors, film schools, and era's (Bordwell, 2006; Buckland, 2009; Cook, 2007; Mast et al., 1992). Studies on the intersection of film traits and artistic/commercial success from a sociological or economic perspective often restrict themselves to gauging production costs and star power (e.g. Holbrook & Addis, 2008). We bring the two paradigms in dialogue to examine how films' attributes relate to cultural classification practices beyond the traditional blockbuster - art house movie divide. We argue that the production logics, which propel the way films are classified, are more fine-tuned than that. On the one hand, film production comprises a material process in which key elements that affect the public's and critics' perception (e.g. setting, time, familiarity theme, narrative complexity) are carefully deliberated. On the other hand, despite their reliance on formatting, pre-screenings, and other risk aversion strategies, film producers cannot fully anticipate how viewers respond in terms of interpretation and valorization (Friedland & Alford, 1991). However fervently producers attempt to control a film's reputation and performance, they cannot govern how much symbolic capital the film will achieve.

By analyzing production traits and viewers' classifications of the top films of 2007 according to three forms of institutional recognition (public, peers, critics), this study explores the possible convergence of movie stereotypes and film's institutional framework. To increase the reliability of our research, we study successful films in four countries: France, the Netherlands, the U.K. and the U.S. While cultural classification systems have repeatedly been shown to differ across countries due to varying social, political, economic, and cultural contexts (Bever, 2005; Janssen et al., 2008; Lamont & Thévenot, 2000), such comparison is not the aim of this article. Still, by sampling films from countries that vary in their global market share, in production output, and in the status within film history from

an artistic perspective, we offer more insight in the internationally oriented film field. In particular, we can analyze the transnational nature of different types of recognition.

### **3.2 Classification of Film**

Today, the film field is highly differentiated: the supply shows great variation in terms of genres and subgenres, but also with regard to films' artistic or commercial orientations. Whereas the idea of film as art has become widely accepted (Baumann, 2007), certainly not all movies are rewarded such a position within the dominant classification system (DiMaggio, 1987; Janssen, 1999); a large portion of the film industry's output still belongs with popular culture. As the small-scale field of film as art and the large-scale field of commercial film answer to different principles (Tudor, 2005), filmmakers (and viewers) in these realms show strongly diverging opinions on what is a "good" movie. In the small-scale field accumulation of symbolic capital (or artistic value) is pursued, while the field of large-scale production is more concerned with obtaining economic capital (material value) (Bourdieu, 1993). These respective goals not only prescribe two dispositions that differ greatly - satisfying the "right" aesthetic criteria versus appealing to the largest possible audience - they also impose expectations on production traits. Whatever forms of recognition filmmakers aspire to achieve, they seek the approval of relevant institutions that are legitimized to attribute this recognition.

Building on sociological analyses of how different forms of value are created in cultural fields (DiMaggio, 1987; Van Rees, 1983; Shrum, 1996), Baumann (2007) has outlined the institutionalization of the film field since the mid-1930s and its consequences for film classification. Over time, various forms of institutional recognition have given weight to a more artistic perspective on film in comparison to the traditional notion of film as entertainment.

Miscellaneous institutional arrangements now generate forms of recognition that cater to the aspirations of all kinds of filmmakers. Yet three forms of recognition still appear to stand out: *popular recognition* by the public (e.g. box office success), *critical recognition* by critics (e.g. film reviews) and *professional recognition* by peers (e.g. film awards) (Lampel & Nadavulakereb, 2009; Schmutz, 2005). There is no clear-cut distinction, however, as was shown by analysis of how films get retrospectively consecrated (Allen &

Lincoln, 2004): various institutions in the American film field seem to award merit to the same films or filmmakers whereas their respective positions in the field suggest a differentiation of classifications. Of course, this also casts doubt on the alleged opposition between the fields of restricted and large-scale cultural production. Apparently, some films emanating from the large-scale production field nonetheless receive large esteem by peers (e.g. *The Dark Knight* (2008)), and/or critical acclaim in either the long or short run (e.g. *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991)). Alternatively, some films originating from the circuit of restricted production are ultimately recognized by audiences (e.g. *Lost In Translation* (2003)). In addition, films that receive highly regarded Oscar nominations seem to gain popular appeal and perform better at the box office in the weeks after the announcements (Nelson et al., 2001).

In an era of globalization, commercialization and digitization, Bourdieu's concepts thus tend to be stretched (Hesmondhalgh, 2006). In a "universe of declassification" (Prior, 2005: 124), cultural classification seems to supersede the dichotomy between art and commercial culture. The institutional logics – the material practices and symbolic affordances guiding the behaviors of institutional agents (Dowd, 2004) - that govern the film field have become increasingly complex due to processes of product differentiation, audience segmentations (Hesmondhalgh, 2002; Schatz, 2009; Tudor, 2005) and declining authority of experts (Keen, 2007; Lupo, 2007). The increased complexity of the present-day audiovisual industry results in hybrid cultural products that combine traits originating from both art and entertainment sectors. A fitting illustration of this trend is found in Hollywood majors that now run subdivisions focusing on art films and regard art film as a new lucrative niche market; this appears to be such "production on the boundaries" (Hesmondhalgh, 2006: 222) between restricted and large-scale fields of film production.

### **3.3 Innovation and Convention in Hollywood**

Institutional logics – "socially constructed packages of practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules that provide a framework in which production is organized and business is conducted" (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999: 804) -- alter when economic and social contexts change. Factors as changes in competition, new views on legitimacy, and upcoming technologies may put pressure on a prevailing logic. For example, the music industry saw a

change from a logic of centralized production managed in a highly concentrated top-down manner, to a logic of decentralized production in which semi-autonomous divisions are in tune with the latest trends and adaptable to innovation (Dowd, 2004). Described developments in the film field make it plausible to suppose a comparable shift in dominant institutional logics in the second half of the twentieth century.

The concept of innovation features as a central point of interest when discussing classifications of art and popular culture. As said, public, peers, and critics evaluate films with varying levels of cultural capital, and so a reoccurring theme in academic discourse on how culture is classified by these various institutions concerns their appreciation of innovation (Crane, 1976). The study of the fine arts is centered on uniqueness; high art is often based on convention “mixed with inventions of great genius” (Cawelti, 2001: 206). Preferences expressed in popular, professional, and critical recognition presumably answer to different mixtures of conventions and innovation as these agents have particular measures of expertise and thus distinct ideas of conservatism and inventiveness (Ferguson, 2009). The higher appreciation of innovation with peers and critics signals the ubiquity of cultural capital, the cultivated aesthetic disposition also described as “aesthetic fluency” (Bourdieu, 1984). An inclination for more conventional content indicates an audience with less cultural capital, and a popular aesthetic. Following, the diverging positions public, peers and critics hold in the film field are consequence to what is old or new to them. For all agents, the realization of innovative movies means a negotiation between conventional and unconventional elements.

### ***3.3.1 Maintained Conventions***

Innovation in cultural production thus implies the continuous trade-off between following previous successes and developing new product traits to find new markets, audiences and/or the approval of institutional experts with the ability to ascribe symbolic value. This process partly concerns material practices: decisions on the allocation of resources affecting both the production itself (e.g. actors, story, special effects) (Bordwell, 2006) as well as its market visibility (marketing, public relations) (Drake, 2008).

Hollywood’s dominance in commercial film production points, firstly, to the importance of material resources in this industry. Conventional film requires big budgets

that allow for much spectacle, elaborate film universes, special effects, and the participation of big movie stars (Faulkner & Anderson, 1987; Wallace et al., 1993), which makes it mainly the business of major conglomerates. Such large investments require films to achieve high revenues, which prompts studios to produce movies that potentially attract large audiences.

Following, film *contents* in terms of theme, place, and time are affected accordingly. Since the film conventions that Hollywood established regarding the industry's material practices are extended to the entire Western world, issues of filming location and language relate to conventionality as well. As the prevailing movie majors "attack the global market by creating films that present universal themes and that rely on sense-stimulating appeal" (Barthel-Bouchier, 2011: 4), mainstream consumers are accustomed to films originating from the U.S. or other (Western) countries of close cultural proximity (Straubhaar, 2007), filmed in familiar settings, spoken in English and focusing on universal themes.

A film's human capital presents another aspect of material production that influences its degree of innovativeness. Being collaborative productions, all films are unique in terms of the collection of contributors, who may vary in talent, experience, artistic legitimacy, and "star power". Famous actors and directors particularly enable filmmakers and audiences to form reasonable expectations on the basis of the reputations built in prior work, an important feature in this risky cultural industry (Baker & Faulkner, 1991; Rossman et al., 2010).

Finally, positions on the innovation-convention continuum are actively constructed through interplay with established field-specific traditions. Such cultural classification tools comprise genre labels, formulas, adaptation of other cultural products, and development of series. Because genre divides the film supply into compartments and genre conventions are common knowledge, genre signifies meaning in cultural products (Griswold, 1987). Genre gives boundaries to what the audience can expect a film to entail (Lena & Peterson, 2008), while providing producers with a rationale to follow (Bielby & Bielby, 1994) and an incentive for a film's exportability and revenue potential (Barthel-Bouchier, 2011). The alleged homogeneity in popular culture products is often related to the use of formulas (Peterson & Berger, 1975) – i.e. more specific blueprints of how to tell a story that have proven successful in previous films. An example is the "meet cute" (Neale, 2007); a formula



frequently used in romantic comedies, prescribing two potential lovers to meet in an unusual way.

In the volatile movie industry, another frequently applied strategy is to adapt successful products from other cultural fields (Schatz, 2009), e.g. bestselling novels (*Eat Pray Love* (2010)), video games (*Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* (2010)), television series (*The A-Team* (2010)), and historical/biographical material (*The King's Speech* (2010)). Producers may also choose to exploit narratives or characters from previous film hits (Hesmondhalgh, 2002) by creating sequels or prequels (the *X-Men* series), or spin-offs (*Puss in Boots* (2011)). Other tactics imply creating variations of hit films (e.g. various romantic comedy's succeeded *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (1994)); or trying out new concepts (e.g. 3D technology in *Avatar* (2009)).

### **3.3.2 Perceived Innovation**

Producers do not simply make use of cultural classification in their publicity and marketing; they must labor for the intended interpretations of classifications to come across. Put more generally, innovation should be *perceived* as such to be truly called innovative, just like creativity is only that when publicly recognized to some extent (Plucker et al., 2009). Beside material practices, institutional logics also incorporate symbolic affordances by relevant social agents (Friedland & Alford, 1991). The symbolic aspect of innovation in cultural production not only constrains producers' material practices, it also informs manners of movie classification amongst experts and regular viewers.

As mainstream film consumers' standards of what film should be about or look like are stipulated by Hollywoodian aesthetic and technological reference points (McDonald & Wasko, 2008), conventions lie with production values that command mass appeal. Film conventions thus have a strong affiliation with the commercial goal of major studios. This implies a rather homogeneous supply of movies that express "a quite restricted range of sentiments in conventionalized ways" (Peterson & Berger, 1975: 163) by means of a limited collection of cultural, social, or psychological themes (Cawelti, 2001). Such themes generally concern everyday life and exert familiarity (Van Venrooij & Schmutz, 2010). Growth of innovation's prominence in the production logic eminent in the film field then

results in the exploration of more diverse and socially informed themes (Peterson & Berger, 1975) that are more abstract and remote to the viewer. Since novelty uncovers the limitations of one's cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984), innovative elements require more interpretation and complicate the film audience's apprehension of meanings expressed. Various degrees of familiarity of thematic film content lead to distinct viewing experiences; movies may require more or less from their audience's cognitive skills. Film can fulfill the need to submerge oneself in entertainment seeking escapism, or to take on an artistic expression that requires concentration span and analysis (Silvia & Berg, 2011). The ease with which one watches a movie can thus vary strongly.

### ***3.3.3 Expectations***

In line with the supposed relation between filmmakers' pursuit of commercial viability and degrees of innovation in film, we anticipate films that were praised by the general public to uphold a higher level of conventionality while professionally or critically acclaimed films contain more innovative elements. Specifically, popular film is expected to abide by Hollywood production rules, heavily utilize genre and formula to reduce complexity of narratives, display familiarity in thematic content, and oblige the audience's cognitive skills. Film with critical recognition will find itself at the other end of this continuum. Further, film with professional recognition likely finds an intermediate position as peer filmmakers may appreciate novelty as connoisseurs while highly regarding filmmakers with a talent for achieving mass appeal.

## **3.4 Data and Methods**

This study examines whether a typology of films with popular, professional, and critical recognition can be drafted with regard to film's material practices and symbolic value. The data consist of film titles rewarded with the most popular, professional, and critical recognition in France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States in 2007.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Films with various forms of recognition were redistributed into either the critical or popular recognition category as the strongest distinctions appeared to exist between these two types. Any combination of types of recognition that included popular recognition was re-coded as "popular", combinations including critical recognition were coded as "critical", and in combinations containing "popular" as well as "critical" recognition the eventual category was set to "popular". The latter decision was based on the general prevalence of commercial influences over aesthetic ones in the film field at large.

These countries were chosen because they represent different film fields. The United States has a large film production with a strong focus on (the export of) commercial films (Hollywood). While not as successful as the U.S., the British film industry is rather successful in producing films that can cross borders but still undergoes a lot of influence of Hollywood (Heise & Tudor, 2007; Lampel & Nadavulakereb, 2009). France has, within Europe, a relatively large and successful film industry – also because of the protective cultural policies of the French government (Scott, 2000) – and is traditionally known for its film art. The Netherlands have a very small national industry and the Dutch are very susceptible to Hollywood film. Selecting twenty film titles per category resulted in 60 film titles per country, overlap between countries and film categories lead to a final sample of 113 film titles. This modest sample size restrains generalization but serves the purpose of getting the clearest possible outline of the differences between film types – i.e. distinctions are most visible in the extremes.

This study concerns feature films that the Motion Pictures Association of America has declared rated PG-13, NC-17, or R and that have been released in theatres in the relevant countries.<sup>7</sup> Popular recognition was measured as commercial success; the twenty best-selling feature films were selected for each country. Winning or being nominated for prestigious film awards was used as the parameter for professional recognition. This was first done on a national level (César Awards, Cannes Film Festival, Gouden Kalveren, BAFTA Awards, British Independent Film Awards, Sundance Festival, Academy Awards) and if this method did not provide twenty titles, the most internationally influential film awards, the Academy Awards, were used to fill the gap. Due to the very obvious “winner takes all” principle (English, 2005), there tends to be a small number of films that receive most of the awards.

Critical recognition is rewarded when a critics’ association, quality newspaper or specialist magazine places a film in a yearly shortlist or hands out awards. The sample of films in this category was selected on a national level (Syndicat Français de la Critique de Cinema, *Cahiers du Cinema*, Kring van Nederlandse Filmjournalisten, *De Volkskrant*, *NRC*

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<sup>7</sup> This excludes the children’s film or family film, which answers to rather distinct criteria.

*Handelsblad*, The British Film Critic’s Circle, *The Times*, *The Guardian*, New York Film Critics, Los Angeles Film Critics, *The New York Times*, and *Los Angeles Times*) and when these shortlists didn’t provide enough film titles, the most prestigious internationally oriented critics’ awards (Golden Globe Awards) were used to complete the list. An overview of the complete film sample is found in Appendix B, the distribution over film types is displayed in table 3.1.

**Table 3.1** Types of recognition

Type of recognition:	Frequency:	Percentage:
Popular	33	29%
Professional	24	21%
Critical	37	33%
Popular/professional	2	2%
Popular/critical	2	2%
Professional/critical	11	10%
Popular/professional/critical	4	3%
Total:	113	100%

In line with our theoretical framework, our empirical analysis consists of two parts, for which different measurements and analyses are performed. Material practices are operationalized through a number of production attributes that are extracted from online resources like the Internet Movie Database (IMDb), Box Office Mojo, and The Numbers. Where needed, we recoded variables to fit our inductive statistical analysis.

For every film, we retrieved the production budget, consisting of four categories: (1) less than \$999,999, (2) \$1-\$20 million, (3) \$20-\$100 million and (4) more than \$100 million. We operationalized film contents via the dominant location in the narrative (Place, at the country level), the dominant historical period in the narrative (Time) and the dominant theme of the film. Place contains three categories: (1) U.S., (2) Europe and (3) else. Time also has three categories: (1) current times (2000s), (2) 1950-2000 or recent history, and

(3) remote periods.<sup>8</sup> The film's theme was constructed in four steps via an inductive process. First, we extracted for each film the two most prominent key words from IMDb's<sup>9</sup> *Plot key words* and *Plot synopsis* —that is: key words that seemed to express the film content most accurately. Second, we summarized these key words into a more general theme (we found 30 different themes) as well as a context in which the theme is played out. Thirdly, we looked for similarities among these general themes by grouping them together and deleting redundancies. In the fourth and final step we collapsed the themes in each group to an even more abstract level, resulting in 4 overarching themes: "Good vs. evil", "Portrait of an individual", "Human relations" and "Social issues". For instance, key words for *Rush Hour 3* (2007) were "murder" and "police". These key words were summarized into the general theme "Crime" played out in the context "murder", while the general theme "crime" ultimately was placed under the overarching theme "Good vs. evil".

The human capital of a film was measured via two variables: the star power wielded by, respectively, the leading actor and the director. To this end, we used the *Starmeter* feature in IMDb as measurement tool; this feature translates the number of searches in IMDb on an actor's or director's name in a given week into a periodical ranking. For each film, we charted the ranking of the two leading actors and the director a month before the relevant film's release via the *Starmeter* archive. Recoding led to both actors' star power and director's star power to consist of three categories: top ranking (1-1000), middle ranking (1001-50,000) and low ranking (50,001 and beyond).

Finally, we operationalized cultural classification characteristics by establishing the genre of the film and whether the film concerned an adaptation of another cultural product, and/or a serial format. Genre was established using IMDb. We distinguish three main categories here: (1) drama, (2) comedy, and (3) action/suspense, since alternative genres like musical, fantasy, and science fiction were hardly found in our sample.<sup>10</sup> Adaptation contains three categories: (1) no adaptation/original script, (2) adaptation of a popular

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<sup>8</sup> This category contains all time periods before 1950 and in the future – i.e. all time periods beyond most viewers' own living experience.

<sup>9</sup> The Internet Movie Database figures as an authoritative source since it is one of the largest, and most popular film databases that cater to an international audience. Researchers have come to utilize it as a respected source on film attributes (e.g. Barthel-Bouchier, 2011; Rossman et al., 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Animation and documentary were excluded from this study, since these genres have such specific characteristics.

culture product (e.g. comic, musical, TV show), and (3) adaptation of high culture product (e.g. novel, play). Serial format is simply coded as applicable or not.

Whereas material practices are regarded as concrete outcomes of decisions within the filmmaking process, the symbolic affordances that guide film producers are operationalized via film viewers' perceptions. We asked six regular film viewers to fill out a questionnaire in which they were invited to assess the conventional and/or innovative nature of our film corpus. Each viewer received a subset of 40 films with a small description (based on IMDb synopsis) and was asked to rate each film (on a scale from 0 to 4) on four attributes. These represented four dimensions of the continuum between conventionality and innovation in movies: (a) Conformation to Hollywood production norms, (b) Complexity of narrative, (c) Familiarity of thematic content, and (d) Difficulty of viewing experience.<sup>11</sup> Subsequently, we calculated the mean ratings per film for each dimension. Reliability analyses showed that the assessments for each dimension were highly consistent: .91 (a), .87 (b), .75 (c) and .89 (d).

## **3.5 Findings**

### ***3.5.1 Material Practices***

We first conducted a Categorical Principal Components Analysis (CATPCA) to find underlying patterns in the "material" film attributes. We report the two-dimension solution since imposing a third dimension on the data decreased the interpretation of the results (possibly because of the small N). Table 3.2 shows the variables' contributions to the distinguished dimensions. Clearly, dimension 1 (Eigenvalue=3.4) mainly differentiates films based upon budget, star power, genre and theme. Dimension 2 (Eigenvalue=1.6) signals differences in time and adaptation. In Figure 3.1, the quantifications per category in these variables facilitate an easier interpretation of the dimensions. Here, we see that films of the suspense/action genre, with high budgets, high ranking actors and directors, and content within the "Good vs. evil" theme have lower object scores than their counterparts.

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<sup>11</sup> The first, third and fourth variable are scaled as increasingly innovative (that is, less conforming, less familiar and more difficult); the second was originally scaled as decreasingly complex, but was reversed for the sake of interpretation.

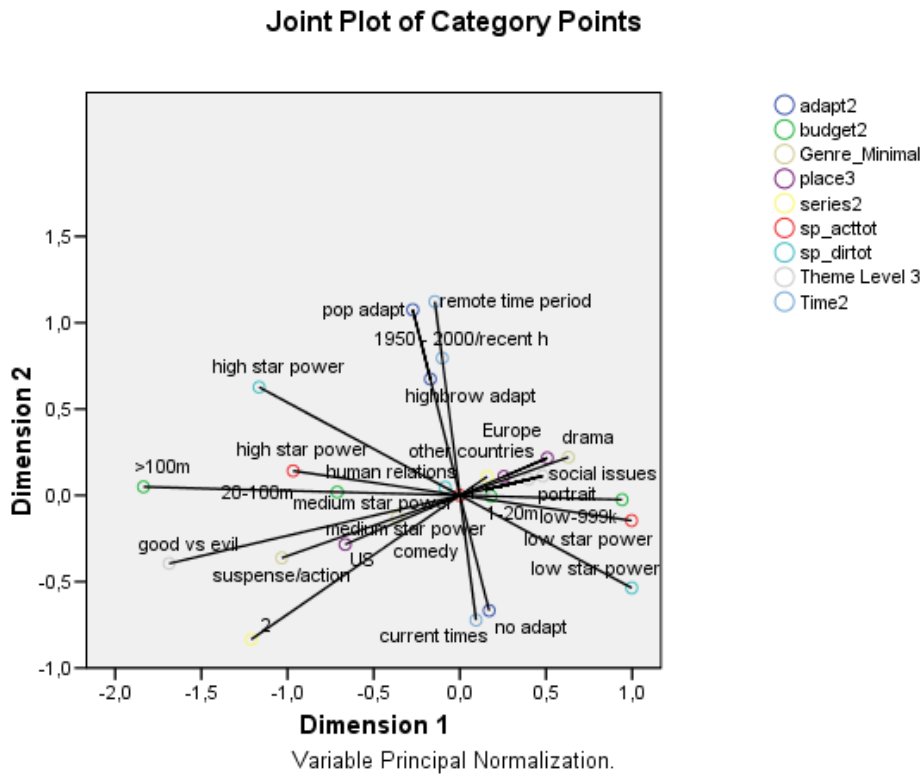
Dimension 1 thus indicates the difference between films that show many of the characteristics of mainstream movies versus films from the domain of small-scale production. Films in our sample score between -2.24 (very mainstream) and 1.45 (very small-scale).

On the other hand, dimension 2 differentiates between films set in a remote time period (the distant past or future) that are based upon popular and high culture products on the one hand, and more contemporary situated films that are not adaptations. Apparently, many historical (e.g. *300* set in classical Greece and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* set in the 16<sup>th</sup> century) but also futuristic films (e.g. *I Am Legend*) are adaptations from books or historic/biographical material. Here, films in our sample score between -1.95 (very contemporary) and 1.69 (large time distance).

**Table 3.2** Component loadings of 2 main dimensions (N=113)

	Dimension 1 Mainstream to small-scale	Dimension 2 More remote time + adaptation
Budget (ord)	-.890	.024
Place (nom)	.531	.227
Time (nom)	-.108	.832
Theme (nom)	.745	.174
Star power actors (ord)	.816	-.120
Star power director (ord)	.613	-.329
Part of series (nom)	-.436	-.301
Adaptation (nom)	-.197	.773
Genre (nom)	-.718	-.252
Eigen value	3.425	1.649

**Figure 3.1** Interplay of two dimensions of material practices



Having established two underlying dimensions within material production values, we tested whether the films recognized by audiences, critics and professionals differ on these dimensions by conducting an ANOVA analysis. The object scores of the Categorical Principal Components Analysis were saved and then, for the sake of interpretation, transformed to a scale ranging from 0 to 4. Table 3.3 shows that films that received predominantly popular recognition are significantly more conventional ( $M=1.59$ ) than the other two film types ( $M=2.81$  and  $M=3.08$ ). While they also seem to be slightly more often contemporary without adaptation, this difference is not significant. Interestingly, we find no difference between films with critical and professional recognition.



**Table 3.3** Differences between films with popular, critical and professional recognition in two dimensions of material production value (mean and s.d.)

	Dimension 1 (> small-scale)	Results post-hoc test		Dimension 2 (> distant time / adapt)	Results post-hoc test	
		Cri	Pro		Cri	Pro
Popular recognition (N=41)	1.59 (1.02)	***	***	1.90 (1.19)	n.s.	n.s.
Critical recognition (N=48)	2.81 (.86)		n.s.	2.44 (1.03)		n.s.
Professional recognition (N=24)	3.08 (.69)			1.96 (.98)		
F-value (between groups)	29.02 ***			3.13 *		

Post-hoc test was Games-Howell test. Significance: \*\*\*p<.001, \*\*p<.01, \*p<.05.

### 3.5.2 Symbolic Affordances

Symbolic aspects of institutional logics were measured via four predefined dimensions, which capture how film viewers perceive the films in terms of conformation to Hollywood norms, narrative complexity, theme familiarity and difficulty of viewing experience.

The results, as presented in Table 3.4, all point in the same direction: films which received popular recognition are conceived as considerably more conventional – and thus less innovative -- on all four dimensions than films recognized by critics or professionals. That is, they are more in line with Hollywood norms, have less complex narratives, have more familiar themes and grant easier viewing experiences. Similar to the results for material practices, no significant differences are found between films that were recognized by critics and professionals.

**Table 3.4** Differences between films with popular, critical and professional recognition in four dimensions of symbolic affordances (mean and s.d.)

	Not in line with Hollywood norms	Results post-hoc test		Complex narratives	Results post-hoc test	
		Cri	Pro		Cri	Pro
Popular recognition (N=41)	1.04	***	***	1.04	***	***
Critical recognition (N=48)	2.86		n.s.	2.61		n.s.
Professional recognition (N=24)	2.55			2.24		
F-value (between groups)	44.39 ***			42.96 ***		
	Themes not familiar			Difficult viewing experience		
Popular recognition (N=41)	1.49	***	***	.94	***	***
Critical recognition (N=48)	2.77		n.s.	2.53		n.s.
Professional recognition (N=24)	2.50			2.23		
F-value (between groups)	38.79 ***			49.71 ***		

Post-hoc test was Games-Howell test. Significance: \*\*\*p<.001, \*\*p<.01, \*p<.05.

### ***3.5.3 Interaction of Material and Symbolic Film Traits***

A final step in our analysis of how films are classified and perceived concerns the interaction of material and symbolic film traits. Here we turn to multivariate analyses in which we analyzed the influence of types of recognition as well as material practices on symbolic affordances by film viewers. While we do not claim to establish “true” causal effects, we argue that both the way producers position their products in the market and the recognition of critics and professionals precede symbolic affordances (as the survey was held in 2011). Also, it is not unlikely that viewers notice such characteristics, which then affects their perceptions of the films. Our analysis mainly tries to provide a more detailed yet exploratory account of how the two sides of institutional logics interact.

Table 3.5 presents the outcomes of four OLS regression analyses. In each analysis, we first estimated a basic model containing only the three types of recognition. The results of these models are in line with the ANOVAs presented in the previous sections: films with popular recognition are in all facets less innovative than films with professional recognition. There are no significant differences between professionally and critically acclaimed films, albeit the latter seem to be slightly more complex in their narratives. Note that for all dimensions a relatively high percentage of about 40% of the variance is explained.

In model 2 we add a selection of material film traits to the model; variables that added no explained variance were excluded, also to obtain a more parsimonious model given the low N. The absence of effects of these characteristics is, of course, an outcome of its own. The model further discloses several relevant findings. First, we observe that all differences between films with popular recognition and professional recognition disappear, while some differences come into play between critically and professionally recognized pictures. This is mainly the effect of the film budget. Keeping the budget constant shows that critically acclaimed films are considered more innovative (except for the familiarity of themes) than professionally recognized films, and that the alleged differences between the professionally and popular recognized films should be attributed to budget. However, this decrease is not solely the result of variation in film budget. Regarding all four dimensions, some small differences remain (unreported analyses); yet disappear completely after introducing the themes of the film (see model 2). Films revolving around the theme “Good vs. evil” and “Human relations” are considered less innovative than films with the theme “Social issues”. Thus, the films’ overarching themes are significantly connected to how viewers perceive the symbolic potential of the film and this seems to neutralize all differences in recognition between the popular and the professional. These significant effects of budget and particularly theme are the second relevant finding of the analyses since they quite precisely demonstrate the interaction between material and symbolic attributes. Rather than aspects like serial format, adaptation, or star power, it is the thematic content of the film that seems to structure the way film viewers perceive its innovation.

Thirdly, we find some modest differences between the four symbolic dimensions of the film's conventionality or innovativeness. Clearly, the degree to which movies conform to Hollywood norms has the highest level of explained variance, which can mainly be attributed to the film budget. The extent to which a film contains familiar themes is the most difficult to explain; model 2 only renders the presence of particular themes significant. Budget does not affect the familiarity of themes. Genre hardly influences viewers' perceptions; only drama is associated with less conformity to Hollywood norms and more difficult viewing experiences.

**Table 3.5** The influence of different types of recognition and material film traits on symbolic film traits (beta's)(N=113)

Model	Ind. variables	Dependent variables			
		Less Hollywood norms	More complex narratives	Less familiar themes	More difficult viewing experience
1	Popular recognition	-.583 ***	-.537 ***	-.531 ***	-.589 ***
	Critical recognition	.122	.172 ~	.143	.142
	Professional recognition	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
	Explained variance (Adj.R <sup>2</sup> )	43.7%	42.8%	39.0%	46.5%
2	Popular recognition	-.078	-.079	-.196	-.137
	Critical recognition	.190 *	.221 *	.155	.187 *
	Professional recognition	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
	Budget	-.418 ***	-.216 ***	-.014	-.192 *
	Genre = drama	.162 ~	.116	.128	.204 *
	Genre = comedy	.060	-.102	-.092	-.024
	Genre = suspense/action	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
	Star power director	.098	.082	.011	.086
	Theme = good vs. evil	-.219 ***	-.326 ***	-.367 ***	-.303 ***
	Theme = portrait	-.090	-.143 *	-.152 ~	-.155 *
	Theme = human relations	-.162 *	-.196 *	-.259 **	-.224 **
	Theme = social issues	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Explained variance (Adj.R <sup>2</sup> )	68.9%	56.9%	47.0%	62.1%	

Star power actors, time, place, series and adaptation were excluded from the model as they did not yield extra explained variance. Types of recognition, genre and themes are made into dummies. Significance:

\*\*\*p<.001, \*\*p<.01, \*p<.05, ~p<.10.

Finally, we tested whether films that were sampled in one, two, three, and four countries differed on the two dimensions found with regard to material practices and the four symbolic traits by conducting an ANOVA analysis. The results show that films that were sampled in the France, the Netherlands, the United States and the United Kingdom are significantly more conventional than films that occur in fewer samples. Not only are films sampled in all four countries produced along more conventional lines (Dimension 1.  $M=1.44$ ) than films sampled in one or two countries ( $M=2.86$  and  $M=2.08$ ), they are also perceived as most conform to Hollywood standards ( $M=1.51$  against  $M=2.41$  and  $M=2.00$ ). The internationally successful films were also seen to contain less complex narratives and more familiar themes, and to offer an easy viewing experience, but the samples did not differ significantly on these dimensions.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This article examined how movies in contemporary film fields in France, the Netherlands, the United States, and the United Kingdom are classified in terms of production characteristics and content. More specifically, it seeks to understand how the recognition that films can receive – from public, peers, or critics – is related to the way films are produced, their intrinsic elements (material practices), but also the way they are interpreted by audiences (their symbolic affordances). Within a cultural landscape in which hierarchical differences are declining (Janssen et al., 2008; 2011), audiences become increasingly omnivorous (Peterson & Kern, 1996), and marketing divisions are gaining power in most cultural genres, the interactions between the “symbolic” and the “material” side of cultural production as well as “innovation” and “convention” need to be analyzed in more detail.

Based upon samples of the 20 most successful films in three different institutional domains in four countries, we conducted an empirical analysis of how movies with large popular, professional and critical recognition differ regarding conventionality and innovation in the late 2000s. In terms of material practices, the traditional distinction between commercial and artistic movies still holds – although rather continuous than discrete. The production budget, star power of the director, genre and thematic content still make a difference. Popular films mostly answer to Hollywood’s traditional profit-

oriented logic (multi-million dollar budgets, major movie stars, well known directors, clearly signaling genres, and comprehensible themes), whereas professionally and critically recognized films fit this conventional profile far less. Furthermore, we examined film's symbolic affordances; film viewers' perception of conventionality and/or innovation in film became apparent in four dimensions. Popular film was perceived as most conventional; these titles were judged to be most conform to Hollywood norms, hold little narrative complexity, represent familiar themes, and offer an easy viewing experience. Films with professional or critical recognition scored in opposite direction on these dimensions.

Previous research shed light on the prominence of narrative complexity and comprehensibility in relation to viewers' interest and pleasure in films (Silvia & Berg, 2011); expertise facilitates aesthetic experience, decreases confusion, and generates interest. Our findings are in keeping with such conclusions and offer insight into the distinction that remains between mainstream and art house film despite the field's further differentiation in past decades. However, this distinction proves a gradual rather than a dichotomous one. Commercially successful and critically acclaimed films present the extremes of a continuum between conventionality and innovation. Particularly the films with professional recognition represent the blurring of boundaries. While being consecrated through awards and prizes, they not solely resemble the art(istic) movie. Much of the distinction with popular movies lay in the budget differences and the themes that were presented. Apparently, the intertwining of small-scale and large-scale film fields (Bourdieu, 1993) cannot be perceived as straightforward loss of distinction or an overall shift of production logics (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999), but rather as the so-called "production on the boundaries" (Hesmondhalgh, 2006) in which filmmakers combine production logics to cater to audiences with various levels of aesthetic fluency.

In line with previous research, films that become successful in more than one country tend to be more conventional (cf. Barthel-Boucher, 2011) than those that attract only one particular audience; the French, Dutch, British, and American contexts were least difficult to circumvent for films that were only moderately innovative.

Since the explorative character of our study and its modest sample size restrain generalizations, future research is needed to construct more elaborate measures of film's attributes. Furthermore, the expansion of the data sample in a longitudinal manner would

greatly benefit research on the conventionality or innovativeness of film types. However, this dialogue between cultural sociology and film studies does add nuance to the traditional picture of mainstream versus artistic film. It appears that not just Hollywood's signature large production budgets and star power determine a film's classification: the impact of thematic content presents a complex dynamic between material practices and symbolic affordances. Whereas the commercial blockbuster does still appear to oppose the art house film, the distinction proves to be a gradual slide from conventionality to innovation. All in all, the results of this paper suggest that due to increasing complexity of the film field, the legitimizing power of institutional agents has leveled, which makes it increasingly difficult for single individuals and organizations to put a mark on classification processes.





## Chapter 4

### ***Film Discourse on the Praised and Acclaimed: Reviewing Criteria in the United States and United Kingdom***

#### **4.1 Introduction\***

In present-day western society, film appears as art and as entertainment, serves cinephiles and escapists alike, and can be divided into many genres, subgenres, and niches. This differentiation did not always exist; during film's early decades in the United States motion pictures were regarded as mere entertainment for the masses (Bordwell & Thompson, 1997). Nevertheless, this cultural form evolved into one that can be approached and appreciated as art, following European example. Cultural analysts have concluded that the intellectualization of film discourse by professional critics played a major role in film's ascent on the cultural ladder. In seminal work on this transition, Baumann (2001, 2007) found that a legitimizing intellectual ideology for film's higher standing, coupled with critics' utilization of devices, concepts, and vocabulary traditionally belonging to discourses associated with highbrow art, assisted film in attaining a new status, that of a product with artistic potential and merit. Also paving the way for the development of film as art were a changing opportunity space for film production from an open field to a more restricted one (Bourdieu, 1993), and the institutionalization of industry resources and practices such as festivals and awards that conveyed value to its goods (English, 2005).

A great deal has changed in media industries since Baumann's important work on film's evolution. First, expanded commercialization, alongside globalization, and digitization have extended the opportunity space for film production and consumption and shifted the institutionalization of its resources since his analysis, which covered films produced only through the mid-1980s (Anderson, 2006; Keen, 2007; McDonald & Wasko, 2008; Wasko, 2001). Second, ever-more complex business strategies have been devised to maximize film's revenue-generating potential, including a deeper reliance upon selected

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release dates and diverse viewing platforms, publicity campaigns to enhance opening weekend box-office revenue, productions targeted to particular audience niches and demographics, and word-of-mouth efforts among audiences and industry members (De Vany & Lee, 2001; Horn, 2011). Third, research (Allen & Lincoln, 2004; English, 2005) has shown that a triad of institutional agents – public, peers, and critics – influence the recognition, merit, and position a film can claim, albeit from different vantage points; however, the interests of these agents may vary even as the selections they attend to overlap. Given these developments, how can present-day film criticism be characterized and understood? In particular, are films that are ultimately consecrated by popular, professional, and critical recognition appraised by similar or different criteria?

#### **4.2 Film Criticism Today**

Critics function as cultural intermediaries between artistic goods and their audiences not only because of their central role as cultural authorities who enact aesthetic standards but because of their ability to transform those standards and contribute to elevating (or lowering) entire fields of cultural goods, as was demonstrated in Baumann's (2007) analysis. Not only did Baumann's research clarify that over time film critics have emphasized an increasingly analytical, interpretive approach to film over a more facile, entertainment-minded one, it also ascertained that their expanding vocabulary of critical devices and concepts in the context of a new ideology for film allowed, in turn, for a more complex discussion of a film's achievements. These developments led to an even more nuanced appraisal of film, including recognizing its positive and negative elements, merit in failure, and whether it was too easy to enjoy, as well as its meaning and significance, location in the overall film canon, placement within a category of films, and contribution artistically versus experientially. This growing vocabulary coincided with and was bolstered by the expanding adoption of auteurism, the increased focus upon the naming of the director as creative artist and originator of serious film (Sarris, 1962).

Nevertheless, while changes in the film world, developments in its wider societal context, and the founding of a legitimizing ideology have resulted in the possibility of film to be regarded as elite art, of course not all films are. Bourdieu (1993) proposed that a field of cultural production contains a restricted portion in which artistic merit and prestige is

aimed for and a large-scale portion in which financial gain is goal. Although there is now compared to a century ago a more restricted field of film production (e.g., *Lars and the Real Girl*; *4 luni, 3 saptamâni si 2 zile: Le Scaphandre et le papillon*) with an elite discourse to match, for the most part the film industry remains relentlessly oriented to its goal of producing commercial products that achieve widespread popular appeal (e.g., *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*; *Spider-Man 3*; *American Gangster*), and not all filmmakers aim to produce films with artistic merit. Therefore, a question remains whether the prevailing dichotomy between art and commerce still reflects the emerging complexity of 21<sup>st</sup> century cultural industries (Heise & Tudor, 2007; Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Prior, 2005; Tudor, 2005), or whether a more nuanced understanding of film criticism is called for. Are contemporary changes within the film industry once again being met by shifts in critical discourse that can be understood as reflecting ongoing developments in the field?

#### **4.3 Aesthetic Position and Cultural Goods**

The idea that criticism of cultural forms may be regarded in distinctive manners can be traced back to Bourdieu's writings on the field of cultural production (1993) and on taste and audiences (1984). According to Bourdieu, an aesthetic disposition is required to truly appreciate a work of art, a disposition that translates into a detached manner of observing and evaluating the form, of distancing oneself from the artwork and the mundane of everyday life. This disposition entails a focus on form rather than function, a so-called "pure gaze" that rejects all things too human, common, or easy, and refers to the Kantian aesthetic that separates "that which pleases" from "that which gratifies" (Bourdieu, 1984). This stance is distinct from a popular aesthetic in which a cultural good is appreciated in the here-and-now, positioned in everyday life, and remains close to the audience (Bielby & Bielby, 2004; Van Venrooij & Schmutz, 2010). The popular aesthetic is defined in relation to its viewer, wherein the distance between audience and cultural good is minimized. Regarded as the "naïve gaze", this aesthetic recognizes continuity between everyday life and art, which implies function over form. Because participation matters in the popular aesthetic, familiarity and easy identification are preferred to formalism, symbolism, and ambiguity. These two dispositions – embodied in the pure and the naïve gazes – represent

distinct systems of criteria wielded by different, albeit more or less culturally legitimate, socially defined taste groups.

Although Bourdieu's distinctions provided considerable clarity for differentiating elite from non-elite art and audiences, it is uncertain to what extent his classification reflects the complexity of contemporary cultural consumption and appraisal. Over a decade ago audiences were found to be more omnivorous than traditionally presumed, particularly among elites (Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Peterson & Kern, 1996), and while the media have expanded coverage of popular culture in order to keep pace with the preferences of the general public (Janssen, 1999; Janssen et al., 2008; 2011), one can only speculate how the film industry's ongoing evolution may have further complicated reviewers' as well as filmgoers' tastes.

At least three trends have had a potential impact on the field of film in recent decades that may be of some consequence to contemporary film criticism. First, while the emergence of a restricted art world for film resulted in more differentiation in the film field's overall output, its commercial large-scale counterpart developed evermore strategically creative ways to satisfy the popular tastes of the general public. This has meant developing production strategies that rely upon narrative sequels of box office hits and adopting proven concepts from other media, as well as devising marketing and distribution strategies designed to appeal to large numbers of moviegoers, all in order to sustain the expensive, blockbuster mode of film production that took over the film industry in the 1970s (Baker & Faulkner, 1991; Bordwell, 2006). However, these developments, which are clearly designed to generate the largest possible audience, do not preclude the potential for artistic originality in popular films; indeed, novelty is just as important to popular art forms as it is to elite ones (Cawelti, 1973).

Second, cultural globalization – “the growing international diffusion, exchange, and intermingling of cultural goods and media products” (Janssen, et al., 2008: 720) – is increasingly noticeable in the film field. Although American dominion of the Western market has been developing steadily ever since WWII, a global event that undermined European film industries and caused some to stagnate (Bordwell & Thompson, 1997; Scott,

2000),<sup>12</sup> cultural globalization has transformed many national industries into international enterprises, increasing their tendency to resemble if not altogether mirror each other's organizational structure, products, and appeal (Janssen, et al., 2008). As a result, film critics now work in a context of global culture in which locally produced films may resemble products from other parts of the globe while at the same time benefit from potential cross-fertilization of proven artistic elements. This would suggest modes of reviewing that result from the incorporation of traits of international film discourse rather than discourse strictly differentiated by the dichotomy between the art house film and the blockbuster.

Third, the digitization of media has introduced different modes of production as well as different outlets for film work (McDonald & Wasko, 2008), and the resulting democratization of access to media production and consumption has brought with it new challenges to choosing what to watch (Hesmondhalgh, 2002; Keen, 2007). Named blogs, e-commerce websites, and amateur critics now publicly compete with the professional critic in offering recommendations and advice about cultural products, often while lacking requisite expert knowledge (David & Pinch, 2006). While audiences can, of course, still discerningly choose where to seek information about movies, the impact of user-generated content on film criticism has not been examined in depth, although studies into online review systems in other cultural fields have pointed to the pervasiveness of their influence (Chatterjee, 2001; David & Pinch, 2006; Tancer, 2008; Verboord, 2010). Debates about the effect of these changes upon the valuation of arts and culture range from fear of the destruction of Western economy, culture, and values (Keen, 2007) to anticipation of an unprecedented cultural richness (Anderson, 2006).

To what extent these trends may have affected the ways in which contemporary critics appraise film remains unknown. At the very least, Bourdieu's notion of analytical detachment versus immersion in the familiar may be too limited, as was found to be the case in the television industry when industry transformation created an opportunity space for artier television (Bielby et al., 2005). Because of the many changes the film field has seen in recent decades, our study relies upon an exploratory analysis to determine the extent to which film criticism may have become more differentiated in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the U.S. film industry's dominance in the international market see Barthel-Bouchier (2011).

We anticipate finding that the components that comprise contemporary film criticism retain the complex discursive elements found in earlier scholarship but that contemporary film reviewing has also been further complicated by the interests of the multiple agents in and sources of critical opinion on film.

#### **4.4 Data and Methods**

Given our interest in cultural globalization generally, and how the U.S. and the U.K. are central contributors to a vigorous linguistically-defined region in the global media marketplace (Bielby & Harrington, 2008), our sample encompassed reviews from four newspapers of record in these two countries to allow for an international comparison of film discourse with the English language as a constant factor. The newspapers we sampled from were *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, and *Los Angeles Times*, which were chosen because they employ professional film critics, have wide-ranging national and international readerships, and, as elite newspapers with middle- to highbrow readerships, play a leading role in present-day discourse on artistic and popular culture.

In order to capture the range of factors that affect contemporary film criticism, we drew our sample from all films released in 2007 rated as PG-13, NC-17, or R by the Motion Picture Association of America that were consecrated through popular, peer, and critical recognition. The twenty highest revenue-generating movies formed the sample of films with popular recognition. The winners and nominees of the most prestigious categories of the BAFTA Awards, British Independent Film Awards, Sundance Festival Awards, and Academy Awards were selected for professional recognition.<sup>13</sup> The movies with the most critical recognition were made up of films most highly regarded by the London Film Critics Circle, *The Times*, *The Guardian*, the New York Film Critics Circle, *The New York Times*, the Los Angeles Film Critics Association, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the Golden Globe Awards of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association. Our final sample is presented in Appendix C, which lists 50 unique titles for both the U.K. and the U.S. For each film title in each country, we analyzed two reviews from two national newspapers. Because not all movies were

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<sup>13</sup> Prize categories of institutes rewarding professional and critical recognition were, in this order: Best Picture, Best Director, Best Original Screenplay, Best Actor in a Leading Role, Best Actress in a Leading Role, Best Foreign Language Film, Best Adapted Screenplay, Best Actor in a Supporting Role, Best Actress in a Supporting Role, and Best Newcomer.

reviewed in all papers, and because of overlap between film categories, we ended up with a sample of 194 film reviews.

We conducted an inductive content analysis of all film reviews in our sample using ATLAS.ti. Each film review was divided into text segments; in general there were five to six segments per review. Total word count per review varied between nearly 100 and 1300. While the length of reviews did not show significant differences among film types, reviews of films with critical recognition tended to be longest. A total of 1,245 quotations were then examined to determine the topics they addressed. Topics included, for example, discussion of the director's accomplishments or career, the actors' performances or trademarks, interpretation of the film's plot, and the film's special effects or its screenplay.<sup>14,15</sup> We then merged or split the topics to eliminate redundancies, resulting in 137 separate codes. The analysis of relations among codes led to their distribution into fifteen overarching code groups, or *themes*. All codes belong to only one theme, and all themes addressed a particular question or issue. After establishing the fifteen themes, we then observed for their respective prominence within reviews of popularly, professionally, and critically acclaimed films. Films that received popular recognition comprised 41% (n=79) of our sample of film reviews, those with critical recognition 38% (n=74), and those with professional recognition 21% (n=41). Finally, we factor analyzed the fifteen themes using oblique rotation to ascertain which ones clustered together into fundamental review components, and then, how those essential components were associated with each type of film recognition.

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<sup>14</sup> A ten percent random sample of reviews was coded by an independent third party in order to provide a measure of validity and reliability. Comparing these recoded reviews with our initial coding proved that the codes were well defined.

<sup>15</sup> Because some films received critical as well as professional recognition, or popular recognition as well as professional recognition, or, in some instances, all three types of validation, we inductively re-evaluated and reassigned overlapping categories in order to execute an unambiguous comparison among review practices. Final assignments were determined by evaluating the overall focus of a review. The overlap between professional and critical recognition was largest. Any combination of types of recognition that included popular recognition was re-coded as "popular", combinations including critical recognition were coded as "critical", and in combinations containing "popular" as well as "critical" recognition the eventual category was set to "popular". The latter decision was based on the general prevalence of commercial influences over aesthetic ones in the film field at large.

## 4.5 Findings

### 4.5.1 Criticism's Elements

With our goal being to ascertain the composition of contemporary film criticism our first basic question is: What do critics focus on in their reviews? Overall, film reviews present a balanced evaluation of a film's principal features through positive and negative commentary in which specific details as well as the general picture are considered. Consistent with the conventions of interpretive practitioners whose central activity is to disclose implicit meanings (Bordwell, 1989), our content analysis found that critics attend to that goal through consideration of the following fifteen themes: "Actors", "Complexity/Depth", "Context/Background", "Credibility", "Director", "Film as product", "Film content", "Film experience", "Film material", "Formal/Filmic elements", "Interpretation", "Mood", "Novelty", "Position in art/entertainment", and "Position in film context/canon". When discussing an aspect, critics generally drew upon a readily observable illustration within a film and couched its discussion syntactically in parenthetical phrases, visual adjectives that were combined with an active voice, and other rhetorical strategies in order to analytically elevate description to meaning, significance, and interpretation. For example, the codes assembled for the theme of Credibility contain information with regard to the believability of a film's plot and characters. Credibility does not necessarily mean that the film's storylines could have come to pass in real life and are therefore believable, but points toward the believability of the film in itself, within its suspension of disbelief: Can the audience buy into the story? Accordingly, the plot receives the most attention, as was illustrated in the *Los Angeles Times* review of *The Bourne Ultimatum*, a film that achieved popular recognition in both countries as well as critical recognition in the U.K.:

*"In other words, the series has always felt remarkably true-to-life for something as defiantly far-fetched. But as long as Damon keeps his focused intelligence and Greengrass continues to stay away from flaming CGI fireballs, Bourne will be able to*



*continue to walk away unscathed from car crashes that could pulverize a rhino at half the speed with his credibility intact. They've earned it."*

*Los Angeles Times*

Evidence of a direct effect of an expanded opportunity space for film production and consumption – such as the influence of the wider social context in which a film was made, creative access brought about by changing production technology, or the impact of Hollywood’s hypercompetitive business climate – was not prominently reflected in our data. In fact, evidence of such considerations seldom occurred even as the film industry has become increasingly attentive to the tastes of expanding ethnic audiences (McClintock, 2011), the appeal of evermore sophisticated graphic effects (Fritz, 2010), and the relevance of distribution strategies designed to grab public attention (Horn, 2011). Thus, it would appear that, as of now, such matters are still regarded by critics as more relevant to the marketing of a finished product than as aspects pertinent to the creative vision that went into a film. Instead, critics remain primarily focused upon appraising the integrity of a film’s narrative and its creative execution overall, as well as the artistic contributions of individual project members, and they pay less attention to the relevance of factors that shape the selection of projects, even as these factors play an increasing role in film production. We return to a discussion of this finding in greater detail below.

Following identification of the corpus of themes that critics focus on, we were interested in how individual themes vary across reviews of films that received the three types of recognition – popular, professional, and critical – so we calculated the distribution of the use of each theme within and across this triad. These results, which are reported as percentages in Table 4.1, reveal that eight of the fifteen themes do not vary much in application across type of recognition; that is, they were equally important to reviewers regardless of a film’s potential recognition. These consistently appearing themes are: “Actors”, “Complexity/Depth”, “Credibility”, “Film content”, “Film experience”, “Mood”, “Novelty”, and “Position in film context”. The remaining seven themes – “Context/Background”, “Director”, “Film as product”, “Film material”, “Formal elements”, “Interpretation”, “Position in art/entertainment” – show modest to significant variation across the types of recognition. Below, we describe, first, some of the consistently deployed

themes to illustrate how their use regularizes a foundation for interpretation within contemporary film criticism, followed by a discussion of those that show variation across types of recognition. Taken together, these findings reveal how the types of film a critic addresses – with our concern being those types merited by different consecrating constituencies – affects the content of criticism in systematic ways.

**Table 4.1** Distribution of use of themes across all 194 reviews as percentages by type of film recognition

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Popular recognition</b>	<b>Professional recognition</b>	<b>Critical recognition</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>X<sup>2</sup></b>
Actors					ns
0	1	2	4	5	
1 – 5	56	68	53	111	
6+	43	30	43	78	
Complexity/Depth					ns
0	38	41	36	74	
1 – 5	62	59	61	118	
6+	-	-	3	2	
Context/Background					*
0	35	61	39	82	
1 – 5	64	38	55	106	
6+	1	1	6	6	
Credibility					ns
0	49	58	61	108	
1 – 5	51	42	39	86	
6+	-	-	-	-	
Director					*
0	19	20	8	29	
1 – 5	75	63	68	135	
6+	6	17	24	30	
Film as product					**
0	30	61	54	89	
1 – 5	66	39	45	101	
6+	4	-	1	4	
Film content					ns
0	6	2	-	6	
1 – 5	82	81	80	157	
6+	12	17	20	31	
Film experience					ns
0	14	27	7	27	
1 – 5	84	71	91	162	
6+	2	2	2	5	
Film material					***
0	22	22	21	42	
1 – 5	76	73	53	129	
6+	2	5	26	23	
Formal elements					*
0	11	20	5	21	
1 – 5	66	63	57	120	

6+	23	17	38	53	
Interpretation					***
0	33	24	9	43	
1 – 5	65	51	57	114	
6+	2	25	34	37	
Mood					ns
0	19	20	9	30	
1 – 5	79	80	81	155	
6+	2	-	10	9	
Novelty					ns
0	35	39	32	68	
1 – 5	65	61	65	124	
6+	-	-	3	2	
Position in art/entertainment					***
0	52	34	20	70	
1 – 5	48	66	77	122	
6+	-	-	3	2	
Position in film context					ns
0	5	10	13	18	
1 – 5	79	80	76	151	
6+	16	10	11	25	

\*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001; ns: not significant (two-tailed chi-square tests).

#### 4.5.2 Consistencies in Use of Themes

We randomly selected three examples from among the eight consistently used themes in order to illustrate the topics that register as equally important to critics in their reviewing practices regardless of the type of film discussed. One central theme is Actors, who are an important box-office draw. The credibility of their characterizations, which establishes resonance with audiences, as well as assessment of an actor's particular skills or talents, holds a key position in film criticism, as we see in this excerpt from a review of *There Will Be Blood*:

*“When Day-Lewis gives his first speech, a quiet, faintly impatient peroration to a crowd of smallholders on why they should trust him as a real “oil man,” it is mesmerizing for no reason other than the actor’s natural charismatic presence. Day-Lewis’s virtuoso displays of technique, occasionally denounced as hamminess, are for me all the more superbly enjoyable for being so rare in an age of naturalism. He has also*

*found a remarkable walk: a slow purposeful scuttle, bow-legged. Maybe it's because of a terrible fall we saw in the first reel – or perhaps, well, it's just a great actor's walk."*

*The Guardian*

Another consistently used theme is Complexity/Depth, which addresses the extent to which the writer or director has explored and thought through the film's material, and it raises questions about whether the filmmaker has an eye for narrative contradictions, consequences, and complications. Films that present events with less complexity than the plot or characters call for are criticized for not doing so, as seen in this review of *Into the Wild*:

*"If you want something in life, reach out and grab it', Chris says to Tracy (Kristen Stewart), a teenage girl who develops a crush on him, collapsing Self-Reliance into something like an advertising slogan. But the movie's theme, thankfully, is not so simple or so easily summed up in words. [...] Into the Wild is, on the contrary, alive to the mysteries and difficulties of experience in a way that very few recent American movies have been."*

*The New York Times*

A final example reveals that reviewers consistently assign films a comparative location in the existing film field, which is captured by the theme of Position in film context/canon. Placement occurs on various dimensions that include other films by the same director, within a genre, and within the overall film canon, and it displays the critic's knowledge of the medium of film and its history. Positioning a film within the canon signals to the audience what to expect, as is demonstrated in this review of *Notes on a Scandal*:

*"With some audacity, the spirits of both Hitchcock and Nabokov are invoked in this delectable adaptation of Zoe Heller's Booker-shortlisted novel."*

*The Guardian*

Among the eight consistently used themes identified by our content analysis, there were two others, Mood and Film experience, that registered as equally important to reviewers but upon closer inspection revealed some subtle differences in their use across the three types of recognition, with each showing up as more prevalent in films that ultimately received critical recognition. Mood – the tone of voice in which a story is told – may be described with terms as simple as *funny* or *full of suspense* or with more interpretative and abstract ones such as *brooding*, *haunting* or *unassuming*, and it is mostly viewed as determined by the director. Mood is understood as a film’s particular *feel*, and critics expect just the right balance between drama and emotion. In contrast, the theme of Film experience – the emotional effects of viewing a film – contributes to understanding the significance and depth of a film’s narrative – its cultural resonance. Although it, like the others discussed so far, is used consistently across all three kinds of recognition a film may receive, we had anticipated that this theme would belong almost exclusively to the discourse of popular recognition given the close relationship between emotional experience, emotional authenticity, and popular culture (Bielby & Bielby, 2004). But that was not the case, and just as interesting is that it is least pronounced in reviews of films that were rewarded by industry peers. We view this particular pattern of variation as suggesting a different level of attention to critics’ search for the elements that contribute to a film’s implicit meanings in criticism attended to by industry peers.

#### ***4.5.3 Differences in Use of Themes***

In contrast to the themes that were used consistently across film recognition categories, the findings reported in Table 4.1 show that three among the remaining seven revealed highly statistically significant differences in use by critics: “Film material”, “Interpretation”, and “Position in art/entertainment”. Taken together, these three themes address a film’s quality and significance, and they were most heavily used in reviews of films that received critical recognition. When considered as a group, these themes reveal the important role film critics play not only as arbiters and interpreters of culture but their important constitutive role in its construction. We discuss each of these three themes in turn.

The first, Film material, focused attention on scripts or screenplays and adaptations of existing material; screenwriters are often named, and attention gets paid to their

accomplished reputations and oeuvres, as seen in the following example, a review of *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*:

*“As for Schnabel, it is an exhilarating breakthrough, and for screenwriter Ronald Harwood the movie is another triumph of responsive, creative intelligence.”*

*The Guardian*

The second theme, Interpretation, which was pronounced in reviews of films with professional as well as critical recognition, reveals the meanings the reviewer uncovers, which can be presented as a coherent whole or as separate aspects. Developing skill with this particular theme figures centrally in scholarly training on film criticism. We find an example of its use in the *Los Angeles Times* review on 4 luni, 3 saptamâni si 2 zile:

*“Set in 1987 in the last days of the Ceausescu dictatorship [...], the film demonstrates with off-handed power how complete a corrupt society can dehumanize its citizens and almost destroy those trapped in it.”*

*Los Angeles Times*

The third theme, Position in art/entertainment, captures the characteristics of and opposition between artistic and popular film, and it appears most often in critically rewarded movies and to a lesser extent in professionally recognized ones. This theme serves to insulate critics' favorites from the lower ranks of entertainment through testimonies of artfulness and use of intellectual terminology:

*“Syndromes and a Century is a poem on screen: a film of ideas and visual tropes that upends conventional narrative expectations, not out of a simple desire to disconcert but to break through the carapace of normality, to give us the knight's-move away from reality that the Russian formalists said was the prerogative of art.”*

*The Guardian*

More modestly statistically significant differences occurred in the remaining themes – “Director”, “Formal elements”, “Film as product”, and “Context/Background”. Not unexpectedly, the Director is considerably more prominently featured in reviews of films that received critical acclaim, as the emphasis on auteurism in film would predict. Discussion often focuses on a director’s career path, unique trademarks, and accomplishments in the film under review, and the film is often described as the director’s property or accomplishment, signified by use of possessive pronouns. Formal elements, which also figured prominently in reviews of critically acclaimed films, encompassed appraisal of a film’s technical elements, and included attention to casting, costume design, dialogue, editing, form, photography, runtime, score, special effects, and the like. A most important aspect of this theme is plot development, because, as has already noted, critics pay a lot of attention to the ways stories are told.

Reviews of popular, ultimately commercially successful films tend to address Film as a product that generates revenue. Comments within this theme point toward budgets, franchises, box office results, brands, distribution, product placement, and intended audiences. Context/Background contains commentary that refers to the film field or wider society in which the film was made. Mostly, these are remarks on the film industry at large, today or in the past. The workings of Hollywood are discussed, as are the response to a film in society or the private lives of actors or directors. This is where direct evidence of the expanded opportunity space for film production and consumption appears, but as was noted earlier, the codes that comprise it did not occur very often in reviews.

#### ***4.5.4 Critics’ Essentials***

With fifteen different themes to account for, we conducted a factor analysis to extract the essential components of film criticism that would more accessibly reveal the focus of contemporary critics. This analysis revealed four influential factors, shown in Table 4.2. Four of the fifteen themes loaded heavily onto Factor 1, which we named “Auteurism”: Director, Film content, Interpretation, and Mood. This factor focuses on the universe of the director as creative visionary. The second factor, named “Experience”, includes the themes of Film experience, Novelty, and Position in art/entertainment; these touch upon aspects of

what one experiences while watching a film, either literally, in relation to other film experiences, or as something typical of art or entertainment more generally. Three themes loaded into Factor 3, which we dubbed “Processes”: Actors, Film material, and Formal elements. These themes mostly consider creative processes that went into making a film and the manner in which the storylines, characters, or look of the movie came about. The last factor, which we dubbed “Context”, contains the themes Context/Background, Credibility, Film as product, and Position in film context; this factor points to considerations that link a film to contexts both within and beyond the film world, either as a commodity or insofar as the film’s content is concerned. When taken together, these four factors reveal the dominant substantive considerations contemporary film critics as a whole engage in their work.

**Table 4.2** Obliquely rotated component loadings for fifteen themes (N=194)

<b>Component</b>	<b>Auteurism 1</b>	<b>Experience 2</b>	<b>Processes 3</b>	<b>Context 4</b>
Actors	.283	.065	<b>.747</b>	.428
Complexity	.416	.246	.426	.273
Context/Background	.149	.477	.115	<b>.683</b>
Credibility	.089	-.094	.262	<b>.653</b>
Director	<b>.648</b>	.547	.445	.257
Film as product	-.366	.468	.164	<b>.514</b>
Film content	<b>.596</b>	.050	.534	.305
Film experience	.214	<b>.672</b>	.404	.154
Film material	.188	.157	<b>.774</b>	.123
Formal elements	.216	.575	<b>.660</b>	.243
Interpretation film	<b>.837</b>	.292	.196	.233
Mood	<b>.673</b>	.411	.351	.272
Novelty	.206	<b>.638</b>	.107	.245
Position art/entertainment	.448	<b>.671</b>	.151	.240
Position film context	.312	.299	.232	<b>.686</b>
Eigenvalues	4.725	1.451	1.283	1.021
Percentage of total variance	31.501	9.677	8.550	6.805

(In bold: relevant loadings onto factor.)

Given our interest in the relationship of contemporary criticism to popular culture and communication, we then analyzed the extent to which these four factors vary across reviews of films ultimately consecrated by popular, professional, and critical constituencies. The results, which are reported in Table 4.3, reveal that there was systematic variation in their use across the three different types of recognition – a finding



that is consistent with the results reported above – but they also reveal that their use varies more in degree than kind. In short, all four factors were present regardless of the kind of recognition a film ultimately received, but their prevalence depended on the particular constituency that engaged their work.

For example, whereas comments related to Auteurism are encountered in reviews of all kinds, this factor proved to be significantly more prominent in reviews of films that received critical recognition. Specifically, criticism that focuses on the director as creative visionary and the interpretation of the universe he or she presents is used the least in reviews of popular films, more so in those of professional prizewinners, and most in reviews of films that achieve critical acclaim.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, the distribution of the factor Experience, which consists of critical appraisal of the quality of the emotional engagement of a film, is also significantly more pronounced in reviews of films with critical recognition.<sup>17</sup> While one might have expected this component to be more consistently used in reviews of films that call for a naïve gaze or popular aesthetic, instead it is deployed to a large extent in reviews of all film types but mostly in those that are critically acclaimed; this is an important finding that reveals that contemporary film criticism incorporates aesthetic considerations that draw from popular interests as well elite ones. The factor of Processes shows slightly significant variation among review types but is stronger in reviews of films with both popular and critical recognition and less so in those that achieve professional awards.<sup>18</sup> This finding also reveals the complexity of contemporary film criticism, in which the same criteria are applied differentially to films that are differently valued. Finally, the finding of the statistically significant difference in the use of Context can be accounted for by the greater likelihood of this component appearing in reviews of films that receive

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<sup>16</sup> Results of the analysis of variance for Auteurism are  $F(11,9) = 13.55, p = <.001$ . Post hoc analyses using the Games-Howell criterion to assess the difference in use between critical recognition and the other two forms found the greatest difference to lie between critical and popularly recognized films ( $p = <.001$ ) and a marginal difference to exist between critical and professional ones ( $p = <.10$ ). There was no significant difference in use of the factor between professionally and popularly recognized films. For an overview of the ANOVA with post hoc analyses see Appendix D.

<sup>17</sup> Results of the analysis of variance for Experience are  $F(4,7) = 9.06, p = <.001$ . Post hoc analyses found the greatest difference to lie between critical and professionally recognized films ( $p = <.001$ ), and a smaller difference to exist between critical and popular ones ( $p = <.01$ ). There was no significant difference in use of the factor between professionally and popularly recognized films.

<sup>18</sup> Results of the analysis of variance for Processes are  $F(11,3) = 4.30, p = <.05$ . Post hoc analyses found the only difference in the use of this factor to lie between critical and professional recognition.

popular recognition.<sup>19</sup> That is, the anticipated shift in contemporary criticism to include reflection on contexts of production – the social and industrial milieux – shows up, but (still) mostly in reviews of films that are granted popular recognition. In sum, reviews of various kinds of film reveal similar approaches to criticism but those of movies that receive popular and critical recognition appear to share particular elements to a stronger degree, whereas those of films with professional recognition occupy an intermediate position.

**Table 4.3** Percentages of reviews linked to factors by type of film recognition

	<b>Popular recognition</b>	<b>Critical recognition</b>	<b>Professional recognition</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>X<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Auteurism</b>					<b>***</b>
0	4	-	-	3	
1 – 5	20	12	27	36	
6 – 10	39	19	17	52	
11 – 15	24	19	20	41	
16 <	13	50	37	62	
<b>Experience</b>					<b>ns</b>
0	3	1	5	5	
1 – 5	70	51	73	123	
6 – 10	21	38	20	54	
11 – 15	5	8	2	11	
16 <	-	1	-	1	
<b>Processes</b>					<b>**</b>
0	-	-	2	1	
1 – 5	17	18	24	36	
6 – 10	29	28	39	60	
11 – 15	35	15	20	47	
16 <	19	39	15	50	
<b>Context</b>					<b>**</b>
0	-	8	5	8	
1 – 5	39	45	66	91	
6 – 10	35	34	27	64	
11 – 15	19	12	-	24	
16 <	6	1	2	7	

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; ns: not significant (two-tailed chi-square tests).

<sup>19</sup> Results for the analysis of variance for Context are  $F(6,3) = 7.89$ ,  $p = <.001$ . Post hoc analyses found the greatest difference to lie between professionally and popularly recognized films ( $p = <.001$ ), and a smaller difference to exist between critical and popular ones ( $p = <.05$ ). There was no significant difference in the use of the factor between critically and professionally recognized films.

## **4.6 Conclusion**

We aimed to clarify the criteria that contemporary film critics deploy to review films. Relying upon seminal work on how the transformation of film as a product of mass appeal to one that is an art form was aided by the evolution of film criticism through its expanded discursive complexity, we went beyond that foundational scholarship to understand how recent changes in the film industry have affected contemporary film criticism. To encompass the varied agents of public and peers that now comprise the critical community alongside professional critics, we identified the top films in three established categories of film recognition – films that have achieved top ranking at the box office, those that are recognized as recipients of top honors in industry awards, and those that achieve the most critical acclaim. We found that reviews consist of four essential components, Auteurism, Experience, Processes, and Context, and that while all four are present in reviews of films that garner different kinds of recognition, we also found that the components are utilized to different degrees, depending on the kind of recognition a film ultimately receives. Critically acclaimed films tend to be appraised with a strong emphasis on auteurism as well as with an eye for the culturally meaningful viewing experience. The finding that reviews of films that end up receiving popular and critical acclaim share many of the same substantive considerations is equally interesting, because it reveals that film criticism is not bound by a strictly detached or pure gaze even as film has become a more elite art form, and similarly, that the appraisal of films that ultimately achieve popular recognition is not constrained by a solely naïve aesthetic. The intermediate position of criticism of films that achieved professional recognition points to the possibility of less distinctive properties of such reviews, but we also note that the fewer number of reviews in this category may have made their distinctiveness more difficult to discern. Further research should provide greater clarity on this matter.

Our interest in conducting this exploratory research was motivated by our broader concern about the ways in which scholars rely upon cultural classification schemes alongside other social constructions that, when left unexamined intensify, if not outright reify social distinctions that may be only minimally present, or that may have been more extensive at some point but have begun to shift, transform, or collapse in ways that should be taken into account in order to reach a deeper understanding of contemporary cultural

classification. Given the now recognized complexity in cultural consumption reported over a decade ago (Peterson & Kern, 1996), which exists alongside the impact of more recent shifts in the changing production and cultural contexts of film making, the question remains to what extent cultural arbiters like film critics have begun to expand the scope of their interpretative focus in light of these changes. Critics are cultural intermediaries who contribute in important ways to public discourse about popular culture, and in so doing continue to play an important role in popular communication about socially influential media like film. While the role of film critics, which is to ascertain film's "implicit and symptomatic meanings" (Bordwell, 1989: p. 17; Scott, 2010), has not changed, the substance and form of their criticism is bound to shift if they are to continue to reach the audiences they aim to speak to.

## Chapter 5

# ***National Cultural Repertoires of Evaluation in a Global Age: Film Discourse in France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States***

### **5.1 Introduction**

*“There may not have been consensus by Day 4 of the Cannes Film Festival — no movie has yet been universally loved, loathed or violently debated — but the critics have staked out their positions and fired up their thumbs. The British are keen on the British film We Need to Talk About Kevin [...] while the French are less impressed. The reviewer at Cahiers du Cinéma anointed it with an unsmiley face [...], a perfect representation of what sometimes seems to be the default critical attitude here.”*

*The New York Times*

While the film world is now a global industry with a worldwide audience, this quote by *The New York Times* film critic Dargis (2011) illustrates that nationality is still perceived to be a factor of influence with regard to critics' evaluations; apparently the British and French have different ideas about what constitutes a good film. Furthermore, the latter are described as having a particular approach to films under review. Does this assumption of cross-national or cross-cultural differentiation with regard to cultural evaluation still make sense in today's highly globalized world?

Evaluation schemes and tastes are socially constructed (Griswold, 1987; Kuipers, 2006) and depend on, amongst other factors, cultural surroundings (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000; Liebes & Katz, 1993). Following, the reception of cultural objects varies according to audience characteristics, and across historical eras and national contexts (Cheyne & Binder, 2010; Daenekindt & Roose, 2011). However, the strongly expanded international exchange

of culture and media products has caused cultural fields in the Western world to resemble each other across countries more than ever before (Janssen et al., 2008). This would mean that we all increasingly read the same bestseller books, listen to the same popular music, and watch the same Hollywood blockbusters, regardless of whether we live in Amsterdam, Paris, London, or New York.

Research has shown that art and culture coverage in European national newspapers has grown far more internationally oriented over the past decades (Janssen et al., 2008). Related, forms of popular culture have gained importance at the cost of traditional high art forms (Janssen et al., 2011), which means media across countries pay attention to the same internationally popular culture products to a growing extent. The newspaper coverage of film, an extremely popular cultural genre and a massive worldwide industry (McDonald & Wasko, 2008), proved the most extensive and internationalized (Janssen et al., 2008). This process of globalization is in line with the predominance of the American movie industry in the Western film world (Lee & Waterman, 2007). Hollywood films prevail on import markets around the world; this concentration of supply has resulted in film fields that are increasingly homogenized across nations (Chung, 2011; Fu, 2006). Consequently, the French, Dutch, British, and American box office hit lists of 2010 all contain films like *Harry Potter*, *Shrek Forever After*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Inception*, *Toy Story*, and *Twilight* (boxofficemojo.com).

Whereas audiences across nations consume the same movies to a large degree (Barthel-Bouchier, 2011), and national newspapers cover the same international cultural products (Janssen et al., 2008), this does not mean that films are made sense of in the same manner across contexts (Chon et al., 2003). Different perspectives may lead to variation in the appropriation of films by various cultural groups. For example, a film's appraisal can result from its formal features (e.g. photography, plot development) or the viewing experience it offers its audiences. As professional critics function as intermediaries between cultural producers and consumers (Bourdieu, 1993; Hesmondhalgh, 2006), their assessments are especially telling with regard to the ways in which films are understood and valued in particular cultural surroundings.

Whereas studies have so far given insight into which cultural products critics across countries pay attention to, and shown how these products are increasingly alike and

internationally oriented (Janssen et al., 2008; 2011), less is known about the possible similarity or differentiation in the ways in which cultural products are appreciated across nations. Cross-national studies have concentrated on the appropriation of high arts (Lamont, 1992; Lamont & Thévenot, 2000) in a set of cultural contexts, on the evaluation of a popular culture genre (television) within a single country (Bielby et al., 2005) or regarding a particular product, e.g. the soap opera *Dallas* (Liebes & Katz, 1993), and the movie *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (Kuipers & de Kloet, 2009). Whereas these studies all provide important insights in the reception of culture, they are constrained by a focus on one particular paradigm, country, cultural genre, or cultural product. The aim of this study is to deliver broader knowledge on the diverse cultural form of film. More specific analysis of overall film discourse was carried out with a sole focus on high art aesthetic criteria and limited to a time period ending in the 1980s (Baumann, 2001). The current research fills several voids in this somewhat fragmented field of research, as it closely examines present-day evaluation of a most globalized cultural genre. It does so by studying reviews published in elite newspapers in as much as four national contexts (France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States), considering a very diverse selection of film titles. By combining both quantitative and qualitative methods, this study aims to answer the question: To what extent can national cultural repertoires of evaluation be differentiated in present-day Western film discourse? As such, this research adds to the understanding of the consequences of globalization in national contexts.

## **5.2 Cultural Repertoires of Evaluation**

Despite societies' reverence for particular historical works of art (e.g. Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* or Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*) and adoration of its makers, cultural products don't possess inherent characteristics that make them recognizable as art. Artistic value is not measured according to existing standards but conferred to a work after social consensus allows it; value is *assigned* to a product rather than *assessed* (Bourdieu, 1993). As assignment of value to cultural products is socially fabricated (Griswold, 1987), it is determined by cultural surroundings (Liebes & Katz, 1993). Cultural repertoires of evaluation -- collections of valuating schemas that people apply in a variety of situations

and which orders their assessments on all kinds of matters (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000) -- pre-exist individuals, but are transformed and made salient by them. Taste in music, books or films is not inherent to the products or even our specific personalities, but subordinate to social categories, e.g. class, age, gender, education level, ethnicity, and social environment (Cheyne & Binder, 2010; Daenekindt & Roose, 2011; Van Eijck & Knulst, 2005; Van Rees & Van Eijck, 2003).

National contexts bear influence on tastes and the assignment of value to cultural products as well. Various environmental factors increase the probability of individuals making sense of their surroundings in a particular way (Lamont, 1992). This would signify that, while we all live in a global age in which the same or similar (popular) culture products are predominantly consumed, culturally diverse groups across the globe interpret and ascribe meaning to such products in a variety of ways (Liebes & Katz, 1993). For instance, readers from the West Indies, Britain, and the United States were demonstrated to lend diverging meanings to the same set of fictional novels (Griswold, 1987). Manners of evaluation are set off by different appropriations of contents from the start; the retelling of stories can take many shapes. People of various cultural groups may understand stories differently (Liebes & Katz, 1993) and thus evaluate the same Hollywood blockbuster in completely different ways.

Research has shown that the national cultural repertoires of evaluation in the United States and France are informed by strongly diverging notions of what is valuable or worthy of acclaim (Lamont, 1992; Lamont & Thévenot, 2000). A clear illustration is found in the differentiation in films that receive acclaim at the two countries' most prestigious film award ceremonies; the Oscars are hardly ever granted to the same movies as the Golden Palms. The French and American wield very different stances on a large variety of subjects, from moral and political topics to the cultural sphere (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000). Evaluation practices in that cultural sphere are chiefly characterized by two aesthetic systems (Bourdieu, 1984; 1993): the "aesthetic disposition" and the "popular aesthetic". The aesthetic disposition, typically ascribed to high art domains, stresses a detached manner of assessment; it demands distance from the artwork, and focuses on form rather than function. The opposing popular aesthetic signifies appreciation of cultural goods in everyday contexts: it brings together audience and cultural good, and focuses on function



instead of form. Highbrow evaluation criteria of film -- criteria that typify the aesthetic disposition -- position films between predecessors and contemporaries, discuss a movie as the artistic output of a sole genius, interpret its narrative, and relate it to its wider societal contexts (Baumann, 2001). Evaluation schemas that answer to a popular aesthetic emphasizes the film's participatory experience, emotional authenticity and performance as commercial commodity (Bielby & Bielby, 2004; Bielby et al., 2005; Van Venrooij & Schmutz, 2010). The appliance of these two aesthetic systems tends to show variation across nations. In contrast to the French, American consumers of culture tend to "deemphasize the properly formal and intellectual aspect of the aesthetic activity to stress its emotional and experiential dimensions" (Lamont, 1992: 122). Cultural repertoires of evaluation in France are characterized by emphasis on aestheticism and intellectualism, while those in the United States are informed by pragmatism (which is also seen to inform Dutch repertoires) (Janssen et al., 2011; Lamont, 1992). This would mean, as critics most clearly exemplify cultural repertoires of evaluation, that American reviewers direct more attention towards the spectacle movies provide the audience with while the French focus on form and interpretation.

### **5.3 Cultural Circumstances**

National cultural repertoires of evaluation appear to grow more parallel in Western countries due to the homogenizing influences of cultural globalization (Appadurai, 1996; Hesmondhalgh, 2002). This trend supposes that national differences found in the past are subsiding (Lamont, 1992); major corporations target global mainstream audiences with the same expensive cultural commodities. The "growing international diffusion, exchange, and intermingling of cultural goods and media products" (Janssen et al., 2008: 720) results in media ownership being in the hands of a few global conglomerates (McDonald & Wasko, 2008) and thus leads to cultural fields' tendency to resemble each other. Since effects of cultural globalization proliferate in the realm of recorded culture distributed through mass media (Janssen et al., 2008), national film discourses -- the manners in which film is primarily discussed in national contexts -- are especially vulnerable to assimilation. Already, film coverage in national newspapers is more internationally oriented than coverage of other cultural genres. The strongly globalized realm of film criticism thus

provides an appropriate field to test the resistance of national cultural repertoires of evaluation to forceful homogenizing trends.

However, susceptibility for global influences varies across countries and may be regarded as a condition that allows or refuses particular evaluative principles to dominate cultural repertoires (Liebes & Katz, 1993). Whereas France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States all reside in the Western cultural domain, their particular characteristics differentiate their openness to influences from beyond their borders (Janssen et al., 2008). The extents to which they can sustain national cultural repertoires of evaluation in a time of globalization thus vary (Lamont, 1992). Such country characteristics include its size, social make-up, centrality, policy, and cultural proximity (Janssen et al., 2008; Straubhaar, 2007). Further, the magnitude of commercial and state influences on media systems that facilitate national cultural repertoires renders them more or less receptive.

Considering these elements, the susceptibility of cultural repertoires of evaluation of film in France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States can be approximated. The American film field is directed inwards due to the country's large size and centrality in the film world. The small and peripheral Netherlands have stimulating rather than restricting policies with regard to culture, and are very receptive to foreign (mainly Hollywood) film. Both France and the United Kingdom find themselves in-between these two extremes with regard to size and centrality. French cultural policy is known for its protectionist measures that contain foreign influences (Barthel-Bouchier, 2011; Scott, 2000). Whereas cultural proximity would assist cohesion amongst European countries, the U.K.'s cultural proximity to (as well as language kinship with) the U.S. also proposes high levels of cultural exchange (Bennett et al., 2009).

Finally, national film fields may characterize evaluation repertoires regarding movies. The American film industry dominates the Western film world as it has the highest output and largest market share at home and abroad (Barthel-Bouchier, 2011; Trumpbour, 2008) – e.g. in 2009, it produced 677 films and claimed a 92% national market share (see Table 5.1). The commercial attitude, industrial infrastructure and powerful star system that benefits the American industry finds no match in Europe (Bordwell & Thompson, 1997; Elsaesser, 2005; McDonald & Wasko, 2008); here, film was traditionally approached

as the “seventh art”. Whereas the French film field is seen to exhibit the most discrepancy with Hollywood (Augros, 2008) due to its traditionally artful approach and protectionist policy (Elsaesser, 2005; Scott, 2000), it does command the largest, most successful domestic film industry in Western Europe. The Dutch film industry is, despite an upsurge in recent years, rather small and generates hardly any export (Van de Kamp, 2009). The intertwining of the British film industry with Hollywood (subsidiaries) has resulted in the hybrid “British Hollywood film” exemplified by the *James Bond* series (Elsaesser, 2005; McDonald, 2008) but the strictly national industry is quite modest.

**Table 5.1** Film production per country in 2009

Country	Output in film titles	Domestic market share in %
France	230	37
Netherlands	52	17
United Kingdom	116	17
United States	677	92

(Source: European Audiovisual Observatory)

These considerations prompt the assumption that the American and French cultural repertoires of evaluation on film are most likely to persevere. Evaluation schemas in the Netherlands and the U.K. are expected to experience more effects from global trends and thus be less distinct.

#### 5.4 Data and Methods

Societies’ professional critics exemplify cultural repertoires of evaluation; as evaluation is their core business, they provide the clearest patterns of evaluation schemas. Specifically, cultural critics traditionally function as intermediaries between producers and consumers, and therefore fulfill a key role in fields of cultural production (Bourdieu, 1993; Hesmondhalgh, 2006). Focusing on film criticism is thus appropriate for the purpose of examination of national cultural repertoires of evaluation. The data sample encompassed film reviews from elite newspapers in France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States, regarding those as institutions key to the sustenance of distinct evaluation schemas. The sample included *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde* for France, *NRC*

*Handelsblad* and *de Volkskrant* for the Netherlands, *The Times* and *The Guardian* for the U.K., and *The New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* for the U.S., which were chosen because they employ professional critics, have large national circulation, and play a leading role in discourse on artistic and popular culture (Chapter 4).

In order to obtain a sample of reviews that encompasses a wide range of film types, the sample was drawn from all films released in 2007 that were highly regarded by public, peer filmmakers, and critics in the relevant countries.<sup>20</sup> As these three institutional agents can be pinpointed as most crucial in the valuation of cultural products (Allen & Lincoln, 2004; Schmutz, 2005), popular, professional, and critical recognition were used as indicators for different types of film. The twenty highest revenue-generating movies formed the sample of films with popular recognition. The winners and nominees of the most prestigious national film awards were selected for professional recognition. The movies with the most critical recognition were made up of films most highly regarded by critics' associations and quality newspapers.<sup>21</sup> As this article is not concerned with the differentiation of discourse with regard to film type, I refer to Chapter 4 for details. However, film type is controlled for in the analysis, using a more nuanced indicator (to be explained shortly). Due to missing reviews and overlap between film categories, the sample consisted of 397 film reviews. These cases were evenly distributed over the four countries. Word counts per review averaged 529 words ( $SD=285$ ); the American reviews were significantly ( $F=78.42, p=0.000$ ) longer than the French, Dutch, and British reviews.

All reviews were subjected to an inductive content analysis using ATLAS.ti.<sup>22</sup> Each film review was divided into text segments or *quotations*, averaging five to six segments per review. A total of 2555 quotations were coded on the topics they addressed, which varied from the prior achievements of star actors to the interpretations of perceived metaphors. After coding, the quotations were aggregated back into complete reviews for the analyses – i.e. the reviews served as research units. The large variety of topics found was considered carefully and codes were adjusted where needed, resulting in 137 final

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<sup>20</sup> The sample only contained films rated as PG-13, NC-17, or R by the Motion Picture Association of America; this excluded children's or family films, which are likely to be evaluated according to different criteria altogether.

<sup>21</sup> For a list of all sampled films see Appendix B.

<sup>22</sup> The French reviews were translated into Dutch by a professional third party before coding.

separate codes. The analysis of associations between codes led to their distribution into fifteen code groups, or *themes*. All codes belong to only one theme, and all themes addressed a particular question or issue (see Chapter 4). Following, an obliquely rotated factor analysis clustered together the fifteen themes and established four fundamental discourse components. The respective eminence of those discourse components in the four national cultural repertoires of evaluation was then examined by means of a multiple OLS regression analysis, in which the sample countries appeared as dummy variables with the United States serving as baseline. As length of reviews could account for longer or more varied elaborations on film aspects, the analysis controlled for review lengths in word counts. Additionally, as more artistic or mainstream film might induce different evaluative approaches, the analysis controlled for film types. The latter was done by positioning the reviewed films on a scale between mainstream and art film that was based upon material practices and thematic content, as a result from Categorical Principal Components Analysis (CATPCA) (Chapter 3). This control variable indicates the differences in evaluations of films that show many of the characteristics of mainstream movies or of more artistic/highbrow films. Films in our sample score between -2.24 (very mainstream) and 1.45 (very artistic).

The examination of film criticism in France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States enables to typify film discourses across these countries. Different characterizations of such discourses, and variety in the proliferation of different aesthetic systems would indicate the sustenance of distinct national cultural repertoires of evaluation despite the ubiquity of processes of globalization.

## **5.5 Findings**

### ***5.5.1 Evaluative Schemas in Film Discourse***

A first step in the examination of evaluation repertoires on film concerns the assessment of themes that film critics address on the whole. Critics in all four countries deployed the same fifteen themes (see Table 5.2) that were found in the analysis of film criticism in the United States and United Kingdom in Chapter 4, but their relative importance varied per country. The distribution of themes over national cultural repertoires presented a complex

picture in which many different combinations of elements of aesthetic systems occurred. Providing a clearer overview of film discourse components, factor analysis revealed four influential factors with an Eigenvalue greater than one, shown in Table 5.2.

**Table 5.2** Obliquely rotated component loadings for fifteen themes (N=397)

<b>Component</b>	<b>Artistic value 1</b>	<b>Context 2</b>	<b>Reality 3</b>	<b>Experience 4</b>
Director's accomplishments and trademarks	<b>.769</b>			
Description of plot and characters	<b>.634</b>			
Formal qualities, e.g. style, photography	<b>.589</b>			
Interpretation/meaning of film (elements)	<b>.818</b>			
Classification as art or entertainment	<b>.487</b>			
Context of film content or production process		<b>.697</b>		
Film as commercial enterprise or commodity		<b>.769</b>		
Position within film canon		<b>.626</b>		
Actors' performances and trademarks			<b>.770</b>	
Credibility of plot and characters			<b>.498</b>	
Screenplay, script, and adaptation			<b>.613</b>	
Complexity of storylines and characters				<b>.499</b>
Viewing experience				<b>.624</b>
Mood, atmosphere or 'feel'				<b>.587</b>
Level of originality or novelty				<b>.629</b>
Cronbach's alpha	.723	.617	.415	.526
Eigenvalues	3.812	1.648	1.223	1.052
Percentage of total variance	25.416	10.987	8.156	7.012

Factor analyzing this larger international sample of reviews resulted in four discourse components that slightly diverged from the ones found in Chapter 4. The loadings on the four factors varied compared to those presented in table 4.2, leading to different interpretations of these components. The factor "Artistic value" represents a reviewing mode in which the film is regarded as the expression of an artist; it has concern for the film's formal qualities and emphasizes analysis and interpretation. This discourse component strongly resembles the aesthetic disposition (Bourdieu, 1993) and signifies the most artful approach to film found in the data. The factor presents a most distinct way of discussing movies that borrows from discourses on highbrow cultural genres. Not surprisingly, this factor explains the most variance of all four.

The factor "Context" considers film in relation to its contexts both within and beyond the film world. This discourse component appears to be rather ambiguous as it combines the appreciation of the cultural product within the canon (a mechanism

prevalent in the valuation of art) with the assessment of film as a commodity or commercial enterprise.

The way in which the factor “Reality” addresses a film’s reality is twofold: it includes both filmmaking processes and the credibility of a film’s content within its suspension of disbelief – i.e. it tests the believability or plausibility of a narrative within the premises of the product or medium. Following, this discourse component signals the effectiveness of a popular aesthetic in two ways, both relating the reviewed film to its actual surroundings. Elaborations on production processes indicate a rather pragmatic stance on film that focuses on the everyday reality of filmmaking; this is in strong contrast with approaching a film as meaningful cultural entity resulting from the creative genius of a director. The emphasis on credibility of what a film portrays shows the reviewer’s lack of distance from the film and his stressing of (emotional) authenticity (Bielby & Bielby, 1994). This search for unity between cultural good and audience (Bourdieu, 1993) is very telling with regard to the aesthetic system underlying a particular discourse.

The factor “Experience” contains the various ways in which reviewers discuss the experience a film brings about. The prominence of such a participatory experience unveils deployment of a popular aesthetic (Van Venrooij & Schmutz, 2010). However, this discourse component simultaneously displays a more artful dimension as consideration of levels of complexity and novelty generally indicates a highbrow perspective (Baumann, 2001). Here, these aspects are directly connected to the viewing experience; simplicity either enhances enjoyment or prompts boredom, while originality generates interest and predictability diverts attention. At the same time, complexity understood as nuance that reflects reality’s complicity appears to increase a film’s ability to draw in the audience.

### ***5.5.2 Film Discourse across Borders***

The four discourse components can be regarded as schemas of evaluation that occur in cultural repertoires in all four countries, but whose prevalence differs in France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Multiple OLS regression analyses that controlled for word counts and film types give insight into the schemas’ relative eminence in national cultural repertoires (see Table 5.3).

**Table 5.3** Multiple OLS regression analyses on prominence of discourse components (N=397)

Variable	Artistic value			Context		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Word count	0.02	0.00	0.86***	0.01	0.00	0.61***
Film displays more art features	1.32	0.23	0.18***	-1.25	0.15	-0.33***
Sample France	11.28	0.82	0.60***	1.62	0.55	0.17**
Sample Netherlands	9.69	0.80	0.54***	3.00	0.53	0.33***
Sample United Kingdom	1.75	0.78	0.10*	0.18	0.52	0.02
Sample United States	Ref.			Ref.		
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.66			.42		
Variable	Reality			Experience		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Word count	0.01	0.00	0.43***	0.01	0.00	0.54***
Film displays more art features	-0.64	0.16	-0.16***	0.06	0.12	0.02
Sample France	-2.27	0.58	-0.23***	-0.33	0.44	-0.05
Sample Netherlands	-1.91	0.57	-0.20***	-0.29	0.42	-0.04
Sample United Kingdom	-2.93	0.55	-0.30***	-1.11	0.41	-0.16**
Sample United States	Ref.			Ref.		
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.40			.35		

Significance: \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ .

With regard to discourse component Artistic value, the model explains 66% of variance. The model displays a positive relation to film type; this means that the more art film characteristics the film contains, the more eminent the discourse component. The sample country of the reviews appears to be the most deciding factor here. French reviewers employ this evaluation schema to a much larger degree than their American counterparts. The Dutch reviews resemble the French in this respect, while the British reviews contain Artistic value far less.

The model encompasses 42% of the variation found in the use of discourse component Context. Its use increases with higher word counts as well as with films' exhibiting more mainstream features. Dutch reviewers tend to discuss a movie's context within or without the film world to the largest extent, followed by the French, and then the British and American.

The variation in prominence of discourse component Reality is explained for 40% by the model's variables. As for all evaluation schemas, the longer the review, the more it gets used. The prevalence of mainstream characteristics in the reviewed films prompt more emphasis on films' relations to their actual environments. This discourse component is



accentuated far more in the American newspapers than in those in France, the Netherlands, and the U.K., with the Dutch reviews showing the least divergence.

The final discourse component, Experience, shows the least variance, the model covering 35% of variance found. Lengthier reviews enable deliberations on viewing experiences but they do not depend on film type. While all European critics talk about experience somewhat less than the Americans do, the only significant difference is found between the United Kingdom and United States.

Whereas discourse is constructed with the same schemas of evaluation in all countries studied, French, Dutch, British, and American cultural repertoires on film can be distinguished by their relative prominence.

### ***5.5.3 American Film Discourse***

American film critics are least inclined to review a film according to its artistic value; they deemphasize formal and intellectual aspects of film as expected. The American discourse demonstrates a strong emphasis on film's reality; the product under review is positioned in its actual context in a variety of ways. Especially the stressing of filmmaking processes fits well with the notion of American evaluating repertoires traditionally being strongly characterized by a sense of pragmatism (Lamont, 1992). Additionally, as these processes include actors' practices and performances, this finding underscores the relative importance of (star) actors compared to directors here (McDonald & Wasko, 2008). Actors have a considerably more prominent position in American discourse than in other countries (on average, U.S. reviews contain 6.61 remarks on the theme Actors' performances and trademarks,  $F=44.27$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), where the director represents a focus point. This is another indication of an approach to film that resembles that of a product resulting from accumulated professional craftsmanship, instead of one that regards film as the outcome of one person's creative vision. Furthermore, emotional and experiential dimensions were once again proven prevalent in American repertoires of evaluation.

*"Much of the film [...] was shot in New Mexico by the Coens' long-time cinematographer, Roger Deakins. Essential atmospheric exteriors, however, were shot in West Texas at the insistence of costar Jones, a native of the Lone Star state. "He*

*yelled at us that [New Mexico] would be a mistake," Ethan Coen said at the film's Cannes debut. [...] Just as the picture demanded those West Texas exteriors, the role of Ed Tom Bell demanded Jones, who gives one of the great performances of his career [...]. Though the Coens liked the idea of Jones' tartness in the good-guy role [...] both the filmmakers and the actor worried that his taking on this part was too obvious a pick. In truth, however, it's hard to think of anyone who could've brought McCarthy's impeccable ear for regional speech so convincingly to the screen. When the sheriff's deputy says, 'It's a mess, ain't it?', it's pure pleasure to hear Jones handle the rejoinder -- "If it ain't, it'll do until the mess gets here" -- with trademark aplomb."*

*Los Angeles Times*

This excerpt of a review on *No Country for Old Men* is a good illustration of American film criticism as it addresses the various filmmaking processes, credibility, and viewing experience. Not only does the critic discuss filming locations and acting performances, the review includes information on the decision-making processes the directors dealt with. Quoting directors, producers, or actors on the production process of a reviewed film is an often-applied method here. Notably, the experience a film offers is regarded as the result of many different factors; here focus lies with Jones' acting performance. It is, however, not uncommon for other, less obvious factors to be shown to influence a film's impact, like the score in the case of *There Will Be Blood*.

*"Making "Blood's" story even more disturbing is the troubling score by Radiohead's Jonny Greenwood, powerful, brooding new music that is critical to the film's impact, creating pervasive uneasiness and letting us know that, appearances to the contrary, we're not watching a conventional story."*

*Los Angeles Times*

In general, the emphasis of American film discourse lies with the products' relation to or function in everyday life. Due to the eminence of both film's reality and its experience, the American film discourse can be typified as stressing a popular aesthetic and by its serviceability to audiences. The length of film reviews in U.S. newspapers facilitates

elaboration and description. Large size of reviews is generally seen to indicate a serious approach (Baumann, 2001), which rings true here since the American film industry is such an important source of export (McDonald & Wasko, 2008). However, it might also point towards the value given to informing the public.

#### **5.5.4 French Film Discourse**

French film criticism underlines cinema's artistic value; critics behold films as meaningful cultural entities that require interpretation. French reviewers downplay a film's reality in any sense, keeping clear of comments on filmmaking processes. As such, French film discourse is not concerned with film's actual surroundings or practices, but solely with the work itself as an expression to be analyzed. Furthermore, the stressing of formal qualities demonstrates the distance kept between cultural product and its audience, which enables such analysis. In this review of *Das Leben der Anderen* (see Appendix E for translation), the critic assigns meaning to a film by analyzing its various elements as well as the film as a whole; the development of one character is related to the film's overall theme, while the setting in which the story takes place is another aspect crucial to the sense-making process. The form is seen as integral to the film's (plot) development and meaning. The critic's interpretation bestows the film with merit as the meaning is seen to provide human worth and depth to the production.

*“Ce qu'il raconte, c'est l'histoire d'une conscience qui se réveille, d'une rédemption qui se profile; une remontée des enfers pour un individu qui en a orchestré quelques descentes. Avec une mise en scène froide et impeccable, le film démonte le mécanisme d'un complot sordide en offrant une porte de sortie à un salaud obéissant, changé en héros révolté. Ainsi, sur une dramaturgie classique, le suspense rebondit subtilement, non plus sur des situations, mais sur la métamorphose d'un individu. Ce qui donne valeur et profondeur humaines à un pamphlet politique sur l'histoire récente de l'Allemagne de l'Est.”*

*Le Figaro*

However, French film reviews also exhibit concern for the viewing experience films bring about. Nevertheless, even when discussing film experience, the French preserve a certain distance to the film; they behold enjoyment as an intellectual activity in some regard.

*“Elle tient aussi à l'art avec lequel il use de l'ellipse, de la digression, du suspense, de la scène dilatée et de la cascade de récits romanesques enchâssés pour savourer le plaisir du conte et le mélange du réalisme et du lyrisme, du social et du sentimental, de la comédie et du drame, du trivial et du métaphysique.”*

*Le Monde*

In this review on *Le Graine et le Mulet*, enjoyment of the film is described as rendered from a mixture of complexity, meaningfulness, emotion and profoundness instead of as the result of being swept away into a “high-octane joy ride”, a description found in a *Los Angeles Times* review on *I Am Legend*.

The French evaluative repertoire on film maintains an aesthetic disposition to a high degree; the aestheticism and intellectualism France is known for remains a defining feature (Lamont, 1992). Within this highbrow discourse, the experience a film offers its audience is seen to have considerable importance, despite the typical use of the component. This distinct characterization of the French discourse is fortified by the complex and quite literary style full of ornate language that French reviews tend to be written in.

### **5.5.5 Dutch Film Discourse**

As anticipated, the Dutch and British film discourses find middle ground between the extremes that those in France and the United States present. The constitution of the Dutch cultural repertoire resembles that of the French much more in that artistic value is highlighted while film's reality is downplayed. However, the Dutch emphasis on film's context, specifically its functioning as commercial commodity (Dutch reviews contain, on average, 1.40 remarks on this theme, which resembles the U.S. but strays far from the other European countries,  $F=5.88$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), appears to indicate deployment of a popular aesthetic (Bielby et al., 2005).

*“Nu de financiële rol van The Lord of the Rings-trilogie op bioscoop- en dvd-gebied grotendeels is uitgespeeld, achtte productiemaatschappij New Line Pictures de tijd rijp voor een nieuwe mythische melkkoe. Zo simpel is het. Zij werd gevonden in Philip Pullmans Noorderlicht (His Dark Materials)-boeken. Erg bekend zijn ze nog niet in Nederland, maar daar zullen de eerste film en de spiksplinternieuwe filmeditie van de jeugdromans ongetwijfeld verandering in brengen. Verwacht echter geen Harry Potter-hysterie of Lord of the Rings-magie. Daar kan zelfs een opgeklopt relletje over de al dan niet blasfemische inhoud van de verhalen niet toe bijdragen.”*

*NRC Handelsblad*

This excerpt of a review on *The Golden Compass* gives insight into Hollywood's commercial logics, explaining how the studio's previous fantasy film series has run its financial course and needs to be succeeded by a comparable formula. Furthermore, some context with regard to the original material of the film is provided, and the film is positioned in the film canon as comparisons with other films are made.

The prominence of contextual information in Dutch reviews typifies the principally highbrow approach to film as one that is considerate of the industrial framework that surrounds it and therefore presents a rather down to earth state of mind. Such level-headedness might be a more precise characterization of Dutch evaluating repertoires than the aforementioned pragmatism, as it significantly differs from the American repertoire that focused on actual filmmaking processes. This is mirrored in the fairly straightforward manner in which critics offer judgment of (elements of) films; compared to critics in the other three countries, Dutch reviewers are very upfront about their assessments. The used excerpt provides a good illustration of such forward opinions as it makes it abundantly clear that nothing can make this film as successful as *The Lord of the Rings* or *Harry Potter*.

Dutch critics consider film experience to about the same amount as their French counterparts, but do not employ their quite intellectual style.

### **5.5.6 British Film Discourse**

British film critics address artistic value more than the Americans but still far less than reviewers in the other European countries. This implies the prevalence of a popular

aesthetic. However, the Brits do not place emphasis on films' reality, context or viewing experience; in this regard, they resemble the French and Dutch reviewers. This would mean that, as none of the evaluating schemas really typifies British film discourse, it presents the most evenly balanced combination of the aesthetic disposition and a popular aesthetic. British cultural repertoires of evaluation are then informed by several notions and cannot be easily characterized. However, the style of British film criticism is striking; the reviews are laced with humor and written in a rather cynical tone of voice.

*"Here, via a plot that repeatedly mistakes incessant convolutions for depth and intrigue, our protagonists are bounced around the known and unknown worlds in a vague attempt to rescue Captain Sparrow from a Sisyphean afterlife of encroaching madness, to recruit the nine international Pirate Lords (don't ask) in a battle against the evil East India Trading Company, to reunite Will Turner with his father Bootstrap Bill, to punish the murderous Davy Jones, to satisfy the ambitions of Captain Barbossa and to, well, it just goes on and on. [...] "Do you think he plans it all out or just makes it up as he goes along?" asks a stupefied sailor, as Sparrow swings to safety after another one of the movie's many interminable skirmishes. He might have been discussing director Gore Verbinski's film-making skills."*

*The Times*

Neither the movie business nor its products are taken too seriously, ridiculing of film elements is very common, as read in the review on *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End* above. This makes British discourse confoundedly different from the serious, lyrical French analyses, the pragmatic American elaborations, and the Dutch levelheaded assessments.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

While a multitude of resemblances have been established, the film discourses in France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States can certainly be typified on the basis of particular characteristics. Film discourses in all four countries contains the discourse components or evaluation schemas "Artistic value", "Context", "Reality", and "Experience", but their different emphases set them apart. American film discourse's

emphasis lies with the film's relation to or function in everyday life. The eminence of film's reality and experience typifies this evaluation repertoire as being informed by pragmatism and stressing a popular aesthetic. French film criticism underlines cinema's artistic value; informed by aestheticism and intellectualism, critics approach directors as artists, and their products as meaningful cultural entities that require interpretation. The prevalence of the aesthetic disposition further shows in the distance kept from cultural products. The Dutch and British discourses on film are less distinct and more difficult to typify. Dutch film criticism is characterized chiefly by a highbrow approach to film, with a particular level-headedness and emphasis on (industrial) context. As none of the evaluating schemas really typifies British film discourse, this presents the most evenly balanced union of the aesthetic disposition and a popular aesthetic. The British style further distinguishes this national cultural repertoire; humor and cynicism put film into perspective.

The appearance of the same schemas of evaluation across countries demonstrates that there is some conformity, which signals the influence of globalizing processes that disseminate both aesthetic systems. Not only do we see the proliferation of elements of the popular aesthetic in the Western world; admittance of aspects of the aesthetic disposition (Bourdieu, 1993) into discourses traditionally not prone to emphasize artistic value persists. The widespread concurrent usage of both aesthetic systems is telling for the qualification of film as a cultural genre: it illustrates its ambiguity as both art form and commercial commodity (Barthel-Bouchier, 2011).

This duality also surfaces in the constructed model: films' characterization as mainstream or art film proved to bear significant influence on the composition of reviews. It appears critics concurrently employ several modes of reviewing; a mode for more artful films presenting an intellectual challenge (e.g. *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*) and a mode reserved for mainstream films that provide mesmerizing spectacle or emotional fulfillment (e.g. *300*, *Music and Lyrics*). Adjusting the reviewing mode to the movie under review shows the serviceability of today's critics; they focus on what particular films have to offer audiences, not on what they personally believe film should be. This service-based criticism can thus be differentiated into modes that are typified by either an aesthetic disposition or a popular aesthetic, and oppose each other as the former focuses on artistic value whereas the latter regards film within its everyday reality. The discourse component "Experience"

exists outside this opposition; the experiential or emotional dimension of film surfaces in all cultural repertoires, regardless of film type.

Indeed, the distinct national cultural repertoires of evaluation that *The New York Times'* film critic Manohla Dargis (2011) referred to in her cited article (see Introduction) were demonstrated to exist beside each other, despite their partial overlap. Thus, whereas the art and culture coverage of the national press in Western countries is seen to increasingly concern popular culture from abroad (Janssen et al., 2008; 2011), this coverage can still be differentiated across countries according to its composition and style. Further, this different appropriation of cultural goods is not limited to high arts (Lamont, 1992; Lamont & Thévenot) or specific products from the realm of popular culture (Liebes & Katz, 1993; Kuipers & de Kloet, 2009). This study has shown that Western countries have distinguishing features that particularize their manner of meaning making. These repertoires may currently all experience similar effects of global phenomena to some extent, culture-specific notions of what is valuable or worthy nonetheless enable the sustenance of international diversity of discourses. The effects of globalization on national cultural repertoires of evaluation should therefore not be overestimated but require careful further examination in an array of cultural fields across a multitude of countries. The cultural differences existent in national contexts may yet prove more influential than often supposed in an era in which globalization is ubiquitous.

Clearly, while this article adds to our understanding of the consequences of cultural globalization, it has limitations and thus requires additional research. Follow up studies might include a larger sample of film titles on the basis of which film criticism is examined. This would bring further nuance to the differentiation of discourse across film types. Also, the inclusion of more popular newspapers would give a more complete overview of evaluation schemas employed in various national contexts. Naturally, the broadening of this research with more sample countries is another way to test current findings. Further, whereas this article gives insight into which components make up film discourse, future research should qualify how they are employed. Finally, supplementing this study with analysis of reviews by regular film viewers (user generated criticism) would solidify the found distinctions between national cultural repertoires of evaluation.



## Chapter 6

### *Conclusions*

#### 6.1 Recapturing the Results

*“Every great film should seem new every time you see it.”*

Roger Ebert

Film is among the most popular cultural genres in today’s Western society. Since its ascension in the early twentieth century, it has emancipated into a highly diverse cultural form that includes art and entertainment, and an array of genres and styles. How do audiences bring order to and make sense of the vast supply of movies the global film industry annually produces? What is a good film? Renowned film critic Roger Ebert captured his terms of enjoyment in a single sentence, quoted above. Whereas his statement reveals an interesting take on film quality, it also prompts additional questions: If a great film seems new every time you see it, what are the features that induce this repeated viewing experience? Is this logic applicable to all types of film? Do critics generally adhere to this view? If so, how does this perspective relate to that of general audiences or of the film industry itself?

I address matters of film classification and critics’ discourse in a variety of ways in this research. The dynamics of classification processes between critics, peer filmmakers, and public are studied, as well as the actual classifications made by these institutional agents. I investigate the film world with equal attention to the artistic small-scale and commercial large-scale fields of film production, and differentiate film types according to three types of institutional recognition (popular recognition, professional recognition, and critical recognition). Film critics’ discourse is examined through in-depth analysis, making comparisons across film types and across national contexts.

The dissertation’s empirical studies provide insight into the practices of film classification and the properties of film discourse in the international film world – they

improve understanding of longitudinal developments but mostly of current dynamics. This final chapter first gives an overview of the findings generated by the four studies. Then, the answers to their respective research questions are consolidated in the discussion, where the thesis' main query and theoretical implications are addressed.

### **6.1.1 *Boundaries between Film Art and Commercial Movies***

The second chapter is directed by the research question: How and to what extent do the boundaries between the restricted and large-scale fields of film production between 1955 and 2005 become apparent in the film coverage of Dutch, French, German, and U.S. newspapers? The examination regards the types of film that received attention in quality newspapers in these countries over time, focusing on whether films can be typified as prestigious or popular productions.

Due to processes both within and beyond the film world that intensified film's claim to art status, the extent to which the field of film art could impose norms on the overall film field was anticipated to grow in the 1960s and 1970s. This strengthening of the boundary between film art and commercial movie is indeed shown, as film coverage increasingly focused on the film director from the 1970s onwards. Additionally, *auteur-directors* serve as the sole creative force behind film productions to growing extents, as adaptations of existing material make way for original scripts by these *auteurs*. Furthermore, the emphasis on film art principles in film coverage appears in the data as devotion to movies by prestigious directors. The boundary strength is stronger in the European countries; the trend is less salient in the United States.

Despite trends of commercialization, globalization, and declassification, the boundaries between the domain of the art film and the territory of the commercial film appear not to have weakened between 1975 and 2005, since the attention for films by commercially successful directors is seen to decrease in the four countries' quality newspapers, while the pool of commercially successful directors remains more or less constant over the years. This trend appears in all four countries and does not show significant differences across nations. Not only has the art film gained in prominence in film discourse, but the aesthetic standards originating there are also employed in discourse on

more commercial movies. Furthermore, these norms seem to hold despite the occurrence of trends that are likely to undermine them.

### ***6.1.2 Film Conventionality and Innovation Uncovered***

Having mapped trends in film classification over time, the research turns to current classification processes. I first focus on the differentiation of film products that are classified in various ways. Public, peers, and critics reward films with popular, professional, and critical recognition, and thereby influence overall value assignment to movies (Allen & Lincoln, 2004; Schmutz, 2005). This study examines whether these different types of recognition are in fact related to distinguishable film types. It encompasses the analysis of production traits and viewers' classifications of the movies appreciated most by public, peers, critics in 2007 in France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States, and focuses on the conventionality and innovation these features display.

The traditional distinction between commercial and artistic movies proves to endure with regard to material practices, but appears to be continuous rather than discrete. For the most part, popular film still complies with Hollywood's traditional profit-oriented institutional logic, which prescribes productions to make use of multi-million dollar budgets, major movie stars, well known directors, clearly signaling genres, and comprehensible themes. Films that received professional and critical recognition fit this conventional profile far less. The analysis of movies' symbolic affordances presents a similar picture. Film viewers' perception of conventionality and innovation in film is captured in four dimensions. Again, popular films are deemed most conventional; they are judged to conform to Hollywood norms to the largest extent, hold little narrative complexity, represent familiar themes, and offer easy viewing experiences. Professionally and critically recognized films score in opposite direction on these dimensions.

These findings demonstrate that commercially successful and critically acclaimed films present the extremes of a continuum between conventionality and innovation, while films with professional recognition are found to reside in between the two. The boundaries between the film types appear rather more fluid than concrete. In this distinction, budget differences and presented themes turn out to be the most discerning film features.

Furthermore, the findings show that films that become successful in more than one country tend to be more conventional than those that only attract audiences in one particular national context.

### ***6.1.3 Considering the Praised and Acclaimed***

The research then returns to film coverage in the media, informed by the foregoing investigation into differentiation of film products. As the global film world is confronted with trends of commercialization, globalization, and digitization (Hesmondhalgh, 2002; McDonald & Wasko, 2008), the question whether the prevailing dichotomy of artistic versus popular forms of criticism (Bourdieu, 1993) still apprehends its complexity is prompted. Given these developments, how can present-day film criticism be characterized and understood? In particular, are films that are ultimately consecrated by popular, professional, and critical recognition appraised by similar or different criteria? This research comprises 200 reviews published in four quality newspapers in the United Kingdom and the United States of films released in 2007, which received the utmost popular, professional, and critical recognition.

Qualitative content analysis (and quantitative processing of the findings) shows that today's reviews consist of fifteen themes that range from actors' performances and plot credibility to the director's trademarks, and interpreted meanings. The fifteen themes are collapsed into four essential discourse components through factor analysis: "Auteurism", "Experience", "Processes", and "Context". All four are present in reviews of all film types, but the components are utilized to different degrees. The component Auteurism focuses on the universe of the director as creative visionary. It proves to be significantly more prominent in reviews of films that received critical recognition, and least so in those on popular movies. The component Experience consists of various aspects of the experience a film offers its audiences. It is deployed to a large extent across reviews of all film types, but most in those on the critically acclaimed. The component Processes addresses the array of processes that went into making a film. It shows slightly significant variation among review types; it is more eminent in reviews of films with both popular and critical recognition. Finally, the component Context consists of links to a film's contexts both within and beyond the product itself. The significant difference in the use of Context is

accounted for by the greater likelihood of this component appearing in reviews of popular films.

In sum, reviews of various kinds of film reveal similar approaches to criticism but those of popular and critically recognized movies appear to be more pronounced in their employment of particular elements, whereas those of films with professional recognition occupy an intermediate position. Critically acclaimed films are reviewed with an emphasis on the responsible director, and with an eye for culturally meaningful viewing experiences. The finding that reviews of other (less prestigious) film types employ these same elements despite different compositions reveals that overall contemporary film criticism incorporates aesthetic considerations that draw from both popular and more highbrow discourses, regardless of either the norms that film art imposes or the pressures current trends put on film discourse.

#### ***6.1.4 Dissection of National Cultural Repertoires***

Overall, today's film discourse proves more complex than traditionally assumed, but does discourse differentiation solely rest with the type of product discussed? Chapter 2 shows that the boundaries between film art and commercial film discern across Western nations; such variation may also exist with regard to the negotiations that go into value assignment. Whereas audiences across nations consume the same movies to a large degree (Barthel-Bouchier, 2011), and national newspapers cover the same international cultural products (Janssen et al., 2011), this does not mean that films are made sense of in the same manner across contexts (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000; Liebes & Katz, 1993). This study answers the question: To what extent can national cultural repertoires of evaluation be differentiated in present-day Western film discourse? It does so by studying film reviews published in elite newspapers in France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States. For this purpose, the data collection used in Chapter 4 is extended with film reviews from France and the Netherlands.

Content analysis reveals the employment of fifteen themes across critics in all four countries, with their relative importance varying per country. The complex picture of theme distribution is unraveled with a factor analysis, as is done in Chapter 3. However, as

the themes load differently onto the four factors, the discourse components are slightly altered in this cross-national analysis.

The factor “Artistic value” represents a reviewing mode in which the film is regarded as the expression of an artist; it has concern for the film’s formal qualities and emphasizes analysis and interpretation. The factor “Context” considers film in relation to its contexts both within and beyond the film world. The way in which the factor “Reality” addresses a film’s reality is twofold: it includes both filmmaking processes and the credibility of a film’s content within its suspension of disbelief. The factor “Experience” contains the various ways in which reviewers discuss the experience a film brings about. The four discourse components are regarded as schemas of evaluation that occur in cultural repertoires in all four countries, but whose prevalence differs in France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Multivariate analyses that account for word counts and film types give insight into the schemas’ relative eminence in national cultural repertoires.

Film discourses in all four countries are demonstrated to contain the four main evaluation schemas, but their different emphases set them apart. American critics’ emphasis lies with the film’s relation to or function in everyday life. The eminence of film’s reality and experience typifies this evaluation repertoire as stressing a popular aesthetic. French film criticism underlines cinema’s artistic value; critics approach directors as artists, and their products as meaningful cultural entities that require interpretation. The Dutch and British discourses on film are less distinct and more difficult to typify. Dutch film criticism is characterized chiefly by a highbrow approach to film, with a particular level-headedness and emphasis on (industrial) context. As none of the evaluating schemas really typifies British film discourse, this presents the most evenly balanced union of the aesthetic disposition and a popular aesthetic.

These findings, like those of Chapter 2, show that while film classification and discourse are under influence from the same trends of cultural globalization, commercialization, and digitization in various Western Countries, they still demonstrate differences regarding how and where to draw the line between film art and commercial movie.

## **6.2 Discussion and Implications**

Below, I return to the literature discussed in Chapter 1 and contemplate the answers the dissertation's four studies have provided, thereby laboring to answer the overall research question:

*In what ways and to what extent can the films appreciated most by the audience, the film industry, and professional critics be distinguished, and how do film critics in various cultural contexts across the Western world classify and make sense of this range of films?*

Further, since this research exposes avenues for further investigation, this chapter offers suggestions for future studies.

### **6.2.1. The Film Field in Longitudinal Perspective**

This dissertation's four empirical studies provide insight into the distinguishable domains of film art and mainstream movies, the diversity of their products and the value assigned to it, as well as the ways in which they are regarded in film criticism. The research starts off with an examination of the practices of film classification over time (Chapter 2) as the film world has experienced a number of developments in its short lifespan. I study whether Bourdieu's (1993) manner of structuring a field of cultural production remains appropriate in investigating modern day cultural industries.

The analysis affirms Baumann's (2007) claim that film went through a phase of emancipation during the 1960s. Film has gained legitimacy as a cultural product with artistic merit; the ideology supporting this stance, the auteur theory, is found to have been ubiquitous in film criticism ever since. This lasting ubiquity points towards the great influence a legitimizing ideology may have in a cultural genre's classification system and aesthetic mobility (Bourdieu, 1993). Furthermore, the enduring prominence of auteur theory shows that the power struggles that Bourdieu (1993) deems inherent to a cultural field have resulted in the restricted field of film production's ability to impose its norms onto the wider film world. However, whereas field theory proves to still be current in this regard, the research also uncovers its limitations with regard to a realm like the film field, showing the overlap between domains of artistic and commercial culture and touching

upon the fluidity of distinctions made (Hesmondhalgh, 2006; Prior, 2005). Not only have film art principles obtained more prominence in film discourse, the aesthetic standards originating in the film art world reign in discourse on more commercial movies as well. Likewise, discourse on popular music also originates in both the aesthetic disposition and a popular aesthetic, resulting in a varied set of criteria applied to the entire genre (Van Venrooij, 2009). The outcomes of Bourdieu's (1993) power struggles thus appear to be less forthright in modern-day cultural industries like those of film or popular music.

Leading newspapers in all four countries appear to discuss artistic and commercial movies side by side throughout the research period, implying that both segments of film production have their place in film discourse across place and time. Whereas the separate restricted and large-scale fields of production can certainly be differentiated with regard to film, the dynamics between the two sections are more complex than Bourdieu (1993) would have held them to be. The film field still finds a framework in the dichotomy between artistic and commercial value, but this dichotomy is more ambiguous than often presumed. Past development have muddied the water, as opposing twentieth century developments like intellectualization (Baumann, 2001) and commercialization (Drake, 2008; Schatz, 2009) now both typify present-day movie production and reception. One does not exempt the other; the current state of the film world might deliver it to highly commercialized media majors, but is still partly defined by film art principles (e.g. auteurism) that stem from decades ago.

Moreover, the traditional distinction between commercial and artistic movies emerges from this dissertation as one that is gradual rather than strictly dichotomous; in Chapter 3 differentiation appears alongside a scale between conventionalism and innovativeness. Today's perceived intertwining of small-scale and large-scale fields of cultural production (especially in the cultural industries) should therefore not be seen as straightforward declassification (Prior, 2005) or an overall shift in dominant production logics (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999) over time, but rather as "production on the boundaries" (Hesmondhalgh, 2006).

The longitudinal portion of this research spans between 1955 and 2005 as this time period contained a number of important developments in the international film world. While consequences of the digitalization that is paramount in today's Western society are



taken into account in this research, other trends that result from it still require more attention. As Web 2.0 applications now enable and encourage cultural consumers to voice their opinions online, the ubiquity of consumer reviews further complicates the division of roles in value assignment as the public takes the critic's seat. Research has shown that consumers' online information-retrieval practices do not necessarily undermine the legitimacy of professional critics (Verboord, 2010), but user created criticism has become such a substantial part of the overall discourse on cultural products that its inclusion in future research will be required to further extend understanding of current dominant discourses, the aesthetics therein employed, and the role of the underlying cultural capital.

### ***6.2.2 Classification and Discourse across Film Types***

The next question prompted is whether the agents involved in classifying movies in fact favor films that can be differentiated according to their various features. I examine the movie preferences of the three main institutional agents involved in value assignment to film (Allen & Lincoln, 2004; Hicks & Petrova, 2006; Lampel & Nadavulakereb, 2009; Schmutz, 2005). Public, peers, and critics are positioned on the gradual distinction between film art and blockbuster according to the capital they represent (Bourdieu, 1984; 1993). The general public is, with the lowest level of cultural capital, least able to appropriate innovative film, which is why films that are predominantly recognized by the mass audience are found on the conventional pole of the continuum. Critically acclaimed films present the other extreme. Trained to dissect movies, critics have an inclination for innovation in film. The production on the boundaries between art and entertainment is particularly evident in the films with professional recognition, which tend to find middle ground between conventionality and inventiveness. As said, the differentiation of films with popular, professional, and critical recognition turns out to be gradual instead of discrete. The distinction proves to be a quite delicate one, as prior research on both the film world (Allen & Lincoln, 2004) and the domain of popular music (Schmutz, 2005) also states. The roles of various agents in processes of cultural classification (DiMaggio, 1987) in today's cultural industries appear confused.

This research shows that the various types of value assigned to film are related to inherently different types of film, with the variation between conventionality and

innovativeness being continuous rather than discrete. However, in spite of the current feasibility of this differentiation between films rewarded with different types of recognition, various agents in the film field are seen to increasingly make the same value judgments whereas their disposal of cultural capital incites to expect variety. In recent years, both artistic films like *Black Swan* (2010) and commercial films like *Avatar* (2009) have succeeded in obtaining prestigious awards as well as drawing sizable audiences into the theatres. This suggests the blurring of the film field's boundaries as a result from globalizing and commercializing trends (Hesmondhalgh, 2002), but might also point towards the emancipation of film audiences or the changed position of film criticism. Furthermore, it should be taken into account that this study concerns films that were released several years before the research was conducted. Part of the research considers film viewers' perception of the film sample but this perception is unlikely to be completely unspoiled by prior knowledge of the films' content, conventions, and/or context. An interesting approach in follow-up research would be to examine audience perceptions of films that are truly new and free of context to the participants.

Over the course of the twentieth century, film has grown up to be a mature, multi-faceted cultural realm with commercial as well as artistic potential. It is not unlikely that the audience has matured alongside the cultural genre as watching movies features as a highly popular pastime in Western societies. Film is by now completely engrained in our cultural life and audiences in general might have gained enough experience in deciphering film's codes to make a shift to enjoying more innovative film. On the other hand, as the mainstream public voices its take on newly released films via blogs, social network sites, online reviewing platforms, and commercial websites, the voice of the professional critic might be in danger of being drowned out (Keen, 2007; Verboord, 2010).

Meanwhile, a conflict of interest complicates the position of peer filmmakers as valuating agents too. Situating professional recognition in processes of cultural classification proves a complex task. The Academy Award ceremony might be intended as a prestigious event to celebrate the industry's greatest accomplishments, but it has also evolved into a highly commercial event that garners a lot of attention in all sorts of worldwide media. Thus, there is also a commercial interest in garnering prestige. In fact, marketing campaigns nowadays make use of a film's prestige, be it in the shape of positive

remarks by critics in elite publications (blurbs), programming in highbrow film festivals, or nominations for well-known film prizes (Baumann, 2002; Drake, 2008). The ambiguity of peer recognition appears in this research as awarded films display the most moderate levels of both conventionality and innovation. Secondly, discourse about these movies seems to be the most balanced between high art and popular aesthetics. It is, in my opinion, highly likely that the boundary between film art and commercial movies will become more blurred in the foreseeable future, film types will grow increasingly hybrid, and valuating agents will be less easily discerned. However, as cultural contexts are seen to maintain influence on classification systems, the extent to which these trends will determine film fields will vary across Western countries.

As the dissertation's focus shifts to film discourse as employed by professional critics, the differentiation of more or less conventional or innovative films is taken into account. Today's film discourse is found to comprise a set of essential components, which originate in more than one aesthetic system. Film criticism is not bound by a strictly detached or pure gaze even as film has become a more elite art form, nor has the domination of commercial Hollywood resulted in discourse that is constrained by a solely naïve aesthetic. Whereas Bourdieu (1993) supposed a separation of the two sets of aesthetic criteria as they belonged to populations with varying degrees of cultural capital (1984), both the aesthetic disposition and popular aesthetic come to the front in today's film discourse. This exemplifies the complex dynamic of value assignment of culture, and demonstrates the misfit between the hybrid modern cultural industries and Bourdieu's quite rigid categories.

However, the composition of film discourse can be discerned according to the film types under discussion. The components that typify evaluation as either art or entertainment do occur to various extents in discourse on films with popular, professional, and critical recognition (Allen & Lincoln, 2004). This signifies that even while the valuating agents increasingly appreciate the same movies, they might still come to their value assignments via different routes, using different criteria. As such, discourse is as differentiated as film production, and might in fact be highly adaptive to the state of the film world. On the other hand, adjusting the used reviewing mode to the movie under review shows the serviceability of today's critics. This service-based criticism can thus be

differentiated into modes that are typified by either an aesthetic disposition or a popular aesthetic, which are deployed according to what a film and its aimed for audiences require (Blank, 2007). Maybe critics now function as intermediaries in the sense that they match movie and audience by adjusting their discourse accordingly; when the film offers an experience to be appreciated through the operation of a popular aesthetic by a mainstream audience, the critic may choose to write in that style for that public. When a film requires an aesthetic disposition to be appreciated, critics might aim for those with the cultural capital to do so.

The traditional, more hierarchical role that is supposed to be the critic's in relation to his readership (Becker, 1982) can be seen to have changed; the critic does not tell us what we are supposed to like but gives direction in the mound of choices that is the film supply. As gatekeepers of the restricted film field (Bourdieu, 1993), their tactics have shifted from strict inclusion and exclusion in the realm of good or valuable film to indicating differentiations and the worth of several categories of film. This means distinction is still exerted but in a changed, milder manner. Films tend to be appreciated for what they are, in the category of movies they serve, e.g. as means of escapism, or vehicles for intellectual endeavors. Further (qualitative) research into the professional practices of film critics is needed to affirm this conclusion. Also, while this research has scrutinized critical recognition, future studies are still required into the specific workings of both popular and professional recognition.

This research covers a variety of film products; it gives insight into the differentiation of movies according to preferences expressed by public, peers, and critics, and then compares critical discourses concerning these discerned film types. This element of the dissertation greatly contributes to the comprehension of dynamics in the film fields, particularly the classification systems at work; it modifies our outlook on film as a cultural genre. Extending this particular study in a longitudinal fashion seems appropriate. Further, in this research the preferences expressed in popular, professional, and critical recognition are limited to specific groups or measures. Naturally, the differentiation of movies and their audiences could be operationalized in a number of other ways. Further research might include DVD's and downloads into measuring popular recognition, more or different film

awards and film festivals into measuring prestige, and a wider range of (more specialized) publications into measuring critical acclaim and investigating film discourse.

### ***6.2.3 Terms of Enjoyment in Cross-National Perspective***

The analysis of film discourse in cross-national perspective shows that the same schemas of evaluation (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000) appear in film discourse across various Western countries, demonstrating a certain level of conformity. This signals the influence of globalizing processes that disseminate both the aesthetic disposition and the popular aesthetic (Bourdieu, 1993). The widespread concurrent usage of both aesthetic systems suits film's ambiguity as both art form and commercial commodity well (Barthel-Bouchier, 2011). More importantly, it adds nuance to the general idea that globalization in the film world consists of Hollywoodian norms gaining influence overseas – i.e. within overall film discourse, aspects of the popular aesthetic that stem from Hollywood are counterbalanced by European notions of auteurism that shape the aesthetic disposition towards film. There is a definite mutual exchange of ideas on film as art and film as entertainment, despite the imbalance in the power structure between the American and European film industries (Baumann, 2007; Bordwell & Thompson, 1997; Elsaesser, 2005; Scott, 2000).

Stated similarities notwithstanding, distinct national cultural repertoires of evaluation (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000) of film can still be differentiated across countries according to emphasis, composition and style. These repertoires may currently all experience similar effects of global phenomena to some extent, culture-specific notions of what is valuable or worthy nonetheless make for the sustenance of international diversity of discourses (Liebes & Katz, 1993). National context still provides a frame within which culture is appreciated; not only does it stipulate which aspects are more or less important, it also prescribes a general attitude, a tone of voice. We might all watch the same blockbusters, award winners, and critics' favorites, but we do maintain our own ways of making sense of them. Future studies should aim to capture the development of these national cultural repertoires in the years to come, as well as extend this research by including more (non-Western) countries to give yet more insight into the influence of national or cultural context on evaluative schemas. Also, this research addresses *what* is discussed in present-day film discourse, but not *how* topics in film criticism were applied or

qualified - the normative character of film criticism requires further study. My research provides insight into the composition of discourse, and the relative importance of evaluative schemas. Future investigations should shed light on how exactly critics judge the various film elements in order to lay bare the complex workings of film classification.

All the tendencies uncovered in the social valuation of film point towards the (increasingly) complex dynamics of fields of cultural production that include both art and entertainment, simultaneously answer to various highbrow and lowbrow aesthetic systems, and involve various institutional agents. While straightforward dichotomies appeared less appropriate for distinctions in culture, several fields of tension are left to explore further. What does the power division between public, peers, and critics exactly look like, and how will it develop in today's convergence culture? Which role do conventionality and innovation precisely play in processes of classification? How are various components in critics' discourse appropriated in user generated criticism and will national cultural repertoires be sustained? Studies that address these questions are required to come to full understanding of today's terms of cultural enjoyment.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A.

Film items (%) by type of newspaper article, 1955-2005 (N=1605, missing 57)

A. Entire sample	1955	1975	1995	2005	N
Reviews	26.6	63.4	52.6	51.8	745
Background	2.8	4.1	10.5	14.9	141
Interviews	2.4	5.3	8.5	8.5	100
Announcements	19.7	14.4	13.1	14.0	249
News Items	48.5	12.8	15.3	10.8	370
<i>N</i>	466	243	352	544	1605
B. France	1955	1975	1995	2005	
Reviews	23.0	59.8	34.0	45.5	
Background	0.8	5.7	9.0	16.2	
Interviews	4.8	4.6	16.7	12.2	
Announcements	12.7	20.7	15.3	21.2	
News Items	58.7	9.2	25.0	5.0	
<i>N</i>	126	87	144	222	
C. Germany	1955	1975	1995	2005	
Reviews	67.6	58.6	67.8	68.1	
Background	14.7	3.4	11.9	13.8	
Interviews	0	3.4	1.7	6.4	
Announcements	5.9	10.3	8.5	2.1	
News Items	11.8	24.1	10.2	9.6	
<i>N</i>	34	29	59	94	
D. Netherlands	1955	1975	1995	2005	
Reviews	61.3	64.2	69.2	45.1	
Background	4	1.5	7.7	9.2	
Interviews	0	6.0	6.2	4.6	
Announcements	25.3	11.9	1.5	24.8	
News Items	9.3	16.4	15.4	16.5	
<i>N</i>	75	67	65	109	
E. United States	1955	1975	1995	2005	
Reviews	11.3	70.0	60.7	57.1	
Background	1.7	5.0	14.3	18.5	
Interviews	2.2	6.7	1.2	6.7	
Announcements	23.8	10.0	21.4	0	
News Items	61.0	8.3	2.4	17.6	
<i>N</i>	231	60	84	119	

## Appendix B.

Sample films with popular recognition

<b>France</b>	<b>The Netherlands</b>	<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>United States</b>
1. <i>Spider-Man 3</i>	1. <i>Alles is Liefde</i>	1. <i>Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix</i>	1. <i>Spider-Man 3</i>
2. <i>Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix</i>	2. <i>Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix</i>	2. <i>Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End</i>	2. <i>Transformers</i>
3. <i>Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End</i>	3. <i>Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End</i>	3. <i>Spider-Man 3</i>	3. <i>Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End</i>
4. <i>La Vie en Rose</i>	4. <i>I Am Legend</i>	4. <i>The Golden Compass</i>	4. <i>Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix</i>
5. <i>Taxi 4</i>	5. <i>Moordwijken</i>	5. <i>I Am Legend</i>	5. <i>I Am Legend</i>
6. <i>The Golden Compass</i>	6. <i>Ocean's Thirteen</i>	6. <i>The Bourne Ultimatum</i>	6. <i>The Bourne Ultimatum</i>
7. <i>I Am Legend</i>	7. <i>Spider-Man 3</i>	7. <i>Transformers</i>	7. <i>300</i>
8. <i>Live Free or Die Hard</i>	8. <i>The Golden Compass</i>	8. <i>Hot Fuzz</i>	8. <i>Wild Hogs</i>
9. <i>Transformers</i>	9. <i>The Bourne Ultimatum</i>	9. <i>Stardust</i>	9. <i>Knocked Up</i>
10. <i>Le Coeur des hommes 2</i>	10. <i>Transformers</i>	10. <i>Live Free or Die Hard</i>	10. <i>Juno</i>
11. <i>300</i>	11. <i>Live Free or Die Hard</i>	11. <i>300</i>	11. <i>Rush Hour 3</i>
12. <i>Un secret</i>	12. <i>Blood Diamond</i>	12. <i>Ocean's Thirteen</i>	12. <i>Live Free or Die Hard</i>
13. <i>Ocean's Thirteen</i>	13. <i>Das Leben der Anderen</i>	13. <i>St. Trinian's</i>	13. <i>American Gangster</i>
14. <i>The Bourne Ultimatum</i>	14. <i>American Gangster</i>	14. <i>Atonement</i>	14. <i>Superbad</i>
15. <i>le Prix a payer</i>	15. <i>300</i>	15. <i>Run Fatboy Run</i>	15. <i>I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry</i>
16. <i>American Gangster</i>	16. <i>Music and Lyrics</i>	16. <i>P.S. I Love You</i>	16. <i>Blades of Glory</i>
17. <i>Das Leben der Anderen</i>	17. <i>Norbit</i>	17. <i>Rush Hour 3</i>	17. <i>Ocean's Thirteen</i>
18. <i>Dialogue avec mon jardinier</i>	18. <i>Atonement</i>	18. <i>American Gangster</i>	18. <i>Ghost Rider</i>
19. <i>Rocky Balboa</i>	19. <i>I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry</i>	19. <i>The Pursuit of Happyness</i>	19. <i>Norbit</i>
20. <i>Blood Diamond</i>	20. <i>Saw III</i>	20. <i>Music and Lyrics</i>	20. <i>The Bucket List</i>

Sample films with professional recognition

France	The Netherlands	United Kingdom	United States
1. <i>La Graine et le mulet</i>	1. <i>Alles is Liefde</i>	1. <i>This is England</i>	1. <i>Sangre de Mi Sangre</i>
2. <i>The Diving Bell and the Butterfly</i>	2. <i>Het Zusje van Katja</i>	2. <i>Atonement</i>	2. <i>Rocket Science</i>
3. <i>La Vie en Rose</i>	3. <i>Dunya &amp; Desie</i>	3. <i>No Country for Old Men</i>	3. <i>Grace is Gone</i>
4. <i>Das Leben der Anderen</i>	4. <i>Bloedbroeders</i>	4. <i>Juno</i>	4. <i>Teeth</i>
5. <i>Les temoins</i>	5. <i>Het Echte Leven</i>	5. <i>There Will Be Blood</i>	5. <i>Four Sheets to the Wind</i>
6. <i>Un secret</i>	6. <i>Skin</i>	6. <i>La Vie en Rose</i>	6. <i>No Country for Old Men</i>
7. <i>4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days</i>	7. <i>TBS</i>	7. <i>Das Leben der Anderen</i>	7. <i>Juno</i>
8. <i>Auf der Anderen Seite</i>	8. <i>Tiramisu</i>	8. <i>The Diving Bell and the Butterfly</i>	8. <i>There Will Be Blood</i>
9. <i>Izgnanie</i>	9. <i>Vox Populi</i>	9. <i>Michael Clayton</i>	9. <i>La Vie en Rose</i>
10. <i>Milyang</i>	10. <i>No Country for Old Men</i>	10. <i>Control</i>	10. <i>Die Falscher</i>
11. <i>No Country for Old Men</i>	11. <i>Juno</i>	11. <i>Notes on a Scandal</i>	11. <i>Michael Clayton</i>
12. <i>Juno</i>	12. <i>There Will Be Blood</i>	12. <i>Eastern Promises</i>	12. <i>Atonement</i>
13. <i>There Will Be Blood</i>	13. <i>La Vie en Rose</i>	13. <i>Die Falscher</i>	13. <i>The Diving Bell and the Butterfly</i>
14. <i>Die Falscher</i>	14. <i>Die Falscher</i>	14. <i>Lars and the Real Girl</i>	14. <i>Lars and the Real Girl</i>
15. <i>Michael Clayton</i>	15. <i>Michael Clayton</i>	15. <i>The Savages</i>	15. <i>The Savages</i>
16. <i>Atonement</i>	16. <i>Atonement</i>	16. <i>Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street</i>	16. <i>Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street</i>
17. <i>Lars and the Real Girl</i>	17. <i>The Diving Bell and the Butterfly</i>	17. <i>In the Valley of Elah</i>	17. <i>In the Valley of Elah</i>
18. <i>The Savages</i>	18. <i>Lars and the Real Girl</i>	18. <i>Elizabeth: The Golden Age</i>	18. <i>Eastern Promises</i>
19. <i>Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street</i>	19. <i>The Savages</i>	19. <i>Away From Her</i>	19. <i>Elizabeth: The Golden Age</i>
20. <i>In the Valley of Elah</i>	20. <i>Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street</i>	20. <i>Beaufort</i>	20. <i>Away From Her</i>

Sample films with critical recognition

<b>France</b>	<b>The Netherlands</b>	<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>United States</b>
1. <i>La Graine et le mulet</i>	1. <i>Das Leben der Anderen</i>	1. <i>No Country for Old Men</i>	1. <i>No Country for Old Men</i>
2. <i>Das Leben der Anderen</i>	2. <i>Atonement</i>	2. <i>There Will Be Blood</i>	2. <i>There Will Be Blood</i>
3. <i>Pan's Labyrinth</i>	3. <i>4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days</i>	3. <i>Das Leben der Anderen</i>	3. <i>Away From Her</i>
4. <i>Paranoid Park</i>	4. <i>Pan's Labyrinth</i>	4. <i>The Bourne Ultimatum</i>	4. <i>Das Leben der Anderen</i>
5. <i>Death Proof</i>	5. <i>The Diving Bell and the Butterfly</i>	5. <i>La Vie en Rose</i>	5. <i>Gone Baby Gone</i>
6. <i>Inland Empire</i>	6. <i>Alles is Liefde</i>	6. <i>Atonement</i>	6. <i>The Savages</i>
7. <i>Still Life</i>	7. <i>Tussenstand</i>	7. <i>Away From Her</i>	7. <i>La Vie en Rose</i>
8. <i>La France</i>	8. <i>Wolfsbergen</i>	8. <i>Michael Clayton</i>	8. <i>4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days</i>
9. <i>Zodiac</i>	9. <i>Duska</i>	9. <i>Control</i>	9. <i>Before the Devil Knows You're Dead</i>
10. <i>Les amours d'Astree et de Celadon</i>	10. <i>Blind</i>	10. <i>Syndromes and a Century</i>	10. <i>Atonement</i>
11. <i>Honor de cavalleria</i>	11. <i>Red Road</i>	11. <i>Silent Light</i>	11. <i>The Diving Bell and the Butterfly</i>
12. <i>Avant que j'oublie</i>	12. <i>I'm Not There</i>	12. <i>Zodiac</i>	12. <i>Once</i>
13. <i>I Don't Want to Sleep Alone</i>	13. <i>Little Children</i>	13. <i>Climates</i>	13. <i>Into the Wild</i>
14. <i>Ne touchez pas la hache</i>	14. <i>Away From Her</i>	14. <i>Inland Empire</i>	14. <i>Lady Chatterley</i>
15. <i>Syndromes and a Century</i>	15. <i>Control</i>	15. <i>Apocalypto</i>	15. <i>Zodiac</i>
16. <i>Atonement</i>	16. <i>Lust, Caution</i>	16. <i>The Painted Veil</i>	16. <i>Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street</i>
17. <i>Le Scaphandre et le papillon</i>	17. <i>Still Life</i>	17. <i>4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days</i>	17. <i>I'm Not There</i>
18. <i>No Country for Old Men</i>	18. <i>Bamako</i>	18. <i>Babel</i>	18. <i>Starting Out in the Evening</i>
19. <i>There Will Be Blood</i>	19. <i>Adam's Apples</i>	19. <i>12:08 East of Bucharest</i>	19. <i>Colossal Youth</i>
20. <i>Away From Her</i>	20. <i>Flandres</i>	20. <i>Letters From Iwo Jima</i>	20. <i>Lars and the Real Girl</i>

## Appendix C.

### Film sample – United States

#### Popular recognition

1. *Spider-Man 3*
2. *Transformers*
3. *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*
4. *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*
5. *I Am Legend*
6. *The Bourne Ultimatum*
7. *300*
8. *Wild Hogs*
  
9. *Knocked Up*
  
10. *Juno*
  
11. *Rush Hour 3*
  
  
12. *Live Free or Die Hard*
13. *American Gangster*
  
  
14. *Superbad*
15. *I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry*
16. *Blades of Glory*
  
17. *Ocean's Thirteen*
18. *Ghost Rider*
19. *Norbit*
  
20. *The Bucket List*

#### Critical recognition

1. *No Country for Old Men*
2. *There Will Be Blood*
3. *Away From Her*
  
4. *Das Leben der Anderen (The Lives of Others)*
5. *Gone Baby Gone*
6. *The Savages*
7. *La Vie en Rose*
8. *4 luni, 3 saptamâni si 2 zile (4 Months, 3 Weeks, and 2 Days)*
  
9. *Before the Devil Knows You're Dead*
10. *Atonement*
  
11. *Le Scaphandre et le papillon (The Diving Bell and the Butterfly)*
  
12. *Once*
13. *Into the Wild*
  
  
14. *Lady Chatterley*
15. *Zodiac*
  
16. *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*
17. *I'm Not There*
18. *Starting Out in the Evening*
19. *Juventude Em Marcha (Colossal Youth)*
20. *Lars and the Real Girl*

#### Professional recognition

1. *Padre Nuestro*
2. *Rocket Science*
3. *Grace is Gone*
  
4. *Teeth*
  
5. *Four Sheets to the Wind*
6. *No Country for Old Men*
7. *Juno*
8. *There Will Be Blood*
  
  
9. *La Vie en Rose*
  
10. *Die Fälscher (The Counterfeiters)*
11. *Michael Clayton*
  
  
12. *Atonement*
13. *Le Scaphandre et le papillon (The Diving Bell and the Butterfly)*
  
  
14. *Lars and the Real Girl*
15. *The Savages*
  
16. *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*
17. *In the Valley of Elah*
18. *Eastern Promises*
19. *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*
  
20. *Away From Her*

Film sample - United Kingdom

**Popular recognition**

1. *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*
2. *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*
3. *Spider-Man 3*
4. *The Golden Compass*
5. *I Am Legend*
6. *The Bourne Ultimatum*
7. *Transformers*
8. *Hot Fuzz*
9. *Stardust*
10. *Live Free or Die Hard*
11. *300*
12. *Ocean's Thirteen*
13. *St. Trinian's*
14. *Atonement*
15. *Run Fatboy Run*
16. *P.S. I Love You*
17. *Rush Hour 3*
18. *American Gangster*
19. *The Pursuit of Happyness*
20. *Music and Lyrics*

**Critical recognition**

1. *No Country for Old Men*
2. *There Will Be Blood*
3. *Das Leben der Anderen (The Lives of Others)*
4. *The Bourne Ultimatum*
5. *La Vie en Rose*
6. *Atonement*
7. *Away From Her*
8. *Michael Clayton*
9. *Control*
10. *Sang sattawat (Syndromes and a Century)*
11. *Stellet licht (Silent Light)*
12. *Zodiac*
13. *Iklimler (Climates)*
14. *Inland Empire*
15. *Apocalypto*
16. *The Painted Veil*
17. *4 luni, 3 saptamâni si 2 zile (4 Months, 3 Weeks, and 2 Days)*
18. *Babel*
19. *A fost sau n-a fost? (12:08 East of Bucharest)*
20. *Letters from Iwo Jima*

**Professional recognition**

1. *This is England*
2. *Atonement*
3. *No Country for Old Men*
4. *Juno*
5. *There Will Be Blood*
6. *La Vie en Rose*
7. *Das Leben der Anderen (The Lives of Others)*
8. *Le Scaphandre et le papillon (The Diving Bell and the Butterfly)*
9. *Michael Clayton*
10. *Control*
11. *Notes on a Scandal*
12. *Eastern Promises*
13. *Die Fälscher (The Counterfeiters)*
14. *Lars and the Real Girl*
15. *The Savages*
16. *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*
17. *In the Valley of Elah*
18. *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*
19. *Away From Her*
20. *Beaufort*

Appendix D.

One-way Independent ANOVA test linkages factors to reviews of film types (N=194)

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig</b>	<b>Post-Hoc Test (Games-Howell)</b>	
<b>Auteurism</b>	11,9	13.55	****	<b>Pop</b>	<b>Prof</b>
Popular recognition	9,3				
Professional recognition	11,8			ns	
Critical recognition	14,8			****	*
<b>Experience</b>	4,7	9.06	****		
Popular recognition	4,2				
Professional recognition	3,6			ns	
Critical recognition	5,9			***	****
<b>Processes</b>	11,3	4.30	**		
Popular recognition	11,1				
Professional recognition	9,1			ns	
Critical recognition	12,7			ns	**
<b>Context</b>	6,3	7.89	****		
Popular recognition	7,7				
Professional recognition	4,7			****	
Critical recognition	5,8			**	ns

\* p < .10; \*\* p < .05; \*\*\* p < .01; \*\*\*\* p < .001; ns: not significant

## Appendix E.

Translations of French and Dutch review excerpts, in chronological order:

'The story concerns the awakening of a conscious, the development of redemption; hell wins ground with someone determined to evade it. Due to the bleak and fantastic mis-en-scène, the film unravels the system of a vicious plot, and provides an obedient bastard turned mutinous hero with an emergency exit. [...] It is no longer about situations, but about an individual's metamorphosis. This confers human worth and depth to this political pamphlet on Eastern Germany's recent history.' - *Le Figaro*

'This enables full enjoyment of the story's amusement and the mixture of reality and lyricism, of the social issues and emotion, of the comedy and the drama, of triviality and profundity.' - *Le Monde*

'Now that the *Lord of the Rings*-trilogy has basically played its financial part with regard to both box office numbers and DVD sales, production company New Line Pictures figured the time is right for the next mythical cash cow. It's as simple as that. She was found in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Material*-novels. While not very well known in the Netherlands just yet, the first film adaptation and the books' brand new film edition are sure to change that shortly. However, don't anticipate *Harry Potter*-hysteria or *The Lord of the Rings*-magic. Not even inflated jabber about the stories' alleged blasphemous contents could invoke it.' - *NRC Handelsblad*



## Dutch summary

### *Voorwaarden van vermaak*

*Film classificatie en kritisch discours in vergelijkend perspectief*

#### **Samenvatting**

Film is een erg populair cultureel genre dat een niet geringe invloed uitoefent op de huidige Westerse cultuur (Bordwell and Thompson, 1997; McDonald and Wasko, 2008). In overeenstemming met deze populariteit beschikt film over een omvangrijke industrie die een wereldwijd publiek bedient door jaarlijks honderden films op de markt te brengen. Het enorme aanbod bestaat uit talloze soorten films, van commerciële films die het massapubliek naar de bioscoop trekken tot kunstzinnige cinema die slechts door het meer kieskeurige arthouse publiek wordt gewaardeerd (Tudor, 2007). Het aanbod wordt verder verdeeld door genres, subgenres en filmstijlen (Cook, 2007). De bioscoopbezoeker dient zich een weg te banen door de vele keuzemogelijkheden. De benodigde classificatie van filmproducten komt tot stand doordat het publiek meningen, gezichtspunten en ervaringen uitwisselt, criteria hanteert en maatstaven bepaalt (DiMaggio, 1987). Deze dissertatie betreft dit proces van waardetoekenning, hier in een notendop gepresenteerd, in verschillende contexten. Hierbij wordt smaak beschouwd als een sociaal construct dat iemand niet van nature bezit maar verwerft door middel van socialisatie en educatie (Bourdieu, 1984). Het “cultureel kapitaal” dat iemand bezit is hierbij van groot belang; hieronder verstaat Bourdieu het geheel van sociale en culturele kennis, vaardigheden, ervaringen, overtuigingen en gewoontes (Bourdieu, 1984; 1993) waarover men beschikt. Filmclassificatie impliceert verschillende groepen in de samenleving wier culturele kapitaal sterk kan verschillen. Een drietal groepen wordt hierbij als cruciaal beschouwd, namelijk het algemene publiek, vakgenoten en professionele critici (Allen & Lincoln, 2004). Deze groepen verschillen wat betreft de hoeveelheid cultureel kapitaal en dus wat betreft positie en status in de filmwereld, waardoor de geuite waardeoordelen ook verschillend worden gewaardeerd (Bourdieu, 1993). De erkenning van het algemene publiek is van groot belang in de filmwereld omdat dit de grote financiële investeringen die de producties vereisen kan

rechtvaardigen, en leidt tot kaartverkoop en groeiende marktaandelen. Dit publiek heeft niet noodzakelijk heel veel cultureel kapitaal tot haar beschikking. De filmvakgenoten hebben wel expertise op het gebied van film (maken) en zijn dus beter in staat om onderscheid te maken tussen middelmatige en goede films. Hun waardering leidt niet noodzakelijkerwijs tot kaartverkoop maar geeft een film wel prestige. Filmcritici kunnen gezien worden als degenen met het hoogste gehalte van cultureel kapitaal, aangezien zij zich gespecialiseerd hebben in het analyseren en interpreteren van films en in staat worden geacht om het publiek van advies te voorzien (Becker, 1982; Janssen 1997; 1999, Verboord, 2010). Kritische erkenning leidt tot eer en prestige, maar niet per definitie tot economisch succes. De “highbrow” of legitieme smaak van critici wordt als leidend ervaren in processen van classificatie. Aangezien smaakvoorkeuren van de verschillende groepen variëren, is er ook verscheidenheid in de films die door deze groepen het meest gewaardeerd worden. Populaire films vragen minder cultureel kapitaal van het publiek dan hun prestigieuze tegenpolen, dit leidt tot het onderscheid tussen filmkunst en commerciële film. Deze worden geproduceerd in de elkaar tegenstellende “velden van kleinschalige en grootschalige filmproductie” (Bourdieu, 1993).

Dit proefschrift besteedt aandacht aan het publiek, de industrie en de kritiek, maar legt de nadruk op de filmkritiek als een centrale institutie in het proces van filmclassificatie. Critici, beschikkend over veel cultureel kapitaal, functioneren traditiegetrouw als bemiddelaars tussen producenten en consumenten, en drukken hun stempel op het discours over film (Becker, 1982; Bourdieu, 1993). In dit onderzoek wordt filmkritiek op verschillende manieren bekeken. De verhouding tussen kritiek, algemeen publiek en de industrie in het classificatieproces wordt onderzocht in verschillende nationale contexten en door de tijd heen. Daarnaast wordt er gekeken wat de filmvoorkeuren van deze drie partijen precies inhouden en of de meest waardevol geachte films ook inhoudelijk vallen te onderscheiden. Vervolgens wordt het hedendaagse discours van professionele filmcritici geanalyseerd met oog voor productdifferentiatie en nationale context. De hoofdvraag van dit onderzoek luidt:

*Hoe kunnen de films die het meest gewaardeerd worden door het publiek, de filmindustrie en de professionele critici onderscheiden worden, en hoe wordt deze verscheidenheid door critici in verschillende culturele contexten in de Westerse wereld geïdentificeerd en van betekenis voorzien?*

De dissertatie bestaat uit vier empirische studies, allen in een apart hoofdstuk gepresenteerd. Het eerste artikel betreft de grenzen tussen commerciële en artistieke film onder invloed van een reeks ontwikkelingen in de twintigste eeuw. Onderzocht is welke typen films er door critici in Amerikaanse, Duitse, Franse en Nederlandse kwaliteitskranten besproken worden tussen 1955 en 2005, en of deze gecategoriseerd kunnen worden als populair of prestigieus. Door ontwikkelingen zowel binnen als buiten de filmwereld werd de claim voor film als kunstvorm (in plaats van alleen als vorm van entertainment) sterker in de jaren zestig en zeventig van de twintigste eeuw. Hierdoor werd de mate waarin het kleinschalige veld van filmproductie de normen van het gehele filmveld kon bepalen groter. Dit komt in de data naar voren als meer aandacht voor de regisseur als het creatieve brein achter de productie. Ook wordt zichtbaar dat de kranten in deze periode meer films van prestigieuze regisseurs bespreken, het percentage artikelen komt terecht op ongeveer veertig procent en blijft daar tijdens de rest van de onderzoeksperiode op hangen. Trends van commercialisering, globalisering en declassificering deden verwachten dat de aandacht voor commerciële film zou stijgen tussen 1975 en 2005. Echter, het percentage artikelen over films van commercieel succesvolle regisseurs neemt af in de laatste decennia van de twintigste eeuw. Geconcludeerd wordt dat de velden van filmkunst en commerciële film nog steeds onderscheiden kunnen worden, maar dat die scheiding minder strikt is dan voorgesteld. Principes van populaire en prestigieuze film bestaan naast elkaar en beïnvloeden beiden de classificaties die kranten hanteren.

Dit kwantitatieve onderzoek naar bredere trends in filmclassificatie leidt tot een exploratie van de typen films die bij verschillende classificaties horen. De tweede studie gaat in op de karakteristieken van de films die door, respectievelijk, het publiek, de industrie en de kritiek als het best worden aangemerkt. Gekeken wordt of de smaakvoorkeuren die deze groepen uitspreken ook daadwerkelijk van toepassing zijn op inherent verschillende films die van elkaar te onderscheiden zijn met betrekking tot

inhoudelijke en productiekenmerken. De films met de meeste erkenning van het publiek, de industrie en de kritiek in Frankrijk, Nederland, het Verenigd Koninkrijk en de Verenigde Staten worden gecodeerd op een reeks eigenschappen die meer of minder conventioneel of innovatief kunnen zijn. Het onderzoek laat zien dat populaire films (erkend door het publiek) zich het sterkst conformeren aan de productielogica van het commercieel georiënteerde Hollywood en dus op alle fronten het minst innovatief zijn. Deze films beschikken over hoge productiebudgetten, beroemde filmsterren, bekende regisseurs, duidelijke genrekenmerken, weinig narratieve complexiteit en begrijpelijke thema's, en dus bieden ze consumenten een makkelijke kijkervaring. De films die door de industrie en de kritiek als het best worden aangemerkt passen veel minder goed in dit conventionele plaatje; vooral kritisch erkende films vertonen meer innovatieve elementen. De belangrijkste conclusie van het onderzoek is dat het publiek, de industrie en de kritiek wel andere filmtypen prefereren; voorkeuren kunnen geplaatst worden op een continuüm tussen conventie en innovatie.

De aandacht wordt vervolgens in Hoofdstuk 4 verlegd naar het discours van filmcritici over deze verschillende typen film – hoe ziet filmkritiek er vandaag de dag uit en welke criteria gelden voor welke films? De kwalitatieve analyse van filmrecensies uit Amerikaanse en Britse kranten laat zien dat de onderwerpen die filmcritici bespreken in vijftien thema's zijn samen te vatten. Deze thema's worden met behulp van een factoranalyse tot vier componenten van het filmdiscours gecomprimeerd: "Auteurisme", "Ervaring", "Processen" en "Context". Alle componenten zijn aanwezig in recensies van alle soorten films maar in verschillende mate. De component Auteurisme legt de focus op de wereld die door de regisseur als artistieke visionair is gecreëerd: dit wordt het meest gebruikt in besprekingen van films met kritische erkenning en het minst in recensies van populaire films. De component Ervaring bestaat uit verschillende aspecten van de kijkervaring die een film het publiek biedt. Deze component komt in recensies van alle soorten films veel voor, maar het meest in degenen over films die gewaardeerd worden door critici. De component Processen omvat een scala aan processen die het maken van een film vereist. Het wordt iets meer gebruikt in beschouwingen van films met erkenning van publiek en kritiek. De component Context verbindt de besproken film op verschillende manieren aan diens omgeving, zowel binnen als buiten de filmwereld. De component wordt

aanzienlijk meer benadrukt in recensies van populaire films. Deze studie concludeert dat filmdiscoursen over verschillende soorten films uit dezelfde elementen bestaan maar een andere compositie krijgen aangemeten. Er worden criteria gehanteerd die kenmerkend zijn voor hoge kunst en populaire cultuur, in verschillende samenstellingen naargelang de film dat vereist.

De kwalitatieve analyse van dit discours wordt voortgezet in de laatste empirische studie, waarin de nadruk komt te liggen op overeenkomsten en verschillen in verschillende culturele contexten. Aangezien evaluatiecriteria sociale constructies en dus afhankelijk van hun omgeving zijn, maar alomtegenwoordige trends van culturele globalisering homogenisering veronderstellen, stelt dit hoofdstuk de vraag of filmdiscoursen in Frankrijk, Nederland, het Verenigd Koninkrijk en de Verenigde Staten van elkaar gedifferentieerd kunnen worden. De thema's die in het vorige hoofdstuk werden blootgelegd komen ook hier weer naar voren. De factoranalyse die deze thema's tot de discourscomponenten comprimeert resulteert hier in vier ietwat gewijzigde elementen: "Artistieke waarde", "Context", "Realiteit" en "Ervaring". De componenten Context en Ervaring zijn hetzelfde gebleven als in hoofdstuk 4. De component Artistieke waarde betreft de beschouwing van een film als expressie van een artiest, aandacht voor de formele aspecten van een productie, en de analyse en interpretatie van de filminhoud. De component Realiteit adresseert de realiteit van een film op twee manieren; enerzijds de productieprocessen die eraan vooraf gegaan zijn en anderzijds de geloofwaardigheid van de inhoud binnen het door de film voorgestelde universum. Multivariate analyse laat zien dat, ondanks dat alle componenten in de Amerikaanse, Britse, Franse en Nederlandse filmkritieken voorkomen, de filmdiscoursen wel onderscheiden kunnen worden naar nationale culturele context. In recensies uit de Verenigde Staten ligt de nadruk op de relatie tussen de besproken film en het alledaagse leven van de kijker, of de functie die de film hierin heeft. De Franse filmcritici besteden vooral veel aandacht aan de artistieke waarde van films en de interpretatie van de filminhoud. De Britse en Nederlandse filmdiscoursen zijn minder onderscheidend en moeilijker te kenmerken.

De dissertatie concludeert uiteindelijk dat de films die als het meest waardevol worden aangemerkt door het algemene publiek, de industrie en de professionele kritiek vallen te onderscheiden aan de hand van de mate van conventionaliteit en innovatie die de

inhoudelijke en productiekenmerken ten toon spreiden. Deze verscheidenheid aan films wordt door critici geduid en van betekenis voorzien door het hanteren van evaluatiecriteria die voortkomen uit zowel een esthetische dispositie en een populaire esthetiek. Het discours wordt aangepast aan tijdgevoelige trends, nationale culturele contexten en productdifferentiatie.

## Curriculum Vitae

Annemarie Kersten was born in 1983 in the province of Zeeland, the Netherlands. She obtained a bachelor degree in Arts and Culture Studies at the Erasmus University Rotterdam in 2005. She then completed a master program in Media Studies at the same institution in 2006 with the thesis "I Couldn't Help But Wonder..." which investigated the extent to which a television program can function as a cultural forum through narrative analysis on the HBO sitcom *Sex and the City*. Shortly after graduating, she began work as a research assistant for Professor Susanne Janssen in the large-scale international research project Cultural Classification Systems in Transition. She remained affiliated with this research project during her PhD research, which focuses on film classification and discourse across national contexts, time periods, and product differentiations. Currently, Annemarie Kersten works as a lecturer at the Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication. Her main research interests include cultural sociology as well as media studies.