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A Multi-Method Analysis of the Berlin International Film Festival
and the World Cinema Fund

A Dissertation Presented

by

EREN ODABASI

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2018

Department of Communication

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A Multi-Method Analysis of the Berlin International Film Festival
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EREN ODABASI

Approved as to style and content by:

Anne T. Ciecko, Chair

Martin F. Norden, Member

Jonathan R. Wynn, Member

Mari Castañeda, Department Chair
Department of Communication

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my advisor Anne T. Ciecko for her guidance, support, and patience throughout my years at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. It has been a great pleasure for me to have long meetings and wonderful conversations with her. Every single aspect of this project benefitted immensely from her close reading of the material and thoughtful comments. I am inspired by the extraordinary sophistication of her scholarship and her enthusiasm for cinema, it has been a true privilege for me to work with her.

I would also like to thank members of the dissertation committee Martin F. Norden and Jonathan R. Wynn for their insightful feedback and continued support throughout the entire process from the prospectus stage to the end result. This study has evolved in many interesting directions following our fruitful conversations.

The fourth chapter, in which quantitative data and statistical methods are utilized, underwent multiple changes following meetings with Qiong Chen from the Institute for Social Science Research at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. I would like to thank her for being such a helpful consultant and sharing her impressive quantitative expertise with me. I am also grateful to Michael Morgan, who contributed greatly to the initial conception of this project with his mastery of quantitative research methods and even offered valuable guidance right before his well-deserved retirement.

A substantial part of chapter three was written during my time at the Dissertation Writing Retreat organized by the Writing Center at the university. I would like to thank the Center for organizing this useful program and allowing me to take part in it.

This project was financially supported by various institutions and initiatives on campus. I would like to thank the Department of Communication for awarding this study the 2017 Anca Romantan Graduate International Research Award, without which an essential part of my fieldwork would not have been possible. Most of the data used in chapters two and three was collected during a different segment of my fieldwork, which was made possible by a Dissertation Research Grant provided by the Graduate School at the University of Massachusetts. I wrote substantial parts of chapters one, two, and five using the Summer Dissertation Fellowship, awarded jointly by the Department of Communication and the Graduate School. I am thankful to all the individuals and committees who made this project possible by granting me these awards and fellowships.

A project of this nature necessitates the institutional support of multiple agents on the global film festival circuit. I would like to thank the press offices of the Berlin International Film Festival and the Cannes Film Festival for granting me access to screenings, facilitating my interviews with several filmmakers, and inviting me to participate in various initiatives. I also extend my thanks to the editors of the *Altyazi Monthly Cinema Magazine* in Turkey for providing me with press credentials and publishing my film criticism work in their wonderful magazine for many years.

Alain Gomis, Claudia Llosa, Matias Mariani, Julia Murat, Benjamin Naishtat, and John Trengove agreed to devote their valuable time to this study (often during festivals where time is the most precious and scarce commodity) and participated in interviews. I would like to thank all of them for their generosity and their willingness to share their experiences with me. Benjamin Domenech from *Rei Cine*, Giulia Fazioli from *Makna*

Presse, Rubaica Jaliwala from Berlinale Talents (Talent Campus at the time), Federico Mancini from Film Press Plus, and Gary Walsh from Alibi Communications provided me with contact information for these filmmakers and, in some cases, scheduled the interviews. I would like to thank all of them for their cooperation.

Most of all, I am forever grateful to my mother and my brother for always being together with me regardless of how many thousands of miles may ‘separate’ us. Given the rather unusual trajectory of my academic life, there have been many important turning points along the way and not all of my decisions seemed to make sense at all times. In those moments, the deep love we always share has been my biggest support. I owe all my happiness, everything that brings me joy in life, to them.

ABSTRACT

A MULTI-METHOD ANALYSIS OF THE BERLIN INTERNATIONAL FILM

FESTIVAL AND THE WORLD CINEMA FUND

MAY 2018

EREN ODABASI, B.S., BOGAZICI UNIVERSITY

M.A., BOGAZICI UNIVERSITY

Ph.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by Professor Anne T. Ciecko

The functions festivals fulfill within contemporary film culture extend beyond the exhibition and circulation of completed films; many festivals around the world have gradually attained the role of a film producer in the past two decades. This dissertation investigates the relationship between a major film festival and a European program that provides financial support for film production in developing countries. With a particular focus on the World Cinema Fund, associated with the Berlin International Film Festival, this study traces the common stylistic and thematic preoccupations observed across a wide range of Latin American, African, and Southeast Asian films partially financed by European festival funds. Textual analyses of recent films that have celebrated their premieres in major festivals after benefitting from these initiatives bring to light a prevalence of narratives about hybrid identities and mobility between cultures, as well as an emphasis on highly ceremonial events and rituals with clear patterns of accepted behavior. Interviews with directors whose films are associated with the World Cinema

Fund complement this analysis by offering a first-hand glimpse into the process of financing and realizing feature film projects under restrictive conditions. A major part of the analysis introduces quantitative data and statistical methods to the study of film festivals, testing for the impact of funding structures of films on their presence in festivals, and for the link between the reception of films on the festival circuit and their commercial prospects. This exploration of film festivals and related financial programs reveals that transnational funds based in Europe, instead of contributing to the sustained development of film production in the Global South through investments in infrastructure, prefer to engage in temporary, project-based transactions which ensure the continuous flow of films suitable for festival selection. When combined together, these findings contribute to a broader, multifaceted understanding of funds associated with film festivals, which offers a critical perspective on the hierarchical power dynamics that lie at the core of this practice.

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INTRODUCTION

The scope of the film festival circuit as a complex, multifaceted phenomenon extends beyond the promotion, exhibition, and reception of completed films. Many film festivals around the world have established themselves as influential institutions that have a notable impact on the entire lifecycle of films; before, during, and after production. While most of the work in the rapidly growing field of film festival studies focuses on the latter stages of filmmaking (typically those that occur after the film is ready for public exhibition), scholars have gradually begun to analyze how festivals are involved in the conception and production of feature film projects as well. Since most of the major international festivals organize concurrent events such as script development workshops, initiatives that promote young and emerging talent, platforms for post-production support, and residency programs for filmmakers who work on new projects; it is fairly obvious that the film festival landscape is not limited to the screening (and in many cases subsequent rewarding) of completed films.

While all the events, platforms, and initiatives mentioned above *facilitate* one stage of filmmaking or the other, relatively few festivals are *directly involved* in the filmmaking process. In most cases, the festival provides filmmakers (who are selected from a large pool of applicants by the festival itself or the juries it assigns) with a set of opportunities to move forward in realizing their projects; however, it does not play an active role in endowing the projects with the necessary financial assets. For example, co-production platforms in film festivals can be useful for producers who wish to reach a large network of potential contributors, partners, and colleagues; but they do not

specifically map out how the co-production initiated through the platform will be carried out nor do they provide monetary resources to cover production expenses. It can be argued that film festivals often prefer to position themselves as functional, even crucial, yet external agents (intermediaries) that function as catalyzers in film production without completely fulfilling the role of a film producer.

But despite the continued reluctance of many festivals to fully embark on film production, this situation has been noticeably changing over the past few decades. Some of the most famous film festivals in the world have commissioned high profile anthology features to commemorate important occasions (such as *Chacun son Cinema*, commissioned by the Cannes Film Festival to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the event in 2007 and *Venezia 70: Future Reloaded*, produced for the 70th anniversary of the eponymous film festival in 2013). On a more consistent basis, some film festivals have established funding bodies that provide financial support to filmmakers from underrepresented or underprivileged parts of the world. The pioneering example of such institutions is the Hubert Bals Fund, associated with the International Film Festival Rotterdam and founded in 1987. Berlin International Film Festival's (henceforth Berlinale), World Cinema Fund (henceforth WCF) awarded its first round of production funding in 2005. WCF is not the only festival-associated fund of its kind, but Berlinale is the only one among the three major European festivals (the others being Cannes and Venice) to have launched a funding initiative. Berlinale and its official production support fund WCF function as the main case study for this dissertation.

There are two main research questions this dissertation seeks to answer. First, what is the impact of the funding structures of narrative feature films on their subsequent festival trajectories? This basic question opens up many directions for possible inquiry. Is it more likely for projects that receive support from festival funds to secure prestigious berths for festival screenings compared to those that do not benefit from similar sources of funding? If a filmmaker enjoys a successful run on the festival circuit with a recent film, does that achievement boost his or her chances of attracting funds for a new project? Does receiving financial support from festival funds function as a seal of approval, indicating perceived high artistic quality or merit?

Festival presence and awards gathered from festivals are often brought up as a type of justification for the use of public funds for film production. For example, being selected for a prestigious international film festival is sufficient to lift the payback requirement of the support granted by national funds in many countries. Public money is allocated to film producers usually with the expectation that their work will end up representing their production countries in the international arena. Therefore, it is a particularly significant endeavor to empirically analyze whether there is indeed a relationship between funding structure and festival presence. Another key justification for the use of public funds in film production is to cultivate new national cinemas and make film production in small countries without established film industries or the necessary resources and infrastructure possible. Financial support obtained from (mostly Western European) outside sources is seen as crucial for the existence of filmmaking in underprivileged parts of the world. Analyzing the link between funding and festival

presence also means questioning whether this is indeed the case or not. Festivals are described as platforms where new national cinemas are cultivated or brought under the spotlight, fresh voices are discovered, unknown talents emerge (Elsaesser 2013).

Building on this argument, it would not be a stretch to anticipate that many films from less established filmmaking countries or directed by young filmmakers, supported by Western funding bodies, will premiere to critical acclaim in major festivals and enjoy extensive stints on the festival circuit.

The second major research question highlights the common aesthetic and thematic preoccupations among the films supported by festival funds. Are there any characteristic narrative, stylistic, or thematic elements that can be observed across a wide range of films that receive financial support from the funds associated with film festivals? I should stress that my intention is not to come up with a simplified checklist for filmmakers who plan to apply to similar funds in the future or provide a recipe for the typical fund-friendly festival film. However, it is important to trace common trends found in the decisions of funding bodies and festival programs because these trends give us valuable hints about the politics of representation, exclusion/inclusion, and value addition in contemporary film culture. Festivals have the power to act as gatekeepers of world cinema; determining which films get seen, what kind of stories are told, how cinematic tools are utilized to tell these stories. Tamara Falicov observes that ‘listing funds at the end of the film might also serve as a “ticket” to gain access to exhibition venues and distribution channels associated within and outside of first-tier film festivals’ (2016, 209).

Production support initiatives associated with film festivals are an integral part of this gatekeeping process both within and beyond the festival circuit.

In order to seek answers to these questions, I turn to the specific case of the Berlinale and WCF. The first edition of the Berlinale, held in 1951, was established as an event promoting the superiority of the liberated Western Germany over her Eastern counterpart (Fehrenbach 1995). The sociopolitical atmosphere of Europe at the time, with a deep divide between the socialist Eastern Bloc and the liberal Western European countries, had a clearly visible impact on where film festivals were organized and which films were shown. Berlinale was no exception. Quickly after its inception, the Berlinale emerged as one of the three major film festivals in Europe alongside Cannes and Venice, and continues to be a part of the ‘Big Three’ (a distinction often used in the popular press and the academic literature; Mezias et al. 2008, Wong 2011) today. The festival screens around 400 films (including shorts) every year, attracts approximately 20,000 professional guests including almost 4,000 members of the international press, sells more than 330,000 tickets to public audiences, and enjoys extensive state support as well as private sponsorships with an annual budget of 24 million euros.¹ In short, Berlinale is indisputably one of the largest, most significant, and most popular stops on the annual film festival calendar.

Together with the Federal Foundation for Culture in Germany and in cooperation with the Goethe Institute, the Foreign Ministry and German producers; the Berlinale

¹ For the key facts and figures related to Berlinale, see https://www.berlinale.de/en/archiv/jahresarchive/2017/01_jahresblatt_2017/01_jahresblatt_7.html#Zahlen2017. Accessed February 2, 2018.

launched the WCF in 2004. With an annual budget of approximately 350,000 euros, WCF supports the production and distribution of feature films and feature-length documentaries. Funding recommendations for production and distribution support are announced separately, and in this dissertation, I will only consider the production support section of the initiative.

The most important policy² of WCF for the purposes of this project is its exclusive focus on projects from specific regions in the world; Latin America, Central America, the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, Southeast Asia and the Caucasus. On the cover of its official catalogue, following expressions are used to describe WCF: ‘More than money, talking about cinema, further developing a new geography of co-productions, passionately committed to tolerance and freedom of expression.’ This statement informs the present dissertation in multiple ways; this project is not intended to be a dry compilation of policies and regulations; neither is it desirable to focus exclusively on the economic aspects of film funding (‘talking only about money’ in the festival’s terms). This study explores funds and festivals only within the broader context of film culture, paying particular attention to the artistic vision expressed by certain filmmakers and placing their WCF-supported films in a larger map of contemporary world cinema.

WCF is the main case study for this dissertation for various reasons beyond its obvious prominence. First, WCF operates on a smaller scale compared to other festival

² All the official policies and regulations of WCF can be accessed on the website of the Berlinale at https://www.berlinale.de/en/branche/world_cinema_fund/wcf_profil/index.html. Accessed June 2, 2017.

funds such as Hubert Bals or established funding bodies outside the festival circuit (one notable example being Eurimages). With only around ten films supported per year, WCF offers a data set of manageable size and it is possible to reach an overview of the trends in WCF selections without arduously trying to find a way among thousands of projects in various stages, genres, types and so forth. It is equally significant that with a history of more than twelve years and around 125 competitively selected projects, WCF's data set is also sufficiently large for meaningful statistical analysis and provides a solid foundation for generalizable observations about the cinema landscape today.

Additionally, WCF has an unusually high rate of completion among the projects it supports. Of the 106 projects³ that have received production funding between 2005 and 2015, 87 have been completed and exhibited in prestigious film festivals for a completion rate of 82 percent. Compared to state funding distributed in many countries or other comparable festival funds, this rate is noticeably high. This means that the vast majority of the titles in the initial data set can be used for further analysis regarding festival presence and each unsuccessful case can be analyzed individually in order to unpack the reasons for the failure to complete the project despite the presence of financial support.

One of the most significant contributions of this project lies in the decision to use quantitative data and statistical methods, which are scarcely employed in film festivals studies. Despite the availability of data on funds allocated to various projects, total budgets used for film production, large numbers of festival invitations, box office

³ Projects that have been selected for production support in November 2016 or later are excluded from the data set because none of them has been completed as of July 2017. The completion rate calculation excludes the projects that have received support after the end of 2015.

revenues and other variables of a similar nature; scholars have generally preferred to utilize qualitative, often ethnographic, methods such as participant observation, interviews and textual analysis. While these established methods constitute a significant part of the tool kit for this project, one chapter is devoted to the quantitative analysis of an extensive data set I constructed. Questions one can answer by hypothesis testing or descriptive statistics differ notably in comparison to those that require qualitative methods of inquiry. The hypotheses I test in this dissertation do not establish *causal* relationships between production practices and festival presence, or *isolate* specific projects in order to analyze them in greater detail. Instead, I answer questions (some of which are listed above) about the *probability* of securing funding and receiving festival invitations based on *large clusters* of films covering a long period of time. Furthermore, building a data set (described in detail in the fourth chapter) is a significant contribution on its own as the same data set can be used to test different hypotheses in the future or can form the basis of new research projects.

In quantifying some of the categorical variables and assigning meaningful numerical values to each category, I had considerable difficulty because previous models or similar quantification attempts were largely absent from the existing literature. There are no established, commonly used scales, measures, or values for festival screenings/awards that I could directly borrow from the literature and apply to my own study. While some of the sources I have used (especially Mezias et. al 2008) are discussed in the relevant chapter, I also created some numerical scales myself in order to make statistical analysis possible. I consider these scales to be another aspect of the contribution my

dissertation makes to the literature, especially with the hope that more widely accepted measures and scales can be established in the near future.

In terms of the conceptualization of the festival phenomenon, shifting the center of the inquiry from exhibition to production is a significant contribution, which builds on a trend already observed in film festivals research. Within the limited scope of a journal article or a book chapter; many scholars have listed various types of festival initiatives, discussed a large number of festivals and films together, and provided an expansive map of the connection between film production and the festival circuit. What is unique about this dissertation is that it has a very particular, deliberately narrow focus on a single fund associated with one festival and only a certain set of films that have received support from this initiative. The advantage of narrowing the scope of my dissertation down is that my research questions and consequent results are applicable to very concrete cases within the current festival circuit and funding system. Conducting research with the question of applicability in mind does not mean that theorization is of secondary importance for the endeavor. As demonstrated below with a lengthy chapter devoted to literature review, existing academic works shape the theoretical framework of this project and many contributions of this dissertation are explicitly theoretical. Nevertheless, I claim that some of the possible contributions of a project such as this one lie at the level of praxis, with the resulting work offering concrete policy suggestions to festival programmers or the administrators of production support funds. Within a short period of ten years, WCF has undergone multiple policy changes and launched collateral initiatives such as WCF Europe (inviting European companies to apply for WCF funding), WCF Africa (which

focuses on projects from Sub-Saharan African countries), and a distribution funding program. As a part of the constantly evolving film financing scene in Europe, WCF is likely to experience further policy changes in the near future. In an implicit, indirect fashion, this dissertation attempts to predict where WCF and other similar funds associated with film festivals may be headed in that regard.

The practice of using public funds from Western European nations to finance projects from the so-called Third World countries has been questioned for the skewed representation of the Global South it promotes, and the hierarchical relationship between the funder and the recipient it reinforces. Analyzing African filmmakers' relationship with funding bodies managed through European film festivals, Lindiwe Dovey notes,

One could argue that to focus on the assumed influence of European film festivals over the thematics and aesthetics of non-European films is – far from offering critique of such festivals – keeping them centered, while rendering non-European or so-called 'world' filmmakers simple 'victims' rather than agents with power to negotiate their individual positions and desires (2015, 57).

Focusing on the influence of European funding bodies on the works of non-European filmmakers is a major part of this project, but this study does not blindly celebrate initiatives such as WCF or victimize artists from Africa, Latin America or Southeast Asia. Dovey's warning is meaningful and timely; one of the central concerns of this dissertation is to think critically about the hierarchical positioning of European and non-European agents. This is a delicate balance to establish; on one hand, one must acknowledge how useful, even essential financial support of initiatives associated with European festivals is for independent filmmakers from outside Europe. The highly commercialized structure of mainstream film industries in most non-European countries

and the lack of necessary infrastructure or monetary assets for independent film production in these territories are undeniable realities of the contemporary film landscape. Almost all the films mentioned in this study depend on European funds for their existence and have enjoyed far more prosperous lives abroad, particularly in the international festival circuit following their premieres in major European events, than in their own domestic markets. But acknowledging the valuable contributions of European institutions to the film scenes in underdeveloped and developing countries does not necessarily mean denying filmmakers from these regions agency or artistic autonomy. On the contrary, the vast majority of the filmmakers who benefit from the financial support WCF or similar initiatives provide are hailed as great *auteur* directors, highly acclaimed artists with a unique, deeply personal vision.

Additionally, even beyond this rather romantic idea of the ‘great creative mind’ or ‘the individual genius behind the work of art,’ it must be noted that the form of exchange between European funding bodies and non-European fund recipients is reciprocal rather than simply exploitative. There are concrete gains European institutions receive in return for their financial investment beyond prestige or a vague sense of ‘serving/helping’ talents in need. Films that benefit from European financing are sold to many European territories after they are completed, creating revenue for their distributors in these countries through ticket sales, home video, rental fees for festival screenings, television broadcasts and so forth. Long before the distribution of the completed films, European economies directly benefit from investing in film production elsewhere because regulations of initiatives such as WCF typically require the involvement of a co-producer

from the European country and the employment of various crew members holding the relevant nationality. For example, one of the key prerequisites of applying to WCF for production support is to have a German production company on board as a co-producer. This requirement practically guarantees that German crew members (cinematographers, editors, sound designers, art directors etc.) will get to work on the project, should it end up receiving funding. In this dissertation, I avoid naively conceptualizing funding initiatives associated with European festivals as noble saviors of world cinema, which contribute to the cultivation of new national cinemas in an almost self-sacrificial manner. Instead, I undertake an ambitious project that encompasses multiple dimensions of the relationship between film festivals and funding initiatives, ranging from the aesthetics and sensory qualities of the film medium to politics of inclusion and representation in cinema, as well as the economics of film production, exhibition, and distribution. This plurality of goals, contributions, and perspectives is reflected in the theoretical framework and the methodological tool kit of the project alike.

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is an extensive literature review, bringing three different strands of scholarly work that inform my project together. This chapter begins with an overview of the current literature on film festivals and addresses various aspects of the theorization of the film festival phenomenon. These topics include the historically European roots of festivals, the global expansion of the circuit, conceptualization of festivals as an interconnected network (borrowing the relevant network theory developed by Bruno Latour), various functions they are assumed to fulfill (such as cultivating cinephilia among enthusiastic viewers, discovering new

national cinemas or cinematic movements, establishing a shared canon of representative films), and market-oriented activities such as programming or awards distribution. The second section of the literature review focuses on the notion of national cinema, or rather the wave of transnationalism that has modified this notion considerably. The third component of this chapter is a review of the literature on film financing and funding bodies. Scholarly work on highly state-regulated European film industries, funds associated with festivals, and their policies regarding projects from developing countries form the backbone of this section.

The second chapter is devoted to the textual analyses of several WCF-supported films that have premiered in major festivals in 2017. All seven films that have been selected for either Berlin or Cannes are included in the data set. The chapter begins with a close reading of WCF regulations, tracing how the elements mentioned in the regulations are reflected in the films. Then I identify notable trends observed in several of the films, including depictions of rituals and ceremonies as an expression of cultural identity and the prevalence of stories with strong female protagonists in films directed by young (mostly women) filmmakers.

The third chapter uses data gathered from interviews with multiple filmmakers whose projects have received production support from WCF. These interviews provide a first-hand glimpse into the application process, and demonstrate the potential impact of securing financial support on the completion, circulation, and reception of projects that deviate from the conventions of mainstream filmmaking. In accordance with the WCF regulations about supporting films from specific parts of the world only, filmmakers who

have participated in interviews are Alain Gomis, Claudia Llosa, Julia Murat, Benjamin Naishtat, and John Trengove. Utilizing a combination of in-person and e-mail interviews, this chapter offers an alternative perspective on the films that have been analyzed in the previous chapter. The initial e-mail inquiry I used to arrange the interviews and the full transcripts of all our conversations are included in the appendix.

The fourth chapter utilizes the quantitative data set that accompanies this dissertation. I have compiled information about more than a dozen variables for all the 124 films that have received production support from WCF. The purpose of this chapter is to expand the scope of the study beyond the limited number of films covered in interviews or textual analyses by presenting aggregate data, which encompasses the entire WCF catalogue. Furthermore, hypothesis testing using this data set allows me to ask different types of questions that look at longitudinal relationships (i.e. the impact of one project on the director's next in terms of both funding and festival trajectory) instead of analyzing each project in isolation. This chapter details how the data set was constructed, provides descriptive statistics about WCF, and presents the results of hypotheses tests in a compact manner. The conclusion of this chapter includes some suggested modifications to the current policies and regulations of film festival funds such as WCF or Hubert Bals.

The fifth chapter chronicles the lived experiences of various 'stakeholders' in a major festival setting. Daily routines of different festival goers with conflicting agendas and goals; organizational practices of festivals regarding spatial arrangements, control of access levels, or the segmentation of the film selection; and the integration of collateral initiatives such as film markets, funding programs, or talent development schemes are

described in detail in this chapter. The unique twist of this ethnographic chapter is its suggestion that many different, seemingly contradictory performances of membership to specific audience groups can be embodied by the very same individual despite their apparent diversity. Since WCF is an official initiative of the Berlinale, observations on the Berlin Film Festival take the center stage in this chapter, though notes from the Cannes Film Festival, where many WCF-supported films premiere, also complement the analysis.

CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE

Funding initiatives associated with film festivals function at the intersection of multiple disciplines, professional activities, and theoretical perspectives. On one hand, these initiatives are governed according to rules and regulations that detail the economic aspects of film production. Operations of programs like WCF are closely intertwined with administrative, legal and financial issues that are commonly observed in the realization of complex co-productions between multiple countries. On the other hand, film production invariably has an aesthetic and artistic aspect to it regardless of how convoluted the preceding funding process may be. Films supported by WCF and similar programs must be seen as notable examples of specific national cinemas, as indicators of key transnational trends in the contemporary film landscape, and significant steps in the artistic trajectories of the filmmakers behind them, all at once. Furthermore, these funds differ from state or regional funds, private investments, or other sources of film financing because they are firmly situated in the complex galaxy of film festivals, with its unique organizational mechanisms, etiquette, and infrastructure.

The first chapter of this dissertation offers a review of the academic literature on the three tracks outlined above: first, I provide an overview of the scholarly work on the film festival phenomenon. How are these events defined, historicized, and theorized by scholars writing from the perspectives of various disciplines? Which fundamental concepts and theories have been borrowed by scholars in the study of film festivals?

What are the key debates and points of contention that have emerged in the past decade?

Then, I proceed with an overview of the literature on national cinemas and transnationalism. Rather than summarizing the significant theoretical attempts to unpack these notions, I focus on the specific cases of Latin American, Southeast Asian, and African cinemas. This applied perspective is necessitated by WCF regulations, which clearly indicate that only projects hailing from these specific regions are eligible for funding. Finally, I look at the literature on film financing with an emphasis on European co-productions, tracing how this contested term has been defined and modified over time. Studies that focus on film festival funds other than WCF (Ross 2011, De Valck 2014, Falicov 2016) are discussed in this section as well.

1.1: Film Festivals

Even though film festivals have been in existence in one form or another for several decades,⁴ scholarly work on the festival phenomenon is relatively recent. In the early 1990s, with the extremely rapid proliferation of film festivals around the world, many scholars have started to analyze the various types of festivals, the groups of agents who participate in this circuit, and the impact of festivals on filmmaking, film financing, distribution, and reception on a regular basis. But it must be acknowledged that there were many pieces written by film critics before that decade including Andre Bazin's (2009 [1955]) famous piece, which describes the Cannes Film Festival as a religious order organized around daily rituals. This article clearly demonstrated that there were organizational aspects of the festival phenomenon that distinguished it from regular

⁴ The 1932 edition of the Venice Film Festival is often cited to be the first film festival in the modern sense of the term (De Valck 2007, Chan 2011).

theatrical film exhibition, qualifying it as an interesting subject worthy of systematic study and theorization. Reputable film magazines like *Film Comment* and *Sight & Sound* have been devoting considerable space to festival coverage since the 1950s. 1950 is the first year when *Sight & Sound* published a piece about Cannes. The magazine was not closely following contemporary film production or theatrical releases in the United Kingdom at the time, therefore the presence of coverage from 1950 should be considered notably early. In the early 1960s, Penelope Houston, who would go on to write festival reports for the magazine until the 1990s, started to attend the festival every year. She was the editor of *Sight & Sound* between 1956 and 1990, so her involvement in the festival as the editor boosted the prominence of the festival and established Cannes coverage as one of the top priorities of the magazine. Richard Roud, who is one of the founders of the New York Film Festival (NYFF), was writing for *Film Comment* during the same time period, resulting in *Film Comment* devoting more than a dozen pages, including contributions from a large group of critics, to NYFF as its main feature in its September-October issues. This type of work on festivals, written from a journalistic perspective rather than in an overtly academic tone, continues to exist today. In addition to the aforementioned popular publications, journals published by university presses (such as *Film Quarterly* published by the University of California Press) have been devoting pages to film festival reports. The first issue of *Film Quarterly* from Autumn 1958 features an article on the initiation of the San Francisco Film Festival written by Gavin Lambert. Lambert also summarizes the history of competitive festivals, identifying Venice as the oldest example and questions whether the event in San Francisco can

achieve such international recognition (1958, 25). It is worth noting that *Film Quarterly* has been regularly publishing festival reports since this early example. Similar pieces often include reflections on the festival phenomenon in general despite focusing on a single edition of a chosen event.

Film festivals have often been seen as celebrations of the art form or an exhibition tool that can be used for various purposes including public education or political propaganda (Falicov 2012). Paul Willemen, on the other hand, presented a darker portrait of film festivals, arguing that the festival circuit can effectively marginalize certain types of films and limit their opportunities for breaking out of the festival system. It is obvious that there are a number of break out successes in almost every festival. But according to Jordanova (2013a), Willemen -during an interaction in a panel on global cinematic exchanges- noted that a greater number of films never manage to progress beyond a small number of festivals, remain underseen and without distribution, and do not benefit from being associated with a festival label. Willemen's position was challenged by many film scholars, most prominently Thomas Elsaesser, who offered a more optimistic view of the festival circuit. According to Elsaesser, the structural capacities and the visibility of film festivals in the current media environment provide many films a valuable platform in order to be catapulted beyond these events. He argues that 'films use the festival circuit as the muscle that pumps [them] through the larger system' (2013, 85). This idea does not only take into account the enhanced distribution and exhibition opportunities films can enjoy after their stint on the festival circuit, but may also be extended into funding and

production spheres, considering how essential festivals have become for the mere existence of especially non-mainstream types of cinema.

Finding a middle ground between these two positions, Marijke de Valck (2007) and Dina Iordanova (2013a) note that festivals can perform multiple functions equally effectively. Perhaps the most significant contribution of their work to film festival studies is the conceptualization of festivals as complicated networks that require broader analysis as opposed to being one-time events organized in isolation. Iordanova notes that a film can enjoy such a long run on the festival circuit that its life in festivals may not be considered simply a preview for outside exhibition stages. She observes that ‘in most cases the suppliers of film content are satisfied with ensuring that the product is showcased at a string of festivals’ (2013a, 121). With little mention of exhibition beyond festivals, and considering the large numbers and various types of festivals films travel to, the festival circuit can be seen as an alternative exhibition network on its own. Going back to Willemen, it is possible to then ask whether the festival circuit becomes not an alternative, but the *only* exhibition platform for some films.

Another significant characteristic of the literature on film festivals has been an intense focus on European identity. Since De Valck's declaration that film festivals are a European phenomenon, most of the work on the subject has tended to analyze major European festivals such as Berlin, Cannes, and Venice; and to a lesser extent Locarno, Rotterdam, and Karlovy Vary. De Valck explicitly claims that ‘Europe is the cradle of the film festival phenomenon’ (2007, 14). Not surprisingly, all four case studies in her book length study focus on events held in Europe. This is to be expected considering these

events are among the oldest and most highly regarded of their kind, they attract considerable media and public attention, and their histories are tightly linked to recent European history. Venice Film Festival was started to showcase the high value the fascist regime attributed to arts, especially when it took the form of state propaganda. The Cannes Film Festival was founded in response, advocating artistic freedom, but it was postponed until the end of World War II. Berlin Film Festival was initiated to showcase the liberties and the superiority of Western Germany against the Eastern part of the country and the choice of Berlin as the location was strategic in that sense. Based on these observations, Elsaesser (2013) also declares that the annual film festival is a ‘very European’ institution.

This initial emphasis on European identity extends beyond the physical locations of festivals and finds textual dimensions. One tendency in this direction is to equate the type of cinema that populates festivals with a traditionally European style of arthouse filmmaking, especially marked by the work of auteur directors. This leads to a simplified dichotomy which situates mainstream Hollywood and European art film at the opposite ends of a spectrum. The interchangeable use of terms like ‘art film’ or ‘festival film’ in daily life as well as in the marketing or distribution of cinematic works is an indicator of this inclination. Extending the analysis of film festivals beyond Europe is useful and necessary to break away from this pattern. Especially following the worldwide outburst of dozens of festivals, this emphasis on European identity has weakened and taken the form of acknowledging the historical roots of the phenomenon without limiting the contemporary festival circuit to a single geographic region. Analyzing events that

specialize on specific genres (fantastic film festivals, animation and documentary events), identity-based festivals (events devoted to LGBTQ films or Jewish cinema), and major but sometimes overlooked events (such as the Pan African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou -FESPACO-, a significant event specializing in films from Africa) is a noteworthy step in this direction (Ruoff 2012). Several works on archival film festivals (Marlow-Mann 2013), queer film festivals (Richards 2016), and film festivals in the Middle East (Iordanova and Van de Peer 2014) have considerably expanded the borders of film festivals research beyond European auteur cinema.

Working along similar lines, Cindy Wong (2011) emphasizes the global nature of the film festival circuit and demonstrates how political, historical and social developments influence the formation of film festivals everywhere in the world, and not just Europe, through the example of the Hong Kong Film Festival. She also distinguishes North American festivals such as New York and Toronto, noting that these events have a different agenda in comparison to their European counterparts because they are content in showcasing the best films presented elsewhere for their local and loyal audiences rather than insisting on premiere status and industry relations. While Wong's position can be criticized for its emphasis on globalism in the sense that such a perspective may lead to misleading ideas of convergence and unity (the festival 'network,' despite the terminology, remains highly diverse and fragmented); her work has been influential and the volume of work published on non-European festivals has increased considerably. Film festivals based in Asia, in particular, have been studied in relation to a wide range of

concepts such as national cinemas in the age of transnational cultural production⁵ and genre focus as a key component of programming strategies.⁶ An anthology on Chinese film festivals edited by Chris Berry and Luke Robinson (2017) -which compiles diverse perspectives that emphasize social aspects like civic engagement, nonprofit organization and rapid urbanization- concentrated on the exhibition of Chinese-language cinema in and around the mainland.

Another key debate in film festival studies has been a question of methodology. Julian Stringer (2003) was the first to problematize the journalistic perspective that prevailed over festival research, asking who gets to study film festivals in the first place. According to him, when he wrote his dissertation shortly after the turn of the millennium, literature on festivals at the time was written by ‘insiders,’ individuals who have a professional affiliation (often in the form of festival-approved accreditations) with the event. He argues that ‘observers’ (academics) have much to bring to the area because they can approach the phenomenon from a broader, more conceptual perspective; breaking both the limited single festival/edition focus observed in many journalistic pieces and the anecdotal nature of the early literature on this topic. He admits that this kind of work produced from a journalistic perspective is valuable, but also adds that the early scholarly work on festivals was ‘characterized by a predominantly anecdotal approach that does not subject the matter at hand to rigorous academic investigation’ (2003, 1).

⁵ For a detailed example, see Soo Jeong Ahn’s (2012) book length analysis of the Pusan International Film Festival in the context of the globalization of South Korean cinema.

⁶ For example, see Sayoko Kinoshita’s (2012) study on the Hiroshima Animation Festival, which she programs herself.

While she acknowledges the fact that academics have little access to festivals unless they write in a journalistic capacity because of institutional limits (lack of funding, festivals not granting accreditations to scholars, logistical difficulties of attending various festivals); Iordanova (2013a) observes that insiders and observers actually show a surprising level of similarity in terms of their concerns, questions, and results. What is more problematic for Iordanova is the lack of coherence and connectedness among the literature produced, regardless of the insider or observer status of the author. She notes that there are too many directions and questions film festival studies is preoccupied with and there is a general tendency among scholars to ignore each other's work. Scholars are not responding to each other or do not draw from a shared pool of existing concepts and definitions. She even questions whether film festival studies can be considered a 'field' despite the quickly growing amount of work produced because of this lack of coherence. It can be argued that this theoretical disconnect between scholars writing on film festivals extends to the of domain methodology as well. In the few years since the publication of Iordanova's observations, several edited volumes that bring a diverse set of authors in dialogue with each other have been published (many of them edited by Iordanova herself in an annual series of 'yearbooks' on film festivals⁷) and comprehensive online bibliographies have been formed,⁸ providing a (perhaps partial) remedy to the problem of disciplinary incoherence.

⁷ For an overview of all 'Film Festival Yearbooks' in the series published by St. Andrews Film Studies, see <http://stafs.org/series/film-festival-yearbooks/>. Accessed July 13, 2017.

⁸ For the online bibliography maintained by Skadi Loist and Marijke De Valck, see <http://www.filmfestivalresearch.org/index.php/ffrn-bibliography/>. Accessed July 13, 2017.

In order to provide a theoretical framework for the study of film festivals, scholars have associated the film festival phenomenon with the works of a diverse group of theorists including Pierre Bourdieu and Walter Benjamin. Many scholars have noted that film festivals bring together various agents operating with different and often clashing goals, and experiencing the festival phenomenon in decidedly distinct ways (Dayan 2000, De Valck 2007, Peranson 2009). Building on a similar argument, Ragan Rhyne (2013) has used the term ‘stakeholders’ to refer to the variety of visitors and professionals who participate in festivals.⁹

A frequently cited scholar, Bourdieu (1984) shows that groups with high cultural capital (education and privileged social origin) are able to determine what ‘taste’ means in society, and establish the distinction between high and low cultures. The categories of good and bad taste (high and low brow culture) are examples of a system of cultural hegemony, which resembles and reproduces other similar hegemonic structures, frequently based on the unequal distribution of financial assets. Applying similar ideas to film festivals, Cindy Wong asserts that festivals are more than mere exhibition venues and notes that by selecting and honoring specific films over others, festivals add value and prestige to films. According to Wong, festival programmers have the power to recognize and create taste, determine what is best or high quality in filmmaking and discover further examples of the ‘distinguished’ type of cinema they themselves have cultivated. Bringing the notable impact of film festivals in terms of both economic and cultural capital together, Wong states that ‘while film festivals play pivotal roles both in

⁹ This argument is developed in further detail in the fifth chapter of this dissertation.

defining a shared canon of “great” cinema and in adding cultural value to films, they also are significant because they create nodes of global business in which films circulate as commodities’ (2011, 129). In addition to her arguments about taste making, Wong’s use of the term ‘node’ is also worth noting because it hints at an application of various network theories in film festival studies. Wong combines network terminology with the processes of cultural value addition, canon formation, and the circulation of economic capital; all of which are important ideas that go back to Bourdieu. The key network theory that has shaped film festival scholarship, Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network Theory, is discussed in detail in the fifth chapter.

In the era of instant and continuous access to films, theatrical film exhibition no longer has the special ‘event’ status it once had. Film festivals, on the other hand, at least partially maintain this quality because of their temporal and spatial specificity. Walter Benjamin’s work provides a useful framework for theorizing this particular aspect of the festival phenomenon. Benjamin (1969) argues that in the age of mechanical reproduction, the value attributed to a work of art does not stem from its existence or its uniqueness. Instead, what is highly valued is the *first* instance of reception as value is created through consumption by audience members. Films are widely reproduced and distributed, but what adds value to this process of production and consumption is the ‘event status’ surrounding the exhibition. In the case of films in this age of reproduction, the value is formed around the factors surrounding the exhibition of the work, not around any inherent or unique quality the material film itself possesses. With their emphasis on premiere status, intense inter-festival competition for world premiere screenings, and

many collateral events that turn the festival screening into a notable event (red carpet galas, talent interacting with the press and the fans etc.); film festivals constitute a prime example of how value can be produced in the modern filmmaking landscape. Bill Nichols (2013), referring to Benjamin, argues that what makes festivals worthy of academic attention is the central position they occupy in the rapid circulatory pattern films go through since the 1990s. According to Nichols, the festival phenomenon stimulates an aura of authenticity and originality by creating carnivalesque public spectacles around films, which themselves may not actually possess these qualities. Festivals are inherently spectacular one-time occasions, and this in itself creates value beyond simple film exhibition.

While organizational practices and infrastructural elements have often been at the forefront of film festival scholarship, many authors have shifted their attention to the films that populate these events; highlighting the role festivals play in cultivating national cinemas, establishing cinematic trends, and determining what constitutes world cinema. This approach has an intense focus on the films themselves rather than the mechanisms that surround their exhibition. Scholars whose work illustrates this approach include Gönül Dönmez Colin (2008), whose study on the wave of films making up the New (or Young) Turkish Cinema is closely linked to the presence of these films in international festivals, and Bill Nichols (1994), who stresses the importance of festivals in determining the new hubs of exciting cinematic activity (e.g., western critics discovering Iranian cinema largely thanks to a retrospective organized by the Toronto Film Festival in the early 1990s). In discussing the critical tendency to coin new terms for clusters of films

shown in a festival and establish new cinematic ‘waves’ or ‘movements,’ Nichols observes that ‘recovering the strange as familiar takes two forms’ and distinguishes between ‘discovering form’ and ‘inferring meaning’ (1994, 18). Within the film festival context, encountering previously unknown films and cinemas often takes the form of inferring meaning. Nichols states that as audiences in film festivals, ‘we hope to go behind appearances, to grasp the meaning of things as those who present them would, to step outside our (inescapable) status as outsiders and diagnosticians to attain a more intimate, more authentic form of experience’ (1994, 19). Beyond merely ‘discovering’ films upon encountering previously unknown media texts and assigning them labels with little substance, Nichols calls for a deeper, more nuanced reading of ‘foreign’ films that are frequently shown in festivals. As a consequence of WCF’s aforementioned policy about supporting projects only from specific underprivileged or underrepresented parts of the world, most of the films mentioned throughout this dissertation originate not from established centers of cinematic production such as Western Europe or North America, but from peripheral locations on the world cinema map. It is crucial to avoid exoticizing the films under analysis or overemphasizing their foreignness. Rather than describing their differences or innovative qualities by taking North American and European conventions of the so-called art film as a point of reference, I attempt to make meaning of their unique thematic and aesthetic qualities, especially in relation to the appeal these films may hold for funding initiatives and festival programmers.

Liz Czach, building on Nichols’ arguments, draws attention to film festivals in Canada, particularly in terms of the role they play in cultivating a national Canadian

cinema. Focusing on the events in Montreal and Toronto, Czach notes that these festivals devote full program sections such as 'Perspective Canada' or 'Panorama Canada' to the cinematic output of the country. She argues that these curatorial efforts are crucial for indigenous filmmaking in Canada because small-scale local productions are unable to secure exhibition outside the festival circuit against the commercial dominance of Hollywood tentpoles. Another key aspect of Czach's analysis is the role of film festivals in determining which films become 'representative' examples of the national cinemas they are a part of. Festivals add value to the films they show, function as a seal of approval, and form national canons. Czach states that in national showcases like 'Perspective Canada,' films are 'being selected because they are "representatives" and adhere to a political agenda of what is good for the nation (...) - not necessarily driven by quality, value, or good taste' (2004, 84). The acknowledgment of festivals' *creation* of taste and value instead of selecting films based on universal, established artistic criteria is reminiscent of Bourdieu's work -as discussed above- but what is unique in Czach's analysis is the introduction of 'representative films' as a key concept. Stephanie Dennison and Song Hwee Lim (2006) argue that the notion of world cinema revolves around politically correct representative films from each country or region and Czach's study, actually predating this theorization of world cinema, identifies film festivals as a significant site where these representative films emerge and are brought together under an institutional umbrella.

However, it must also be noted that festivals' involvement in determining which films get to represent national cinemas has been contested convincingly. Felicia Chan,

questioning the discourse of national cinema within the context of film festivals, notes that ‘apart from celebrating individual films and directors, festivals often showcase various bodies of work defined as cinema emerging from particular nations, more usually referred to as “national cinemas”’ (2011, 253). She brings up the notion of national cinema in order to problematize the gap between the international and domestic receptions of films that receive critical acclaim on the festival circuit. Since most of the films that succeed in international film festivals actually struggle to connect with audiences in their home countries, how can these films be understood as ‘representatives’ of the cinematic output of that country? Far from being representative examples, many of the films that win accolades in film festivals are marginalized in their domestic markets. As Chan observes, ‘for many non-European filmmakers festivals can provide an opportunity to express their own ideas of a national consciousness that may otherwise not find an audience at home,’ adding that ‘the question remains as to how such a cinema, one appears to be more “national” abroad than at home, should be situated’ (259).

Consequently, one key question becomes what is the source of this discrepancy between the trajectories of ‘festival films’ at home and abroad? In order to answer this question, many scholars have attempted to unpack the characteristic qualities seen across a range of films that enjoy successful festival runs. ‘Festival films’ have been situated in opposition to commercial, mainstream productions that appeal to broad audience groups and this term has been used synonymously with other categories such as ‘art’ film. For example, Azadeh Farahmand analyzes the success of Iranian films in international festivals despite the unfavorable production and exhibition conditions in the country, and

argues that these festival films have created a genre with its own visual and narrative codes. Farahmand explains the formation of such a genre by stating that ‘local producers often internalize and integrate an understanding of festival expectations in the very inception and development of projects’ (2010, 267). The genre of festival films is marked by a sustained sense of slowness and symbolism; key components of the ‘generic conception of Iranian cinema’ cultivated on the international film festival circuit, consequently ‘adopted and internalized’ by Iranian filmmakers (277).

Slowness of festival films -placed in contrast to fast-paced mainstream productions- is a common notion that extends far beyond the limited context of Iranian cinema. In his work on ‘slow cinema,’ Ira Jaffe argues that slow films deliberately counter the conventions of mainstream cinema, or what he calls the ‘cinema of action,’ and quickly notes how successful the films he examines have been on the festival circuit by stating that such slow films ‘have been hailed at Cannes, Berlin, Venice (...) and other international film festivals’ (2014, 2). Festivals’ alleged preference for the so-called slow cinema is nothing new; going back to Antonioni’s classic *L’Avventura* (1960) and mentioning a wide range of films from Aleksandr Sokurov’s *Mother and Son* (*Mat i Syn*, 1997) to Apichatpong Weerasethakul’s *Syndromes and a Century* (*Sang Sattawat*, 2006), Cindy Wong argues that ‘works by many of the great festival directors present small moments dissected in detail’ and identifies the presence of long, slow shots or the lack of narrative momentum as key tools to achieve this impact (2011, 78). Questioning whether ‘art cinema’ can constitute a genre category, David Bordwell similarly places art films (frequently screened at festivals) in opposition to action and movement, stating that ‘the

art cinema is less concerned with action than reaction, it is a cinema of psychological effects in search of their causes' (2009, 651). Consequently, Jaffe's contribution is to explicitly spell out the implied in inaction as slowness and unpack the visual tools used to construct this insistent sense of stasis. Some of the tools are fairly obvious (such as a tendency in editing to let shots linger on for longer than usual or careful framing with minimal camera movement), while some others require more careful analysis. For example, using *Liverpool* (2008) -a WCF-funded film- by Lisandro Alonso, Jaffe observes that a common 'slow-movie tactic' is to 'underscore [the] protagonist's lack of dynamism and narrative agency by excluding images that reflect the protagonist's point of view' (2014, 113). Agreeing with Jaffe's analysis, Song Hwee Lim also provides a quick list of what constitutes slow cinema by identifying 'long takes (up to ten minutes), static camera, big difference between the camera [and] its human subjects, and a lot of the banality of daily life' as characteristic elements (2014, 2).

The 'festival style,' which some filmmakers may internalize as Farahmand argues, extends beyond a formalist obsession with stillness to the domain of narrative and thematic concerns. In unpacking what these thematic concerns are, Rick Warner -who uses the term 'contemplative cinema' to refer to a specific segment of slow films- lists many filmmakers whose names frequently come up in discussions of slow (or 'minimal' or 'pensive') cinema such as Lisandro Alonso, Pedro Costa, Lav Diaz, Abbas Kiarostami, Aleksandr Sokurov, and Bela Tarr. Not coincidentally, this is an illustrious list of artists when one considers the critical acclaim and awards recognition these directors have enjoyed on the film festival circuit. Regarding the works of these directors, he states that,

These are feature films, *often products of the international festival circuit*, that diverge radically from the customary centers of dramatic action and operate more intensely in a non-narrative key. By and large they tend toward longer shot durations, assign greater emphasis to lags and lacunae in the plot, and give priority to physical surroundings (...). These films are often distinguished by a sparseness of *mise-en-scène*, a systematic reduction and rarefaction so that each element in play, down to the merest sound, the humblest object, and the subtlest gesture, can be charged with immense expressive force (2015, 46, my emphasis).

Warner's formulation brings together multiple dimensions of slow cinema previously discussed by Jaffe and Lim. More significantly, he highlights a major function of slowness in cinema; that is the heightened interest the film shows in the most minute details. In slow films that enjoy successful festival runs, the camera does not merely witness and record events, it stops and pays particular attention to seemingly ordinary images. In other words, the camera's unexpected fascination with the mundane creates an aura of transcendentalism. This is not to be confused with a simplified, schematic sense of religiosity, but needs to be identified as a recognizable spiritual aspect. Perhaps the most widely known analysis of the transcendental style in cinema is Paul Schrader's (1972) account of the works of Yasujiro Ozu, Robert Bresson, and Carl Theodor Dreyer. However, I utilize the notions Warner uses in his discussion (slowness, contemplation, spirituality) for a different purpose in relation to the films that receive financial support from WCF and other festival funds. Specifically, Schrader's study of the transcendental style closely associates the spiritual quality observed in the films by Ozu, Bresson, and Dreyer with minimalism, a deliberate absence of spectacle. Following the more contemporary accounts of slow cinema cited above, I dissociate slowness from minimalism and frame slow cinema as a profoundly formalist tradition. I argue that the

absolute stillness of images and the extreme attention to the smallest details this necessitates create a unique type of cinematic spectacle, which possesses an extraordinary level of texture and sensory prowess.¹⁰ Though it is obviously impossible to pinpoint a single brand of filmmaking that appeals to funding bodies such as WCF, it is clear that aesthetics of slowness, when put in the service of visual innovation and narratives that leave ample room for meaningful contemplation, can be identified as one notable ingredient of what constitutes a ‘festival film.’

1.2: (Trans)National Cinemas

While it is debatable whether the films that receive WCF-support can be considered ‘representatives’ of the cinematic output of their respective home countries, many scholars have written extensive accounts of national cinemas by using these films as prominent case studies. WCF funding is allocated to films from specific regions including Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Among the Latin American films funded by WCF, productions from Argentina constitute an overwhelming majority. Even though there are films from Peru, Brazil, Chile, and Colombia that have received financial support from WCF; it is indisputable that Argentine films outnumber all other Latin American productions by a significant margin. Consequently, the prevalent discourse on New Argentine Cinema forms a useful theoretical framework for this study. In fact, as it is the case with most cinematic movements and national cinemas, it is not easy to determine where ‘New Argentine Cinema’ begins or ends. Myrto Konstantarakos

¹⁰ This argument is developed further in chapters two and three with specific examples from several films that have received WCF support in recent years.

accurately warns us that ‘despite receiving praise and recognition from critics and the public alike, the new crop of Argentine filmmakers refuse to be labelled as a movement because they lack a declaration of principles and a single set of ideas’ (2006, 132).

Reminiscent of Nichols’ aforementioned critique of the critical tendency to quickly assign labels to small clusters of films, New Argentine Cinema is a term coined by film critics and scholars rather than a deliberately formed cinematic movement. Nevertheless, a critical comparative analysis of several recent Argentine films that have received financial support and awards recognition from major European festivals reveals a number of common visual traits and thematic preoccupations.

On the most obvious level, it is important to note that all scholarly accounts of New Argentine Cinema refer to the economic crisis at the turn of the millennium as a defining moment, and highlight the changes in funding structures for domestic film production as a key factor in the proliferation of Argentine films during the first decade of the 21st century (Ross 2010, Andermann 2012, Hart 2014). This decade witnessed the rise of free market policies and neoliberal economic governance in Argentina. Unsurprisingly, Argentine filmmakers depicted these socioeconomic transformations in their works. They were both successful chroniclers of the changing economic conditions in their country, and accurate predictors of the impact rising neoliberalism would have on the lives of ordinary lower-middle class citizens. It is worth noting, however, that the national specificity of the content has not caused Argentine cinema to have difficulty in attracting international attention. In an overview of contemporary Latin American cinema, Deborah Shaw states that ‘national contexts have, in many cases, proven no obstacle to spectators’

enjoyment of the films in other countries' (2007, 6). This point is clearly demonstrated by the generous financial support Latin American films have received from many funding initiatives based in Europe as well as the widespread critical and -in some cases- commercial success these films have enjoyed upon their premieres in prestigious international festivals.

Associating the political filmmaking scene in Argentina in the 1960s with New Argentine Cinema, Joanna Page claims that Argentine films made during the first years of the new century 'turned poverty into a "signifier" in their representation of underdevelopment and inequality' (2009, 2). The most evident outcome of growing neoliberalism in the Latin American context, according to several prominent examples of New Argentine cinema, has been the widening of the socioeconomic gap between the financially privileged and disadvantaged segments of society. This emphasis on poverty and social inequality remains a major thematic preoccupation in Argentine cinema, especially in the films that receive financial support from funds associated with major European film festivals.¹¹

Equally significant for the purposes of this dissertation is the spatial expansion of the festival circuit into the specific territories under analysis. In this sense, I underline the re-formation of Mar del Plata Film Festival in 1996 after 25 years off the festival map and the initiation of Buenos Aires Independent Film Festival (BAFICI) in 2001 as key developments. These two events are the most important film festivals in Argentina and

¹¹ For example, Miriam Ross (2011) highlights the portrayal of economic struggles and uses the term 'misery porn' in her analysis of the Hubert Bals fund, when she uses the Argentine film *Pizza, Birra, Faso* (1998) as her case study.

both constitute an essential platform for the exhibition, appreciation, and circulation of contemporary Argentine films. In the light of the previous argument regarding the economic crisis at the turn of the century, it is not a coincidence that both of these festivals were (re-)launched almost concurrently, slightly before or in the immediate aftermath of the economic turmoil. BAFICI's decision to limit the scope of its competitive strand to directorial debuts or second films, and the distribution of awards to directors such as Adrian Caetano or Pablo Trapero (who would go onto become some of the leading figures of New Argentine Cinema) also indicate how essential a role the festival circuit has played in cultivating a cinematic movement emerging in the face of considerable economic difficulty. However, I should stress that the contribution of domestic festivals to the meteoric rise of Argentine cinema was inevitably limited to symbolic value addition rather than the allocation of monetary assets because of an economic emergency legislation. Andermann reminds us that state subsidies for film production were frozen between 1997 and 2002, forcing many young filmmakers to 'routinely apply to international foundations such as the Sundance Institute, the French Fonds Sud Cinema, or the Dutch Hubert Bals Fund' (2012, 8). Considering Hubert Bals' association with the Rotterdam Film Festival and the prominence of the Sundance Film Festival in the festival circuit, it is possible to safely assert that international film festivals have been actively involved in providing necessary economic resources for film production in Argentina during a period when such resources were not available in the domestic market.

Andermann devotes lengthy sections of his book length study on New Argentine Cinema to some of the characteristic elements observed in the films brought together under this contested term: locating the crisis in urban locations and metropolitan centers, especially Buenos Aires as ‘a key site of crisis, indeed as the eye of the storm’ (30); fast-paced, formalist editing (‘stepping over the speed barrier of the neoliberal city’ (34) in Andermann’s words); and narrative emphasis on reconstructing communities against a shared adversary. Andermann notes that many recent Argentine films ‘relate to place as a sphere of belonging (...) around which a community can assemble with regained strength’ (38). Analyzing Latin American cinema as a whole rather than focusing on Argentina alone, Stephen Hart makes similar observations with Andermann regarding what he calls ‘the essential ingredients of the “slick grit” of Latin American cinema in the 21st century’ (2014, 109). Highlighting films such as *Amores Perros* (2000), *Nine Queens* (*Nueve Reinas*, 2000) or *City of God* (*Cidade de Deus*, 2002); he draws attention to aggressive formal elements and quick cutting (aided by digital technology), gritty urban locations marked by crime and poverty, and a thematic preoccupation regarding widespread corruption, national economic crisis or moral decadence in every layer of Latin American societies as they try to deal with the effects of neoliberal policies.

In the milieu of a major economic crisis, the early films of New Argentine Cinema reflect a very specific moment in the history of the country, but I argue that with the involvement of international institutions in domestic film production and the influence of the festival circuit; the landscape of New Argentine Cinema has quickly evolved after the turn of the century. On one hand, there was the chaotic urban center suffering from the

side effects of neoliberal economic policies. On the other hand, frequent portrayals of life in rural Argentina found their ways to the screen, in part thanks to the financial support provided by WCF and similar foreign sources of funding. Deliberate use of slow cinema aesthetics with a more leisurely pace that leaves room for self-reflection, and narratives that follow a single individual closely in order to examine personal (rather than communal or societal) issues have risen in prominence. Films set in rural areas constitute a significant portion of the cinematic output in many Latin American countries; as Joanna Page demonstrates in relation to Argentina, ‘the anti-capitalist impetus of many films has produced nostalgic images of a rural, lesser developed Argentina’ (2009, 115). This thematic dichotomy between the slow-paced life in rural areas and the chaotic, hurried atmosphere of the neoliberal metropolis can be observed in even the earliest examples of New Argentine Cinema from the late 1990s.¹² However, with the consequent proliferation of the slow, rural, ‘festival-friendly’ Latin American films; the political undercurrent such films carried within the context of the economic crisis and its immediate aftermath was lost, resulting in a different brand of cinema, which is relatively more personal and formalist, at least on a surface level. The increasingly personal nature of Latin American films produced with European involvement is noted by Paul Julian Smith, who attempts to identify common elements found in transnational films emerging from Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil. Smith states that “‘festival films’ (normally known as art, auteur or specialist features)’ are held to be ‘*personal* and local,’ even though they usually are ‘transnational in both production and aesthetics’ (2014, 27, my emphasis).

¹² Page’s examples include Alejandro Agresti’s *Wind with the Gone* (*El Viento se Llovió Lo Que*, 1998) and Carlos Sorin’s *Intimate Stories* (*Historias Minimas*) from 2002.

As evidenced by the frequent mentions of Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Lav Diaz in the literature on the brand of slow cinema favored by international film festivals, Southeast Asia constitutes another major hub of such contemplative filmmaking alongside Latin America. That being the case, existing scholarly works on the cinematic output of Southeast Asian countries form another essential theoretical framework for this study. It must be stressed that all the Southeast Asian films in the WCF roster can be labeled as ‘independent’ and that they fall decidedly outside the extremely rich and active mainstream filmmaking traditions of their home countries. However, this categorization based on a vague notion of independence does not explain much apart from distinguishing a certain group of films from more overtly commercial ones with broader mass appeal. Starting with an attempt to define what ‘independent cinema’ means in the unique context of Southeast Asia, Tilman Baumgärtel first notes that ‘the cinema of Southeast Asia has been a *quantite negligeable* internationally until very recently, despite the fact that this part of the world has been positively cinema-crazy for decades’ (2012a, 1). Obviously, one component of independence in this context is a break away from the conventions of the dominant, highly productive commercial film industries in Southeast Asian countries. Baumgärtel then highlights the emergence of digital filmmaking technologies as a key factor that made the proliferation of independent films in countries such as Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines possible. Digital cinema has caused notable changes in the ways films are made and distributed not only in this specific part of the world, but all around the globe. Nevertheless, Southeast Asia perhaps is the one region where the impact of digitization on independent cinema is most clearly

evident and pronounced. As a way of comparison, it can be useful to remember that the Latin American counterpart of a new independent cinema in the early 2000s was primarily marked by the political preoccupations of the filmmakers (regarding the economic crisis, corruption, inequality between social classes and so forth). Southeast Asian independent cinema, on the other hand, is characterized by the aesthetic innovativeness of filmmakers and the formally daring films they make, aided greatly by digital technology. Baumgärtel observes that independent Southeast Asian films

should not exclusively be judged by their political relevance or the issues they address, as they are first and foremost movies with an aesthetic and artistic agenda. And it is on the aesthetic level where the indie films of Southeast Asia really shine, especially when they are trying to find a filmic language of their own that is not derivative of Hollywood or other international cinemas (2012a, 6).

Consequently, one must ask what the aesthetic agenda that gives Southeast Asian films such a unique identity exactly is. In some cases, there are obvious filmmaking strategies that Southeast Asian directors utilize in order to cultivate a distinctive cinematic signature of their own (such as insisting on extraordinarily generous running times of around eight to ten hours, as it is the case in the films by Lav Diaz from the Philippines). Many of the aesthetic elements that I mentioned above in relation to slow cinema are frequently observed in films from this region as well. Of course, it is possible to interpret the use of such techniques as an act of resistance in opposition to the dominant storytelling conventions of domestic commercial film industries in these countries. Asking the obvious yet essential question ‘independent of what?’ in relation to contemporary films from this region, John Lent highlights being ‘independent of government regulation/censorship,’ ‘independent of big mainstream studios,’ and

‘independent of traditional methods and styles of filmmaking’ as significant components of the unconventional and individualistic character of film production in Southeast Asia (2012, 13-16). All these components explicitly state a dominant local agent or tradition that independent filmmakers need to resist, and frame independent filmmaking as an act of opposition to various hegemonic powers. This is an important point to note as regulations of WCF, Hubert Bals Fund and other similar initiatives often highlight political relevance and visual innovation as crucial selection criteria. It is necessary for Southeast Asian films to distinguish themselves from the formulaic structures and mainstream traditions of their domestic markets by finding a unique cinematic voice, emerging as texts that take a critical point of view on dominant ideologies.

The oppositional, or perhaps rather interstitial, position of independent Southeast Asian films within the contemporary film landscape points at multiple conflicting perspectives, even some instances of notable friction between filmmakers, local authorities, and audience members. A common problem is the fact that, despite the widespread acclaim and recognition they receive in international festivals; films by Lav Diaz, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Phan Dang Di, Eric Khoo and similar directors struggle to reach domestic audiences in the original form that meets directors’ intentions. Majority of the films directed by Diaz have been unable to secure theatrical distribution in his native the Philippines because of either the very long running times of his films or the extremely restrictive censorship ratings assigned to his work. Diaz established an online system to self-distribute his films through DVD-R copies produced upon order through a website. Perhaps the most high-profile case of state censorship in recent years

was Weerasethakul's *Syndromes and a Century*, which was censored by Thai authorities despite premiering to rave reviews in Venice and being hailed as one of the great films of the decade a few years later, and resulted in the director expressing his unwillingness to exhibit his work in his own country. Regarding this unfortunate discrepancy, Baumgärtel argues that the situation becomes all the more striking because 'these works are often perceived by an international audience as the very essence of the specific culture of the very countries that show little or no interest in these films' (2012b, 22). This is definitely a noteworthy observation, which I believe is closely linked to the international film festival circuit.¹³ I argue that, as discussed previously, film festivals play a crucial role in cultivating a skewed understanding of 'national essence' by selecting and exhibiting specific films, which in fact may have difficulty in finding a place within the very culture they are assumed to represent. Festivals make certain films visible in the international arena, which often leads to a widespread confusion between visibility and a 'representative' quality these films actually do not possess, as indicated by the rejection they tend to face if and when they are released in their countries of origin.

Perhaps a larger consequent question concerns how filmmakers themselves perceive this discrepancy and react to the generalizations based on their work. Do they exploit the blind faith of western audiences in the cultural authenticity of their films in order to further cement their privileged positions on the festival circuit? Or do they question the role of portraying an amorphous notion of national essence on screen, which is assigned to their work against their will; negotiating their subjective positions between

¹³ This example about Southeast Asian cinemas is closely linked to the question of representing a national cinema discussed earlier in relation to Bill Nichols' and Felicia Chans's works.

various national and transnational identities through their films? Providing a rather optimistic answer to this question, Baumgärtel (2012b) refers to Benedict Anderson (1983) and claims that independent Southeast Asian films constitute ‘imagined worlds’ (a variation of Anderson’s ‘imagined communities’). The most notable characteristic of these worlds is that they are intangible, subjective, and, despite being partially shaped by the real historical, economic or social conditions that surround them, they possess the capacity to destabilize established notions of national identity. On the other, darker end of the spectrum, focusing on the particular case of Thai cinema, Chaiworaporn and Knee claim that the so-called Thai national identity has been deliberately utilized by filmmakers with political agendas (rather than personal ones) in mind, arguing that ‘in the face of globalization and in the wake of economic crisis and recovery, contemporary cinema in Thailand has emphasized aspects of Thai identity’ (2006, 58). Their argument is not specifically limited to the independent film scene; instead they pay due attention to popular local blockbusters and the proliferation of historical dramas, which exploit characters, narratives, and imagery from Thai (or Siamese) history in order to achieve box office success. Nevertheless, traces of a similarly exploitative approach to Thai history, politics, and cultural identity can be observed in independent productions as I shall illustrate below.

The most prominent name of independent Thai cinema on the international film festival circuit is Apichatpong Weerasethakul, two of whose films have been supported by WCF and gone on to premiere in Cannes.¹⁴ He has an alternating perspective on

¹⁴ The two WCF-supported films are *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* (*Loong Boonmee Raleuk Chat*, 2010) and *Cemetery of Splendor* (*Rak ti Khon Kaen*, 2015).

representing Thai identity for international audiences, occupying a position somewhere between the two views outlined above. In an interview with Baumgärtel conducted on the occasion of Weerasethakul's first complete retrospective in Europe, the director himself notes that all his films are very personal and explicitly states, 'I do not represent anything but myself' (2012, 181). He goes on to declare that he makes films for himself, and neither for the local audiences in Thailand nor the international viewers who watch his films in festivals, on home video and so forth (188). In addition, he clarifies his position on nationhood by stating, 'I would like to think that I do not represent any nation or any country' (189). On the other hand, he admits that the political climate in Thailand has caused his approach to filmmaking to change gradually and that his upcoming works are more closely linked to Thai politics and history compared to his earlier, extremely personal films. This point is clearly embodied in *Cemetery of Splendor*, his latest film released after the publication of the quoted interview, whose political undercurrent is inescapably linked to the 2014 coup d'état in Thailand resulting in a military takeover.

The unhurried pace of Weerasethakul's films has frequently been associated with slow cinema aesthetics as discussed above. Other scholars have interpreted the prevalence of mundane events in his work -presented in deliberate stillness- as an extension of the filmmaker's signature mix of fantasy elements and social realism. It is because of this element of social reality that Weerasethakul's films are sometimes assumed to present an authentic portrayal of Thailand. Writing on *Tropical Malady* (Sud Pralad, 2004), perhaps Weerasethakul's most enigmatic and elusive film, Arnika Fuhrmann describes the film as a 'realist fantasy' and goes on to state that 'the film

renders [its story] through a documentary lens that admixes elements of fantasy' (2016, 130). Regarding the first half of the film, she claims that the director presents 'the detailed social reality' of Thailand (132). I offer a different perspective on the seeming casualness of some sequences in Weerasethakul's films, including the two supported by WCF, and argue that these films normalize the most surreal elements (ghosts, trapped souls, interspecies transformations, reincarnations, and so forth) through their unexpected and consistent serenity. Weerasethakul gently appropriates (some might say exploits) these most clichéd elements that have previously been sensationalized in the modest, local, commercial genre pictures of his childhood, and redefines them from a much more subdued lens shaped in part by his Buddhist worldview.

It is necessary to note that the key points discussed thus far are not unique to the case of Thai cinema or Weerasethakul's films. Resistance against a highly commercialized local film industry, struggle in penetrating into the domestic market upon international festival success, visual innovation particularly in terms of slow cinema aesthetics, and representation of a vague national identity are all applicable tools in studying other WCF-supported Southeast Asian films as well. For example, discussing the contemporary state of Vietnamese cinema, Panivong Norindr (2006) claims that the recent opening up of the regulations regarding the film industry, which was previously controlled by the state in very strict terms, caused the film scene in Vietnam to quickly evolve. He notes that nationalist films about peasant life, rural poverty, or traditional Vietnamese values fail to connect with younger audiences, placing independent film production in a position of opposition against restrictive state agendas. Similar problems

about independent film production are observed across the entire region as filmmakers negotiate questions of contested national identities and painful socioeconomic transformations.

Projects hailing from Africa initially constituted a relatively small minority within the WCF catalogue, yet the prevalence of African films in funding decisions has increased considerably in the last couple of years.¹⁵ It is difficult to identify a single national cinema or just one prominent director whose work is widely acclaimed, distributed and analyzed when it comes to the extremely diverse panorama of African cinemas. While this complicates the process of selecting a suitable theoretical framework for this study; the nature of film festival funds, as European institutions providing financial support to projects from African countries -many of which have previously been colonized by European powers- raises questions regarding the legacy of colonialism in the domain of cultural production. Not surprisingly, most of the scholars writing on African cinemas refer to the colonial history of the continent and associate contemporary film production with the continued influence of former colonizers. Mahir Saul, writing on Francophone African cinema from a historical perspective, states that ‘African francophone cinema emerged from intricate connections, including the colonial heritage, the local and global postcolonial experience, and the economic and technical exigencies of celluloid film production’ (2010, 153). In the pre-digital era, high costs associated with film production and the technical complexity of post-production processes necessitated

¹⁵ Presumably the key reason for this is the launch of an initiative titled ‘WCF-Africa,’ which has a particular focus on co-productions between a Sub-Saharan African country and a European country. This program awarded its first round of funding in 2016 with a budget of 160,000 euros.

the involvement of affluent European financiers and forced African filmmakers to depend on foreign sources of financing and infrastructure. Saul argues that the emergence of digital filmmaking technologies may reduce this dependence, but regardless of whether this prediction becomes true or not, the roots of certain African cinemas are closely tied to colonialism. As Saul notes,

The standard narrative of francophone African cinema tells us that the French government discouraged colonial filmmaking but once independence was achieved, in 1960, reversed its policy by creating specialized institutions and dedicating money to assist the emerging African cineastes (134).

Not surprisingly, almost all the major names emerging from Africa, ranging from Ousmane Sembène to Idrissa Ouedraogo or Abderrahmane Sissako have utilized French financing in realizing their projects. Furthermore, majority of the prominent African filmmakers have received their formal training abroad.¹⁶ This is an ongoing process as financing obtained from European sources remains crucial for African films that fall outside the local mainstream (e.g., extremely prolific industries which enjoy immense popularity on the video market) and complete successful runs on the festival circuit. Alongside (mostly French) state funds, initiatives like WCF have quickly become key agents for the production and appreciation of arthouse films from Africa.

Aforementioned questions of national identity have been a major preoccupation for African filmmakers as well, not an unexpected development considering nation building in the aftermath of colonialism is a complex, painful process. African filmmakers have employed various strategies in dealing with such issues. Frank Ukadike

¹⁶ Going by Victor Bachy's (1983) figures, 90 francophone African filmmakers who made a feature film between 1960 and 1983 either studied in film schools abroad or gained experience in foreign radio and television institutions.

(1994) identifies two approaches as he divides African cinema into broad categories; ‘films put in the service of political consciousness’ and ‘films that are thematically audacious and innovative.’ Establishing a chronology, he names these approaches as the first and second instances, respectively. Films produced in the first instance are marked by ‘combative didactic practices of nationalistic concerns’ as they are deliberately heavy-handed in the delivery of their political messages and militant in their treatment of national agendas. On the other hand, films that belong to the second instance are those ‘whose sociopolitical allegory is diffused by pandering to the imitation of alien conventions and commercialization.’ Ukadike is excessively critical of this second group of films, he describes this category as ‘politically compromised aesthetic internationalism of economic concerns’ (247). The formation of WCF and other film festival funds chronologically corresponds to the second instance in Ukadike’s terminology. His critique, though too sweeping in bringing together a diverse set of visually inventive and thematically rich films under the umbrella of ‘political compromise,’ points at a significant shift in African cinema as filmmakers have gradually moved away from overt politics. Ukadike considers this shift as a component of a continued colonial gaze when he claims that ‘there seems to be a movement away from the political use of the film medium, which addresses and relates to authentic cultures and histories, toward a concern with film as an object of anthropological interest’ (248). The emphasis on cultural authenticity is particularly notable because African filmmakers, who utilize European funds such as WCF, seem to find themselves in a double bind in which they have to tick the box for authentically depicting their cultures on screen in order to secure the funds,

and simultaneously face domestic criticism about foregoing cultural and historical accuracy for folkloric exploitation.

There are more appreciative analyses of this move away from political militancy and didacticism in favor of aesthetic innovation as well. Many scholars who write on specific cases that have been partially financed by European institutions highlight the inventiveness of *mise-en-scène* and the timely theme of immigration as frequently observed elements in these films. In various analyses of African films produced in collaboration with European partners, the visual constructions of these films are described as an advancement beyond the basic, serviceable cinematic language employed in traditionally didactic films and, far from being understood as pale imitations of foreign conventions, are appreciated for their own artistic merits. For example, Benjamin Geer praises Yousry Nasrallah's Egyptian-German-French co-production *The Aquarium* (*Junainat al-Asmak*, 2008)¹⁷ for 'adopting stylistic traits of avant-garde cinema' such as having the actors deliver monologues while directly addressing the camera or switching between the first and the third persons when talking about their characters (2015, 157). Geoff Andrew applauds Abderrahmane Sissako's *Timbuktu* (2014) for its 'fragmented, elegant, uninsistent but utterly persuasive' construction and particularly highlights the 'superb scope camerawork,' the 'lyrical score,' and Sissako's 'tonal boldness' as elements that hold the fragmented narrative together.¹⁸ This review puts Sissako's widely acclaimed co-production between France and Mauritania in direct opposition to the

¹⁷ *The Aquarium* is a key film for WCF because since 2005, this is the project that has received the highest amount of funding awarded to a single project.

¹⁸ For Geoff Andrew's review of *Timbuktu*, see <http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/reviews-recommendations/cannes-2014-crying-timbuktu>. Accessed July 18, 2017.

simple, direct cinematic language employed in older African films that tell deliberately straightforward stories in order to convey their ideological messages as clearly as possible.

Thematically speaking, in Valérie Orlando's extensive analysis of African cinema in the 21st century, the move away from national politics is framed as a factor that boosts the transnational appeal of African films. Orlando observes that

in general, most African films made in the past fifteen years have been less politically defined within the theoretical structures of postcolonial Third Cinema. (...) In an effort to attract local and global viewers, cineastes produce works that challenge and probe films' former national paradigms by mixing recognizable social realist and documentary styles with more fluid, twenty-first-century themes that speak to younger audiences (2017, 82-83).

For Orlando, this evolution constitutes a natural step towards the production of accomplished, fluid works that manage to speak about contemporary issues rather than indicating a compromised position regarding national cultures or histories. She praises African filmmakers who have 'become more savvy and discerning in their approaches to creating narratives for local and global appeal.' Film festivals and funds associated with them function as key sites that facilitate this change, enabling filmmakers to reach receptive and appreciative audiences around the world. Orlando notes that several recent African films 'have emerged as products of transnational and transcontinental systems that are consumed by cosmopolitan audiences in urban spaces' (97).

What exactly are these themes and narratives that appeal to transnational production and exhibition systems? Population mobility, experiences of diaspora or exile, and interactions between cultures are frequently depicted in African films produced with

the financial support of European institutions. Dominic Thomas, using a diverse set of films from Mauritania, Congo, Burkina Faso, and Cameroon as his case studies, demonstrates that ‘territorial displacement and spatial reconfiguration have been employed to more accurately contextualize the shifting global landscape of African/French postcolonial relations’ (2009, 141). The wave of globalization and transnationalism, as opposed to the past emphasis on nation building and cultural authenticity, finds its narrative embodiment in stories about migration and flow of populations both intercontinentally and within Africa.¹⁹

1.3: Film Funds

All films supported by WCF are co-productions between a German company and a company from one of the eligible regions. In defining what the term ‘co-production’ means in the film industry, Anne Jäckel reminds us that ‘co-production is a much abused term’ and notes that ‘it may refer to any form of co-financing (a pre-sale to a television channel, theatrical distributor or foreign territory) or creative and financial collaboration between various producers’ (2003, 58). Since the regulations of WCF designate the German co-producer as the actual recipient of the WCF support and hold it legally liable for the project, all the co-productions mentioned in this dissertation definitely take the form of an extensive artistic and economic collaboration rather than a mere broadcasting or distribution agreement. This is not a unique aspect of WCF, but rather a common point in the regulations of all film festival funds including Hubert Bals.

¹⁹ Several examples that illustrate this point are discussed in detail in chapter two, which focuses on a roster of films that premiered in major festivals after benefitting from WCF support.

Perhaps surprisingly, the existing academic literature on co-productions is quite critical of the practice. Some of the earliest studies on co-productions problematize the loss of ‘nationalistic features’ and see such films as an obstacle before the emergence of a strong national cinema, a once-valuable category which holds lesser value today given the financial realities of the film industry (Liehm 1984; Hayward 1993, 2000). However, some of the more affirmative analyses from recent scholarship examine co-productions from a different perspective, highlighting co-productions’ capacity to ‘destabilize the too-facile opposition of the supranational versus the national and the local’ (Rivi 2007, 41). According to Rivi, co-productions provide filmmakers with various opportunities and platforms, through which they can operate outside the restrictions imposed on them by multiple agents ranging from state authorities that prioritize specific political agendas to strict censorship bodies, or from major corporations ruling the local commercial film scene to distributors and exhibitors too risk averse for relatively unconventional types of cinema. Such a conceptualization effectively reverses the initial argument and supports the view that national cinemas do emerge *because of* international co-productions, not *despite* them. While there are various difficulties in carrying out co-productions successfully, including minimum contribution requirements that prevent small independent companies from collaborating, or reporting issues often associated with long rounds of bureaucracy; international co-productions play an essential role in enabling filmmakers from underdeveloped regions to realize their projects.

The proliferation of international co-productions is a part of a broader shift towards transnationalism in film culture. Mette Hjort (2009) identifies nine different

types of transnational film production including three most relevant types in terms of film financing; ‘affinitive, opportunistic, and globalizing’ transnationalisms. Affinitive transnationalism refers to the inclination of filmmakers to collaborate with colleagues who share a similar culture, set of values, and language. This type of co-productions are frequently studied by scholars; collaborations between Scandinavian countries are analyzed by Hedling (2008), the co-production pact between China and Korea is examined by Yecies (2016), and Camporesi (2014) offers a historical analysis of Italian-Spanish co-productions. The category of opportunistic transnationalism refers to cases where the availability of financial resources is the primary factor that determines the selection of partners. Alternatively, examples of globalizing transnationalism, as identified by Hjort, are films whose large scales of production, star casts, expensive special effects and similar elements necessitate the collaboration of producers from several countries. Projects supported by WCF or other film festival funds, on the other hand, differ from these common types of transnational film production. With a maximum budget of one million euros, projects eligible for WCF funding are invariably small productions and are carried out under financially restrictive circumstances. The selection of co-production partners do not primarily depend on financial concerns as there are strict regulations about which countries can participate in WCF projects. But there is no cultural similarity or affinity between the diverse set of regions or countries listed by the policies of the fund and its host country (Germany), either. Therefore, this dissertation focuses on a unique, relatively small subset of international co-productions, not frequently studied in the existing academic literature on film financing.

Many of the projects supported by WCF have another co-production partner in addition to the compulsory German involvement. In the vast majority of such cases, this third partner is unsurprisingly a French company. There are multiple reasons for this; first, the most influential world sales companies, which are among the most important stakeholders in the festival circuit, are based in France.²⁰ Therefore, the inclusion of a French partner in the co-production structure is a useful tool for having access to the internal dynamics of major festivals for filmmakers. Second, it should not be forgotten that WCF's initiation coincides with a period of rapid proliferation of co-productions in the French film industry. I consider this to be an extension of France's aggressive cultural policy, which self-assigns the country the leadership role in European film industry by bringing together the most powerful sales agents in the industry, the most prestigious festival in the world with the largest market (Cannes), and the most active national funding body in Europe (Le Centre National du Cinéma et de L'image Animée – CNC) all in France. Providing an economic explanation for this convergence, Jäckel notes that 'with the prospect of diminishing returns from the usual sources of funding in a rapidly deregulated and increasingly global environment, French film producers are now encouraged to find more financing abroad' (2007, 26). As a result of the increasing interest French producers show in co-producing films in regions where financial risks are more minimal, Jäckel illustrates that the number of co-productions with French

²⁰ The most notable sales agents include Wild Bunch, Memento Films International, Celluloid Dreams, MK2, and Films Distribution (later re-branded as Playtime), which are all based in France. It is worth noting that the second center of world sales companies in Europe is Germany, dominated by The Match Factory, Films Boutique, and Beta Cinema. It is not surprising that these two countries host the two most prominent film festivals in the world (Cannes and Berlin).

involvement has increased considerably from 1986 to 2005. The number of French co-productions has risen from 37 in 1986 to 114 in 2005 (a 208.1% increase). This is a striking figure in comparison to the rise in the number of entirely French productions during the same period (from 97 in 1986 to 126 in 2005, only a 29.9% increase).

Co-producing films from WCF-eligible regions has been preferable for French companies over collaborating with American or British partners on larger projects. One obvious reason for this is the vast discrepancy between the production scales in Europe and the United States, which would effectively mean that the European partner would have to settle for the role of the minority co-producer behind an American studio. However, even excluding possible collaborations with English-speaking countries because of the unbreakable dominance of Hollywood, European co-productions mostly travel within the domain of the festival circuit and arthouse theaters instead of domestic mainstream film industries in continental Europe. Co-productions enjoy extended festival runs while domestic box office hits in Europe tend to be single-country productions.²¹ Lucy Mazdon offers a possible explanation for this close link between film festivals and international co-productions when she observes that,

the great majority of popular films which thrive at the domestic box office in France, for example, tend not to translate to non-French audiences (...). The art or *auteur* films which lend themselves to festival screenings do, however, extend beyond the domestic context (albeit in a somewhat limited fashion) as they travel from festival to festival and, if successful, achieve international distribution on the arthouse circuit (2007, 13-14, emphasis in original).

²¹ For example, the two highest grossing French films of all time (*Bienvenue Chez Les Ch'Tis* from 2008 and *Intouchables* from 2011) as well as the top domestic box office hits of 2014 and 2016 in France (*Qu'est-ce Qu'on a Fait au Bon Dieu?* and *Les Tuche 2*) are full French productions without the involvement of another European co-producer.

As international co-productions often fail to attract mass audiences or turn a profit from theatrical revenues in major European territories, an alternative distribution network is required to provide a more suitable platform for these films. Mazdon identifies international film festivals as the key agents in this alternative network; positioning these events as the launching pad for art cinema in order to reach international audiences following extended festival tours. Whether festival recognition eventually leads to commercial success is a different matter that needs to be studied on a case by case basis.²² Yet it is quite evident that a high profile run on the film festival circuit is crucial for the survival of international co-productions which struggle to commercially succeed in their domestic mass markets.

Funds and programs aimed at financially supporting co-productions are extremely diverse. Limiting the scope of the analysis to European funds only, it is possible to identify at least four categories of film funds; those that operate at the ‘national, sub-national (regional and local), and supranational’ (Europe-wide) levels as well as those that operate outside Europe despite being based in the continent (Newman-Baudais 2011, 9). This list only includes public funding bodies and film festival funds such as WCF fall into the fourth category. According to the 2011 edition of European Audiovisual Observatory’s report on ‘Public Funding for Film and Audiovisual Works in Europe,’ there are a whopping 280 public funding bodies operating across all European countries

²² Some films that premiere in major festivals end up selling a significant number of tickets when released in commercial theaters, though Mazdon considers these cases within the more modest scope of the ‘arthouse circuit’ rather than placing them alongside the popular films that ‘thrive’ at the box office. On the other hand, it goes without saying that a larger number of films never really break out of the festival system; collecting most of their revenues from festival screening fees, prize money, television broadcasts, home video, and other similar ancillary sources.

and this number is quickly growing.²³ The largest category by far is the regional funds (195 initiatives, discussed in detail below), followed by national funds with 67 active programs. In comparison, there are only seven supranational programs though some of them (like Eurimages or the MEDIA program of the European Union) are among the most prolific and powerful funding bodies in the world. In order to situate WCF within the broader picture of European film funds, we must look at the eleven programs that support projects hailing from outside of Europe. Newman-Baudais locates WCF alongside other film festival funds including the script development fund of The Amiens Film Festival in France, The Göteborg International Film Festival Fund in Sweden, Hubert Bals Fund based in the Netherlands, The Jan Vrijman Fund associated with the International Documentary Festival of Amsterdam (IDFA), the Swiss fund Visions Sud-Est -a joint initiative between The Fribourg Film Festival and the documentary festival Visions du Réel-, Montpellier International Film Festival's fund aimed at supporting films from Mediterranean countries, and finally Sørfond (The Norwegian South Film Fund), which is attached to the Film far Sør (Films from the South) Festival in Oslo. In other words, WCF is one of only eight funding bodies officially associated with one or more European film festivals. Considering the major event status of the International Film Festival Rotterdam and the Berlinale in comparison to the other festivals mentioned above, it is not surprising that the two funds associated with these events are the most handsomely financed and active programs among their peers. While other festivals focus

²³ The previous edition of the same report, published in 2004, lists 208 funds. This is an increase of 72 funds in less than a decade. The data included in the 2011 report covers all funds until the end of 2009.

on specific types of projects (documentaries, films from the Mediterranean region etc.), Hubert Bals and WCF keep the pool of eligible projects considerably broader and provide more financing to a larger number of films. The 355,000 euros of production support WCF allocated in 2009 ranks second only to Hubert Bals' comparable spending (364,000 euros) among film festival funds and significantly exceeds the 48,000 euro spending of the Amiens Film Festival fund, 190,000 euros of production support distributed by the Göteborg International Film Festival's fund, or the 255,000 euros the Jan Vrijman fund allocated to documentary film projects (72).²⁴ Film festival funds, on average, operate on a much smaller budget compared to larger supranational funds and allocate relatively small sums to each project.²⁵ They constitute a tiny fraction of the extremely diverse and rich film financing landscape in Europe. But it is equally worth noting that WCF is among the most prominent programs within this unique category.

Since the amounts of money these funds distribute are very small, some scholars question their actual function in producing films and opt to explain the phenomenon of film festival funds in relation to distribution and exhibition processes rather than the production stage. For example, in her discussion of the Hubert Bals Fund, Tamara Falicov (2016) highlights how festival funds work as brands that add symbolic value to films and how these initiatives contribute to a continuous flow of festival-friendly films that festivals and arthouse distributors need. When Falicov notes that it is theoretically

²⁴ These figures only refer to funding allocated for production activities (as WCF is active only in production and distribution spheres). If all types of activities (script development, project development, production, distribution and exhibition, promotion, festival organization and talent training) are considered, Hubert Bals benefited from a total budget of 875,000 euros.

²⁵ For comparison, the largest funding body which is active in the production sphere, Eurimages, distributed 19,460,000 euros in 2009.

possible to make a film using a combination of funds provided by various festivals, she quickly adds that in reality, the sum endowed by each fund remains very small. Similarly, De Valck claims that ‘festival funds function as hallmarks of quality for the films and filmmakers they support, and they can significantly increase filmmakers’ chances to complete and circulate a project, even if the actual money contributed by the fund is modest’ (2014, 46). From this point of view, she sees festival funds and co-production markets organized concurrently with many festivals as almost identical in terms of the roles they play in film production.

Though I agree that festival funds definitely fulfill the above mentioned functions in adding symbolic value and contributing to a continued supply of films, I diverge from existing studies and emphasize how crucial seemingly minor amounts of funding actually is for many filmmakers from underdeveloped countries. Crane (2014) shows that in the mid-2000s (around the same time when WCF first started distributing funds), the average cost of a French film was \$5.1 million, notably less than the \$40 million threshold European Audiovisual Observatory used to define the category of ‘independent’ American film or the \$13.3 million average budget for British productions. Continental European cinemas in general operate on a considerably smaller scale compared to their English-language counterparts. Crane also adds that the average cost of an Egyptian film, for the sake of comparison, is only around \$1.3 million. Perhaps more telling is De Vinck and Lindmark’s (2011, quoted in Crane 2014) study, which shows that in smaller Asian countries outside the Far Eastern powerhouse industries in China, South Korea, and Japan; the average cost of a film in 2008 was as low as \$0.4 million. Considering the

extremely limited budgets many filmmakers supported by WCF work with, it is important to pay due attention to the concrete economic dimensions of film financing instead of overemphasizing the cultural or symbolic value associated with festival labels.

Of the few studies that portray a particular fund in greater detail, almost all focus on Hubert Bals as the pioneering example of such initiatives. Academic work on Hubert Bals tends to be overwhelmingly celebratory, with many scholars praising the fund for its contributions to film production worldwide. De Valck contends that ‘the (Dutch) government has a responsibility to support art that cannot survive in the marketplace’ (2014, 50). Based on multiple interviews with the managers of the Hubert Bals fund, her study positions the initiative in opposition to dominant neoliberal market forces that plague the independent film scene and depicts the fund as a noble, even altruistic, defender of art cinema. Steinhart is similarly positive in his analysis of Hubert Bals (and Rotterdam’s other production initiative Cinemart) when he claims that ‘there is nary a Hollywood copycat or Europudding film amongst the projects in Cinemart since the coordinators opt for work that showcases an authentic, regional identity’ (2006, 7). It is undeniable that Hubert Bals and other similar funds such as WCF have contributed greatly to the making of many notable films that decidedly fall outside mainstream filmmaking conventions, or deviate from the codes of popular all-European co-productions.

On the other hand, one should also question the hierarchical power relations and the politics of inclusion or exclusion that inevitably emerge during the operations of such initiatives without describing the phenomenon in all too-rosy terms. A general anxiety

about European film funds operating in developing countries, especially regarding the potential cultural colonialism their activities may entail, has been voiced by several scholars. David Martin-Jones and Soledad Montañez's study on the emergence of a new Uruguayan cinema in the 2000s, for example, explains that 'Uruguayan cinema is increasingly achieving a delicate balancing act between the national and the international dimensions needed for a small national cinema to compete in the global marketplace' and identifies IBERMEDIA²⁶ as a key transnational agent that helps Uruguayan films to prosper on the festival circuit. However, the authors also mention 'the potentially neocolonial implications of reliance on IBERMEDIA, and the ever-present danger of a loss of Uruguayan cinema's distinctive identity due to co-productions and foreign finance' as significant side effects of this development (2009, 343). Similarly, Miriam Ross' analysis of Latin American films supported by Hubert Bals offers an alternative, much darker perspective on the same topic. She puts the concept of a so-called authentic national identity into question and problematizes western audiences' preexisting ideas about developing countries when she states,

More often than not, the national framework that is made available on screen adheres to what international film festival audiences have come to expect of developing-world modes of being; conditions of poverty are assumed and social structures built upon limited resources are anticipated (2011, 264).

As Ross argues, Hubert Bals Fund's criteria for project selection may restrict filmmakers through its explicit mention of cultural authenticity, and over-stress stereotypical depictions of poverty and misery as a skewed representation of the Third World. This

²⁶ IBERMEDIA is a partially European supranational funding body which supports Latin American filmmaking. Main partners of the initiative include Spain and Portugal.

ongoing fallacy of representation goes back to Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's discussion about Eurocentrism in world cinema. The authors argue that when put into a position of 'relative powerlessness,' Third World filmmakers deal with 'a constant struggle to create an elusive "authenticity" to be constructed anew with every generation' (1994, 285). The practice of selectively and very competitively allocating European public funds to projects from developing countries creates one clear instance of such power inequality, leading the supported filmmakers to internalize a problematic need to underline the cultural authenticity of their work time and again. Furthermore, a regulatory emphasis on an authentic cultural context is not unique to Hubert Bals; rather, practically every fund associated with a film festival including WCF or even dozens of national or regional funds posit comparable requirements. Therefore, taking key concepts such as national cinema, festival film, or international co-production for granted presents multiple potential traps about understanding the contributions and responsibilities of funding bodies. A delicate balance between celebrating the valuable efforts of film festival funds and critically analyzing the potential shortcomings of the activities undertaken by these initiatives needs to be established.

One significant critique in this regard has been raised about the temporary, project-based endowment of monetary resources when European institutions step in to support filmmakers from developing countries. Instead of using financial resources in the building of necessary and permanent infrastructures, almost all state and festival initiatives based in Europe prefer to allocate funds to isolated, one-time projects. The lack of sustained development of infrastructure in regions where film production is

traditionally carried out under less than optimum circumstances becomes evident when one focuses on WCF-eligible territories like Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Africa. Analyzing the connection between public funds from France and film production in Africa, Roy Armes notes that ‘the official emphasis continues to be on the development of African cultural identities and once more there are no plans for any investment in African infrastructure’ (2006, 58). Therefore, it can be argued that the key objective of such funding schemes is to expand the aforementioned cultural dominance of certain European countries as the central actors in the world cinema scene rather than contributing to the sustained development of less privileged parts of the world. Instead of making a long-term expansion of the world cinema map possible by enabling nascent national cinemas to flourish, many European funds cause a dangerous concentration of all available sources of financing into a small number of exclusive clusters, making the production of arthouse films all over the world invariably dependent on western investment.

The lack of improvements in filmmaking infrastructures is illustrated clearly in the existing literature. Since financial aid is only project-based and local resources for continued film production remain insufficient, most African filmmakers only get to make one or two films and, unless those early works turn out to be major critical or commercial successes, fall into oblivion. Roy Armes tabulates 588 films from francophone countries made until the end of 2004 and demonstrates that 269 different filmmakers were behind the camera in these projects, meaning that each filmmaker was able to make only two

films on average (59-60).²⁷ A whopping 46 percent of all African films tabulated are the first films of their directors, and Armes calculates that ‘in total about fourteen films a year split between seventeen sovereign states with a total population of over 166 million’ are produced (60). These extremely low numbers indicate that despite the erratic emergence of some individual success stories, European financial investment has not resulted in the sustained development of filmmaking in most of Africa.

Scholars usually point to large, state level institutions like Fonds Sud, which is jointly financed by the French Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Culture and functions in co-operation with the National French Film Center CNC, when writing about film financing mechanisms. Such institutions operate either at the state level or -more frequently- as regional funds. Film production throughout Europe largely depends on such regional funds, all of which are financially supported by their governments. Focusing on the Italian case, Marco Cucco argues that the state supports the film industry ‘not only to ensure the survival of the cinematic art form, vital for any country threatened by market economics, but also to support an industry that may require massive financial injections that are not always recouped when products are sold’ (2013, 270). Analyzing Swedish cinema from a similar perspective, Olof Hedling praises national film policy in Sweden and notes that ‘a larger number of films [are] produced annually as a result of greater availability of money, mostly from different public entities.’ These public entities include ‘the national government and the regional authorities’ (2008, 12). As the optimistic discourse found in these studies indicates, such national and regional funds

²⁷ This list only includes fictional feature films, leaves out films shot or distributed on video, and is thought to be comprehensive.

improve local infrastructure and contribute to sustained film production, at least to a certain extent. National and regional funds operate on a large scale, supporting a high number of projects and allocating generous funds to their selections. Consequently, they are able to create a more tangible impact on local film production. Cucco explains the reasoning behind the formation of regional funds by noting that ‘it is unlikely that a production will shoot within just one municipality, and therefore it seems sensible that a fund cover a reasonably large area.’ This means that financing from not just one municipality, but from several local governing bodies come together in the formation of regional funds. Cucco also adds that ‘establishing a fund requires a financial commitment, and local governing bodies are best able to bear such expenses’ (2013, 271). Not only do these practices ensure the financial strength of national and regional funds, but such funds also benefit financially from the returns on their investments. Such financial returns are directly integrated into the policies of regional funds. As Cucco explains, to obtain funding from regional initiatives, producers must spend ‘a percentage of the funds awarded (usually 120-150 percent, i.e. more than what a film production receives)’ in the local area (272).

The consequent question then becomes why is there such a large discrepancy between the contributions of supranational or festival-associated funds, which allocate project-based financing and have a rather temporary impact, and of national or regional funds, which provide support for permanent development of their local film industries?

I offer two explanations for this situation: first, the funding allocated by national and regional funds often stays in the source country while funds distributed by

supranational programs or film festival funds are more likely to be spent in the receiving country.²⁸ This may presumably lead policy makers to prioritize national funds in order to boost their domestic industries and limit the financial resources transnationally active film festival funds work with. Second, national funds are able to participate in collateral activities such as media education, film conservation and archiving, or research in film studies besides supporting film production and distribution. This becomes possible thanks to the large budgets national funds have at their disposal and the availability of sufficient full-time personnel. Film festival funds usually operate in the spheres of project development, production and distribution, but are unable to offer comparable services for the development of general film culture due to the scarcity of resources. In the case of film festival funds, in comparison to national or regional funds, the financing obtained from various sources in order to be allocated to selected projects is not as substantial, nor is a comparable guaranteed return on investments possible. This financial disadvantage directly affects the types of activities undertaken by these small-scale programs.

Newman-Baudais' report on European film funds indicates that in 2009 alone, the total spending of all national funds throughout Europe reached more than 24 million euros for archives and film conservation, almost 15 million euros for education and media literacy, more than 27 million euros for the development of film culture and research, and nearly 8 million euros for digital media (including the launch of video-on-demand platforms and

²⁸ For example, as Cucco notes regional funds often require that 'the local historic, cultural and landscape heritage must be given a certain prominence, in that a minimum percentage of the scenes in the final edited product must be filmed outdoors' (2013, 272). In contrast, film festival funds do not posit any requirements about shooting locations and majority of the supported projects are filmed in their countries of origin.

the digitization of available screens). However, there was no spending at all in any of these activity areas by any of the film festival funds, around 97 percent of whose budgets were devoted to project-based film production and distribution (2011, 53).

1.4: Conclusion

Film festivals' involvement in the complex sphere of film funding raises several questions. How are film festival funds situated within the broader picture of European film financing schemes? How do these initiatives fare in comparison to larger national, regional, or supranational funds? What is the impact of some key characteristics of the festival circuit -ranging from its traditionally European roots to its ongoing global expansion, from the plurality of agents that populate it to its crucial function in building cinematic canons- on the funds associated with film festivals? What role do these programs play in the development of nascent national cinemas, especially in an era marked by the transnational flow of talent, resources, and narratives? How do conflicting concerns about cultural authenticity and potential neocolonial agendas relate to the activities of film festival funds?

In attempting to answer these questions and establish clear boundaries for this dissertation, the present literature review inescapably leaves some relevant concepts and phenomena out. While I focus on studies about the organizational features, audiences and participants, or business-related aspects of film festivals; it must be noted that historical accounts of the film festival phenomenon also constitute a large portion of the literature on the subject. Especially the ideological concerns and social developments that have

shaped major festivals during their initial formation have been widely studied, as briefly illustrated in the introduction. On the other hand, the establishment of film festival funds is a relatively recent occurrence. Additionally, the present analysis of particular national cinemas only covers the regions specified in WCF regulations and highlights the impact of foreign financial aid on these industries, but I do not examine the complete histories of cinematic production in these territories. The extremely rich and prolific mainstream filmmaking traditions in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Africa -including the massive output of Nigerian video films or the commercially successful genre blockbusters hailing from Thailand- are mostly excluded from this study because of WCF's (and other similar funds') tendency to ignore the popular, commercially-inclined films produced in the very regions designated in their own policies.

Another significant caveat is the absence from this literature review of a discussion about alternative financing sources such as tax incentives, private investments, or expense rebate programs. In addition to receiving monetary endowments from the funding bodies mentioned in this chapter, most of the films discussed throughout this dissertation benefit from various refund schemes, tax credits, sponsorships and so forth. Furthermore, it is obvious that there are some key national and supranational funding bodies or film festival funds which exist outside of Europe, even though Europe remains the unmistakable home to majority of the active funding programs in the world.²⁹

²⁹ The 2017 edition of the 'Funds Guide' I obtained in the film market during the Cannes Film Festival lists 309 initiatives including all types of funding bodies and tax programs. 225 of these are based in Europe (72.8 percent). Though not exhaustive, this list is a good indicator of the concentration of funding bodies in Europe. This guide is distributed to all accredited guests of the Cannes Film Festival who attend the film market. Every country that has a counter in the market can list its various funding programs in this publication.

Nevertheless, considering the fact that WCF, like all the other film festival funds, operates through providing monetary production support instead of tax schemes, and that Berlinale maintains its position as a major European institution; it can be argued that the scope of this study is determined by its central case study.

The literature reviewed here pays attention to a very diverse set of factors; films shown in festivals, their thematic preoccupations especially in terms of cultural specificity and national identity, policies and regulations that govern their making, the quantitative aspects of their production like budgeting and gathering various funds, and their reception by different segments of the audience including industry professionals, festival-goers, and domestic viewers. The following chapters of the dissertation also reflect this diversity as I proceed by analyzing WCF-funded films in detail, quoting the filmmakers behind them, providing statistical data about their production, and examining the festival audiences that appreciate them.

CHAPTER 2

FILMS

Selection of particular films over others is essential to every process associated with film festivals and funding initiatives. Obviously, both the selection of projects to be financially supported and the selection of completed films to be exhibited over the course of a festival should be understood as curatorial endeavors. This brings up a seemingly straightforward question; is there a specific kind of film that populates the festival circuit, appeals to funding juries and festival programmers? If that is the case, what are the common aesthetic and thematic elements that can be observed across a wide range of successful festival titles? A clear answer to these questions remains elusive for the reasons discussed below. This chapter does not aim to offer a rigid formula for the ideal festival film, for such a concept does not exist, rather it provides an up-to-date snapshot of the festival and financing landscapes with the goal of discovering recent trends in these highly fragmented domains.

In his discussion of curatorial practices within the context of film festivals, Peter Bosma notes that ‘each edition [of a festival] is to some extent accidental, a more or less happy coincidence of circumstances. The artistic choice depends on the available harvest and the degree of freedom to gather this crop’ (2015, 69). This implies that it is not possible for programmers to impose strict agendas while selecting films and that they are bound by several external factors outside their control. These factors may include the logistics of organizing a film festival with limited resources, the availability or the lack of sufficient exhibition venues (a particularly restrictive concern for the selection of films in

alternative formats such as 3-D, IMAX, VR and so forth), obtaining film prints despite the busy calendar with many conflicting festivals organized concurrently, and restrictions regarding the premiere status of films and their consequent ineligibility for festivals that would in fact wish to screen them. Bosma also mentions other restrictions that go beyond the borders of the film industry or the festival galaxy, especially censorship (76). He observes that films may be censored in their countries of origin or in the country of exhibition (where the festival in question is to be held), resulting in the programmers' inability to select a desired film in both cases.

These restrictions should not be situated in opposition to curatorial strategies or the careful building of a brand identity. Festival programmers operate within these boundaries, yet they aim to cultivate a consistent, recognizable profile for their festivals. Bosma states, 'the "product" of a film festival is the program. In order to be able to promote the program properly it is necessary to create a recognizable "corporate identity," in other words a clear curatorial profile' (71). The purpose of this chapter is to determine the components of this particular profile in the case of the Berlinale and WCF in the years since the inception of the fund in early 2005. Films that have premiered in the 2017 editions of Berlin and Cannes festivals after receiving WCF support constitute the particular case examined here. As supported projects are completed and reach the exhibition stage, they gradually form a specific brand identity for WCF, contributing to a broader picture that is difficult to grasp while analyzing particular films in isolation. The identity of WCF is the combined result of a number of factors, including the curatorial decisions taken by its jurors, the regulations that limit the pool of projects the jurors can

work with, the artistic choices made by the supported filmmakers during the realization of their projects, and the reception of WCF-supported films upon completion on the international festival circuit. Therefore, my analysis in this chapter brings together a cluster of films instead of focusing on just one, refers back to the regulations that these projects were subjected to in early stages, and pays attention to the reactions these films have elicited during their premieres in major festivals.

In the remainder of this chapter, I proceed by comparatively analyzing the most recent WCF-supported films that have made waves on the film festival circuit, tracing common thematic preoccupations such as social inequality and cultural hybridity, and shared narrative strategies including a strong emphasis on female protagonists and highly ritualized, ceremonial events. While I certainly do not claim that this limited set of films provides me with a sufficient basis to cover the entire range of cinematic tendencies that hypothetically appeal to European funding bodies such as WCF, I argue that these films manage to capture the most significant characteristics of the admittedly narrow branch of filmmaking analyzed in this dissertation. All WCF films that premiered in major festivals in the first half of 2017 are included in the data set. I provide a close reading of each film, informed by relevant theoretical concepts such as Mikhail Bakhtin's hybridization, the male gaze as discussed by Laura Mulvey, and Stuart Hall's definition of identity. I also draw from the existing scholarly literature on a diverse set of topics including women directors in contemporary South American cinema, the genealogy of Francophone film in Africa, or modern dance in terms of its symbolic capacity to depict abstract concepts on screen. The discussion of each film is complemented by an interview with the director, a

professional review of the film in question, or director's notes found in the press kit of the film I obtained during the festival where it celebrated its premiere.

2.1: WCF-Funded Films on the Festival Circuit

The regulations of the WCF do not explicitly state any aesthetic or thematic restrictions for eligibility. In the official regulations document, the aims of the fund are described as follows:

Projects eligible for funding should deal with the cultural identity of their regions and should contribute to the development of the local film industry. The main criterion for selection is the artistic quality of the projects. The preference is to fund projects that tell strong stories, that are creatively and visually innovative, that have the potential to enjoy international success - as well as being of cultural and political relevance.³⁰

The most notable part of this description is its emphasis on three factors, dealing with the cultural identity of the region, visual innovativeness, and the potential for international success. Compared to the official regulations of similar funding initiatives, this description is both very short and vague. In comparison, the directives for the Hubert Bals Fund associated with the International Film Festival Rotterdam are more extensively detailed in publicly available guidelines. In the case of Hubert Bals, each eligible application is assigned a grade out of 100 points, with 25 points coming from the 'artistic quality' of the project, which is further broken down to individual factors including the 'storyline, narrative structure, character development, the relation between content and

³⁰ For the most recent version of WCF regulations, see the document available at: https://www.berlinale.de/media/pdf_word/world_cinema_fund/richtlinien_pdf/Guidelines_English.pdf. These regulations are dated April 1st, 2014 and occasional changes regarding eligibility conditions are made. One of the major revisions in this current document is the reduction of maximum amount of funding per project from 100,000 euros to 80,000. Accessed August 8, 2017.

form, innovative aspects in terms of content and form, relation to film history/theory and/or social context' and there is additional preference for first or second time directors.³¹ WCF regulations do not disclose a comparable quantitative breakdown and, if there is a similar rating system in place, it is not explained in a publicly available guide that could function as a roadmap for producers wishing to apply for funding. The vagueness of the selection criteria (or rather the deliberately vague rhetoric used to disclose the selection criteria) in the case of WCF consequently leads to a diverse pool of projects from various corners of the world, with many different thematic preoccupations and stylistic tendencies observed across films. Nevertheless, it is possible to use the description provided above to unpack some of the common trends that have emerged in recent WCF selections.

Seven WCF-supported films celebrated their world premieres in the 2017 editions of the festivals in Berlin and Cannes. In Berlin, Alain Gomis' *Félicité* (2017) played in competition and won the runner-up prize the Jury Grand Prix. The film is a co-production between five different countries although it is entirely set in the city of Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A predominantly Lingala-language film, *Félicité* (a co-production between France, Senegal, Belgium, Germany, and Lebanon) benefited from WCF funding as a project hailing from Senegal based on the nationality of the director (who holds dual Senegalese/French citizenship). In the Panorama section of the

³¹ For the most recent version of Hubert Bals regulations including information on financial eligibility, co-production requirements, and grade values assigned to each element, see the web page available at: <https://iffir.com/en/professionals/hbfeurope-selection-process-contracts-and-payments>. Accessed June 4, 2017. (Further details about financial eligibility are discussed in chapter four, in relation to both Hubert Bals Fund and WCF.)

Berlinale, Brazilian filmmaker Julia Murat's *Pendular* (2017) was presented and consequently awarded the prize of the FIPRESCI jury, organized by the International Federation of Film Critics. The third WCF-supported film in Berlinale 2017 was *The Wound* (2017) by John Trengove from South Africa, which was screened as the opening film of the Panorama section.³²

Four additional projects that have received WCF support were invited to the Cannes Film Festival in 2017. Two of them played in the second competitive strand of the official selection, Un Certain Regard. One of them was the Tunisian film *Beauty and the Dogs* (*Aala Kaf Ifrit*, 2017) directed by Kaouther Ben Hania. Also in the same section was a directorial debut from Algeria, *Until the Birds Return* (*En Attendant Les Hirondelles*, 2017) by Karim Moussaoui. As it is often the case with African films selected for major international festivals, both of these films have significantly benefitted from European funds. Moussaoui's film is a majority French production while Ben Hania's film is a co-production between seven countries (Tunisia, France, Sweden, Norway, Lebanon, Qatar and Switzerland).³³ The other two films were invited to the concurrently organized sidebars; Directors' Fortnight (Quinzaine des Realisateurs) and the Critics' Week (Semaine de la Critique). Zambian-born Welsh director Rungano Nyoni's first feature film *I am not a Witch* (2017) was presented in the former section while Chilean director Marcela Said's second film *Los Perros* (2017) was shown as a part

³² See the press release dated February 8, 2017: https://www.berlinale.de/en/presse/pressemitteilungen/world_cinema_fund/wcf-presse-detail_36885.html. Accessed June 4, 2017.

³³ My decision to consider these films as Tunisian and Algerian productions is based on Cannes General Delegate Thierry Fremaux's tendency to determine the countries of films in the selection according to the nationality of the director.

of the latter program.³⁴ These seven films constitute the main roster of features to be analyzed in the present chapter.

The first criterion mentioned above is how the funded projects deal with the ‘cultural identity’ of their regions. Cultural identity is a vague and contested term. Stuart Hall defines identity as follows:

The meeting point, the point of *suture*, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to ‘interpellate,’ speak to us or hail us into place as social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be ‘spoken’ (1996, 5-6).

Identity, in this definition, is a shared concept, but it is not a fixed or permanent notion; rather it is a series of discursive formations strategically utilized to create a sense of belonging to a particular group among individuals and at the same time, to ensure the continuity of this very sense of belonging by maintaining one’s subjective position within the group. Cultural identity, in particular, refers to the reflections of such formations in the areas of cultural production, tradition, ritual and so forth. The cultural identity in question may be linked to belonging to a nation, a tribe, an ethnic minority or a similar segment of society, and is manifested through certain shared patterns of behavior, communications, or performances. I argue that several different expressions of a specific cultural identity can be observed in the WCF-supported films listed above and that in most cases, this expression is brought to the screen from a critical perspective that acknowledges or questions its subjective and social dimensions alike. Cinematic expressions of cultural identity often find their ways into the narrative through an

³⁴ See the press release dated May 10, 2017: https://www.berlinale.de/en/presse/pressemitteilungen/zus_tzliches/weiteres-presse-detail_37588.html. Accessed June 4, 2017.

individual, from the subjective point of view of a single protagonist, but consequently function as significant critiques of broader social structures and a deep sense of society-wide malaise.

2.2: Rituals and Ceremonies

The depiction of a cultural identity usually takes the form of staging ceremonies and rituals in films supported by WCF. Weddings, funerals, initiation ceremonies, graduation parties and similar events that commemorate significant points in life are commonly depicted in scenes that are marked by a distinct local flavor. The story of *The Wound* by John Trengove revolves around the ‘ukwaluka’ ritual, which is a traditional ceremony of adolescent boys’ initiation into manhood that is practiced by the Xhosa people in South Africa. While the film itself is rather vague about how widely practiced this ritual is in contemporary South Africa, the press kit of the film mentions that ukwaluka continues to be a frequently performed and highly controversial practice and states that ukwaluka ‘remains a cornerstone of traditional Xhosa culture and is considered the defining event of a man’s life.’³⁵ The ritual lasts for several weeks, during which the initiates are paired with an older mentor in a secluded camping area in a rural location, and ends with their circumcision. The film follows a young factory worker named Xolani, who joins a mountain camp, and almost the entire running time is devoted to the ritual. Until the very end of the film, there is not a single scene set in an urban center, there is no indicator of the time period during which the film is set, and it is practically impossible to

³⁵ This quote is from the press kit of *The Wound* I obtained during the 2017 Berlinale, but the document does not indicate any publisher information or page numbers.

catch any hints of a developed, modern country that exists alongside the tribal life the film closely follows. The ukwaluka ritual is not merely a background, but rather the backbone of the film and is used as a strong marker of a specific cultural identity, that of the Xhosa people.

While Xolani is the unmistakable protagonist of the film, *The Wound* works as a critique of several aspects of South African society at large. Instead of exploiting the ritual as an exotic or folkloric element that would presumably boost the appeal the film may hold for international audiences, Trengove presents a complex depiction of black masculinity that goes against the stereotypical screen image of the black male. Several scholars have noted that cinematic portrayals of black masculinity have relied heavily on problematic stereotypes since the early days of the medium. From the blaxploitation era of the 1970s to the New Black Realism period in the 1990s and to contemporary films, black male characters have largely been relegated to one stereotype or the other. Barry Keith Grant claims that ‘African Americans in mainstream cinema have been a catalog of demeaning stereotypes’ (2011, 106). Similarly, Ronald Jackson notes that ‘the public narratives pertaining to black men’s lives comply with several radicalized projections about the black masculine body as: (1) exotic and strange, (2) violent, (3) incompetent and uneducated, (4) sexual, (5) exploitable, and (6) innately incapacitated’ (2006, 75). Adding to this list of questionable projections, Katharine Bausch observes that depicting ‘the black male as savior to his family and community serves to reinforce heterosexual patriarchal ideas about family life’ (2013, 271).

Trengove's treatment of many black male characters in *The Wound*, on the other hand, clearly rejects every item on this crowded list of stereotypes. The film is unexpectedly sensual and delicate, following its characters closely and finding visual counterparts to many small, sensory pleasures they experience. The images are richly textured, the film includes many close up shots of human bodies, and there is an emphasis on the elemental quality of the ritual performed out in the open. The sensation of feeling the breeze on one's skin, lying on grass, touching the raindrops or immersing one's body in water are carefully brought to screen. While the narrative is built around a ritual that brings many young men together, there is little visual evidence of the masculine violence and toughness one would presumably expect to encounter in such a situation.

Complicating the portrayal of a black male protagonist further is the fact that Xolani is shown to be homosexual. His sexual orientation marks a significant point of divergence between the character and the social stereotype he is expected to conform to. The unexpressed physical attraction between Xolani and a mentor brings up the central theme of suppressed desire and situates the film very far away from the decidedly heterosexual, aggressively sexual domain of black masculinity on screen. If there is an eruption of violence at the end of the film, it is not because black males are shown to be inherently violent or that violence is associated with a cliched understanding of masculinity. Violence surfaces in the end only as a consequence of the sustained suppression of strong feelings, as a result of repressed desire.

Another notable aspect of the sexual orientation of the protagonist is that it forms the basis of a contrast between a misunderstood modernity and the traditions it is thought to threaten. From this point of view, it can be argued that there are actually two separate ‘cultural identities’ in *The Wound*. On one hand, there is the modern face of South Africa with a greater degree of individual freedom than before, on the other hand, there is a ‘traditional’ tribal culture which views homosexuality as a hurtful artifact of Western lifestyle.³⁶ When considered within this context, ukwaluka cannot be understood merely as an exotic marker of the South African or Xhosa cultural identity the film is expected to represent, but it rather becomes a rich metaphor for the evolving notion of masculinity in a society in transition.

A similar emphasis on rituals as a representation of a particular cultural identity is also observed in *I am not a Witch* by Rungano Nyoni. The main protagonist of the film is a young girl named Shula, who is accused of practicing witchcraft and sent to a camp for witches. The film is an absurd, deadpan comedy of superstition, walking a difficult line between feeding into stereotypical projections of Africa as a land of underdevelopment, corruption and misery, and cleverly making fun of such Western preconceptions about the continent. It is not always clear where Nyoni stands, and the political content of the film can be read in different ways depending on whether one sees Nyoni as a filmmaker from the West observing Africa from a distance or as an African filmmaker teasing the Western gaze observing Africa. The film opens with a group of tourists -all white, carrying cameras, clearly coming from a First World country on a touristic tour- who visit a witch

³⁶ In the aforementioned press kit, Trengove mentions that South African political leaders treated homosexuality as a ‘virus that penetrates and threatens a patriarchal organism’ in the early 1990s.

camp and looking at the people living there as if they are watching exotic animals trapped and displayed in a zoo. However, for the most of the running time, we do not see the tourists again and follow Shula, her fellow ‘witches’ and a government official named Mr. Banda who exploits Shula’s so-called powers for his own gain. A significant portion of the running time is devoted to the rituals in the camp, details like the particular dress code old women accused of witchcraft are forced to respect, and highly ceremonial activities such as a court in which Shula is given full authority despite being a small child or a TV program where her ‘expertise’ is commercialized and shared with thousands of viewers. The most striking rule in the witch camp is that all witches are required to wear meters of white fabric with large ribbons, and carry a hefty wooden stick with them at all times so that the fabric, tied to the stick, will prevent them from flying. Shula is warned that if she cuts the ribbon that ties her to the stick, she will turn into a goat. The only way out of the witch camp is, once again, a ritual with idiosyncratic rules and behavioral patterns; a ‘cleansing ceremony’ during which the resurrected witch needs to scream ‘I am not a witch!’ multiple times. The ceremony is presided over by the witch doctor.

The film takes place in an unnamed African country.³⁷ Therefore it is not easy to decode the political undercurrents of the film. While one can easily situate *The Wound* in the context of social transformations South Africa has undergone since the early 1990s, such an obvious point of reference does not exist for *I am not a Witch*. The political content of the film is not built on a contrast between modernity and tradition, or a local culture and a foreign influence that ‘destroys’ this culture. Rather, *I am not a Witch* can be

³⁷ The film was actually shot in Zambia and some of the locations are identifiable for viewers who are familiar with the country, but the place is not explicitly named throughout the film.

seen as a story of an individual trying to deal with superstitious, out-dated customs and the corrupt system built on them from within. In a comprehensive analysis of African cinema in the 2000s, Olivier Barlet argues that

If we accept the idea that cultural groups have their own ways of changing their obsolete practices, the issue is not to escape the group to adopt the Other's culture, but to fight and assert oneself as a subject in one's own group so that things evolve. These films (African films of the 2000s) constantly reinforce the discourse of difference. Customs, magic, communitarian behavior all represent an abyss that only individual emancipation can overcome (2016, 134-135).

The use of superstitions, meaningless rituals, and age-old customs in *I am not a Witch* serves a similar function. Shula's story is not one of modernity or development placed opposite tradition, but rather one of finding a place within the existing system, adapting to it, and possibly cultivating a path for change from inside. Nyoni's approach is too cynical and dark to offer Shula any relief or reach a hopeful conclusion with some possibility of social change. Nevertheless, the film follows the pattern Barlet describes in the sense that it portrays a cultural identity marred by obsolete practices, refuses to identify a 'superior' culture (a modern culture, likely associated with a former colonizer or a major political/economic force from the West), and builds its main argument around the individual emancipation of its protagonist. In an interview with CNN after the premiere of the film in Cannes, Nyoni mentions this aspect of the film regarding social change when she states 'there's some beautiful things about African culture, and there's some things that we have to recognize are blatantly detrimental to a certain group of people.' She adds, 'we can't be politically correct about it, it needs to change.'³⁸

³⁸ For Thomas Page's interview with Rungano Nyoni, see <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/29/africa/cannes-i-am-not-a-witch-rungano-nyoni/>. Accessed June 6, 2017.

While Shula never manages to change the rules of the witch camp or raise awareness among the older members of the community, she gradually comes to use her position as a witch as an advantage and learns to navigate her way in her surroundings. She gets to ‘identify’ a thief among a group of suspects she has never seen, she is chosen to lead a group prayer for rain. She evolves from an innocent, powerless victim to a popular, leading member of her community. The conclusion of the film is by no means optimistic, yet Nyoni is careful to avoid depicting Shula as a victim of the cultural environment. If there is to be any change in this society, individuals like Shula are the most likely members of the community to lead such a transition from within.

There are frequent cinematic depictions of ceremonies and rituals in other WCF-funded films as well. While not as idiosyncratic as ukwaluka or initiation to a witch camp, African films with a Francophone connection also feature situations where a strict behavioral code and customs, presumably as indicators of the local culture the film is portraying, are followed. In Algerian filmmaker Karim Moussaoui’s debut film *Until the Birds Return*, a French co-production that premiered in the Un Certain Regard section of the Cannes Film Festival in 2017, all three loosely connected stories of the film revolve around weddings, a major ceremony with established cultural codes in almost every part of the world. The first story follows a wealthy businessman named Mourad, who witnesses a violent beating but decides not to help the victim, simply leaving the scene of the crime without doing anything. Mourad has married twice, once to an Algerian woman who acts as a traditional matriarch in the large family, later to a younger French woman who says she doesn’t ‘understand how this place works’ and expresses her desire to return

to France. Through this character and her remarks, it becomes evident that Moussaoui's critique is not only directed at Algerian authorities but also at the continued influence of the French on Algeria in the post-colonial period. In his overview of contemporary Egyptian, Tunisian, Moroccan and Algerian cinemas, Josef Gugler notes that 'attacks on authoritarian rulers have usually implied a critique of the Western governments that supported them (2015, 8). Even though it is entirely set in Algeria, the indirect presence of France in *Until the Birds Return* serves a similar function.

The second story's main character is Mourad's driver Djalil, who takes a couple of days off work in order to drive an acquaintance and her daughter Aicha to a rural town for the daughter's arranged marriage. The father suffers from food poisoning on the road and is forced to spend a night in the hospital. Djalil and Aicha check into a nearby hotel and it gradually becomes clear that in fact they are in love, but are unable to freely express their love for each other because of Aicha's pending marriage. The final story mostly takes place during a wedding sequence. One of the guests, a doctor named Dahman, is accused of being a silent witness to a rape during the Algerian war. The woman is the victim of a group rape and she recognizes Dahman, who turns out to have been kidnapped by the rebel soldiers at the time and was actually practicing his profession under the orders of an armed group he did not support.

The plot summary above contains multiple hints about the social relevance of the film, which can be described as a multifaceted portrayal of contemporary Algeria. Moussaoui's cinematic language is unexpectedly patient and poetic, the film is primarily a sensual mood piece rather than a loud and clear political document. Instead of

following a linear narrative or conveying a clear political message, the director captures the varied textures, atmosphere, and ambiance of Algeria in the near past. Moussaoui states, ‘I wanted my gaze to be observant and sometimes poetic, but never definitively decisive.’³⁹ Nevertheless, the film manages to address certain frictions in Algeria today and bring the traces of an underrepresented era of recent Algerian history to screen. The third story is instrumental in this regard; Dahman’s involuntary involvement in the Algerian War raises questions about the unacknowledged legacy of this traumatic experience on Algerian society. The clear victim is the woman, now living in visible poverty and still unable to fight the demons of the past. But Dahman, despite his guilt for not acting against a major crime (which resembles Mourad’s disturbing silence in the first story), can also be considered a victim as he was kidnapped by rebels and did not have any chance but to go along with the demands of his captors in order to survive. Guy Austin notes that representations of ‘the civil war between Islamist groups and the Algerian government that followed the suspension of the 1992 elections and the declaration of a state of emergency’ has been ‘a more neglected factor’ (2009, 119). In this sense, *Until the Birds Return* fills a significant void and shows that erasing the wounds of the war has not been possible for a deeply divided nation, where distinguishing the victim from the offender is quite difficult. In the prolonged aftermath of the war, the film argues, the gap between the various socioeconomic classes has

³⁹ This quote is from the press kit of *Until the Birds Return* I obtained during the Cannes Film Festival in 2017, but the document does not indicate any publisher information or page numbers. The quote is in French, the translation is mine. The original is as follows: ‘J’ai voulu que mon regard, soit une observation parfois poétique, mais jamais définitivement tranchée.’

widened and the more privileged classes have chosen to ignore the problems that are actually felt in every corner of the country.

The civil war, which forms the background of all three stories even though it is not explicitly mentioned until the last segment, pits the secular part of the nation against the Islamist movement. But this divide is not a purely religious one, there is an unpronounced yet evident economic dimension as well. Juxtaposition of three stories is a powerful indicator of the social inequality the film depicts because in each story, Moussaoui shifts his attention to a less affluent class and quietly portrays the massive differences between the lives his protagonists lead. Mourad's house is large, handsomely furnished, his son thinks about dropping out of medical school to pursue his musical dreams. When the film starts following Djalil in the second part, there is an obvious change in the texture of the film with the deserted hotel Djalil and Aicha stay in or the cheap restaurant where Aicha's father eats the chicken leading to the food poisoning incident both depicting a far less glamorous daily existence. Djalil is Mourad's driver and clearly deals with financial difficulties. When they reach their destination, he feels he needs to return to the city immediately and always stays a few steps behind, internalizing his lowly status as a driver. If the viewer is led to observe the stark contrast between the social milieus Mourad and Djalil operate in, the contrast grows even more striking when the third story begins. The rape victim in the last segment lives in a building which can essentially be described as ruins. It is no coincidence that the character who has suffered from the violence of the Islamist movement most directly is a villager, a woman without any means to defend herself; financial, legal or otherwise. The further away the film gets

from the notably secular urban centers, the more conservative and struck with poverty the Algeria we see becomes.

For the purposes of this analysis, it is crucial to note that all the social and political elements discussed above are brought to screen via ceremonies and rituals. Setting many scenes during weddings is a strategic decision in this regard because weddings -with culture-specific customs, costumes, oaths, music and dance- invariably function as markers of the cultural identity the film in question is dealing with. In *Until the Birds Return*, the communal and crowded celebration that accompanies the wedding ceremony is vividly captured in the third part of the film.

In fact, music must be highlighted in particular as a significant component of Moussaoui's cinematic language because the use of music fulfills two functions at once. On one hand, traditional Algerian music is a notable component of the local texture and cultural identity the film evokes. The music used throughout the film frequently evokes the very specific time and place of the stories, reminding the viewer of how deeply Algerian this French co-production really is. On the other hand, Moussaoui stages the musical sequences in highly inventive ways; using stage lights, unexpected camera angles or movements, and rich colors to create some of the most memorable and evocative scenes in the entire film. The visual inventiveness demonstrated in such sequences is of particular importance for international funding initiatives when one remembers the official WCF regulations quoted in the beginning of this chapter. In the empty ballroom of the hotel, Aicha dances to a popular Algerian song and Djalil joins her, with the dance

becoming an implicit yet powerful expression of their desire for each other.⁴⁰ From the song the hotel band is playing with traditional instruments to the colored patterns on the walls of the hall, every detail in this musical sequence carefully establishes an identifiably Algerian texture. An even more striking example of this occurs during the transition between the second and third stories. After the film leaves Djilil and Aicha in a deserted location and before Dahman is introduced in the same place, a group of musicians and dancers appear out of nowhere and perform an energetic, wonderfully choreographed dance routine. This scene has no narrative connection with the rest of the film and is reminiscent of the lavish song-and-dance sequences frequently seen in popular Hindi cinema.⁴¹ Similarly to the earlier dance scene, this dance sequence also features traditional music and innovative cinematography, but the costumes and the dance moves give this scene a slightly more modern, more contemporary character. The production values for this scene are noticeably higher because of the large number of dancers on screen and the elaborate choreography they execute.

2.3: Women's Stories

Even though WCF regulations do not officially express preferential treatment of women directors or projects focusing on women as main protagonists, one of the most striking aspects of the recent crop of WCF-supported films to achieve success on the

⁴⁰ A brief video excerpt from this scene can be seen at <http://www.cineuropa.org/vd.aspx?t=video&l=en&rdID=326994>. Accessed June 8, 2017.

⁴¹ Several scholars have noted that song and dance sequences function as veiled expressions of sexual attraction and romantic longing in Hindi cinema, filling a void caused by conservatism and censorship (Booth 2000, Sen 2008). The musical scenes in *Until the Birds Return* can be seen as serving a similar function in the romance between Aicha and Djilil.

festival circuit is the prevalence of women in prominent roles behind and in front of the camera. A significant number of the projects that have reached completion in 2017 and premiered in a major festival (four out of seven) are directed by women.⁴² Furthermore, all four of these films focus on female protagonists and address issues related with being a woman in the respective social settings they emerge from. Another one of the films directed by a male director, *Félicité* by Alain Gomis, is also built around a remarkable female protagonist, who is the titular character of the film. Considering the notable presence of films directed by or centered around women in the other chapters of this dissertation as well as in the overall pool of projects supported by WCF, it would not be a stretch to claim that the widespread presence of women's stories and women directors is an important trend in WCF selections and needs to be analyzed in detail on its own.

Kaouther Ben Hania's *Beauty and the Dogs*, which premiered in the Un Certain Regard section of the Cannes Film Festival in 2017 alongside *Until the Birds Return*, starts with a light-hearted graduation party organized by the film's protagonist Mariam. In the first of the nine long plan-sequences that make up the film, Mariam is seen changing her outfit after her blouse is torn and she wears a dress that her friend brings. We are in the ladies' room and the narrowness of the space, with three girls sharing the limited space, contributes to a strong sense of intimacy. The director is unafraid to get very close to the protagonist and follow her closely throughout the entire film. After changing her dress, Mariam goes out to the dance hall, joins the colorful party, and starts talking to a young man named Youssef. This opening is surprising in many ways; we see young

⁴² Among the films under analysis, those directed by women are *Pendular*, *Beauty and the Dogs*, *Los Perros*, and *I am not a Witch*.

women obtaining higher education, living alone far away from their families, enjoying relative freedom in their interactions with men of their age. Compared to the restrictive situations women deal with in the majority of the Arab world, the film depicts a more secular, progressive environment. But it does not take long for this portrayal to be completely reversed. Rebecca Hillauer observes that

The country [Tunisia] enjoys the reputation of being the most progressive of the Arab countries. It produced the Arab world's first written constitution, women have more attested legal rights than everywhere else in the region, and abortion is legal. In actual fact, however, apart from those women living in the big cities such as Tunis or Sousse, the situation of Tunisian women does not differ much from that of their Arab sisters throughout the Mediterranean region (2000, 359-360).

From the second scene onwards, *Beauty and the Dogs* illustrates this unfortunate reality only too well. The second long take begins with a petrified Mariam running on the street, her dress ruined and her make up mixed with blood. A few minutes later it is revealed that Mariam was raped by two policemen, who approached the young couple, came up with an excuse to separate them, forced Mariam to get into their car, and raped her after beating Youssef. The rest of the film shows a harrowing social reality in which the young woman is turned down by several medical institutions, sent to obtain a police certificate before a medical examination can be performed, denied the certificate because the accused rapists themselves are policemen, intimidated by police officers to withdraw her complaint, accused of lying and shamed for going out at night, talking to a young man she doesn't know, or wearing 'revealing' clothes. The social critique of the film is built around these dreadful attitudes toward women and bureaucratic procedures that deny

women their rights or autonomy. Director Ben Hania, in an interview published in the press kit of the film, states that

From Mariam's perspective, the story is cruel, but at the same time - paradoxically - it is trivial from that of the hospitals and the police. For them, it's just another day at work. They see victims like Mariam every night. The difference between these two attitudes, that of personal tragedy and the insensitivity of institutions, defines the tone of the film.⁴³

In its portrayal of labyrinthine bureaucracy and unjust treatment of ordinary citizens by state institutions, the film resembles many examples of recent Romanian cinema, particularly *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* (*Moartea Domnului Lăzărescu*, 2005) by Cristi Puiu. This comparison is brought up by many critics who review the film, including Jay Weissberg of *Variety*, who states that 'the ghost of *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* (...) inevitably hangs over' the film.⁴⁴ Boyd van Hoeij, writing for *The Hollywood Reporter*, praises the film for 'evoking nothing less than the nightmarish descent into the medico-bureaucratic hell of Cristi Puiu's *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu*' while Wendy Ide's review in *Screendaily* argues that Mariam's journey 'has something of the grinding slog of official indifference explored by Cristi Puiu's *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu*.'⁴⁵ Long takes without cutting and the directors' decision to let the scenes play out in real time contribute to this similarity. It is also worth noting that both films premiered in the same section (Un Certain Regard) at Cannes and they both closely follow their main characters

⁴³ This quote is from the press kit of *Beauty and the Dogs* I obtained during the Cannes Film Festival in 2017, but the document does not indicate any publisher information or page numbers.

⁴⁴ For Jay Weissberg's review of *Beauty and the Dogs*, see <http://variety.com/2017/film/reviews/beauty-and-the-dogs-review-1202436889/>. Accessed August 10, 2017.

⁴⁵ For Boyd van Hoeij's review of *Beauty and the Dogs*, see <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/beauty-dogs-1003573>. For Wendy Ide's review of the film, see <http://www.screendaily.com/reviews/beauty-and-the-dogs-cannes-review/5118175.article>. Both accessed August 10, 2017.

in near-Kafkaesque tales of endless bureaucracy in the aftermath of a harrowing medical situation. Both of the films start in the evening and take place over the course of one night, reaching a conclusion as the new day breaks. However, *Beauty and the Dogs* diverges from this point of reference in a significant way. The best-known films of the Romanian New Wave are ironic and cynical (Nasta 2013, Pop 2014). But Ben Hania's film focuses on a naive protagonist and reaches an optimistic conclusion. Ben Hania says 'I didn't want to give her [Mariam] a militant past. That's why I presented her as a naive character' and adds 'Mariam pursues a journey wherein all she wants is justice and reparation for what she's been put through by requesting a hearing.'⁴⁶ Despite all the intimidation, threats and shaming she faces, the film ends with Mariam deciding to file an official complaint with the help of a good officer and her family, managing to leave the police station safely as the new day breaks.

Mariam's lack of militancy is significant in two regards: first, keeping it in mind that this film is made in the post-2011 / post-revolution era, it is safe to assume that some of the other younger characters have participated in the demonstrations that have resulted in the end of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's 23-year dictatorship. The revolution is explicitly mentioned several times and Youssef is clearly identified as a revolutionary. But this later causes further maltreatment of Youssef by the policemen, who consider him an enemy against their right wing political views. Robert Lang, writing about Tunisian director Nouri Bouzid's *Making Of* (2006), notes that 'the policeman is one of the prime representatives of sought-after male supremacy' (2014, 271). The friction between the

⁴⁶ This quote is taken from the aforementioned press kit of the film.

policemen and Youssef can be seen as an extension for a similar race for male supremacy. Mariam is denied an autonomous voice and treated as a passive presence by the men fighting for power among themselves. The sides in this male competition are largely defined by the political views of the characters; with the left-wing revolutionary Youssef finding himself alone against a crowded group of right-wing policemen, all state employees with conservative views.

The second significant aspect of Mariam's lack of militancy is the film's refusal to identify a simple, single-dimensional enemy for her to fight against. Lang observes that in Tunisian cinema, 'it is not always, or only the Salafists,⁴⁷ who are the "problem," but rather a widespread and deeply rooted conservatism that more accurately describes what the liberal secularists are up against' (265). Ben Hania's approach is a balanced application of this point, considering the absence of an Islamist or Salafist enemy in *Beauty and the Dogs*. The film is set in a relatively progressive environment and there is no obvious indicator of the presence of religious fundamentalists or Islamists in the region. There is a female police officer who takes Mariam's statement and she is a notable character because she continues to work despite being heavily pregnant and does not wear the Islamic attire, both of which would have been impossible under an Islamist rule. She is not a fully sympathetic character because she refuses to help Mariam after her shift is over, yet her religiosity or its lack does not constitute a reason for the viewer's negative opinion of her. The viewer is asked to evaluate the character based solely on her institutional identity as an insensitive state employee. Adding to the balanced portrayal of

⁴⁷ Salafism is a very conservative social and political movement in the Arab region, which advocates for a return to the strict traditions of Sunni Islam.

the group of antagonists in the film is the presence of just, helpful employees in the state institutions alongside corrupt ones. The film does not merely represent an endless series of miserable and harrowing events. Mariam faces several dishonest policemen including the two rapists, but the supportive old man who informs Mariam about her rights and encourages her to run away from the station in the last scene is none other than another ordinary police officer. Similarly, even though the administrator in the first medical center is more interested in chatting about food than helping a petrified young woman, the film presents a comparable character in the second hospital who tries her hardest to help Mariam and Youssef.

As illustrated above, Ben Hania's decision to follow a female protagonist in a male-dominated environment does not only raise gender issues, but also boosts the appeal of the film for initiatives such as WCF by increasing its political relevance -a factor explicitly mentioned in the regulations quoted above. It is worth noting that *Beauty and the Dogs* received financial support from Hubert Bals Fund of the International Film Festival Rotterdam alongside its success with WCF. The project managed a rare feat in attracting a large number of funding bodies associated with film festivals as it was also supported by Sørfond associated with the Films From the South Film Festival in Norway and Visions Sud Est, an initiative of the Visions du Reel Festival in Switzerland.

Another significant box *Beauty and the Dogs* ticks with ease is 'creative and visual innovativeness.' The visual composition presents a major technical challenge, which the director and her team of craftsmen pass with flying colors. The 100-minute film is made up of only nine takes, each lasting over ten minutes and separated by simple

intertitles that indicate chapter numbers. It is important to note that the use of long, uninterrupted takes in this case must not be confused with the use of long static shots in slow cinema, discussed in detail below. *Beauty and the Dogs* maintains an almost exhausting narrative momentum throughout, there is hardly any time in the film to slow down and reflect. The storyline is very eventful and the characters are constantly on the move. Therefore, the use of long takes does not contribute to a sense of stasis or slowness in any way. While she deliberately lets scenes linger for long periods of time, Ben Hania - unlike the practitioners of slow cinema- does not provide her characters or the viewers any room for contemplation or design evocatively still images. On the contrary; all the locations are crowded, life flows with a hectic pace, there is unbearable tension that keeps building up. Ben Hania explains the rationale behind her stylistic choices in the film by saying that long takes form ‘a considerable formal constraint. But the film needs it, because a long shot has the benefit of plunging us into real-time - into life.’ She goes on to add that ‘using a long shot allows us to create an element of tension and to immerse the audience in the sensation of real time, even if the film is made up of nine fragments.’⁴⁸ The tension she mentions stems from the gripping events that make up the narrative as well as the highly choreographed, mobile, complex way they are brought to screen. The viewer simultaneously feels anxious for Mariam, rooting for her in her quest to survive a night of dreadful events, and experiences a sense of tension caused by the knowledge that any simple mistake (a timing error by the camera operator, a malfunction of the lights or lenses, a wrong step one of the actors can take) can ruin the elaborate shot. When a new

⁴⁸ Both of these quotes are taken from the aforementioned press kit of the film.

sequence begins from an unexpectedly tight angle or a difficult location -like a crowded hospital lobby with dozens of people running in all directions- is introduced, the viewers not only wonder how Mariam will solve her problems, but also keep the question of how a complex 10-minute shot will be executed in the back of their minds.

The use of mobile long takes definitely makes *Beauty and the Dogs* a more visually innovative film than it would have been otherwise. But it must be stressed that the visual innovation observed in the film (and presumably favored by WCF and similar initiatives) is not of the merely gimmicky kind. Visual creativity of the film is not only for the sake of visual creativity. In addition to their function in creating a tense atmosphere, long takes are directly linked to the aforementioned cultural and political content of the film. Explaining various purposes of using long takes, Laura Kissel claims that ‘the long take enables a certain kind of intelligibility that is different from an answer. It resists constructing a singular meaning to what is before the camera; instead, the long take is expansive’ (2008, 351). This point brings to mind the previously-discussed qualities of *Beauty and the Dogs* such as the plurality of perspectives, the refusal to identify a single antagonist, and the balanced portrayal of corrupt and just characters together. Ben Hania creates an extensive canvas of different traditions, socioeconomic classes, beliefs, and institutions that works as a portrayal of contemporary Tunisia as much as it does as the story of an individual. Another point Kissel raises, which is applicable to Ben Hania’s film, is her argument that ‘it is the fulcrum of the long take to make what is obscured, discernible, to bring what is mostly marginalized to the center of attention’ (351). The film discloses often veiled issues such as rape, police brutality, or

corruption and inefficiency in state institutions by following an unusual protagonist. Neither the difficult subject matter nor the main character -an independent young woman who refuses to be intimidated or let go of her rights- are frequently seen on screens. *Beauty and the Dogs* brings them to the front in formally rigorous fashion.

Marcela Said's *Los Perros* -like *Beauty and The Dogs*- was supported by WCF, shown in the Cannes Film Festival in 2017, and tells a story built around a female protagonist. In this case the main character, named Mariana, comes from a wealthy family, owns a gallery, and takes horseback riding lessons. The film hints at the growing sexual tension between her and her riding instructor Juan, but this relationship is only secondary to the political crisis that arises over the course of the film. Juan is a former colonel accused of human rights abuses during the Pinochet dictatorship and now awaiting the verdict of his trial. Complicating matters further is the fact that Mariana's father is also accused of being involved with the Pinochet regime, possibly explaining how he was able to accumulate his wealth in the first place.

Paul Rodriguez notes that, in the context of Latin American cinema, 'a key development in the new century has been the rise to prominence of female directors. Before the 1980s, noteworthy Latin American women directors were few and far between' (2016, 265). He goes on to divide this resurgence into two periods. He considers the filmmakers who were active between the early 1980s and mid-1990s as the first generation. He argues that 'despite its increasing prevalence, the work of this first generation remained marginal within the New Latin American Cinema,' but when discussing the second generation (from the late-1990s to the contemporary period), he

adds that ‘today, on the other hand, women directors are at the center of a cinematic revival’ (266). A frequently observed element in the works that make up this revival is an exploration of ‘the legacy of Latin America’s violent past’ from the perspective of heroines that enjoy ‘class or race privileges’ (282). Rodriguez’s main example for the close relation between class and the legacy of past political traumas is Lucrecia Martel’s *Salta Trilogy*.⁴⁹ I argue that a similar conceptual framework, paying attention to contemporary power dynamics built on a deep divide between social classes and associating them with the violent political history of the Latin American country the film hails from, is necessary when analyzing *Los Perros*. The heroine of Martel’s *The Headless Woman* is a visibly affluent woman and the film details the crisis she goes through after -possibly- running over a socioeconomically disadvantaged boy in the beginning of the film. *Los Perros* similarly focuses on a financially privileged woman and chronicles how she deals with a problem that threatens to shatter her comfortable life. Both of the protagonists are depicted as lacking class conscience, turning a blind eye to the problems less affluent people around them face. Another similarity is that both of the women are, at least initially, easily manipulated by the men around them even though they are shown as strong women who can command their environments. The ‘headlessness’ in the title of Martel’s film refers to the protagonist’s gradual loss of this command -in other words, her growing inability to think and decide for herself-, resulting in an upper class indifference the film problematizes. The heroine in the film convinces herself of a version of the vague events in the film (the hit-and-run accident) that ignores

⁴⁹ *The Salta Trilogy* includes the following three films: *The Swamp* (*La Ciénaga*, 2001), *Holy Girl* (*La Nina Santa*, 2004), and *The Headless Woman* (*La Mujer sin Cabeza*, 2008).

any responsibility she might possibly have. A very similar trajectory from initial strength to manipulation in the aftermath of a crisis and consequent lack of awareness about class-related issues can be observed in *Los Perros* as well.

It must be noted, however, that Martel's films are situated in a specific Argentinean context while Said's *Los Perros* is closely linked to recent Chilean history. As the analysis below shall illustrate, the socioeconomic divide in *Los Perros* is problematized in the film especially in terms of its relation to the Pinochet era and human rights abuses committed during the dictatorship. *The Headless Woman*, on the other hand, is a more enigmatic film that refuses to explicitly specify any such political context in its depiction of upper class indifference. Based on the use of color home videos and early cell phones, Rodriguez assumes that the film takes place in the late 1990s and argues that it depicts 'Argentina's civil society' as 'an accommodating accomplice of [President Carlos] Menem's brand of populist neoliberalism' in this period (279). Considering Menem's presidential pardon of the crimes committed by military officials during the 1970s (an era of military dictatorship in Argentina) in 1989 and 1990, some political context regarding human rights abuse can be found in *The Headless Woman* as well, perhaps. Yet Martel is not as direct and straightforward in establishing this connection as Said is in *Los Perros*. The common prevalence of these issues about social inequality and class divide in Argentine and Chilean films is not surprising. A significant similarity between contemporary Chilean and Argentine cinemas, according to Héctor L'Hoeste, is the fact that they were the only two Latin American countries experiencing almost simultaneous economic growth in the aftermath of dictatorships (2000, 64).

Los Perros, like the other films discussed in this chapter, is a complex film in which the personal and the political are irretrievably intertwined. Mariana's relationship with Juan as well as her family history are deeply marked by the traumatic political history of Chile and the crimes individuals were forced to commit on behalf of the state. Director Said mentions this aspect when she states 'I knew the way the political and the personal were so mixed and mingled together was going to be a little shocking,' and goes on to explain, 'she [Mariana] was never going to be a heroine restoring justice. (...) While they [Mariana and Juan] are talking about something political, strong, emotional, and terrible, at the same time, there is this intense sexuality.'⁵⁰ As Said notes, the connection between Mariana's personal history and the recent history of her country disturbs the viewer because she is not portrayed as a naive character or a victim. Mariana herself is a very provocative woman and it is not always easy to read her motivations. On one hand, it is impossible to ignore the attraction between her and Juan, on the other hand, she unexpectedly has a violently sexual encounter with the family lawyer. She seems to care about Juan and his legal troubles, but she does not want to disclose her father's involvement in the very same crimes Juan is being judged for. At one point in the film, her father tells Mariana 'you have a loose screw, just like your mother.' The film follows Mariana throughout, but Mariana, unlike Mariam in *Beauty and the Dogs* or Shula in *I am not a Witch*, is not an innocent, sympathetic, victimized character the viewer can identify with and root for. In the other films, it is easier to observe how the personal story

⁵⁰ For Elena Lazic's interview with Marcela Said, see <https://seventh-row.com/2017/05/25/marcela-said-los-perros/>. Accessed June 14, 2017.

of one woman is utilized to address social and political ills, but in *Los Perros* a similar strategy that connects the personal and the political takes an unsettling turn.

Contemporary Chilean cinema often deals with the Pinochet regime and the traces it has left on Chilean society today. Several documentaries by Patricio Guzmán including *Nostalgia for the Light* (*Nostalgia de la Luz*, 2010) and *The Pearl Button* (*El Botón de Nácar*, 2015) -as well as his earlier work-, internationally acclaimed films by Pablo Larraín such as *Tony Manero* (2008) and *Post Mortem* (2010), and Andrés Wood's *Machuca* (2004) have portrayed different facets of the years leading up to the dictatorship, years of trauma and suffering, its immediate aftermath, and its continued legacy. It is worth noting that all the Chilean directors whose work is mentioned here have benefitted from European -and particularly French- funding in realizing their projects. This is not limited to contemporary Chilean cinema alone, but rather has traditionally been the case since the Pinochet era with Raúl Ruiz working in exile in France during the dictatorship period and Guzmán completing his monumental three-part epic *The Battle of Chile* (*La Batalla de Chile: La Lucha de un Pueblo sin Armas*, 1975-1979) with French financing and completely without any support from Chile in the 1970s. Writing about Raúl Ruiz's and Guzmán's works in the last two decades in particular, James Cisneros argues that these films 'offer examples of forging a memory strategy that projects images to make visible a perpetual absence and to show the screen that hides' (2006, 59). *Los Perros* should definitely be considered as an addition to this growing roster of Chilean films dealing with the Pinochet regime, contributing to this cinematic chronicle by employing the strategy Cisneros describes. It is a film about what

is unsaid, remains unacknowledged and hidden, collectively forgotten. Said focuses on a wealthy protagonist and her privileged family in order to show how they choose to forget, act as if the past dictatorship has never occurred, and live with their eyes closed. Said makes their lack of memory, or their unwillingness to remember, visible on the screen. More specifically, it is gradually revealed that Mariana's father was very close to the higher ranks of the Pinochet regime and helped finance some of the camps where political prisoners were tortured and killed. He used his position to quickly grow his fortune and managed to wash his hands off the crime using his financial means once the dictatorship period was over. When the verdict of Juan's trial is announced, it becomes clear that the only ones who pay for the crimes committed under the Pinochet rule are the ones who lack the financial power, influential connections, and the privileged social status necessary to clear one's name. Juan is found guilty while the significant involvement of Mariana's father in the same crime is not even mentioned in the court. The film seems to argue that the burden of the violent past only belongs to lower-middle class citizens -the ordinary folk- whereas the upper classes can use their privileges to simply get away with the crimes they committed.

Perhaps more striking is Mariana's own silence after learning her father's crimes and the source of the wealth she continues to enjoy. The political relevance of *Los Perros*, which -according to the regulations- makes the film a good fit for WCF support, stems not from its references to a bygone era of Chilean history, but rather from the way it makes visible the contemporary silence of the upper classes about the past. In the case of this film, the problematic sense of silence I described above differs from similar acts of

collective forgetting observed in other aforementioned films like the work of Patricio Guzmán because Mariana is not only silent, but she is constantly silenced by the men around her. Director Said considers Mariana as ‘a woman looking for freedom’ and adds ‘she presents herself as this really strong woman when in fact, she is not that strong. (...) But her profound desire to liberate herself is always honest, even if she doesn't succeed.’⁵¹ There are several examples of how trapped Mariana feels when the men in her family are around her. Her father considers selling their land to a major corporation without asking for Mariana’s opinion so that a lodging facility can be built. Mariana, too, owns part of the land in question, but all the decisions are taken by her father and her husband, her consent is not even asked for. There is a neighbor who threatens to kill Mariana’s dog because the dog likes to go to his side of the lawn. He never complains to Mariana’s husband, nor does her husband do anything to help her. She becomes the target of ugly, angry threats only when she is alone.

Mariana’s relationship with Juan can also be interpreted as a more implicit extension of her silencing by the men around her. As she realizes Juan is not the kind, helpful gentleman he initially seems to be, Mariana is confronted with a dilemma. Reviewing the film for *The Hollywood Reporter*, film critic Todd McCarthy notes that ‘the core interest in Said’s story rests in how -and for how long- this bright lady, who is no young innocent, can disregard the brutal criminal behavior once indulged in by the elegant, soft-spoken gentleman she so admires.’⁵² Mariana is not *forced* to remain silent

⁵¹ These quotes are taken from the aforementioned interview with Marcela Said by Elena Lazic.

⁵² For Todd McCarthy’s review of *Los Perros*, see <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/los-perros-review-1005062>. Accessed June 15, 2017.

and disregard Juan's or her father's crimes, but she is inclined to do so because of her attraction to the former and the constant pressure the latter puts on her. The silencing of women in *Los Perros* does not take the form of physical violence and overt intimidation as it does in *Beauty and the Dogs*, yet the film makes a more complex, psychological, unpronounced sense of oppression palpable.

The second South American film⁵³ in the sample, *Pendular*, is also directed by a woman and closely follows a female protagonist. But if *Los Perros* is the most overtly political film of the bunch, *Pendular* must be the least politically charged. The second film by Julia Murat is a co-production between Brazil, Argentina and France. Almost the entire film is set in a single location, where the characters both live and work, and focuses on two characters without names, simply credited as 'she' and 'he.' The film entirely skips the romantic backstory between these characters and begins as they put tape on the floor of a studio, dividing the place into two (she practices modern dance in her part while he works as a sculptor). These artists could live anywhere in the world, the film has no obvious connection with Brazilian politics or does not explicitly refer to a particular cultural identity. Nevertheless, it demonstrates the two points I have highlighted thus far - emphasis on rituals and women's stories- bountifully. *Pendular* differs from the other

⁵³ It must be noted that 'South American film' is a contested and flexible term. Jeffrey Middents questions such geographical terms, and notes that in the case of 'Latin' America, 'most of the film festival-oriented feature films are co-productions with significant funds coming from European or American sources' (2013, 155). Miriam Ross (2010) limits her analysis of 'South' American cinema to Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Bolivia because these countries share borders, speak the same language, and have similar policies regarding film production. Stephen Hart (2014) includes Portuguese-speaking Brazil in his analysis, but also covers Mexican cinema and uses the term 'Latin American Cinema' instead of South American. I include Brazil in my discussion as a part of South American cinema following Demetrios Matheou (2010), whose book on 'New South American Cinema' explores several Brazilian films like *City of God* alongside key films from Argentina, Peru, Uruguay, and Chile.

films in the set because it is very conceptual and opaque, yet the common factors that I have identified above are applicable to this WCF-supported film as well.

Director Murat explains the origin of the film with a reference to a famous performance piece titled *Rest Energy*, created by Marina Abramovic and her partner Ulay in 1980. Murat describes the piece by noting that the artists ‘held a taut bow with an arrow pointing at Abramovic’s heart, with only the weight of their bodies sustaining the tension’ and connects this piece to her film by stating that ‘*Pendular*’s leitmotiv is an enactment of the extreme levels of trust and vulnerability inherent in any deep relationship.’⁵⁴ The key idea of the film is about the delicate balance (or perhaps the disequilibrium) found in relationships. It is clear that the characters are financially privileged, they never encounter other characters from the outer world who do not enjoy the same privileges, and the film does not attempt to make any social commentary based on the class structure. Current or past political events in Brazil are not mentioned and most of the film is devoted to the creative processes of the two artists or mundane activities such as playing football with friends, having a shower, or inviting guests over for a party. The film is always focused on the two main characters and their relationship, never leaving the borders of their own world. Recalling the scriptwriting stage, Murat admits, ‘we had unwittingly created characters that were only seen in the light of this bond (their relationship) and ones who possessed an inner life too opaque to generate a genuine connection with the audience.’⁵⁵ The prominence of dance and performance in

⁵⁴ This quote is from the press kit of *Pendular I* obtained during the Berlin Film Festival in 2017, but the document does not indicate any publisher information or page numbers.

⁵⁵ This quote is taken from the aforementioned press kit of the film.

the film is instrumental in fleshing out the characters and solving the issue Murat raises. She, in the film, is a dancer therefore the viewer gets a large number of opportunities to watch her at work, consequently gaining access to her thought process and getting to know her better as a fully realized character instead of an indecipherable representation of conceptual ideas. Quoted by Milton Snoeyenbos, Nelson Goodman (1968) describes all dances as 'symbol systems' that 'perform one or more referential functions: representation, description, expression, or exemplification.' (2001, 204). Dance pieces performed in *Pendular*, some of which are presented as mere rehearsals while some others are shown to be routines performed in ceremonial fashion before a live audience, fulfill functions similar to those listed by Goodman. Dance can be interpreted as a symbol of the fluctuations in the intense, passionate, and all-consuming relationship between him and her. The female protagonist's dance pieces oscillate between serene depictions of trust and equilibrium, and more chaotic portrayals of discomfort and disappointment.

Many of the dance pieces in the film can be understood as rituals that closely resemble mundane occurrences. Like the other films discussed thus far, *Pendular* depicts a daily existence, a recognizable world, through several ceremonies/performative rituals. Snoeyenbos argues that resemblance is a major component of the desired symbolic capacity of dance, and claims that 'dance representation often occurs via allusions or hints of resemblance' (206). The film presents a clear illustration of this connection between the notion of resemblance and the meanings dance can attain through it. *Pendular* is constructed in a way that carefully interweaves performance and daily life, with each dance ritual gaining a symbolic meaning beyond its purely aesthetic function

thanks to its resemblance to an ordinary occurrence from the relationship the characters share. Discussing the role of dance in the film, Murat notes that ‘the choreography is inspired by the transition between common everyday gestures and dance movements,’ and continues to explain that ‘the dance movement is therefore born from everyday occurrence, as a gait that slowly transforms into music and dance.’⁵⁶ The most memorable demonstration of these smooth transitions in the film comes during a dance ritual performed by her in the second half of the film. She is seated in the living room part of the building which also functions as the studio, reading a book on her chair. There is another chair in front of her, seemingly because she likes to rest her feet on it. She slowly begins to push the second chair back and forth without raising her head from the book. As she stretches more and more between the chairs, it is revealed that this most mundane of daily tasks -lazily reading a book on a wooden chair- is actually part of a choreographed dance and performed in front of an audience. Her movements between the chairs get more and more complicated, with a certain logic and self-imposed restrictions emerging over the course of the piece.

Pendular’s attention to female psyche and sexuality is also noteworthy. The film is surprisingly frank and explicit in its depiction of sexuality on screen. Murat devotes a considerable portion of the running time to sex scenes which can be seen as an alternative form of ‘dance’ between the characters, extending the film’s strategy to connect mundane acts with choreographed performances. Like dance, sex on screen also works as a reflection of the mental states of the characters or as an expression of the turbulences they

⁵⁶ This quote is taken from the aforementioned press kit of the film.

go through in their relationship. Sex scenes alternate between tenderness and violence, depending on the level of trust between the characters or the lack thereof. In his review for *The New York Times*, A. O. Scott notes that ‘the film is concerned above all with the negotiation of boundaries: between the intimacy of a couple and the autonomy of an individual, between art and eros.’⁵⁷ This is a key observation in many ways, not only because the film begins with the formation of a literal border between ‘his’ and ‘her’ space, but also because the interplay between artistic creation and eroticism is central to Murat’s vision. While he and she have almost equal screen time, it becomes evident through the dance and sex scenes (art and eros) that the female perspective is at the core of the film and that Murat’s main purpose is to find visual counterparts to the female character’s state of mind, not the male’s. The execution of the sex scenes also reflects this preference as Murat is extremely careful to maintain the dancer’s autonomy and agency in these sequences. Traditionally, as Laura Mulvey’s canonical text argues in relation to narrative cinema,

in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The demeaning male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact (2009, 715).

Mulvey’s argument is often considered to give the active role of the beholder to men, conceptualizing a male spectator, and describing women -female characters in films- as the passive objects of their gaze. Since the initial publication of *Visual Pleasure and*

⁵⁷ For A. O. Scott’s review of *Pendular*, see https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/21/movies/new-directors-new-films-8-filmmakers-to-watch.html?_r=0. Accessed June 16, 2017.

Narrative Cinema in 1975, Mulvey modified her arguments to accommodate all viewers regardless of their gender. In a 1981 piece, she states,

At the time, I was interested in the relationship between the image of woman on the screen and the ‘masculinization’ of the spectator position, regardless of the actual sex (or possible deviance) of any real live movie-goer. The in-built patterns of pleasure and identification seemed to impose masculinity as ‘point of view’ (1981, 12).

While Mulvey notes that she does not only consider male spectators in the literal sense and takes all spectatorial perspectives into account including the gaze of women who watch films, her analysis of the autonomous diegeses of narrative films maintains the central active/male beholder versus passive/female object divide. Regardless of the viewer, most films are constructed in a way that reflects the male point of view, depicting the female body as an object of desire.⁵⁸ Murat’s use of female sexuality on screen in *Pendular*, on the other hand, reverses the roles in this formulation and challenges the established notions of the gaze and its object. It is true that the dancer occupies a major position in the composition of the film and that the camera is frequently fascinated by her body, presence, and movements. But the film shows a similar sense of fascination and respect in closely observing the sculptor’s body as well. Murat’s strategy is not to simply shift the female character into the beholder’s position and objectify the male from her perspective. Instead, one of the most striking qualities of *Pendular* is its balanced, careful approach to sexuality on screen, its ability to keep male and female bodies in equilibrium. Of the several sex scenes, one can come across as particularly surprising at first glance because we see the female character penetrating the male’s body during their lovemaking.

⁵⁸ Mulvey famously associates the male gaze with psychoanalysis, which is beyond the purposes of the present analysis of *Pendular*.

Crucially, Murat does not treat this scene any differently from the other sexual encounters in the film, refusing to emphasize the relative unconventionality of the scene as a risqué or controversial element. In his review of the film, Chuck Bowen draws attention to the portrayal of female sexuality in *Pendular*, noting that the dancer's 'corporeality is poignant and erotic in a fashion that embarrasses the eroticism of so much male-centric cinema.' He adds that 'eroticism often divorces women of their humanity, conforming them to depressingly typical masturbatory fantasies, while the eroticism of *Pendular* connects us [the viewer] to [her-the dancer's] total essence as a person in transition.'⁵⁹ The dancer is navigating the fluctuations of her artistic and romantic lives in a film that carefully utilizes rituals and routines in order to tell a woman's story.

2.4: Hybrid Identities

Félicité and its director Alain Gomis seem to be outliers within the group of films and filmmakers under analysis. First, while all the other directors are artists who have directed only one or two films including the WCF-supported project (with the exception of Kaouther Ben Hania, whose third film is *Beauty and the Dogs*), Gomis is a relatively more established name with four narrative feature length films to his credit. Each one of his features premiered in major festivals like Venice or Berlin and his 2012 film *Today* (*Tey - Aujourd'hui*) was invited to the most coveted section of the Berlinale, the competition, and won the top prize in the most prestigious film festival in Africa, FESPACO. The Berlinale competition appearance has significantly boosted Gomis'

⁵⁹ For Chuck Bowen's review of *Pendular* in *Slant Magazine*, see <http://www.slantmagazine.com/film/review/pendular>. Accessed June 18, 2017.

international profile - it is uncommon to find works by directors who have competed in major festivals before in the pool of WCF-funded projects.⁶⁰ Once *Félicité* was completed, it became the only film in the sample set to premiere in a major festival competition and it ended up winning a significant official prize, the Jury Grand Prix in Berlin. It is the first WCF film to win such a major award since 2010 and has already enjoyed a successful theatrical release in the most important European territory -France- with more than 40,000 admissions.

Despite its unique position in terms of pedigree involved in its making and the extraordinary success it has enjoyed since its premiere, I argue that *Félicité* is more closely linked to the films discussed above than it initially seems to be. There are several aspects of the film that illustrate the two main points analyzed thus far; cinematic depiction of ceremonies, rituals, and performances as an expression of cultural identity; and the emphasis placed on women's stories told from women's perspectives. Furthermore, *Félicité* makes some formal elements and implicit thematic concerns, which are only briefly mentioned in other films, more prominent and fully developed.

The titular character, played by Véro Tshanda Beyo, is a single mother who earns her living by singing in a bar in Kinshasa. When her refrigerator breaks down a neighbor named Tabu, who admires Félicité in the bar every night, approaches her and tries to convince her to buy a new refrigerator. Before long, the new gadget causes problems and Tabu starts visiting Félicité frequently to fix the refrigerator. Purchasing a refrigerator is a considerable expense for Félicité and her life turns upside down during this period of

⁶⁰ Only nine other directors with such previous pedigree have received WCF funding in the last twelve years.

financial struggle when her son is seriously injured in a motorcycle accident. He needs surgery, otherwise he will lose his leg, but the operation cannot be performed until Félicité raises enough money to pay for the expenses. The first half of the film follows Félicité in her odyssey around the city in order to find money for the operation, visiting everyone in town she can think of. She fails in her search and her son Samu ends up losing his leg. The tone of the film shifts drastically as Félicité's will to live evaporates after suffering such a major blow, she starts blaming herself for the tragedy and becomes unable to find her characteristic energy, feistiness, or the magnetic force that initially defined her stage performances. The film slows down in the second half, allowing Félicité time to contemplate, rediscover the small things that make life worth living, and regain a different kind of happiness -or rather piece of mind-, partially with Tabu's help.

As the plot summary above indicates, music plays a central role in the film.

Félicité's music is based on the songs of Mua Mbuyi, who also appears in a small role. Mbuyi is the singer of *Kasai Allstars*, a conglomerate of four different groups that produced the soundtrack album. The album features songs in Lingala and combines traditional songs built on almost-hypnotic repetition of simple melodies with modern electronic sounds, resulting in examples of a genre of music named 'Congotronics.' The traditional songs in the film can be described as improvised trance sessions as many of the songs last for longer than six-seven minutes and organically evolve over that time.⁶¹ There are several electronic pieces and remixed versions of older songs in the film as

⁶¹ For example, the longest song in the soundtrack, *Mabela*, is 12 minutes 47 seconds long. All the songs feature poetry recitation as well as deliberately used background noise and chatter. The entire album by *Kasai Allstars*, titled *Around Félicité*, is available in the iTunes store in the US.

well. Singing is Félicité's main source of income, the songs she sings establish a strong sense of time and place -contributing to the cultural specificity of the film-, and her relationship with music functions as a symbol -or a barometer- of her state of mind. In the beginning of the film, Félicité commands her audience, her singing is passionate, fierce, and powerful. After the tragedy, however, her posture on stage changes. She becomes more hesitant and a deep sadness settles in her voice. This trajectory is reflected in several scenes set during her stage performances. These sequences are similar to the dance routines in *Pendular*, or the weddings and other social gatherings in *Until the Birds Return* and *Beauty and the Dogs* in the sense that they situate the film in a particular cultural scene and fulfill various functions such as moving the narrative forward, offering insights about the main character's psychological state, or boosting the political relevance of the film. The music is essential to the film's construction and defines the culture *Félicité* has emerged from. When asked whether music had an influence on his choosing Kinshasa⁶² as the location, director Gomis says yes and explains that the music in the film is 'both traditional music and music that has become urbanized, that smells of grease and the forest. Transcendental, electric, almost rock or electro. This music links tradition and modernity and, as I see it, embodies the African city.'⁶³

The plot summary above also indicates the presence of a strong female protagonist in *Félicité*, another element observed across many films that have received

⁶² Gomis is a French-born Senegalese director and his earlier films are set in Senegal. *Félicité*, on the other hand, takes place in Kinshasa, the capital city of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Gomis has no connection with the country and the choice of location is unexpected at first glance.

⁶³ This quote is from the press kit of *Félicité* I obtained during the Berlin Film Festival in 2017, but the document does not indicate any publisher information or page numbers.

WCF support. Gomis' camera is constantly fascinated by the titular character, there are many expressive close up shots of Beyo's memorable face. She is the center of the film, she commands the screen and her screen presence lends a unique power to the images. In fact, Gomis notes that portraying a strong woman on screen was one of the key ideas behind the project. He states, 'at the origin of this one [the film] are real people, women I am close to - mainly in Senegal. Strong women who don't accept compromise, who tackle everything head on and refuse to give in no matter what.'⁶⁴ Despite all the obstacles she faces in her quest to raise the money, Félicité continues to look for new options and never gives up regardless of her desperate circumstances. She is a determined and passionate character. Crucially and unexpectedly, the film refuses to portray Tabu as a protector for Félicité, let a romance blossom between these two characters, or associate Félicité's ability to regain her joy of living in the second half with her equation with a man. She is strong enough to handle her problems on her own. Tabu is not a typically strong and caring male protector. He is an infamous womanizer, not a particularly good mechanic, and Félicité does not fall in love with him. She simply enjoys his company and the only thing she says to him is 'I like your way of being.' This is the extent of their relationship; it is profound and meaningful, but in no way a reaffirmation of traditional gender roles which usually depict the woman as lacking the strength to deal with her problems without the help of a strong man.

The portrayal of Félicité in the film is in line with the fashion in which women are often depicted in African, and particularly Senegalese, cinema. Analyzing screen images

⁶⁴ This quote is taken from the aforementioned press kit of the film.

of African femininity through the films directed by renowned Senegalese filmmakers Ousmane Sembène and Joseph Gai Ramaka, Anjali Prabhu argues that female characters can often be ‘a shining example of resilience and hope against a backdrop of corrupt and male-dominated postcolonial urban society in chaos’ (2014, 79). *Félicité* is not a didactic symbol of hope and resilience, yet it is clear that she possesses those qualities. She matches many of the criteria listed by Prabhu; she navigates the chaotic urban space successfully, and she manages to remain hopeful and strong as a lonely woman in a society dominated by corrupt local authorities, most of whom are male. Similarly to Mariana in *Los Perros* and Mariam in *Beauty and the Dogs*, *Félicité* is confronted with a crisis with political and social implications beyond its personal toll. She displays an impressive capacity to recover when she is pushed to the limit.

Beyond the portrayal of a resilient female character as the central protagonist and the prevalence of ceremonial markers of cultural identity, *Félicité* prominently illustrates a few other significant thematic and formal elements, which are more fleetingly displayed in the aforementioned films. One such element is a preoccupation with ‘hybrid’ identities, a sense of being in-between the local and the global. We see this briefly in *Until the Birds Return* when Mourad’s second wife contemplates returning to France or when more affluent characters alternate between Arabic and French in their daily interactions. *The Wound*, almost entirely set in a rural camp where a traditional ceremony is performed, ends with images of an urban, highly globalized South Africa when the protagonist returns to the city center. Once again, the dialogue is in a fluid combination of the local language (Xhosa) and the language of the former colonizer (English). *I am not a Witch*,

set in a witch camp in Zambia, reminds us of the European tourists who visit the camp as a touristic attraction in a couple of scenes. None of these films is fully invested in the negotiation of the clash between domestic and foreign forces, yet the co-existence of the local and the global is reflected briefly in all of them.

Hybridization is actually a literary term introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin.

Extending the definition of hybridity beyond biology or racial issues, Bakhtin developed the concept of 'hybridization' as a process, with hybridity being its end result. Bakhtin defines hybridization as 'a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor' (1981, 358). For Bakhtin, the 'heteroglossia' -the co-existence of multiple perspectives in a single text- found in hybrid narratives, in other words their 'polyphonic' nature, gives them the potential to challenge traditional and hegemonic discourses. This critical and political potential of hybrid texts has been acknowledged and theorized by several other scholars including literary theorist Homi Bhabha. Bhabha (1994) adapted the notion of hybridization to the study of postcolonial texts and presented hybridity as an alternative to existing cultural, social, and political binaries such as colonizer/colonized, dominant/subservient, or self/other. In doing so, Bhabha utilized hybridization in order to challenge traditionally inflexible and simplified categories like race, class, and gender. Bringing Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia to mind, Bhabha also focused on cultural plurality and argued that culture can exist interstitially, in the spaces between rigid and monolithic categories. Applying the notion

of hybridization to the domain of communication and media studies, Marwan Kraidy modifies Bakhtin's definition as he states,

Since hybridity involves the fusion of two hitherto relatively distinct forms, styles, or identities, cross-cultural contact, which often occurs across national borders as well as across cultural boundaries, is a requisite for hybridity. The occurrence of contact typically involves movement of some sort, and in international communication contact entails the movement of cultural commodities such as media programs, or the movement of people through migration (2005, 5).

How is this notion of hybridity manifested in *Félicité*? It is worth noting that *Félicité*'s stage performances are not the only instances where music is used strategically in the film. Perhaps even more ceremonial and useful in capturing the particular cultural scene in Kinshasa are the scenes showing a symphony orchestra playing European classical music. Gomis juxtaposes *Félicité*'s traditional African songs with the Arvo Pärt⁶⁵ piece *Fratres* the all-African symphony orchestra is performing in an empty hangar. In relation to hybridity, the cultural commodity that moves in the cross-cultural contact in the film is music. There are multiple national identities in play as well, with a French-born filmmaker of Senegalese and Bissau Guinean heritage directing a co-production between France, Senegal, Belgium, Germany, and Lebanon, shot in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. *Félicité*, like all the other films in the sample set, is the result of the combination of transnationally mobile talent and resources from several different points of origin.

Bakhtin distinguishes between two types of hybridization: unintentional and intentional. Unintentional, unconscious hybridization occurs historically and organically.

⁶⁵ Arvo Pärt is an Estonian composer of classical and choral music, whose works are often celebrated for their minimalism and meditative quality.

Intentional hybridization, on the other hand, is defined by Bakhtin as ‘precisely the perception of one language by another language, its illumination by another linguistic consciousness. An image of language may be structured only from the point of view of another language, which is taken as the norm’ (1981, 359). It is this second category of hybridization that is useful for the analysis presented here, because intentional hybridization describes a certain level of asymmetry, a power dynamic which can be confusing and problematic for the individual stuck between unequal cultural traditions, identities, or perspectives. Applying Bakhtin’s idea of intentional hybridization to cultural theory, Pnina Werbner draws attention to this state of rupture, the uneasy gap between the cultures in question as she states ‘aesthetic hybrids build to shock, change, challenge, revitalize, or disrupt through deliberate, intended fusions of unlike social languages and images’ and -referring to Bakhtin’s original text- claims that ‘intentional hybrids create an ironic double consciousness, a “collision between differing points of views on the world.”’ Such artistic interventions -unlike organic hybrids- are internally dialogical, fusing the unfusable’ (2015, 5). The collision outlined by Werbner finds its cinematic counterpart in the identity crisis of the confused, disoriented protagonist. It is almost as if there are two different Félicités in Gomis’ film; the strong, hopeful, resilient single mother in the first half, and the disrupted, exhausted woman in the second half, whose soul seems to have left her body.

Félicité, in the second half, becomes a character detached from herself, which is a condition linked to the collision of cultures and identities, in other words the intentional hybridization, that lies at the core of the film. Beya describes Félicité as ‘a woman who is

half alive, and half dead.’⁶⁶ Her character remains silent for most of the second half, she seems slow and inefficient, in pain, very much unlike the Félicité we have followed in the first half. When ‘felicity’ vanishes, when the initial sense of hope and joyfulness disappears, Félicité experiences a strong sense of strangeness from herself. Gomis articulates Félicité’s state as he notes, ‘falling into a body, falling into a story, into a context you endure. This strangeness from oneself (...) is something very familiar to me and with which I constantly dialogue. It is, in part, the foundation of my desire, my cinematic domain.’ When confronted with the question whether questioning this otherness in his films comes from a need, he responds,

I experience it in a very powerful way. Does it come from being mixed race? That is to say, not looking like those who are close to me, not looking like my father or my mother, or people from my countries. This strangeness from oneself is something I need to assert. I believe the doubt as to our core identity is clearly more widespread than we claim. Therein is a kind of abyss that I am inclined to find wonderful.⁶⁷

Félicité’s mood and mental state in the second half are not simply the visible consequences of the tragedy that occurs in the first half, rather they can also be interpreted as cinematic reflections of the ‘otherness experience’ Gomis mentions above. The director himself embodies the notion of intentional hybridization through his family heritage, his personal history oscillating between several cultures, countries, and continents; and the projects he brings to fruition via transnational flows of financial capital, technology, talent, and labor. I argue that the protagonist he creates on screen,

⁶⁶ Beya is quoted by Gomis in the interview with the latter, presented in the press kit of the film.

⁶⁷ Both of the quotes as well as the question about ‘questioning otherness’ are taken from the aforementioned press kit of the film.

while she may not directly be an alter ego for Gomis, is at least partially shaped by questions of identity and otherness -or perhaps the strange sense of not belonging to your cultural surroundings- he says form the foundation of his cinematic universe.

Similarly to all the other elements examined thus far, cinematic depiction of hybrid identities also has a political dimension in addition to its subjective thematic and aesthetic implications. The musical choices in the film are unexpected and innovative, but beyond inventiveness, they also serve a significant political function: Gomis' intention is not to present an exotic, foreign image of Africa by exploiting folklore (overemphasizing traditional songs in Lingala), but rather to capture the full diversity and richness of the city. Multiple musical forms, which do not initially seem to be relevant or as a good fit for each other, are used side by side. Gomis explains why he brought traditional African music and contemporary European classical music together when he recalls,

When I first arrived in Kinshasa, my first reaction was 'how do I get out of here,' but the city managed to grab hold of me, and that's something I have tried to transcribe, to make sure that this initially repulsive image becomes endearing. So, on one of my first days, while I was contemplating *how to show the reality of this city on screen*, I contacted the orchestra, which I knew about thanks to a documentary. I arrived in a hangar, took a seat, and they started to play. I was absolutely exhausted, and suddenly I was lifted away.⁶⁸

The use of highly ritualized musical performances in the film is instrumental in situating the film within a vivid, specific cultural place and moment - likely improving the match between the WCF regulations and the film, consequently boosting its political relevance and the appeal the project held for the WCF jury.

⁶⁸ This quote is taken from the aforementioned press kit of the film, my emphasis.

Furthermore, I argue that the choice of a European musical piece in an African film by a Francophone director is not merely cultural or accidental, but should also be seen as a political decision. As it is the case in most of the films discussed above, cultural routines and performances in *Félicité* address very concrete social issues and form the basis of implicit political commentary. ‘Showing the reality of the city on screen,’ in Gomis’ words, does not only mean depicting its cultural diversity, but it also means capturing the social inequality and lack of sufficient infrastructure that continues to plague Kinshasa today. As *Félicité* goes around the city to raise enough money for the operation; she encounters a female thief in the hospital, tries to get some money from a wealthy but merciless lender, asks for some money from her boss in the bar, and talks to some policemen for help. Throughout this journey, as she gets in touch with individuals from very different socioeconomic backgrounds, the viewer watches a striking combination of devastating poverty and extreme wealth co-existing in close proximity. Gomis explains the political dimension of his choice of location by drawing attention to this contrast. He notes that in Kinshasa, ‘there is this paradox of immense underground wealth at the same time as terrible poverty. Kinshasa is a city where infrastructures have exploded under demographic pressure.’⁶⁹

I argue that this political dimension is noteworthy because Gomis refuses to identify a single source of inequality and underdevelopment. Traditionally, colonial influences or corrupt local authorities have been depicted as the main sources of the struggles African countries have endured over the years. In their extensive overview of

⁶⁹ This quote is taken from the aforementioned press kit of the film.

African Francophone Cinema, Barlet and Harrow distinguish three paradigms (or phases), beginning with the 1960s and the 1970s as a period in which questions of nationhood, problems faced in building new nations in the aftermath or under the shadow of colonial powers (especially France) were at the forefront. They argue that in the first paradigm, ‘the image of the new “modern” Africa often denotes young men and women seeking to create New Africa, free from both the past country ways and colonial European forms of oppression’ (2017, 35). The second paradigm arrived in the 1980s-1990s with ‘the move away from representations of colonialists, colonialism, or neocolonialism (...). Increasingly, there developed concerns over local authoritarian or despotic rule’ (41). The third paradigm, applicable to the cinema of the 2000s -of which *Félicité* is a part- rejects this rather simplified division of local and foreign enemies. It is not as easy as it used to be to identify the villain; problems are rooted in daily life, which is becoming an increasingly -to refer back to Bakhtin’s notion- hybrid experience. Barlet and Harrow summarize the third paradigm as follows:

The sense of everyday life is local, and yet the local is imbricated with news/ techniques/books/phone calls that extend to and from France. (...) At the same time, movement from Europe to Africa and back is increasingly seen as a Brownian motion rather than unidirectional (...). France is now less the neocolonial power than a presence both remote, especially in terms of wealth, and close, especially in terms of culture and language (56).

The phase of in-betweenness and multidirectional flow described by the authors finds several representations in *Félicité*. Kinshasa is a major city, an unmistakable urban center quite distinct from the rural locations favored in the first and second paradigms outlined above. The film patiently observes a hybrid everyday existence in which Lingala

and French are spoken together, communication and household technologies have found their way into ordinary homes -albeit belatedly in comparison to the technological advances in the First World-, an African orchestra performs European classical music, and the influence of French culture is observed everywhere even if France is no longer the colonial power she once was.

2.5: Conclusion

This chapter seeks to trace the common thematic preoccupations and stylistic tendencies that -at least partially- inform recent WCF decisions. While the regulations of the initiative point to elements such as visual innovation, cultural specificity, and political relevance; a comparative textual analysis of several WCF-supported films reveals other common traits. The main argument presented here focuses on three such traits; (1) the prevalence of ceremonies, rituals, and routines associated with customs and traditions observed by the particular cultural groups the films follow, (2) the presence of resilient, powerful female protagonists in films about and directed by women, and (3) the disorienting sense of ‘strangeness from one’s self’ characters experience as subjects with transnational, hybrid identities. These findings illustrate a seemingly paradoxical situation; while each film is placed within a very specific cultural and social milieu, the characters inhabiting these surroundings do not belong to the worlds of the films they are in. They are individuals deeply affected by the collision of cultures, perspectives and identities that defines the contemporary moment of transnationalism and hybridization. As auteurs reflecting their own worlds in their cinematic works, and as independent

filmmakers benefitting from a wide range of global funding initiatives, it is no surprise that all the artists whose films are analyzed in this chapter have been interested in the negotiation of cultural identity in an increasingly transnational and hybrid system that ironically continues to value cultural specificity very highly.

There are a few caveats to be noted. The criteria for the selection of the films to be analyzed was by no means subjective or random. Instead of picking particular films from the entire WCF catalogue over others according to some vague, self-defined criterion, I have included all the 2017 films that premiered in key festivals (Berlin and Cannes) in the study. But this also has a side effect; the set of films under analysis closely reflects the most recent trends and institutional priorities in WCF without accurately covering the entire twelve years of the fund's existence. Five of the seven films are from African countries, with the other two coming from South America, and no mention of Far East Asia, the Middle East, or Eurasia. The increasing support for African cinemas is a very contemporary development; in the first decade of WCF, the presence of African films within the pool of selected projects was far more limited and the support allocated to these films was extremely scarce. Going back further in the history of WCF reveals a much stronger presence of Far Eastern countries and asserts South America as the dominant region in WCF decisions.⁷⁰ However, it must be stressed that most of the tendencies and preoccupations addressed here can be applied to earlier WCF films from different countries, discussed in the other chapters of this dissertation. For example, among the interview subjects quoted in the third chapter, Peruvian Claudia Llosa has

⁷⁰ A more detailed breakdown of WCF support across various regions over the years is provided in the fourth chapter, in which statistical data covering the entire WCF catalogue is utilized.

made three notable films all focusing on strong women, including Fausta -the protagonist of her WCF-supported Golden Bear winner *The Milk of Sorrow (La Teta Asustada, 2009)*. Mentioned in the fifth chapter, Thai director Apichatpong Weerasethakul's WCF-funded, Golden Palm winning *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* features several Buddhist ceremonies including an idiosyncratic funeral sequence and tells a story revolving around the culturally specific concept of reincarnation. The points presented in this chapter are especially evident in the most recent set of projects that received support from WCF, but a wide range of past WCF films also exhibit similar thematic concerns.

Additionally, it must be clarified that the three elements highlighted in this chapter are neither specific to WCF-supported films, nor are they the direct reasons behind the financial support the films have received from the initiative. Needless to say, there are hundreds of other films without any involvement from WCF, which follow strong female protagonists and tell stories that revolve around women's struggles and resilience. Obviously there are many other films that deal with transnationalism and hybrid identities; many comparable theoretical concepts have been developed to analyze films that tackle similar themes. For example, the sense of disorientation and cultural confusion I described in relation to hybridization is often depicted on screen through stories about migration and exile -very topical and significant issues completely absent from the set of films examined here. To name a relevant point of comparison, the notion of 'accented' cinema, developed by Hamid Naficy, comes to mind when one reads the discussion about intentional hybridization presented above, even though none of the WCF films I listed is accented in the sense Naficy uses the term. Transnational films

analyzed by Naficy as examples of accented cinema often deal with diaspora, exile, or migration. According to Naficy, accented cinema is ‘simultaneously global and local, and it exists in chaotic semiautonomous pockets in symbiosis with the dominant and other alternative cinemas’ (2001, 19). Accented films are interstitial, occupying the gaps between two or more different cinematic traditions and cultural identities. Accented films do not necessarily focus on characters dealing with the effects of hybridization, nor is it the case that all the films that do so become automatically accented. Nevertheless, there is a certain level of proximity between these two concepts -accent and hybridization- and how they are reflected as thematic preoccupations in narrative feature films. This chapter does not establish a causal relationship between the involvement of WCF and the presence of the three main elements highlighted here. Instead, I acknowledge WCF and other comparable funds associated with film festivals as a notable example alongside many other domains where significant questions about cultural specificity, representation of women, and hybrid identities may be observed.

CHAPTER 3

FILMMAKERS

When filmmakers attend film festivals to present their new work, they participate in several interviews, photo calls, and other types of media activities. While most of these activities are inevitably promotional in nature, many filmmakers consider such media obligations to be more than just insubstantial advertising and are open to discussing their work in detail or addressing aspects of their films which may not be obvious at first glance. Therefore, many film scholars and journalists alike continue to utilize filmmaker interviews as a valuable source of information.

Multiple chapters of this dissertation include quotes from filmmakers or references to directors' notes found in the press kits of their films, but the interviews presented in this chapter provide a more expansive platform for directors' views than those brief mentions. One of the most monumental, expansive studies that utilize interview data was carried out by Scott MacDonald, who combined in-depth interviews with dozens of independent filmmakers in five volumes published over a period of eighteen years. In his introduction to the fifth volume of his book series, MacDonald argues that interviews 'allow makers to have as complete a say about their work and their careers as they wish' (2006, 14). Instead of relying on previously published interviews as a secondary source of data, I decided to conduct interviews with filmmakers whose films benefitted from WCF support for a similar reason. My goal as an interviewer was to give filmmakers an open space in which they can evaluate their own experiences with European funding bodies. I tried to avoid directing them towards confirming or rejecting

preconceived ideas and hypotheses I had already formulated before the interviews. Teshome Gabriel, in his foreword to a volume of more than a dozen interviews with African directors, explains the purpose of conducting extensive interviews when he claims that ‘the art of skillful question puts the questioner in a stance of opposition to conventional wisdom and provides a framework for the development of new insights, new methods, new ways of seeing and thinking’ (2002, ix). The questions I posed to the filmmakers who participated in this study were intended to be precisely and only that; no more than a framework for the development of fresh perspectives.

Needless to say, I have seen many films by the participating directors and familiarized myself with their work in preparation for the interviews. Most of the conversations quoted here revolve around the specific case of the WCF-funded film instead of covering the entire filmography of the participating director. Having said that, I should note that as one of the filmmakers (Benjamin Naishtat) has received WCF-funding on two occasions, one (Claudia Llosa) returned to Berlin as a member of the main jury, and another (John Trengove) is an alumnus of the Berlinale Talents program; the interviews presented here reflect a multifaceted, long-term engagement with the festival and its various initiatives despite the apparent emphasis on individual WCF projects.

One of the most surprising aspects of this endeavor was to observe the extraordinary generosity and willingness of filmmakers, both emerging and established, to talk in detail about their work. All the filmmakers I contacted were excited, even flattered, to be a part of this study and expressed interest in answering questions about the

funding stage of their creative process.⁷¹ More than one participant complained about having to answer the same questions over and over again in every interview and noted that questions about financial matters were uncommon in interviews. Despite the difficulties they faced in getting their projects off the ground, all the filmmakers shared an optimism about eventually finding a way to complete their films and get people to see them. In a volume consisting of interviews with thirty nine filmmakers from around the globe, Elena Oumano observes that ‘despite [the] challenges, the filmmakers believe that an individual driven by the passion to express him or herself through cinema will somehow be able to make a film and that people will somehow be able to see it (2011, xii). A similarly positive perspective on the financing landscape is expressed by WCF funding recipients I interviewed, perhaps as a side effect of talking only to those that ‘made it’ by securing a berth in festivals like Cannes or Berlin.

In the remainder of this chapter, I first provide details about the data collection process and introduce the interview participants. Then I identify some common themes, ideas, and concerns that were mentioned in several interviews, emerging as key points to be highlighted in a broad analysis. Following that, I focus on more specific elements that are applicable to isolated cases rather than the complete data set. Finally, the chapter ends with some concluding remarks, some observations that connect this section with the rest

⁷¹ Considering how busy directors are during festivals and that they spend the vast majority of their time in promotional interviews with much more tangible financial rewards than this research project, I interpreted the directors’ openness to participating in a scholarly interview as an act of generosity on their part. On a similar note, John Trengove explicitly said ‘it is nice that we are talking about something different because we have been getting a lot of the same questions.’ (See the appendix for full context.)

of the project, as well as reflections on the overall process of interviewing filmmakers during chaotic film festivals and my role (or influence) as the researcher.

3.1: Data Collection

In selecting the individuals to be interviewed for this chapter, I considered three main criteria. First, it is worth noting that the filmmakers quoted here embody a wide range of experience levels, with first-time directors and well-established names both included in the pool of participants. Second, the WCF-funded projects mentioned in this chapter have enjoyed varying degrees of success on the festival circuit. The data set includes one film that has won the top prize in the event it premiered, but it also features more modest cases which did not travel as extensively, having premiered in a sidebar section as opposed to the main competition. The commercial performances of the films outside the festival circuit also exhibit a similarly wide range. Third, many of the filmmakers who contributed to this chapter are the artists behind the films analyzed in the previous chapter. This makes it possible for me to compare the detached, critical perspective and textual approach that informed the second chapter with the personal, first-hand point of view directors bring through their recollections. Furthermore, this choice boosts the coherence of the overall project, linking various components of the study to each other.⁷²

Krainhöfer, Schrieber, and Weidemann's report on the programming diversity of the Berlinale between 1980 and 2016 features several interesting observations on the

⁷² Claudia Llosa is one of the remaining two directors whose WCF projects are not discussed in chapter two. Her work is briefly discussed in the literature review in chapter one.

geographical breakdown of the countries where films selected for the festival hail from. The authors state that ‘had Moritz de Hadeln⁷³ conquered Asiatic cinema for the West, so did Dieter Kosslick - almost upon his arrival - dedicate himself to the opening up and operating regions with a weak film infrastructure’ (2017, 22). They identify Latin and Central America, the Caribbean, Africa, and the Middle East as the regions which rose to prominence in Berlinale programming with this opening up and note that the launch of WCF was crucial in this regard. The interviews also reflect this trend with the participants who presented new work in the 2017 edition of the festival all coming from either Latin America or Africa, and the other two directors also representing two additional Latin American countries.

The data analyzed in this chapter was collected in two stages. In the first stage, I contacted several directors whose projects have received WCF support in the past, using the contact information I obtained from production companies, sales agents, or press representatives. Benjamin Naishtat, whose WCF-funded *History of Fear (Historia del Miedo, 2014)* achieved a rare feat by securing a competition berth in Berlin despite being a debut feature, answered my questions via email. I have also exchanged emails with Claudia Llosa, whose *The Milk of Sorrow* won the Golden Bear for best film and went onto receive an Academy Award nomination in the ‘Best Foreign Language Film’ category. I had already interviewed Llosa in February 2011 in Berlin. Our discussion at the time had revolved around *The Milk of Sorrow* -Llosa’s latest film at that point- and after informing her of my dissertation project, I used this past interview as a data source

⁷³ Moritz de Hadeln was the festival director of the Berlinale between 1980 and 2001. Kosslick is his successor, acting as the festival director from 2002 to 2019.

in this chapter. Since *The Milk of Sorrow* is Llosa's sole film with WCF involvement, this older interview remains highly relevant to this dissertation. As a participant in the Berlinale Talent Campus in 2011, I was assigned the task of reporting from a panel about gathering international funds for film production in developing countries for the official publication of the festival. Llosa was one of the experts speaking in that panel and I also had the opportunity to conduct an individual interview with her right after the talk. Even though that interview occurred in a different context long before I started writing this dissertation, the panel Llosa spoke in and consequently the questions I posed in our individual conversation revolved around film festivals and financing. Therefore there is a high degree of correlation between the content of that older interview and this present dissertation. All the aforementioned interactions were in English. This first stage took place in October and November 2016.

The second stage occurred during my field trip to the Berlin Film Festival in 2017. I interviewed Alain Gomis, Julia Murat, and John Trengove after the presentation of their films.⁷⁴ All the interviews were conducted in person and audio recordings were created with the permission of the participants. During our interviews, Murat was accompanied by her partner and co-screenwriter Matias Mariani. According to Gary Walsh, the press agent who arranged the interview, Murat specifically requested that Mariani be present in all the interviews she gave during the Berlinale including ours. During my interview with John Trengove, Nakhane Touré, who plays Xolani -the protagonist- in *The Wound*, was also present in the room and he voluntarily answered

⁷⁴ Films in question are *Félicité*, *Pendular*, and *The Wound*, respectively. All of these films are analyzed in detail in chapter two.

some of my questions, but his presence was coincidental, unlike the case of Murat and Mariani. The interview with Alain Gomis was part of a larger group interview as individual interview slots were not available in this case.⁷⁵ There were six people (including myself) participating, each taking turns to ask a question to Gomis. When quoting Gomis below, I have indicated whether the question was asked by myself or another participant where necessary. Some of the questions that came up in this interview led to answers that touched upon issues that I was planning to address in my own questions, even if the actual question was not directly related to WCF, financing, or film festivals.⁷⁶ Interviews with Murat and Trengove were entirely conducted in English. Gomis' interview started in French with a translator also present, but Gomis himself decided to switch to English midway through the interview, therefore some of the interaction was in English. All the interviews, including the questions and full answers, are available in the appendix.

All participants were given the option to withdraw from the study at any time, not to answer some of the questions, and to remain anonymous if they wished (no one chose this option). I shared a preliminary list of questions with the participants who were interviewed through e-mail in advance, but several additional questions emerged during our conversations based on their responses. In the beginning of all the interviews arranged through a press agent, I disclosed to the participants that I was writing a

⁷⁵ This is not surprising considering *Félicité's* placement in the main competition and Gomis' stature as a director returning to the competition. It is often the case that requests for individual interviews for competition titles cannot be honored because of the large number of inquiries.

⁷⁶ For an example of this, see the question about the potential influence of Dardenne Brothers on the visual style of *Félicité* below.

dissertation on film festivals and funding bodies, and explained that this interview was not being conducted for journalistic or promotional purposes. This was not an issue for any of the participants, all the filmmakers agreed to continue with the interview after learning about the research context.

3.2: Common Themes

One of the most critical points about the practice of allocating public money from European countries to projects from developing countries, which were formerly colonized by the very same nations, is its potentially neocolonialist impact through the cultural domain. This issue has already been raised in the literature review on African cinemas and European co-productions in chapter one as well as by several other scholars writing on funding initiatives. For example, Tess Van Hemert, whose dissertation on the role of international film festivals in supporting emerging women directors includes a discussion about the Hubert Bals Fund associated with the International Film Festival Rotterdam, raises a similar question. She notes that ‘Rotterdam has been criticized for the First World/Third World dichotomy that it perpetuates through its funding of films only from developing nations’ (2013, 122). One of the most clear expressions of this concern was raised by Mark Peranson, who asked ‘why the sudden interest in colonizing the Third World through world cinema funds, which, though certainly valuable, often end up influencing the kind of film that is made’ (2009, 35). Given the emphasis on cultural authenticity in the WCF regulations quoted in the previous chapter (which means that

proving one's deep connection to a developing country is a key prerequisite), it can be argued that a similar anxiety is applicable to the case of Berlinale as well.

Among the filmmakers I interviewed, only one (John Trengove) explicitly referred to the legacy of colonialism, building a tentative link between the contemporary activities of European film funds and neocolonialism through cultural production. When I asked how essential it was to receive support from funds like WCF for a daring project such as *The Wound*, he problematized this high degree of dependence while still acknowledging the crucial contribution of WCF and similar initiatives. He started by saying that 'there is a certain kind of film that would not exist if it were not for these European funds.' But then he quickly added that 'for world cinema to be solely reliant on European funds makes it vulnerable.'

I further inquired what form that vulnerability could possibly take and suggested that some filmmakers may feel the need to tailor their projects according to preferences of European funding bodies in order to improve their chances of attracting financing. To this Trengove replied;

You have to appeal to this organization but you also have to resist the influence of that power. It is an ancient colonial kind of interaction. There is this idea of the European master and these films from the developing world that come and ask for money. But there are also extraordinary people administering these funds, who really understand the importance and the value of these kinds of films, and who set, as a very high priority, artistic independence.

This is a striking statement for multiple reasons. First, Trengove directly refers to colonialism, describing film funds as potential 'European masters' and situating filmmakers from the Global South ('developing countries' in his words) in a possibly

disadvantaged position. He uses the word ‘resist’ in explaining the responsibility he assigns to filmmakers in this formulation, which is obviously a politically-charged choice of expression. But he carefully avoids overgeneralizing all film funds by placing them under a militantly critical umbrella, instead identifying the administrators of these funds as key agents who respect and protect the artistic independence of filmmakers despite the economic dependence they have to navigate.

Most of the filmmakers I talked to were very cautious in addressing this issue, partly because they obviously did not want to position themselves as manipulated agents in a broader colonial game or as directors who take advantage of such colonialist agendas for personal gain. Also, they were genuinely grateful to have had the opportunity to complete their projects despite significant hardship, financial and otherwise, which led them to being hesitant to take a very critical position about European film festival funds. For this reason, I framed my questions about cultural neocolonialism around the notion of cultural ‘authenticity’ and avoided directing the participants towards a critical perspective that they may not actually share. Consider this excerpt from my interview with Benjamin Naishtat, for example:

Question: Do you think that your films grapple with the notions of Argentine identity or Argentine society in any way?

Naishtat: In the Argentine context, *History of Fear* would belong to the generation that came right after the New Argentine Cinema, both thematically and formally. Certainly there are dialogues among Latin American filmmakers and films and I would like to think of myself as a Latin American filmmaker. That said, the globalization has certainly arrived to the arthouse film world and we see now generational convergences that surpass the national or regional background of the filmmakers.

Even though the thematic and formal preoccupations of New Argentine Cinema⁷⁷ and the films that came after it were deeply political in nature and dealt with the social impact of economic dependence on international financial institutions (such as the World Bank or the IMF), Naishtat chose not to emphasize this aspect and added that the globalization of the 'arthouse film world' has made such concerns secondary.

Claudia Llosa was also clear about how her films differ from other examples of contemporary Latin American cinema and did not identify as a part of any cinematic movements. Upon this, I suggested that in most Latin American films that depict urban environments, the pace is very fast with rapid editing being used as a tool to capture the hectic nature of daily life, yet Llosa's films have a very distinct, almost meditative rhythm and a leisurely pace. She responded to my comments by agreeing that her work was clearly distinct from the aggressive formalism of filmmakers like José Padilha, Fernando Meirelles or Adrián Caetano. Yet she also refrained from mentioning any names associated with the slow cinema movement, such as Lisandro Alonso or Carlos Reygadas. Unlike Benjamin Naishtat, who brought up New Argentina Cinema and its aftermath as a reference point, Llosa did not identify with any national cinema or cultural tradition. For her, the main rationale behind all thematic and aesthetic choices was rooted in her individual experiences rather than the influence a group of films or filmmakers could possibly have. Describing the deliberate slowness of her films in relation to a 'personal' conceptualization of time, she explained;

⁷⁷ See chapter one for a detailed overview of New Argentine Cinema and its thematic or stylistic characteristics, alongside a broader discussion of other contemporary Latin American cinemas.

I did not want to give the viewer the time to get just a glimpse of what they are seeing, but take their time and understand what is going on. The frame itself contains enough information for the viewer and I want them to go to different places, to see different layers of the film. In our country culture, time is different than in European modernity; it is circular - not linear. Time is a personal conception and I want to involve this feeling. Like you never know what time it is, but it completes a cycle and repeats itself. I am trying to go with that rhythm, that of nature.

The Milk of Sorrow includes extensive use of traditional music and multiple ceremonial sequences that depict cultural rituals in detail, such as several weddings and even a group wedding scene with a lengthy gift-giving procedure. However, Llosa was careful to articulate the distinctive, individual qualities of her work instead of emphasizing the cultural identity aspect or its political implications. Like Naishtat, rather than reflecting on how Peruvian culture and identity are embodied in the film, Llosa characterized a state of 'not-belonging' and 'being in transition' as key components of her film. She downplayed the cultural specificity of her film and, despite the rural setting of the film, said;

I am a girl of the city, I was born in Lima. Because of my father, we traveled a lot but always as a visitor. When I was a little child, I always had the feeling that I belonged to a place that I didn't belong. I am Peruvian and live in a big city, and speak Spanish. So it feels European, but it is not. It is probably a multicultural society, but it is actually fragmented, without communication. That is something that really touches me from the very beginning. I consciously wanted to relate to this important problem we as a country have to deal with - but somehow we don't.

The most notable aspect of Llosa's discussion was the way she situated (especially urban) Peruvian society interstitially between Europe and Latin America instead of focusing on the 'authentically Peruvian' rural culture her film may be perceived to depict. Furthermore, she talked about this state of being in-between not only

as a social issue that is often ignored, but also in relation to her personal experiences, as something that has troubled her since her childhood. Emphasizing how sociopolitical concerns do not necessarily shape her approach to filmmaking, she went on to note;

I wanted to talk about matters that are important to me, like migration from country to Lima, the violation of women, and inheritance. These are the things I lived during my youth in Peru. But it is not something I will do all the time, I can do films that have nothing to do with society or politics.

Llosa was not alone in mentioning cultural hybridity and movement between different social environments as a major thematic preoccupation. She downplayed the role of politics in her work, and instead drew attention to the personal experiences, conceptions, or states of minds as a driving factor. Articulating a similar approach, Alain Gomis also refrained from positioning *Félicité* in relation to the authentic depiction of a particular cultural identity (not surprising considering how prominent the theme of cultural hybridity is in the film, as discussed in chapter two). He described the main location, Kinshasa, as ‘a universal city, a city without make-up,’ shifting the attention away from possible markers of an authentic and unique culture the city may play host to. One of the journalists participating in our group interview asked if Gomis was influenced by the work of Dardenne Brothers, and *Rosetta* (1999) in particular, while making *Félicité* because he thought the documentary aesthetics he observed in the first half of the film was reminiscent of the socially conscious realism of that Golden Palm winner. To this question, Gomis responded;

No. I know *Rosetta* very well and I respect them [the Dardenne Brothers] a lot, but I do not want to make a sociological film. I want to show the ‘inside of me’ in the character Félicité. I arrived in Kinshasa as a French-Senegalese-Bissau Guinean to make a film about the interior of this character.

Gomis concisely described *Rosetta* as a sociological film and emphasized his status as an outsider in Kinshasa, drawing attention to the mobility (or the flexibility) of national identities based on his own experiences. He implied that he is not in a position to portray any cultural identity on screen, nor would he be interested in doing so.

Gomis then explained that the aesthetic choices in the film (following the main character closely with a hand-held camera, shooting in real locations around the city, often using natural light) are an extension of this desire to go inside Félicité's psyche rather than an attempt to capture the contemporary socioeconomic reality in Kinshasa. Talking about his approach to the main character, he said 'I wanted to make the audience go inside Félicité's intimacy, her internal world. To open the character without any frontier, any security.' Like Naishtat and Llosa, he was unwilling to describe his work in terms of its relation to the cultural context it emerged from or in relation to its sociopolitical implications.

Jonathan Romney's profile of Alain Gomis' career covers all four feature films he has made and offers a more expansive perspective on the role of politics in Gomis' work, with an emphasis on *Félicité*'s place within his oeuvre. Romney characterizes Gomis' cinema by stating that 'this French-Senegalese director has consistently explored themes of hybrid identity in the post-colonial world,' but also notes that '*Félicité* may be Alain Gomis' least overtly political film.' The author discusses several expressions of hybrid identity in the film, referring, for example, to the name of the titular protagonist as one indicator that 'leaves the character stranded between cultures, between African identity

and a borrowed word from a European colonial power' (2017, 48).⁷⁸ Therefore, it can be argued that cultural specificity and sociopolitical issues (ranging from the lack of sufficient infrastructure in the city, the problems in the healthcare system, or workplace inequalities based on gender discrimination) find their ways into Gomis' work through very subtle, nuanced means even if he does not conceive his projects with an overtly political agenda in mind. Even though Romney explicitly refers to European colonial powers in the quote above, he refrains from characterizing Gomis' work as clearly anti-colonial or political, instead describing his films as 'city symphonies' and praising them for their 'otherworldly drift' or for 'resembling a dance movie' (50).

This comparison with dance films obviously brings Julia Murat's *Pendular* to mind. When I asked Murat about the process of gathering funds for a very personal project about two artists without any overt sociopolitical agenda or any obvious generalizable comments about 'Brazilian identity,' she responded by saying that 'it was quite difficult for people to understand the film from the script. Usually people would read the script and think the film is too conceptual.' She noted that this created some problems in gathering funds, and added that the main thing that helped them overcome this issue and attract financing with relative ease was the success of her earlier film *Found Memories (Histórias que Só Existem Quando Lembradas, 2011)*, which premiered in Venice. Despite my question, she did not want to present the the lack of a pronounced socioeconomic or cultural agenda as an obstacle before funding. Instead she highlighted

⁷⁸ Hybridity of cultures and identities is discussed as a major theme in *Félicité* with references to several additional factors (such as the use of music in the film, the financial structure of the project, and Gomis' own experiences across multiple cultures) in the second chapter.

the conceptual (rather than narratively driven) nature of the script as the main difficulty, which they were able to largely avert thanks to the success of her previous feature.

Regarding the impact of past successes on the funding prospects of a new project, co-writer Matias Mariani added,

Julia's first film got a lot of funds from outside Brazil, but Brazil itself did not commit to the film until it was already in Venice and well received. So I think they felt a little bit challenged by that. In a way, they invested early in the project [*Pendular*] because they felt they had almost lost an opportunity [with *Found Memories*].

To this Murat jokingly responded, 'I also said a lot about that [lack of funding from Brazil] in interviews. I kind of pushed them.'⁷⁹ In the case of *Pendular*, not only the national film agency ANCINE, but also some local municipalities in Brazil were financially involved.

Murat is not the only filmmaker among those I interviewed who struggled to attract domestic state funds for her first project and initially had to rely mostly on transnational sources of financing based in Europe. John Trengove also had a similar experience while making *The Wound*. In our interview, he noted that 'the subject matter [of the film] is obscure, political, deals with heavy issues, it is contentious and controversial in South Africa. So there was not much support at home.' He then went on to enthusiastically express his gratitude to his European co-production partners. He said, 'we reached out to an international community to get the film made. We were very fortunate that there were all these amazing people in different places that understood what

⁷⁹ This positive impact of a past festival success on the funding prospects of new projects by the same filmmaker is observed in many different cases and is quantitatively demonstrated by testing a relevant hypothesis in chapter four.

we were doing and got behind it.’ In this sense, Trengove’s remarks resemble the journey Julia Murat went through in getting her first film off the ground and position WCF as an absolutely essential agent without whom the film could not be completed.

Unsurprisingly, Trengove’s approach to the role of politics in *The Wound* was similar to the opinions voiced by his fellow filmmakers. He noted that even though the film has an unmistakable political dimension, he did not see *The Wound* primarily as a political work and did not consider social transformations South Africa has undergone or their impact on diverse cultural identities in the country as the key theme. In our interview, he explained that ‘from the beginning there was this idea that there were very few elements in the story. It happens outside of society, so there are no cities or infrastructure, no signifiers that you would associate with society.’ He then distinguished between the idea that triggered the project and his sensibility as a filmmaker as he developed an entire feature film from that first idea. During this process, political agendas and concerns about cultural specificity gradually became less prominent. When I asked him how *The Wound*, as a visceral sensory experience, addresses problems about patriarchy and homophobia on a society-wide level, he recalled;

It certainly started with the political idea. It was very much a response to a political climate that we are in. But I think that my sensibility is visceral. So it was about wrestling with an abstract idea in my own body and in my own feelings. I personally don’t respond to films that are overtly intellectual. I have to feel something to think about it. I do hope we avoided an agenda. It is not a cause, it is not about activism.’

Another question that I asked to every filmmaker was about the timing of the WCF funding. At what point in the project’s journey from conception to exhibition did

they apply for WCF funding? Filmmakers' experiences in that regard varied greatly. For some, WCF was the first significant step in getting the project off the ground while others utilized WCF funds as the last part of a complex puzzle. I asked this question particularly with the goal of addressing the impact of being associated with a prestigious label like Berlinale and WCF in attracting further funds. Several filmmakers confirmed that receiving support from WCF had implications for the outcome of their projects beyond the rather meager amount of money the fund provided and that they had an easier time securing additional financing afterwards. In other words, securing WCF funding was the first major breakthrough towards achieving further financing success for multiple directors. Benjamin Naishtat provided a detailed breakdown of the process through which they assembled the budget for *History of Fear* and explained that,

Indeed WCF was essential to the completion of the production funding. Project budget was roughly 300.000 Euros at the stage in which we received the grant, and we had until then as only funding that of the INCAA (Argentina's National Film Fund), which was about 180.000 Euros. WCF put us 30.000 Euro closer, but most importantly, through its prestige it gave us international projection which was essential further down the line to keep gathering funding (from IBERMEDIA and Doha Film Institute which completed the budget), and for festival attention. A project like *History of Fear* could have never gotten any kind of private investment in Argentina, and it was only thanks to institutional international funding that it came to light.

Claudia Llosa had a similar experience while gathering the funds for *The Milk of Sorrow*. She noted that WCF was the first source of European funding they were able secure and added that after receiving the WCF support, other funds followed like 'blocks building on each other.' She also acknowledged that her dual citizenship (she holds Italian citizenship alongside her native Peru) was very useful in having access to

European funds. She had two Spanish co-production partners for the making of her first film *Madeinusa* (2006) and they were extremely helpful in getting a second project move forward even before the completion of her debut film. She started writing the screenplay for *The Milk of Sorrow* during the post-production of *Madeinusa* and considered the two films as parts of a diptych with similar themes, also connected by the same actress (Magaly Solier, who made her acting debut with *Madeinusa*) in the lead role in both films. Coupled with the critical acclaim of her first film, Llosa characterized WCF's involvement as an early turning point in the realization of her second project.

In contrast to these cases, WCF funding came last for *Pendular*. Julia Murat recalled that they first received a grant from the city of Rio de Janeiro for project development, which they used to conduct dance workshops before formulating the film itself, then won funding from the Hubert Bals Fund particularly for casting and script development stages. Production support was provided by IBERMEDIA and ANCINE whereas WCF was involved only at the final stage.

For John Trengove and *The Wound*, even though WCF funding came relatively late in the process, the project's association with the Berlinale through its multiple initiatives started much earlier. Before receiving financial support from WCF, Trengove was invited to participate in Berlinale's Talent Campus program for young and emerging professionals from every branch of the film industry in 2014. He also took part in the 'Script Station' initiative of the Talents program, a subsection aimed specifically for screenwriters, and significantly reworked the screenplay. He reflected on this multi-step process by saying that,

Festivals create these development workshops. It took me a while to understand it but it is a multifaceted thing. On the surface, it is about helping filmmakers develop their scripts and introduce them to financiers and take the next few steps. But on another level, it is about cultivating a relationship between the festival and the filmmakers. You go through this process, then you are branded as part of the festival.

Trengove's use of phrases like 'cultivating a relationship' and being 'branded as a part of the festival' can be interpreted as confirmation about the continuous role funds like WCF play in adding symbolic value to the films and filmmakers they select beyond the allocation of monetary assets. Furthermore, when I reversed the question and asked how important supporting such films is for the festivals (and not just the filmmakers), he acknowledged that this is a two-way transaction. Regarding the activities of initiatives such as the Talent Campus, Script Station and WCF, he said that 'it is also about festivals taking some kind of responsibility to stay relevant and to be able to put interesting films on.' From this point of view, it is not surprising or coincidental that many filmmakers return to Berlin to present their work in its completed form after participating in several programs organized by the festival in the early part of their careers.

Regardless of the likelihood of attracting additional funds post-WCF, filmmakers agreed upon the positive influence of being associated with the Berlinale brand on signing a high-profile sales agent and boosting the appeal of the film for festival programmers. Naishtat explained, 'indeed the WCF added international projection to the project and made it easier to finish financing and catch attention from sales agents, festivals and arthouse industry actors in general on an international scale.' Beyond financing, receiving WCF support also had other tangible benefits for filmmakers such as

being invited to a major festival for the world premiere and enjoying market presence with robust sales activity.

A consequent question I posed after inquiring about the timing of the funding application was concerned with the evolution of the projects throughout this long process. A common question I asked was, ‘how similar or different the project submitted in the funding application and the completed film are to each other? Did the project undergo very significant changes from the WCF-funding stage until it reached its final form?’ Responses to this question varied greatly as well, but not always in the ways one would intuitively expect. While *Pendular* received WCF funding very late in its journey, it evolved significantly with each new funding decision. In contrast, even though WCF was one of the first international institutions to invest in *History of Fear*, the film remained practically identical after securing WCF funds. Naishtat recalls that ‘the project was very much similar to what the film was in the end. The project had on earlier stages changed a lot, but when we applied to WCF, we felt it had a mature development and there was barely any rewriting after that.’

Murat’s response to this question, on the other hand, highlights one of the most notable features of her film; *Pendular*’s deliberate confinement in indoor locations. Even a scene in which the characters play soccer takes place in a large indoor warehouse. When I asked Murat about the choice of keeping the entire film indoors regardless of the apparent demands of the story, she noted how much the project evolved throughout and mentioned economic reasons as a driving force behind this evolution, as mentioned in the following comments by Matias Mariani:

Julia is a very practical filmmaker. I think at first there was a kind of economic restraint, like, ‘let’s make a film that we can make with a small budget.’ That was the first seed of the idea of making it all in one location. But during the [writing of] different drafts, we did go out and see the city. Then we had a wonderful consultant, Miguel Machalski, and he worked with us a lot.⁸⁰ One day he said ‘you guys need to be brave, you’re trying to make it all in there but also not, it’s weird. You need to cut all the scenes from outside.’

Considering his participation in the Script Station program of Berlinale Talents, it is not surprising that John Trengove recounted a very similar experience regarding the screenplay of *The Wound*. He likewise mentioned the gradual process of cutting many scenes out and reaching an elemental version of the screenplay free of any excess. He similarly noted that collaborating with a professional script consultant was very helpful in reworking the screenplay and finding its essence. He summarized the changes the project went through by recalling, ‘the script really benefitted from the time at the Script Station. I was introduced to an amazing Dutch script consultant [Anita Voorham] and she was very instrumental in helping me find some certain direction with the story.’ This gradual evolution of the screenplay continued after his time at the Script Station, with other contributors getting involved. Regarding an entire storyline they ended up taking out, he said ‘I need to give credit to my French sales agent, who always pushed me to keep taking more out and trust that it was all working.’⁸¹

⁸⁰ Miguel Machalski is an Argentinian-French screenwriter who has worked as a script consultant in several WCF films including *Pendular* and *Los Perros*, both analyzed in chapter two.

⁸¹ While such artistic involvement of a sales agent in the scripting stage may seem unexpected at first, it must be noted that most of the influential world sales companies invest in the films they represent as co-production partners. It is not at all unusual for an executive from the world sales company, who also invests in films financially, to have a say in the evolution of projects long before they reach film festivals and markets. The sales agent in this case is the French company Pyramide International. Trengove refers to Eric Lagesse as the sales agent that helped him refine the screenplay.

I knew that Berlinale's Script Station was not the only program of this kind Trengove participated in.⁸² Therefore, I asked him where he would place WCF and Berlinale among all the film festival workshops and funds that supported the project. Trengove's quick response was 'very highly.' He noted that the association with Berlinale and WCF was multifaceted and encompassed artistic and financial aspects alike. Many of the funds that were involved in a latter stage made a strictly financial contribution while WCF's investment in the project had a creative dimension as well. Trengove referred to his collaboration with WCF as 'a very pivotal moment' and said that 'some of the other workshops we did were instrumental in the final financing of the film, more so than the actual creative development, because a lot of that had already happened in the Berlinale.'

Similarly to Trengove, Murat, and Mariani; Alain Gomis also mentioned some changes in the screenplay as the project evolved. But in the case of *Félicité*, the driving factor behind these changes was casting, and not necessarily financing. The project was intended to be realized on a small budget from the beginning. Gomis recalled, 'I wanted to stay free, so I took a small group of people and light equipment to be very flexible.' For him, this was a consequence of his 'desire to be sincere and natural to approach the reality of *Félicité* without any artifice, deep and powerful.' What caused the most significant changes in the development of the project instead was the involvement of the lead actress Véro Tshanda Beya. Gomis noted that he 'changed [his] approach and the script after casting Véro because of her strength.' But regardless of the changes that were

⁸² *The Wound* was supported by the Hubert Bals Fund of the International Film Festival Rotterdam and was selected for the Torino Film Lab, linked to the Torino Film Festival, in addition to its success with WCF (Alain Gomis' *Félicité* was another WCF film that participated in the Torino Film Lab).

made to portray Félicité as a more commanding, resilient character, the scale of the production with a preference for light equipment and a small crew remained the same even after the producers received WCF funding. Gomis did not explicitly mention at what stage WCF funding was awarded or in which order they managed to gather multiple funds, but asserted that the rationale behind his choice to work with a small, mobile crew was primarily artistic, not financial.

While they acknowledged the critical role funds like WCF play in getting projects made, many directors also emphasized how essential a platform the festival circuit is for their work upon completion. Most of the directors I interviewed seemed to accept from the very beginning that their work is unlikely to enjoy broad commercial success, and embrace the festival circuit as the natural habitat for the type of filmmaking they practice. This is in agreement with Hamid Naficy's analysis of the evolution of 'art' and 'mainstream' cinemas in the digital age. Referring to his own earlier work, Naficy observes that 'although physically displaced, the accented filmmakers are not without a place. They are situated but universal figures who work in the interstices of social formations and cinematic practices' (2010, 13). He goes onto define such interstitial formations by stating that 'by and large they [accented filmmakers] work independently, outside of the studio system or the mainstream film industries, using two chief modes of production: interstitial and collective' (14). If interstitial filmmaking practices are characterized by their independence from the studio system, I argue that film festivals should also be understood as similarly interstitial formations despite the apparent mainstream media interest they attract. As discussed in chapter one, the festival circuit

has frequently been characterized in the existing academic literature as an alternative home for films that fall outside the conventions of commercial mainstream cinema. Many of the filmmakers I interviewed, all of them ‘accented’ and ‘interstitially situated’ in Naficy’s terms, talked about the festival circuit as a ‘home’ for their films, most of which are produced through complex transnational collaborations (therefore lacking a ‘home country’ in the traditional sense) and face rejection when they reach domestic audiences in the director’s country of origin. They framed being selected for a festival as a significant form of reward that will inevitably remain elusive outside the festival context.

For example, referring to *Félicité*, Alain Gomis said;

It is a film with a small budget. It does not have great commercial prospects. For this kind of films, the festival circuit is very important. Of course, it is very important to come to a big festival to find partners. Bu it is also important for all the people who contribute and commit to the film to come to Berlinale.

It is worth noting that at the time of this interview, *Félicité* had just celebrated its world premiere the day before and its commercial fate was yet to be decided. Despite this fact, Gomis was far from optimistic when it comes to predicting whether the film will be a financial success or not, instead opting to emphasize the importance of coming to a festival like Berlin for those who put a lot of hard work in getting the film made.

Naishtat also characterized the experience of presenting his work in Berlin after receiving financial support from the festival’s funding initiative in similar terms. For him, coming to Berlin was essential because he saw festivals like Berlin as the key sites where his films can survive and reach an informed audience. Similarly to Gomis, traveling to festivals as a filmmaker who is working with small budgets was a form of reward for

him. But he went into greater detail than Gomis in describing the intellectual dimension of attending film festivals and interacting with audience members, who would not have a chance to see the film theatrically outside the festival context. He stated;

For a film like *History of Fear*, which has a slight narrative drive and focuses on atmosphere and formal approaches to social commentary, the festival circuit will be the natural environment. It was thanks to the festival circuit that the film was screened in over 30 countries, also allowing myself as a director to join the film in many of those places. Through those festival attendances I was able to interact in Q&A's with audiences around the world, engaging in rich and fulfilling debates with people from the most diverse backgrounds. This is of course a major reward for any filmmaker and particularly for a first film.

His use of the phrase 'natural environment' is particularly noteworthy, resembling Gomis' acknowledgement that the festival circuit is very important for the type of decidedly uncommercial films he makes. He also describes the value of presenting one's work in international film festivals not necessarily in monetary terms, but rather by highlighting the intellectual rewards of participating in 'rich and fulfilling debates.'

Claudia Llosa was another director who directly mentioned the debates and audience interactions festival screenings can foster. But her perspective was different from Naishtat's in that she was cautious about the multiplicity of perspectives that emerge in such post-screening discussions. Instead of characterizing these encounters with diverse audience groups as a 'reward,' she concentrated on the 'responsibility' this brings to the filmmaker. Regarding showing her work in film festivals and participating in discussions, she said:

I do believe that everybody is entitled to say whatever they want to say. When I finish a film, that film does not belong to me. I have to respect the opinions and because I respect that opinion, I have to analyze it. Art has richness of interpretation, and it is that richness that brings me responsibility. These subjects

(sexual abuse, class inequality, migration and urbanization - all of which are central to *The Milk of Sorrow*) are so difficult and complex. They are like prisms. When you look like this and look like that, it is always different. Rationally I accept everything, but emotionally it is difficult, of course. But as a filmmaker, I have to leave that at home.

Hamid Naficy's discussion on accented filmmakers and their work in an era marked by the resurgence of what he calls the 'multiplex cinema' carries this apparent contrast between grim financial prospects and the intellectual or artistic rewards of festival participation one step further.⁸³ Naficy argues that thematic and aesthetic attributes usually associated with interstitial, accented filmmakers and frequently seen in films that populate festivals (transnational production practices, preoccupation with hybrid identities or identity confusion, narratives of return to homeland) can be observed in American cinema or particularly Hollywood as well. But the motives and rationales behind these shared tendencies are quite distinct for accented filmmakers and their peers operating within the studio system. Naficy argues that;

While the accented filmmakers' multiplex tendencies are genuine and emanate from their own lived experiences of deterritorialization and the multiple displacements of both themselves and their compatriot audiences, Hollywood's multiplexing is driven by a new form of cultural tourism and imperialism, which tends to co-opt the expenses of displacement and its aesthetics for the purposes of reaching multiple markets and higher profits (2010, 18).

While I find this characterization a bit too clear-cut and argue that there are filmmakers in Hollywood whose genuine approach to filmmaking is built around personal experiences of displacement as well as several accented filmmakers whose financial motives result in

⁸³ 'Multiplex cinema' is defined as a resurgent brand of mainstream cinema characterized by the intersection of two contemporary movements; post-diasporic (physical displacement of people) and post-digital (consolidation of digital media). This new global cinema encompasses both filmmakers and audiences (Naficy 2010, 13).

a deliberate self-exploitation of otherness, I must acknowledge that a similar dichotomy has been described by other scholars whose writing more directly deals with the festival phenomenon as well as many directors I interviewed.⁸⁴ For example, Diane Burgess' study on the governance of film festivals in Canada highlights a comparable friction between arts and commerce. Burgess acknowledges that festivals themselves are agents in a capitalist economic system and argues that 'it became critical [for festivals] to navigate the distinction between the cultural provision to audience access (a symbolic measure) and the pursuit of box office share (an industrial measure)' (2012, 8). The distinction she makes between 'audience access' and 'box office share' resembles Naishtat's and Gomis' above-quoted remarks about how the international festival circuit allowed their films to reach viewers in dozens of countries despite their commercial inaccessibility. In the constant struggle between the art and commerce of filmmaking, these filmmakers clearly identify festivals and funds like WCF as rare points of refuge.

3.3: On Racial Dynamics, Follow-Up Projects, and Nascent Industries

During our interviews, several specific questions which are related only to one of the films under investigation rather than the full WCF roster inevitably came up. Even though I had a template for the questions I planned to ask all the filmmakers, these common questions were limited to inquiries about the funding process, financial structure, and festival participation of the films. They did not sufficiently explore the key

⁸⁴ In this sense, it is noteworthy that Naficy uses the word 'imperialism,' which brings to mind the anxieties about cultural neocolonialism voiced by multiple scholars writing on the European influence on African cinemas - discussed in detail in the first chapter.

thematic and aesthetic aspects of each film or address certain conspicuous issues surrounding them. Therefore it was important for me to alter my questions according to the flow of the interviews in order to gather information about significant concerns beyond festivals, exhibition, and funding.

Unsurprisingly, each film and filmmaker presented their own questions and set of sensitive issues that needed to be raised. In the case of *The Wound*, the fragile racial dynamics that lie at the core of the film and its making formed one such topic that I wanted to talk about. Director John Trengove had already put a lot of thought into the process of making a film so completely immersed in the Xhosa culture, with an all-black cast in front of the camera, as a white South African director. Therefore, when I asked him about the potential shortcomings of the white gaze in telling a rural story which revolves around the ukwaluka ritual and the relative absence of this problematic perspective from his film, he responded by saying;

With the team I was working with, I did not feel I had to combat that. But maybe that perception was out there. When you look at the funds, I know it looks like everybody came on board, but we faced a lot of rejection. There were a lot of people who did not respond to the script because the colonial gaze was not there [refers to the lack of any white characters in the film]. They did not give us funding, or did not think it was going to work. Our French partner was the one who understood what we were doing and was a big supporter of the process from the beginning.

It is quite telling that Trengove highlights the support of a French producer following the initial rejection the project faced instead of any local community or institution in South Africa. He is reluctant to name any individuals or funding bodies that rejected the project either because they perceived it impossible for a white filmmaker to sensitively handle

such a story or because they thought the presence of a white character/narrator was necessary to 'explain' the Xhosa culture to a predominantly white urban/global audience. But the way he frames the French involvement as an essential source of support at an early stage when the project struggled to attract attention implies that problematic assumptions and expectations regarding race formed a serious obstacle especially within the domestic film industry in South Africa. Securing French financing, and consequently German and WCF funding, propelled the project to the international arena and were instrumental in overcoming the complications that arose because of the apparent friction between the director's racial identity and the story he chose to tell.

Beyond financing, his own position as a white filmmaker was a major factor that Trengove repeatedly reflected upon as he was developing the project. This was not merely a financial question for the director; instead questions of race and the neocolonial gaze were present throughout the making of the film from screenwriting to editing. In fact, Trengove's written reflections found in the press kit of the film include explicit mentions of this concern. He notes that, 'as a white man, representing marginalized black realities that are not my own, the situation is of course complicated. Even highly problematic. It was important to me that the story mirrors this problem.'⁸⁵ In this sense, the complete absence of white characters and the decision to keep the narrative confined to the rural camp where the ritual takes place were crucial choices. There is no visitor to the camp, no characters who can easily be called outsiders; the film is an immersive and

⁸⁵ This quote is from the press kit of *The Wound* I obtained during the 2017 Berlinale, also quoted in chapter two.

comprehensive portrayal of the ukwaluka ritual from the inside. Trengove leaves anything that can contribute to a detached outsider's perspective out of the film.

According to the director, this approach emerged out of extensive research and first-hand experience in preparation for the project. He spent time in the Eastern Cape (the region of South Africa where the ritual is most widely practiced) in person. He talked to Xhosa men who had been through ukwaluka and listened to their testimonials. In his conversations, he deliberately made an effort to hear as diverse a set of perspectives as possible; talking to homosexual and heterosexual men alike, participants who come from urban areas alongside those that live in rural regions, and financially disadvantaged people as well as more affluent ones. Hearing all these different points of view enabled Trengove to move out of his own comfort zone and approach the story from a more critical, nuanced, and diverse angle. When asked the question, 'how do you navigate the politics of being a white filmmaker depicting marginal characters with realities different than your own,' he responded by saying;

As much as possible I tried to disrupt my own preconceptions. Like most middle-class audiences who watch the film, it would be easy for me to look at Xolani and say, here is a gay character who is repressed and deserves to be emancipated from his oppressive community and express himself as an individual. I resisted those kinds of resolutions for his character and tried instead to present his problem for what it is, which is big and difficult, without clear answers.⁸⁶

As this quote demonstrates, the lack of a clear resolution at the end of the film and the absence of a familiar character arc of self discovery and acceptance for Xolani must be understood as conscious directorial choices on Trengove's part, as an extension of his

⁸⁶ This question and the quoted response are taken from the aforementioned press kit of the film.

conscious attempt to avoid a privileged white perspective while dealing with complex issues that bring notions of race, class, and sexuality together.

Benjamin Naishtat's *History of Fear* can be seen as another outlier among the roster of films analyzed here for two reasons; Naishtat is the only director among those that I have interviewed to have received WCF funding for two different projects (*History of Fear* was the first one), and *History of Fear* is the only debut film to secure a competition berth in a major festival.⁸⁷ Therefore, I asked Naishtat specific questions that addressed these aspects, which were not applicable to other filmmakers. In relation to the potential impact of *History of Fear* in helping him secure WCF funding for his upcoming film *Rojo*, Naishtat rejected my characterization that '*History of Fear* was a major success' and asserted that the merits of the new project on its own, rather than the past success of its director, was the driving factor behind the second grant. Regarding the success of his first film, he said;

I would not consider *History of Fear* a major success, considering its critical harvest at the time of the Berlinale premiere and the fact that, apart from the festival circuit, the film remained largely unseen -in comparison with other Argentine films that premiered in Berlinale, such as *The Minder (El Custodio, 2006)*. The film was released in Argentina (2300 admissions), France (2000), Brazil (3000) and Uruguay (likely under 500). So it is accurate to say that theatrical releases were fairly disappointing. The festival circuit should have helped spreading the buzz, and by giving prior coverage to the film. But it was not enough as to get people in theaters.

While Naishtat is modest and thoughtful in articulating the trajectory of his film following its premiere; he downplays the success they have had in selling the film to

⁸⁷ *The Wound* is a directorial debut as well but it was selected for the Panorama section instead of the competition. The point that main competitions of Berlin, Cannes, and Venice almost always prove elusive for first-time directors is quantitatively demonstrated and discussed in further detail in chapter four.

major markets like France and Brazil (which presumably resulted in home video releases and television broadcasts beyond commercial theatrical releases), mentions the critical ‘harvest’ in mainstream trade publications instead of talking about the awards the film collected in important festivals like Jeonju and San Francisco, and makes a somewhat unfair comparison by referring to *The Minder*, which significantly benefitted from a major official prize (the Alfred Bauer Prize, essentially a third-place jury prize given to a film that ‘opens new perspectives on cinematic art’) it won in the Berlinale competition. Yet his main argument stands valid regardless of the scale of success *History of Fear* achieved or not. He rejects the assumption that a high-profile festival trajectory a debut film follows will automatically boost the funding prospects of the follow up project by the same director. In relation to his repeated success with WCF, Naishtat states, ‘I am certainly more willing to believe that they found my current project *Rojo* appealing and pertinent enough as to give it a grant, which I believe, was decided by a committee totally different from that of *History of Fear*.’ He is correct in his assumption that funding decisions were made by juries composed of different individuals and it goes without saying that in cases where the artistic quality of the project clearly does not merit WCF selection on its own, the pedigree of the filmmaker would not be sufficient to guarantee funding.

This does not, however, mean that juries of funding bodies are completely unaware of the past achievements of the filmmakers whose new projects they are tasked with evaluating. On the contrary, given the fact that such juries are often made up of professionals with a significant level of experience and expertise in various aspects of

filmmaking, it is safe to argue that the critical and -to a lesser extent- commercial success of earlier works is among the several factors that selection committees are aware of and take into consideration while determining which films receive financial support. Even though he was reluctant to talk about his own films in these terms, Naishtat also acknowledged that the first film is one of the ‘determinants’ of the fate of the second film in an extremely competitive financial landscape and added,

I certainly agree that it is not easy at all to finance film projects, both arthouse or mainstream. The competition in first and second features is enormous and you have to take into consideration that you as a filmmaker are a complete unknown at that stage. Having said that, the international projection of your first feature will be a determinant to ease international financing opportunities for the second.

Building on this discussion on the long-term impact of funding bodies in cultivating new voices and supporting filmmakers across multiple projects, I asked Naishtat about his directorial signature and how he negotiated his position as a young, emerging talent with a distinctive style. Such a question was informed by the very distinctive, fragmented narrative structure of *History of Fear*, which clearly rejects standard storytelling conventions. Unlike all the other films in the roster, Naishtat’s debut does not follow a classic story arc (however loosely defined it may be). There is not a clear protagonist and many scenes are connected only through a sustained sense of unease whose source eludes the viewer throughout the film, rather than narrative momentum or plot in the traditional sense. A vague plot about a power outage in an affluent suburb emerges in the last half hour, but Naishtat refrains from turning this event into a story and concludes the film with a series of suggestive yet inconclusive reaction shots, which show a young male character from an earlier episode in the film.

Emphasizing this non-narrative structure and the originality of Naishtat's approach, Boyd van Hoeij's review for *The Hollywood Reporter* describes the film as a 'confident, semi-experimental debut' and, in a fashion that resembles a visual essay rather than a narrative feature, as a 'feature-length exploration of how terror of the unknown can become a destructive force.'⁸⁸ Similarly, in his review for *Slant Magazine*, Steve MacFarlane characterizes the film as 'a withholding sketch of what happens across an array of different characters when their normative roles are challenged.'⁸⁹ Therefore, my question to Naishtat was about constructing a film in conceptual terms rather than around a clear narrative, and consequently, the impact of this artistic choice on the funding and festival prospects of the project. He maintained the same modest tone in answering this question as well and downplayed the inventive, daring film grammar employed in *History of Fear*. In response to my suggestion that film festival funds may find such unique directorial voices appealing and support them repeatedly as they mature, he said;

I would think that the funding bodies seek for diversity and innovation in formal approaches, and maybe *History of Fear* fit their expectations in those regards. Having said that, and with a sense of self-critique and retrospection, I would say that audience accessibility should not be spared in the favor of directorial signatures, certainly both things can and should coexist.

When I highlighted the reviews that approached the film as an experimental feature and compared it to multi-screen installations, he was reluctant to talk about institutions like museums or galleries as an alternative source of funding. Referring to directors such as

⁸⁸ For Boyd van Hoeij's review of *History of Fear*, see <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/history-fear-historia-del-miedo-678694>. Accessed January 9, 2018.

⁸⁹ For Steve MacFarlane's review of *History of Fear*, see <https://www.slantmagazine.com/film/review/history-of-fear>. Accessed January 9, 2018.

Apichatpong Weerasethakul and Tsai Ming Liang, who work with funding from prestigious institutions in the art world in addition to making feature films, I asked what Naishtat thought of this increasing movement between formats and the blurring of the line between the gallery and the arthouse. In response, he recalled,

We applied to WCF without having a German counterpart yet. This was unusual but we were admitted. It was due to the fact that until then we had failed to find a suitable German producer willing to join us in the making of the film. We got the WCF grant anyways, and were then bound to find a German production house. We asked Vitakuben's (the production company) Leif Magne Tangen, whom we had met at Cinemart (the co-production market of the International Film Festival Rotterdam) because he was involved in the arts world as well as film, and we thought the project could have some interest within the arts world.

But despite this involvement from the arts world, he did not identify a move to the arts circle as a likely direction for his future work. He said that 'as for considering other formats, I would do it out of curiosity or intuition. I do not think any of the arts formats or forms provide much financial security, nor I expected to have such a thing when I decided to do films.' This final remark is reminiscent of directors' aforementioned acceptance that the types of festival films discussed in this dissertation have little appeal in the mainstream market and that non-monetary rewards of filmmaking ranging from artistic and intellectual satisfaction to critical acclaim and awards recognition are prioritized over financial security or commercial success.

Lack of financial security for individuals who choose to pursue a career in the film industries of the Global South is a significant point applicable to all the filmmakers I interviewed. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that filmmakers from Brazil, Argentina, or South Africa operate within established industries with a certain degree of infrastructure

already in place whereas in the case of Claudia Llosa and the filmmaking scene in Peru, the situation is quite different.⁹⁰ Llosa is the only filmmaker I interviewed who started her career in a country without regular annual cinematic output, in a filmmaking scene without basic infrastructure like laboratories where reels of film can be processed. Isaac León Frías notes that six Peruvian films were released in 2003 and describes this development as a ‘boom’ for Peruvian cinema, stating that this modest number is ‘the largest figure in many years’ (2005, 234). Sarah Barrow, who has written extensively on Peruvian cinema, explains that, ‘explicit efforts to develop a coherent national cinema for Peru, albeit one focused on activity in Lima, were made in the 1970s via the introduction of interventionist legislation and specific policies that allocated funding’ (2013a, 199). But she quickly adds that this development could not be sustained in the 1980s because of the social and political turmoil in the country. After the short-lived attempts to cultivate a national cinema, she clarifies, ‘there followed a hiatus of several very lean years during the second half of the 1990s when the existence of a home-grown cinema was disrupted by a range of factors - political, economic and social’ (200). More specifically, the turmoil mentioned by Barrow is the armed conflict in Peru that took place between 1980 and 2000. The sides in this conflict were the Peruvian government, which was in fact installed under the control of the Revolutionary Armed Forces that had been in power since a coup in 1968, and People’s Guerrilla Army formed by the Shining Path group - the armed wing of the Communist Party of Peru. This civil war, strangely

⁹⁰ I left Alain Gomis out of this comparison because even though he often works in Africa, all his films have significant French involvement and feature mostly French-language dialogue. He is a French-born director who spends most of his time in Europe.

pitting a left-wing government and a communist party against each other, is assumed to have taken more lives than the European colonization of Peru and is the second longest running conflict in Latin America after the Colombian case (Fielding and Shortland 2012).

Not surprisingly, the international film festival circuit has been identified as one possible venue where the recently rejuvenated Peruvian cinema may have a sustained presence, if not exactly thrive, in the aftermath of the conflict. In her discussion of transnational cinema in the Spanish language (mostly in the form of co-productions between Spain and one of the smaller, emerging film industries from Latin America), Barrow is careful not to overstate the contributions of transnational funding bodies to Peruvian cinema. She states that her work does not ‘suggest that Peruvian cinema is now thriving and that its filmmakers have been awash with new opportunities since the early 2000s.’ Nevertheless, on a more optimistic note, she brings festivals into the conversation by claiming that there is a ‘potential for sustained rejuvenation offered by taking a fresh approach to the negotiation of national schemes alongside transnational collaborations (festivals, competitions, trans/multilateral projects)’ (2013b, 139). Llosa’s high-profile success in major festivals like Rotterdam (where *Madeinusa* won the critics’ prize) and Berlin is an obvious illustration of the potential she identifies.

Elsewhere, in a piece that explores the contemporary state of Peruvian cinema, Barrow states that, even after the turn of the century in 2000, Peru ‘has a fragile and fragmented film production ecology, which relies to a large extent on passion, serendipity and transnational patrons.’ She notes that Peru is ‘a nation in transition in the sense that it

is still recovering from the internal conflict between state and Shining Path insurgents who wreaked havoc for thousands of citizens from all strata of society over two decades up to year 2000' (2015, 24). For Claudia Llosa, who started her career shortly after the end of the conflict Barrow mentions, this state of the domestic film scene posed a unique obstacle. The 'fragility' of the Peruvian production ecology and its dependence on 'transnational patrons,' to use Barrow's words, are obvious in the financial structure of *The Milk of Sorrow*. This is a film produced with the support of WCF, among other funds, and is a co-production with Spanish and German partners. It is clear that the film marked a major breakthrough for Peru and catapulted the country -at least briefly- to the limelight of the world cinema scene with its Golden Bear win and Academy Award nomination (both of which were first-time achievements in the history of the country), alongside its many other accolades.

But on a deeper level, the 'fragmentation' and the society-wide 'havoc' discussed by Barrow have also had a formative impact on Llosa's cinema. Regarding the first point, it is worth noting that both *Madeinusa* and *The Milk of Sorrow* feature substantial dialogue in Quechua⁹¹ in addition to Spanish. This dichotomy between languages functions as a key indicator of the societal fragmentation the films portray, with working class rural populations speaking Quechua and the affluent urban groups conversing in Spanish. In relation to the crucial role language plays in her work, Llosa explained that 'it was very important to have the dichotomy between Quechua and Spanish; the opposition between the modern society versus tradition and ancestral culture.' The story of *The Milk*

⁹¹ Quechua is the language of the indigenous native people of Peru, also spoken in Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador.

of Sorrow expands her exploration of this divide by linking it to the armed internal conflict (mentioned in the film as a civil war) of the 1980s and the 1990s. The protagonist, Fausta, is a young woman who loses her mother in the beginning of the film. Her mother is a victim of the infamous rape crimes committed during the conflict; a trauma that Fausta inherits even after the passing of the mother. While the main plot chronicles the difficulties Fausta faces in order to finance a proper funeral for her mother and her experiences after taking up a job as a maid in Lima, a crucial subplot reveals that she inserted a potato in her vagina years ago as an attempt to protect herself from rape and is now facing consequent health issues.

Considering the state of film infrastructure in Peru, the political and social issues that have shaped the country in the past four decades, and their profound impact on Llosa's films, it was important for me to address how the director navigates her position between a non-existent domestic industry and a complex web of transnational connections based in Europe. As mentioned earlier, on the day of my individual interview with Llosa, she also participated in a panel discussion on how stories from small countries find their way onto large screens around the globe. Quotes below are a combination of Llosa's responses to questions raised in this panel, moderated by Dorothee Wenner, and my own interview, part of which was quoted earlier in this chapter.⁹² The first major issue Llosa highlighted was regarding the script of *The Milk of Sorrow*. She explained,

⁹² For a video recording of the panel, see <https://www.berlinale-talents.de/bt/program/telelecture/945>. Accessed January 10, 2018. Dorothee Wenner is a member of the selection committee of Berlinale Forum since 1990 and serves as the Berlinale delegate for India and Sub-Saharan Africa.

The script is about a girl who has a potato inside herself and it is growing, blossoming during the film. To understand the importance of that, the inheritance of the violent conflict, the war, of the things we are still not able to say out loud, was difficult. For me, it was important to make people understand the importance of the project. I wrote so many letters about things surrounding the project in order to present to coproducers. I built a world surrounding the project, talking about things that are so different and strange for others. I needed to make the crew connect with the profound necessity of the story.

The strangeness of the crucial act, around which the story of the film revolves, and the problems this created in attracting funds are reminiscent of John Trengove's remarks about the ukwaluka ritual in *The Wound*. However, in addition to building an external world that made the project more relatable or easier to understand for European coproducers or the crew (most of whom were professionals from Spain), Llosa faced additional challenges because of the lack of necessary filmmaking technology in Peru - problems that Trengove did not need to deal with despite the comparable cultural specificity and 'strangeness' of his screenplay. Llosa recalled, 'when you are making a film in a country that doesn't have an industry, you have to build your way every day.' When asked to provide a concrete example, she talked about an incredible process they went through in order to process the filmed materials. She said;

There is a lot of energy put in to just how to do simple things. For example, how to bring the material to Europe? We did not have a way to do that [sufficient laboratory facilities or professional film transportation services in Peru]. So finally we made pizza boxes, and put all the material into these pizza boxes. We didn't have typical boxes [cans] that are safe enough to travel.

Crucially, Llosa was careful not to characterize film professionals in Peru as victims working against all odds or create a problematic sense of superiority European crew members may be perceived to have over their Peruvian colleagues. I found this

aspect of her remarks particularly valuable and refreshing because even though all the filmmakers I interviewed clearly expressed gratitude and admiration for their European collaborators and institutions such as WCF, Llosa was the only director to explicitly note that this relationship works both ways and that European film professionals too benefit from teaming up with colleagues from the Global South. The level of dedication, passion, and creativity that working in an industry without sufficient infrastructure entails may prove inspirational, or even educational for European professionals who are usually used to taking basic filmmaking technologies and tools for granted. After talking about the problems she faced during the making of her film, Llosa went on to explain why she appreciated her Peruvian collaborators and added that working on *The Milk of Sorrow* was a positive experience for Spanish members of the crew as well. Praising Peruvian artists and craftsmen, she said;

People that work in the film business in Peru are people that do so because they love cinema. They don't work because of money. That energy is somehow lost in a very big, important industry. So I think both sides [Spanish and Peruvian members of the crew] fall in love with the other one.

In order to make sense of the comparison in the first part of her remarks, it is important to note that Llosa herself has been living in Barcelona for over a decade and dividing her time between Spain and Peru. She has extensive first-hand experience in the creative industries of both countries, having worked in the advertising sector and launched her own production company prior to directing *Madeinusa*. Explaining her decision to settle in Barcelona and her mobility between two continents, she said, 'when I started living in Europe ten or twelve years ago [from 2011], the situation in Peru was

totally different; at that time you had almost only one film shooting in five years or so.’ This recollection functions as a clear embodiment of the lean production landscape studied by Barrow and illustrates why it was practically mandatory for Llosa to move to Europe. Additionally, regarding the possibility of pursuing a career in film direction in Peru, she stated, ‘trying to be a filmmaker was like trying to become an astronaut; it was not possible, not even a question.’ Following her move to Spain, she found herself in a position where she had ‘the best of both worlds’ because she could always go back to Peru and ‘start again in a minute.’

Beyond starting a filmmaking career and getting her debut project off the ground, living in Europe was important for Llosa also in order to stay connected to an active hub of cinematic production and maintain her career in the film industry in the long term. Despite the worldwide critical and commercial success⁹³ of *The Milk of Sorrow*, Llosa still believes that ‘it is very difficult to live only off the films you do.’ Even though she has returned to Peru to make her films and travels back and forth extensively, she remains based in Barcelona. She explained this choice by saying,

In Barcelona, I am able to teach in a university and come to festivals like this one [Berlin]. It is near. From Peru, you have to save a lot of money just to come to Europe once or twice every year. So it would make it very difficult for you if you want to meet coproducers, go to markets, or just stay in contact with people you already know.

⁹³ In addition to the awards it won, *The Milk of Sorrow* is one of the highest grossing films in the entire roster of WCF selections over 13 years. The film was sold to 18 different territories in Europe alone (it also had a theatrical release in the United States and several Latin American countries) and recorded more than 185,000 admissions in its theatrical releases in the continent. For context, this is a strikingly high number in comparison to the admission figures for *History of Fear* quoted above.

Presumably, the costs of traveling to European film festivals and markets from Argentina, Brazil or South Africa are similarly high, yet Llosa was the only filmmaker to talk about this issue as a prohibitive factor. This is a key observation because it signals that the financial support of initiatives such as WCF remains at a project-based level and that these institutions do not contribute to long-term solutions that improve filmmaking conditions in small countries with limited infrastructure. Isolated projects may be successful, but problems of access and financial security persist. Even in the case of a rare example like Claudia Llosa, who has achieved high-profile global recognition with her work, the (valuable) contribution of film festival funds like WCF remains mostly confined to the life cycle of a single project and the possibility of sustaining a productive filmmaking career in the Global South in financially viable terms proves elusive.

3.4: Conclusion

The interviews included in this chapter reveal a decidedly different perspective compared to the one that emerged out of the examination of WCF regulations and the textual analyses of films, which were presented in the preceding chapter. Whereas the regulations had an emphasis on shared cultural identities, sociopolitical relevance, and potential for international success; the filmmakers framed their work as deeply personal, firmly rooted in their own lived experiences and states of mind. From a critical distance, it is possible to observe how almost every film in the data set presents a good match for the criteria outlined in the regulations, and works as a significant social critique or as an authentic cultural portrait. Concretely identifying these dimensions was one of the main

contributions of the second chapter. The remarks quoted above, on the other hand, unearth an equally significant component of the creative process that complements the broader social and historical contents of the films, which is more intimate and individualistic in nature.

From Alain Gomis' expression of his desire to 'show the inside of himself' instead of making a 'sociological film' and Claudia Llosa's reference to her childhood memories marked by constant traveling ('not-belonging' in her words) to John Trengove's description of his cinematic sensibility as 'visceral' and his preference for 'feelings' over 'agendas' and Julia Murat's use of her own real-life relationship with her co-writer as the basis of an abstract dance film; every interview I conducted included explicit declarations about personal and sensory experiences taking precedence over overt politics, didacticism, and communal concerns in the brand of cinema these filmmakers are interested in. Acknowledging the fundamental position of the personal does not diminish the significant role political content plays in these films; filmmakers are most certainly aware that a wide range of important issues ranging from the repression of homosexual individuals in South Africa to the decades-long civil war in Peru or the class-based social inequalities in Argentina form an inseparable background for the stories they tell. In fact, it can be argued that the filmmakers who succeed the most both in securing transnational funds and in transporting their cinematic vision to the screen without compromise are those that manage to strike this delicate balance between the intimate/personal and the social/cultural layers of their films.

A rather worrying trend that emerged across several interviews was the reluctance of domestic funding bodies and state institutions in supporting films that are perceived to be thematically controversial or formally bold. As mentioned above, Julia Murat did not receive state support for her first project in Brazil until the completed film was already selected for the Venice Film Festival. Claudia Llosa described the internal armed conflict in Peru as ‘something we do not speak out loud about’ while John Trengove admitted ‘there was not much support at home’ because the story of his film dealt with a contentious issue. I argue that it is significant to problematize this dark, biased, conservative state of domestic film funding in countries in the Global South; particularly because isolated success stories such as those supported by WCF are often framed as crucial turning points and wrongly credited for initiating a boom in cinematic production in their countries. Sadly, it must be noted that the contributions of transnational funding bodies or international film festivals rarely reach the domestic industries the films analyzed here were produced in and such short-lived periods of positivity often quickly dissolve into continued dependence on external sources of funding. Not only did none of the directors I talked to express any optimism about significant improvements in terms of access to domestic funds; but also many of them described a bleak reality in which their films have an extremely small audience back home, meaning that festivals abroad constitute the only natural environment where the type of non-mainstream cinema they produce can thrive.

One direct consequence of this absence of domestic support for filmmaking is increased dependence on transnational funding bodies, including those associated with

film festivals. While the scholarly work reviewed in chapter one frequently questions the monetary and symbolic value created by film festival funds, suggesting that the minuscule amounts of money allocated to each project does not mean much for an endeavor as costly as film production beyond the prestige that comes alongside the financial endowment; filmmakers I interviewed were far more decisive in asserting that each source of funding is absolutely crucial for them to be able to realize their projects. Specifically in relation to WCF, Benjamin Naishtat explicitly said that *History of Fear* could not have been completed without the WCF funding, even though the 30,000 euros the project received may seem small at first glance. Claudia Llosa noted that WCF was the first block on which all other parts of funding were built, assigning the fund a similarly pivotal role in the making of her film. All the filmmakers were extremely grateful for the opportunities WCF selection afforded them and clearly expressed that the financial involvement of this particular institution was of critical importance.

A related observation expressed by all the directors was about the artistic aspect of their transnational collaborations beyond the stark financial conditions that necessitated them. Both Murat and Trengove recalled how much their films benefitted from working with a foreign script consultant. Alain Gomis noted that his encounters with actors and musicians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had a formative impact on the evolution of *Félicité*. He also graciously praised his cinematographer Céline Bozon and editor Fabrice Rouaud, both of whom are French. Claudia Llosa mentioned how the working relationship between Peruvian and Spanish members of the crew was rewarding and inspiring for both parties involved. Benjamin Naishtat was the

only director to argue that the artistic involvement of his German coproduction partner was minimal, yet he was still very appreciative of the coproducer's openness to formal innovation and interest in experimental, non-narrative works. Coproductions between several countries can often be purely financial collaborations, as argued by both Jäckel (2003) and Hjort (2009), but all the filmmakers I interviewed refrained from such a characterization and strongly emphasized that their creative processes included valuable input from all parties involved in the coproduction equation.

CHAPTER 4

STATISTICS

The trajectory a project follows after receiving financial support from WCF or other similar initiatives is difficult to quantify. The number of territories the film is sold for distribution, festivals it is screened at, or the tickets it sells during its theatrical release can be counted easily, yet the number of studies that utilize such data remains limited. The complex nature of the international film festival circuit necessitates more nuanced measurement than mere counting; festivals have different levels of significance and impact, some territories act as major sources of revenue while the financial contribution of securing a theatrical release in a smaller market may be negligible, festival programs are often very fragmented with the prestige of the section the film is invited to determining how much it benefits from the exposure. Because of several complications of this kind, the existing scholarly literature on film festivals has mostly avoided quantitative data and statistics, resulting in the lack of established and commonly used scales, measurement techniques, and categories.

Focusing on the specific domain of funds associated with film festivals means that numerical data regarding funding decisions, sales, and box office results becomes an integral part of the inquiry. In this chapter, I utilize the complete roster of films that have received financial support from WCF since the inception of the fund in 2005 to present empirically supported observations regarding the broad trends found in the activities of the initiative. This analysis complements the more specific and project-based findings presented in earlier chapters, bringing a longitudinal perspective that covers over a

hundred projects funded throughout the past twelve years. Consequently, it can be argued that the results discussed below are generalizable beyond the specific case of WCF and the Berlinale, leading to a number of policy implications that may potentially be useful for other comparable international film festivals and the funding bodies associated with them.

While the particular properties of WCF and the film festival circuit play a major role in the analysis, the results presented in this chapter can be interpreted on a wider scale. As argued several times in the preceding chapters, participating in international film festivals is often considered as a seal of approval and boosts the prestige of a film before it reaches the general public. Therefore, it would not be a stretch to consider various variables about festival participation as indicators of the overall critical reception of films; with films that premiere in more prestigious events, win prizes in competitive sections, or travel to a larger number of festivals after their premieres achieving a higher level of critical acclaim compared to those with limited exposure on the festival circuit. Obviously, this does not necessarily mean that there are not any critically acclaimed films that completely bypass festivals or that films lacking in artistic merit never get to play on the festival circuit (they most certainly do for reasons ranging from the red carpet appeal of the cast to the past pedigree of the director). Nevertheless, on average, it would be logical to claim that the perceived quality of feature films and their access to prominent festivals are highly and positively correlated.

The hypotheses tested below are based on a similar assumption and argue that festival participation may have an important and positive impact on the number of tickets

sold at the box office or territories where the film is theatrically released. On the other hand, I do not treat festival participation as a fixed concept that occurs in a vacuum, either. There are a large set of factors that determine which films, critically acclaimed or otherwise, get shown in festivals. In this chapter, I investigate some of these factors including the funding structures of films, the previous achievements of filmmakers, and the involvement of co-production partners. From this point of view, it can be claimed that this chapter attempts to build a bridge between the early financing stage of film production and the eventual commercial performance of completed films by situating film festivals as crucial intermediaries in this long process.

In the sections below, I first provide the details of the data collection and coding procedures and address a number of methodological concerns. Then I review some notable quantitative studies that revolve around questions of co-production structure, financing, film festivals, critical reception, and commercial success. The analysis presented below is informed by and in dialogue with these earlier studies. Before using the WCF data set to test some of the relationships that have previously been revealed in these existing studies, I proceed by presenting the descriptive statistics about all the variables. In the final sections of the chapter, I unveil the results of the tests, and discuss what they mean for WCF and other funds associated with film festivals.

4.1: Data and Methodology

In order to perform relevant statistical tests, I have compiled data from twenty five press releases archived on the website of the Berlinale between February 13, 2005

and November 17, 2016; creating a data set with 124 films and nineteen variables about each film.⁹⁴ Variables in the data set include the date of the funding decision, original title of the project at the funding stage, the English title of the completed film, name of the director, the main production country of the film (the WCF-eligible country), name of the production company that filed the application, whether the project is co-produced by another Western European country (France in most cases), whether the project marks the directorial debut of the filmmaker, whether the project marks the second film directed by the filmmaker, whether the project is successfully completed or not, the year of completion for the completed projects, the most significant festival selections and awards recognition for the earlier works of the filmmaker (if applicable), the festival selection for the world premiere screening of the funded film, whether the film has won an official award during its premiere festival appearance or not, a list of its subsequent screenings in major festivals around the world, the total number of admissions for the WCF-funded film in European territories, the number of European territories where the WCF-funded film received a theatrical release, whether an earlier project by the same director received WCF support as well or not, and the amount of production support endowed to the project in euros.

Information regarding the total budget of each project is not available. This is a significant variable that presumably has an impact on other variables such as the total number of admissions, but in the specific case of WCF, it can be argued that the total

⁹⁴ The press releases can be found here: https://www.berlinale.de/en/archiv/jahresarchive/2017/08_pressemitteilungen_2017/08_pressemitteilungen_2017.html. Links for years before 2017 are available on the same webpage. Accessed on October 8th, 2017.

budgets of projects do not constitute a key variable because all the projects have budgets within the same fairly narrow range. As per the regulations of WCF, every film included in the data set has a total budget between 200,000 and 1,000,000 euros. Furthermore, regardless of the total budgets of films, there is a ceiling to the amount of production support any film can receive at 80,000 euros.⁹⁵

While information about the majority of variables was gathered from Berlinale's official press releases or the official WCF booklet, I used other sources for some of the variables. For the variable regarding the major festival screenings of each project following its premiere, I combined data from the WCF booklet with the release information found on the IMDb page for each film. I limited my search to the following significant festivals: Buenos Aires (BAFICI), Hong Kong, Karlovy Vary, Locarno, London, Mar del Plata, New York, Ougadougou (FESPACO), Pusan, Rio de Janeiro, Rotterdam, San Sebastian, Sao Paulo, Sarajevo, Sundance, Toronto, and Tribeca. These events represent a significant portion of the most prominent events⁹⁶ in the film festival circuit. I deliberately added a number of Latin American and Far Eastern events as well as the premier festival in Africa considering the project's focus on these three regions. I obtained the data on box office admissions and sales to European territories from the

⁹⁵ The maximum amount of funding allocated to a single project was 100,000 euros between 2005 and 2014. This number was later reduced to 80,000 euros with a policy change in 2014. If the project is funded while at the post-production stage, the maximum available funding is limited to 40,000 euros.

⁹⁶ It must be noted that one side effect of the prominence of these events is that films cannot play in them in certain combinations because of premiere status restrictions. For example, any film shown in Tribeca is ineligible for New York Film Festival because it loses its premiere status.

LUMIERE database organized by the European Audiovisual Observatory.⁹⁷ This database includes data gathered from the thirty six member states of the Observatory.⁹⁸ Films that did not return any results in a search on this database had not been theatrically released in any of the thirty six territories, therefore I recorded zero admissions and zero sales for these titles. I used admissions rather than revenue as a measure of box office results because many territories in the database use different currencies and it is not possible to convert all the currencies to construct a reliable measure of box office revenue. Similarly, the value of each currency fluctuates widely during the time period under analysis.

Some projects that were initially recommended for funding by WCF were not completed in the form presented to the jury and their producers returned the allocated amount, with the project subsequently being dropped from the current records of WCF. In some rare cases, the same project was later completed in a modified form, utilizing funding obtained from a different set of initiatives, and went onto play at various important festivals. I included such cases in the original data set for descriptive statistics, but did not take them into account when testing hypotheses that are applicable to completed projects only. For example, such projects are included when calculating the average amount of funding allocated to different types of films (e.g. films from Latin America, debut films etc.), but are excluded when testing a hypothesis like ‘Latin American films funded by WCF are more likely to premiere in major festivals compared to those from Southeast Asia.’

⁹⁷ The search engine of the database can be found here: <http://lumiere.obs.coe.int/web/search/index.php>. Accessed September 6, 2017.

⁹⁸ For a list of the territories covered by the database, see http://lumiere.obs.coe.int/web/iso_codes/. Accessed September 6, 2017.

Some variables are applicable to a subset of films instead of the entire data set. The variable about the most significant festival selections of the earlier works of directors, for instance, cannot be applied to filmmakers who make their directorial debuts with WCF-funded projects. Therefore, the number of observations changes with respect to each variable. For this reason, I indicate the number of observations used in the test in parentheses every time I introduce the results of a statistical test below. Regarding the number of observations, it must be noted that T-tests (comparison of means) and the one-way ANOVA (analysis of variance) analyses presented below are robust regardless of the sample size (Agresti and Finlay 1999). There is no minimum sample size requirement, and the numbers of observations listed below are sufficient for the types of tests performed.

Many of the variables in the data set are so-called ‘dummy’ variables (alternatively called ‘indicator variables’), meaning that they can take either one of only two possible values. For example, coding the debut film status of a project creates an indicator variable because the only possible answers to this question are yes and no. The prevalence of this type of variables limits the number of statistical methods that can be used in the analysis. Many advanced statistical tests require variables to be at the ordinal (with a clear ranking and hierarchy between each category) or the scale (continuous) level, which is not the case with the WCF data set. Therefore, I modified my hypotheses and chose statistical methods that are suitable for the present levels of measurement. There is only one dependent and one independent variable in all the hypotheses tested below. Depending on the relevant variables and their levels of measurement, I use one of

these four methods for each hypothesis: Fisher's Exact Test (a variation of chi-square cross tabs for categorical dependent and independent variables with small sample sizes), independent-samples T-test (for binary categorical variables compared in regards to a continuous dependent variable), one-way ANOVA (for nominal variables with more than two categories compared in regards to a continuous dependent variable), or correlation analysis (for continuous dependent and independent variables).

While coding for the indicator variables and the variables about festival selections or awards, I used Mezias et al. (2008) as the model study; coding every positive answer and every major festival award as '1,' every negative answer as '0,' and creating a cumulative festival selections measure (every festival has an equal weight of '1' in this measure). Variables regarding the amount of funding allocated, number of tickets sold, and the territories where the films were released theatrically were already measured at the scale level and did not require operationalization. For the main country of production, I used the categorization found in the official regulations of WCF, grouping all projects into one of five categories; Latin America, Southeast Asia, Middle East, Eurasia, and Africa. In rare cases where countries from more than one of these regions are involved in the co-production, I used the country of the main production company that filed the WCF application (for example, *Félicité*, an aforementioned Senegalese-German-French-Belgian-Lebanese co-production is listed under Africa instead of the Middle East).

Three festival variables (festival success of previous films by the same director, world premiere screening of the funded project, and its award recognition in festivals) were the most subjective items in terms of operationalization. In the first variable, I only

considered the presence of a previous film in one of the three leading festivals in Berlin, Cannes, and Venice. If a non-debutant director never presented a film in Berlin, Cannes, or Venice before the WCF-funded project, I coded that project as '1.' If one of the same director's previous films was presented in a 'sidebar or secondary' section in these festivals, I coded that project as '2.'⁹⁹ If one of the same director's previous films was invited to the main competition of these three festivals, I coded that project as '3.'¹⁰⁰ In cases where multiple categories are applicable to the same director, the higher value/category was used. For the variable about the world premiere festival selection, I divided festivals into three broad categories; 'major' festivals (Berlin, Cannes, Venice), 'top' festivals (all the key events listed above except for the three majors), and 'minor' (all the festivals which were not listed above as top events). If the WCF-funded project premiered in a minor festival, I coded that project as '1.' If the film premiered in a top festival, I coded that project as '2.' Among the films that premiered in major festivals, I coded those that were selected for sidebars as '3,' those that were invited to secondary competitive sections as '4,' and those that played in the main competition as '5.'¹⁰¹ By establishing such categories, I aim to account for the complex hierarchies found in the festival circuit and the varying levels of impact and significance various events have

⁹⁹ The 'sidebar/secondary' sections are defined as follows: Panorama and Forum in Berlin; Un Certain Regard, Semaine de la Critique, and Quinzaine des Réalistes in Cannes; Orizzonti, Venice Days, and the Critics' Week in Venice.

¹⁰⁰ In the specific case of Yousry Nasrallah, he had presented a film in an out of competition slot at Cannes before receiving WCF support. I considered it as equivalent to a competition slot because such films are also part of the official selection at Cannes and receive the same treatment with all competing titles except for awards eligibility.

¹⁰¹ 'Secondary competitive sections' are the following: Panorama in Berlin, Un Certain Regard in Cannes, and Orizzonti in Venice.

relative to each other as well as to pay due attention to the fragmented nature of the selection within a single festival.

Among the variables about festival selections and the reception of films in these events, awards recognition is the most straightforward, coded as '0' for films that did not win any awards in the festivals where they premiered and as '1' if they did. However, the definition of an 'award' in this study is not as simple. Since the number of award winners in the sample is quite small, I considered all awards as equal in value. Presumably the impact of winning the Golden Palm at Cannes on the commercial performance and sales potential of a film is different than winning the third-place 'Jury Prize' or a specific award like best screenplay. But since there are only a handful of prize winners (n=12) in the data set and only two of them (*Milk of Sorrow* and *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*) have won the top prize after their respective festival premieres, it would not have made sense for me to establish separate categories for different awards. It must be noted that almost every film in the data set has been recognized in some smaller festivals or won some awards at the national level. However, I limited my analysis to awards won in the aforementioned major festivals only because the influence of smaller festivals or local awards bodies on the international profile of a film, its box office success, or its market value for European distributors can be considered negligible, especially in comparison to the influence of major festivals. For the very same reason, I counted Academy Award nominations in the 'Best Foreign Language Film' category as an equivalent to winning a major festival award because the high level of visibility an Oscar nomination provides to a film has a notable effect on the variables mentioned above.

All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics software, version 25 for Mac. After compiling the data on Microsoft Excel software, version 15 for Mac, I operationalized all variables following the procedures summarized above and imported that fully quantitative data set to SPSS. This software was used for all the statistical tests discussed below as well as for running the descriptive statistics for all variables.

4.2: Critical Acclaim and Commercial Success

While I did not find any existing studies that quantitatively investigate the relationship between film festivals, funding bodies, and the distribution or box office performance of films; there are a number of studies that tackle comparable questions, broadly defined. If one considers film festival recognition as a specific measure of critical acclaim and defines sales to different territories or the number of tickets sold at the box office as indicators of commercial success, it is possible to identify some articles that inform the analysis presented here.

Berg and Raddick (2017) explore the relationship between the critical reception of motion pictures and their performance at the North American box office by using a quantitative data set which covers more than six thousand films. The measure they choose for critical acclaim is the ‘Metacritic’ score¹⁰² for each title and their study focuses on box office success only in terms of collections in North America.

Consequently, their data set is heavily skewed towards American studio productions and

¹⁰² Metacritic is a popular website which gathers professional film and television reviews, assigns a numerical score to each review, and presents a weighted average score out of 100 for each film. For most films, around 40-45 reviews are used in calculating the average score. See <http://www.metacritic.com>. Accessed October 17, 2017.

English-language films. Therefore their conclusion that ‘there is virtually no relationship between what the critics think of a movie and whether or not it makes money at the box office’ is not easily applicable in the context of international film festivals (117).

However, as an investigation of the link between critical acclaim and financial prospects of films, their study presents an impressively large-scale model.

It must also be noted that the conclusion presented by Berg and Raddick conflict with several other quantitative studies. Kim, Park and Park note that ‘most previous studies have found a positive impact of expert reviews on box office revenues’ (2013, 101). Some of those previous studies cited by the authors include De Silva (1998), Litman (1983), and Sochay (1994). All of these studies test the correlation between the critical reception of films and their fates at the box office though they differ in the variables they utilize to measure an abstract and rather elusive concept like critical acclaim. The major contribution of the present chapter to this debate is to introduce two rather novel indicators of perceived artistic quality in the form of film festival participation and funding allocated by initiatives associated with film festivals. But I must stress that, unlike all the studies mentioned above, box office revenue does not constitute the main dependent variable in the analysis below and that my purpose is not to come up with a model that would predict the box office performance of films based on their festival trajectories.

Metacritic score is used as an indicator of critical reception of films in a number of other academic studies as well. Plucker, Kaufman, Temple, and Qian (2009) also employ the same variable in their comparison between the ratings assigned to feature

films by professional critics and film enthusiasts without an industry affiliation, with IMDb scores standing as the data source regarding the latter group. Another measure used as an indicator of perceived higher quality for films is awards, which is more directly related to the festival phenomenon. In their study on the film industry in the United Kingdom, Elliott and Simmons state that ‘a key quality signal could be the nomination or winning of film awards’ (2008, 94). They operationalize the ‘prize’ variable in their model as nominations in the best film, best actress, and best actor categories in either British Academy of Film and Television Arts Awards or in the Academy Awards in the United States, with no mention of awards obtained in film festivals (102).

By acknowledging film festivals as key institutions in the marketing, distribution, and reception of feature films, Kim and Jensen’s (2014) analysis of commercial prospects of film exports (films released outside their country of origin) identifies two major factors that have a statistically significant impact on box office collections; the domestic commercial performance of the film and its participation in international film festivals. They explain their choice of festival participation as a variable that indicates critical acclaim when they state, ‘opening in competition at Cannes, Berlin, and Venice is an important form of artistic acclaim that, unlike many film awards, is not affected by commercial performance because the selected films have yet to open to the wider public’ (1363). Their focus on Cannes, Berlin, and Venice as the three premier festivals is in line with the categorization reviewed in earlier chapters. Furthermore, the authors distinguish festival recognition and other film awards, prioritizing the former because of its timing, which makes unbiased evaluation of films (unaltered by their popularity or

commercial success) possible. There are methodological similarities between this study and the analysis I present below as well; the authors consider all three festivals as equal in importance and create indicator variables (yes or no) for festival participation. They also use the same data source, the LUMIERE database, to gather information about box office results in European markets.¹⁰³

A similar article which explores the relationship between participation in film festivals and distribution in international markets is Yi Sun's (2015) case study of the Hong Kong-based production company Milkyway Image. Declarations about the significant role festivals play in promoting national cinemas is nothing new. For example, Cindy Wong (2009) clearly argues that the Berlinale has been the most important actor on the festival circuit regarding the globalization of Hong Kong cinema since the 1980s. Most of the studies with similar arguments focus on individual films or filmmakers like Wong Kar Wai or John Woo. The most notable aspect of Sun's approach, on the other hand, is its focus on a production company as a key agent. Her main argument is that production companies like Milkyway strategically take advantage of the festival circuit in order to improve their transnational circulation prospects and strengthen their positions in the international arena. Sun's analysis is useful for this chapter in its recognition of what I call 'the chain effect' in film festival participation as she demonstrates that Milkyway productions that premiere in key events like Cannes and Berlin tend to travel to a larger number of other festivals and enjoy a longer life span in ancillary markets compared to

¹⁰³ The study includes films only until 2009 and considers 32 member states in the database. While I also use the LUMIERE database in my analysis, the data I gathered covers 36 member states. The markets that are not included in the 2009 study are Albania, Bosnia, Malta, and Montenegro.

early Milkyway films that bowed internationally in smaller genre events and regional festivals such as Fantasia or The New York Asian Film Festival. Following a similar train of thought, I investigate the relationship between the festival selections for the world premieres of WCF-funded films and their consequent travels on the circuit and beyond. As quantitatively illustrated below, the idea that the world premiere screening in an international festival is a strategically significant tool to shape the entire life cycle of a film is applicable to contexts beyond Hong Kong cinema and proves valid for the WCF data set as well.

As discussed in the first chapter with references to Jäckel (2007) and Hjort (2009), co-productions supported by WCF are creative collaborations instead of endeavors driven by purely financial concerns. But the quantitative research on co-productions reveals that this is actually a rare case. For example, regarding co-productions involving a Spanish partner, Alejandro Pardo states that many such projects are ‘designed on a strictly financial basis, without demanding necessarily a creative or cultural exchange’ (2007, 22). Similarly, Huw David Jones’ (2016a) analysis of thirty co-productions between companies based in the United Kingdom and continental Europe demonstrates that merely half a dozen of these films had any creative or cultural input from the continental European partner.¹⁰⁴ By focusing on co-productions shaped, at least in part, within the creatively stimulating context of a film festival, this dissertation shifts

¹⁰⁴ ‘Creative or cultural input’ is defined in various ways in these studies. This may include shooting in locations in every country involved in the co-production, having characters with specific nationalities in the narrative, employing cast and crew members from all participating countries and so forth.

the attention to a smaller subset of international co-productions, which are assembled with cultural exchange, rather than financial necessity, acting as the driving factor.

Co-production status has also been studied in relation to the aforementioned variable about box office success. Martin Kanzler's (2008) report for the European Audiovisual Observatory reveals that films with multiple co-production partners record 2.7 times more admissions in the territories covered by the LUMIERE database than domestic productions without any involvement from a foreign co-producer. By comparing the box office results of WCF-funded films which have a third co-production partner (in addition to the compulsory German involvement) with those that do not, this chapter tests a similar hypothesis.

One of the rare studies that explores the connection between the funding structures of international co-productions and film festivals is Huw David Jones' (2012b) article on the films of Ken Loach. Loach is an exemplary case study; throughout his long career he has collaborated with co-production partners from outside the United Kingdom several times and presented an extraordinarily large number of films in major festivals, gathering many important prizes and enjoying wide distribution in almost every key market. Not surprisingly, Jones notes that most of Loach's co-production partners are based in France and Germany (the two main actors in WCF co-productions as well and notably the host countries of Cannes and Berlin festivals), with Spain also being included in the funding structure of *Land and Freedom* (1995) as the film is set in Spain during the 1930s. Crucially, Jones argues that what determines the commercial prospects of Loach's films is not necessarily the involvement of a co-producer from continental Europe or lack

thereof, but rather the presence and awards recognition of these films in major film festivals. He states,

What appears to make the most difference to the box office performance of Loach's films is the critical reception of the work. It is noticeable, for example, that Loach's most successful film in box office terms has been *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, which won the 2006 Palme d'Or at Cannes. (...) By contrast, *Route Irish*, *Tickets*, and *Bread and Roses* [none of which received a major festival prize] have been among Loach's worst performing films (383-384).

It must be noted, however, that even the most sizable successes, when it comes to the theatrical distribution of international co-productions that populate film festivals, are small projects in comparison to mainstream studio pictures and their commercial 'success' must also be understood in relative terms. For example, according to the LUMIERE database, while *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* secured distribution in 22 European territories, in its most successful market France, the film sold 934,013 tickets - a solid number, but still below the 1 million threshold that 45 other films¹⁰⁵ managed to pass in France in 2006 alone.¹⁰⁶ To put these numbers further in context, one must also remember that 2006 was in fact a very slow year for box office receipts in France, where usually more than 50 films pass the 1 million admissions mark every year.

Jones' argument still stands strong; according to the same data source, Loach's *Bread and Roses* sold 253,524 tickets in France while *Route Irish* registered even fewer admissions with 66,380 - both significantly lower than the number *The Wind That Sakes*

¹⁰⁵ For a list of the films that sold more than 1 million tickets at the French box office in 2006, see https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Box-office_France_2006. Accessed October 19, 2017.

¹⁰⁶ It may also seem interesting that the film sold more tickets in France than its country of origin, the United Kingdom. However, this is very common for Ken Loach, who has a very loyal and large following in France. Factors contributing to this discrepancy include the number of screens showing Loach's films as well as the impressive prevalence of arthouse theaters in the exhibition network in France.

the Barley achieved. Jones does not provide these figures, but the numbers definitely support his argument about the impact of festival success and awards recognition on box office performance.

Without the name recognition factor Ken Loach brings, the advantage of filming in the English language, or a Golden Palm to boast of (except for one exceptional case); films in the WCF database are distributed and seen on an even smaller scale than Jones' example. Despite this indisputable fact, it is important to analyze the connections between the funding structure, festival participation, and commercial performance of independent co-productions between continental Europe and the Global South. In an ever-shrinking market environment that marginalizes films in languages other than English to ancillary channels, it is sadly unsurprising that all of the aforementioned studies on market trends focus entirely on either the North American market or the co-productions between Western European countries. The literature reviewed above shows scarce interest in projects hailing from Latin America, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, or Africa. Ignoring co-productions with involvement from these regions only because they operate on a smaller financial scale would mean merely reinforcing the Eurocentrism and western-oriented perspectives dominant in the field. This present chapter, on the other hand, takes a critical look at the complex connections between funding initiatives, film festivals, and the theatrical exhibition of films from the Global South; contributing to the existing academic literature by placing often-neglected films from developing territories front and center.

4.3: Descriptive Statistics

Four variables in the data set are identified as continuous: *AMOUNT* (the amount of funding allocated to each project in euros at the time of the funding decision), *TIME* (the amount of time -in years- spent on the making of each film between the funding decision and the completion of the project), *TICKETS* (box office admissions in terms of the total number of tickets sold across all 36 European markets covered by the LUMIERE database combined), and *TERRITORIES* (the number of territories among the 36 European markets covered by the LUMIERE database, where the film received a theatrical release). Five descriptive statistics are provided below for each of these four variables.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for continuous variables

Variable	Number of Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum Value	Maximum Value
Amount	124	41,218	13,019	15,000	100,000
Time	102	1.69	1.03	0	5
Tickets	102	20,986	58,408	0	437,023
Territories	102	2.44	4.03	0	20

It is worth noting that while the range of amount of funding allocated to each project is fairly large (85,000 euros), the standard deviation is rather small (just over 13,000), which means that most of the projects have received similar amounts of funding clustered around the mean value. Films that have received amounts closer to the

minimum and maximum values presented above are few and far between. It is also significant that the average amount (41,218 euros) falls in the lower half of the range, with a higher number of films receiving relatively small amounts in funding and hefty allocations to a single project remaining a rarity.

However, it would be a mistake to overstate how minuscule the amounts of funding allocated seem to be. For young and independent filmmakers from the Global South, levels of financing that may seem negligibly small in Western standards often have a crucial impact on the outcome of a project. Perhaps the most striking aspect of the numbers above is the fact that 102 out of 124 projects were completed, for a high completion rate of 82.26 percent. These numbers fail to account for an important detail in the data set as well; 10 out of the 22 projects that have not been completed as of October 2017 received WCF funding in the last two rounds of funding in July and November 2016. It is highly likely that several of these incomplete projects will be completed and shown in international festivals in 2018 and beyond, resulting in an even higher completion rate in reality. On average, 1.69 years pass between the funding decision and the premiere of the completed film, therefore films that have received support in July 2016 and beyond are expected to premiere in the second half of 2018. In rare cases, it can take up to five years for films to reach completion after receiving WCF support.

While WCF projects very often succeed in reaching the completion stage, the picture is not as uplifting when it comes to their box office performance. The average number of tickets sold at the European box office is 20,986; a disappointing number considering the fact that all of these films have at least one European co-production

partner (which, in theory, should guarantee a theatrical release in the German market) and that the numbers above present an aggregate of ticket sales in up to 20 different territories. A minimum value of zero in *TICKETS* indicates that some films failed to secure a theatrical release even in Germany despite the compulsory involvement of a German production company in the co-production structure. The mean value here is a lowly 2.44, which reveals that WCF films on average do not even get released in three markets out of a possible 36 in Europe.

One significant point to clarify here is that the variable *TERRITORIES* is directly linked to the *TICKETS* variable because the LUMIERE database only counts admission numbers and ignores ancillary revenues. It is extremely likely for films to actually have been sold to some territories without necessarily receiving a theatrical release in those markets. If a film is sold to a territory for TV broadcast or home video release, bypassing theatrical exhibition, the *TERRITORIES* variable fails to take that sale into account. Therefore, in reality, many of the films with extremely low values in the *TICKETS* variable do reach audiences in European countries that have participated in the co-production equation even if this is not reflected in the *TERRITORIES* variable. Media consumption outside the traditional theatrical formats is instrumental in that regard.

All the other variables in the data set are categorical. *COPRODUCTION* reveals whether the project had a second co-production partner from Europe beyond the German company involved. *COMPLETION* indicates whether the project is successfully completed or not. *DEBUT* and *SECOND* variables take the value '1/YES' for debut and second films, respectively, and '0/NO' otherwise. *REPEAT* shows whether another

project by the same director has received WCF support before or not. In the cases where a filmmaker receives support for two projects, both projects are marked ‘1,’ therefore the number of directors to receive support more than once is half of the number of projects with ‘1’ in the *REPEAT* variable. This also means that the number of directors who have received WCF funding at least once in their careers is 113, instead of 124 because 11 individuals have been selected twice for different projects. Finally *AWARD* indicates whether the film has won an official award in the festival where it premiered or not. The total number of observations is fewer in this case (n=102 instead of 124) because some projects that were not completed were never eligible for awards.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for binary variables

	Number of Observations	Yes	No	Yes (Percentage)
Coproduction	124	66	58	53.2
Completion	124	102	22	82.3
Debut	124	52	72	41.9
Second	124	34	90	27.4
Repeat	124	22	102	17.7
Award	102	12	90	11.8

The results above indicate that there is an almost even split between co-productions with multiple European partners and those with only a German company (though the sample slightly leans towards the former with 53.2 percent). Perhaps the most striking observation these stats make evident is the overwhelming presence of emerging

talent in WCF's funding decisions. A whopping 41.9 percent of projects selected for funding are directed by first-time filmmakers. Combined with the second film projects, the share of young and inexperienced directors in the WCF funding pie rises to 69.3 percent - more than two thirds of all the projects supported. Consequently, the relatively small presence of filmmakers who receive support for multiple projects is not surprising. After completing a project with WCF funding and achieving critical and/or commercial success, many filmmakers move onto larger projects which are often ineligible for WCF because of the maximum budget restrictions. In terms of the number of films that are marked as '1' in *REPEAT*, the percentage is 17.7. In other words, this number means that of the 113 filmmakers who have received WCF funding, only 11 (9.7 percent) were awarded support for a second time.¹⁰⁷ It must also be noted that no filmmaker has secured WCF funding for three different projects since the inception of the fund in 2005.

The number of films that have won an official award in the competitive sections of the three major festivals or been nominated for an Academy Award is unsurprisingly small. But coupled with the noteworthy presence of emerging talent in the data set and the festivals' reluctance to put first or second films in the main competition, it is rather impressive that 11.8 percent of the completed projects have achieved awards recognition.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Some films in the data set are directed by more than one individual. For this variable, directing duos or teams are counted as one director.

¹⁰⁸ To illustrate how rare it is for a debut work or a second film to play in competition at Cannes, it must be noted that since 2005 (the first year of WCF), 263 films competed in the main competition of the festival. Of those, only 20 (7.6 percent) were first or second films.

All the other variables in the data set are categorical ones with more than two categories. *DATE* refers to the year of the funding decision when a project is selected. *COUNTRY* indicates the WCF-eligible country the director of each project hails from. *PREVIOUS* refers to the earlier works of the same director and measures festival success and existing pedigree. *PREMIERE* is coded for the world premiere screening of each film according to the definitions and categories outlined above. Finally, *FESTIVALS* indicates the presence of the WCF-funded film in important international film festivals following its world premiere. All projects are considered for *COUNTRY* and *DATE* (n=124). Debut films are excluded from the *PREVIOUS* variable (n=72). For the other two variables, only the completed projects are taken into account (n=102).

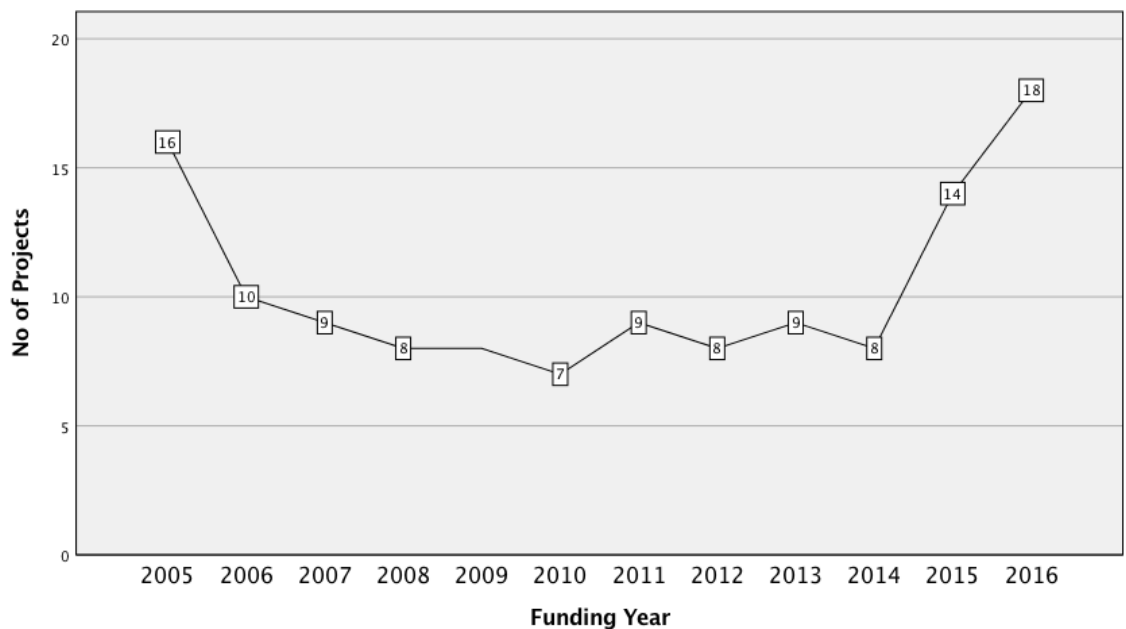


Figure 1: Number of projects funded per year

As shown in the graph above, there has been a noteworthy increase in the number of projects funded per year since 2015. 2005 is an outlier year because three rounds of funding were awarded in 2005 as opposed to two rounds per year since then. For a full decade until 2015, the number of projects selected each year alternated between seven (in 2010) and ten (in 2006), with eight or nine films supported in most years. However, a sudden jump is observed in 2015 with the launch of the WCF Europe initiative, followed by an even larger number of projects endowed funding in 2016 as the WCF Africa program expands the scope of the initiative even further.

The impact of the latter program is clearly visible when one considers the temporal breakdown of funded projects hailing from Africa. There have been a total of 24 African films selected for funding since 2005. Eight of these films have been supported in 2016 alone, with a single year's selection accounting for a third of the complete haul over twelve years. Thanks to this development, African films, which were often overshadowed by projects from other eligible regions in the first years of WCF, have now achieved parity with Middle Eastern films in terms of the total number of films selected and leapfrogged Southeast Asia and Eurasia.

It is also worth noting that projects from Latin America constitute a substantial 45 percent of all films selected for funding. As the number of projects funded per year gradually increased, Latin American films maintained their sizable presence, yet Southeast Asia became less prominently represented. No projects from Southeast Asian countries were selected in the last two rounds of funding in 2016. Three of the twelve Southeast Asian films (25 percent) were chosen in the same session in late 2008 and

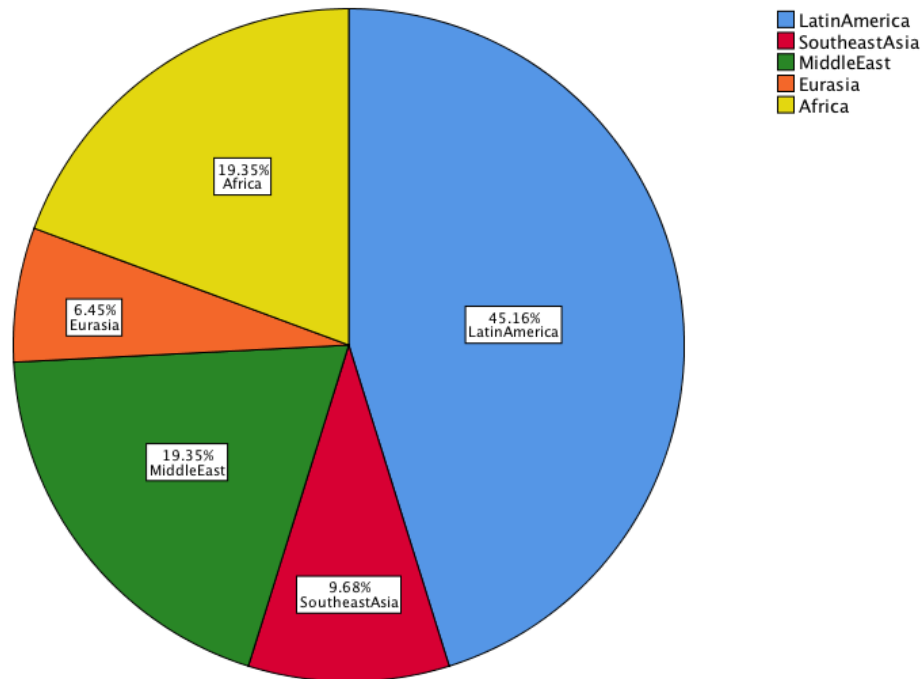


Figure 2: Breakdown of funded projects by country/region (n=124)

following this rare instance, films from the region were completely shut out for almost three years, with the next Southeast Asian film being included only in the July 2011 roster.¹⁰⁹ In contrast, there has never been two successive rounds of funding without a Latin American film chosen for WCF support.

In terms of the presence of previous films directed by filmmakers whose new projects are supported by WCF in the three major festivals, existing pedigree on the festival circuit emerges as a significant factor for WCF selection. Almost two thirds of all selected films (45 out of 72, or 62.5 percent) are directed by filmmakers who have presented at least one film in Berlin, Cannes, or Venice before. This is a very striking

¹⁰⁹ For comparison, the longest run with no Middle Eastern film among the selections was two years between July 2013 and July 2015.

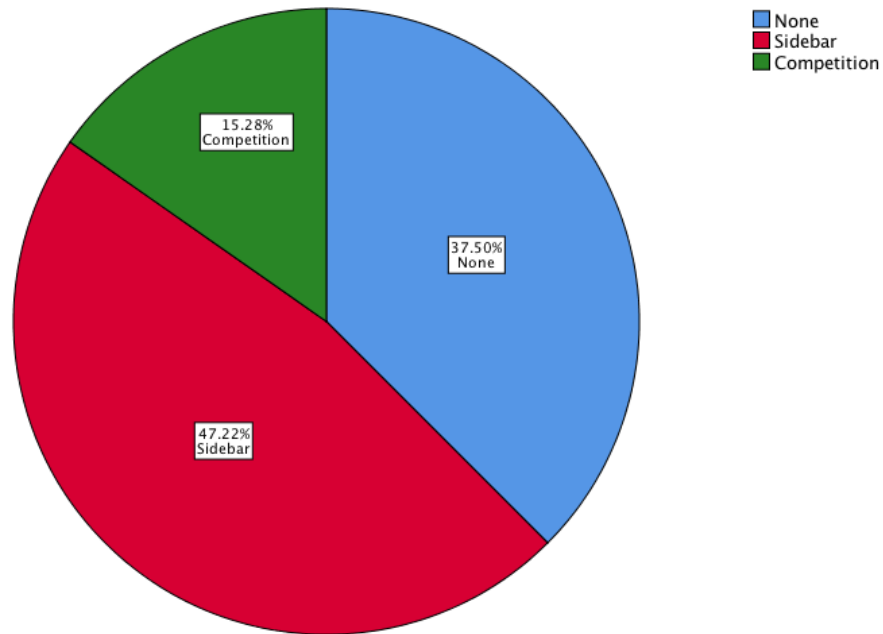


Figure 3: Previous festival pedigree of directors whose new projects are selected for WCF funding (n=72, excluding debut films supported by WCF)

number especially considering the fact that 34 of the 72 projects included here are second films by relatively inexperienced directors. It must be acknowledged that the remaining 37.5 percent of projects, whose directors had no past festival success at the time of the WCF decision, includes several second films. In these cases, past festival success depends on the selection of just one film, and a debut at that. Unsurprisingly, for the vast majority of these 45 cases with significant previous pedigree, past festival success takes the form of presenting a film in a sidebar instead of the main competition. Taking festivals' aforementioned reluctance to put young filmmakers in the main competition, this is to be expected. Also, as discussed in chapter five, competitive sections of festivals usually gather relatively more ambitious or large-scale productions with recognizable actors who provide red carpet attractions. This means that the most suitable projects for

competitive sections fall outside of the small budgetary range specified in the WCF regulations regarding financial eligibility.

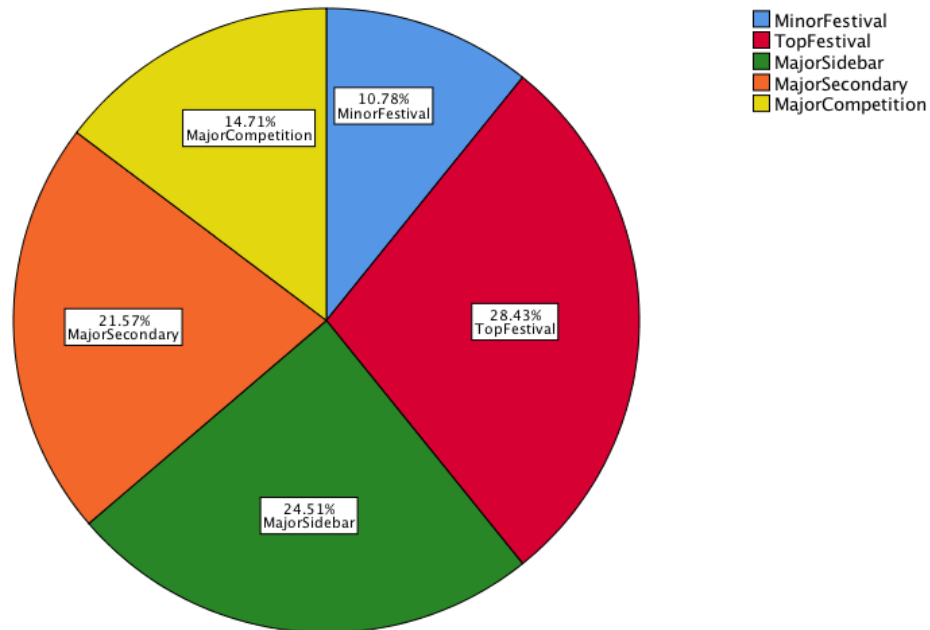


Figure 4: Festival selections for the world premieres of films funded by WCF (n=102)

The prominence of sidebars and secondary sections (instead of the main competition) also extends to the festival selections of WCF-funded films for their world premieres. Astonishingly, more than half (60.8 percent) of WCF films premiere in Berlin, Cannes, or Venice though the majority of these selections (75.8 percent of films that premiere in these three events) are for sidebars or secondary sections. Nevertheless, the share of films selected for a major competition should not be dismissed as small, either. Comparatively speaking, the share of films that premiere in minor or local events is

smaller than those that make it to the competition in Berlin, Cannes, or Venice.¹¹⁰ It is safe to say that films supported by WCF have an extraordinary track record in securing prestigious festival berths for their world premieres.¹¹¹ The share of Berlinale premieres (regardless of the section) is a rather high 26.5 percent.

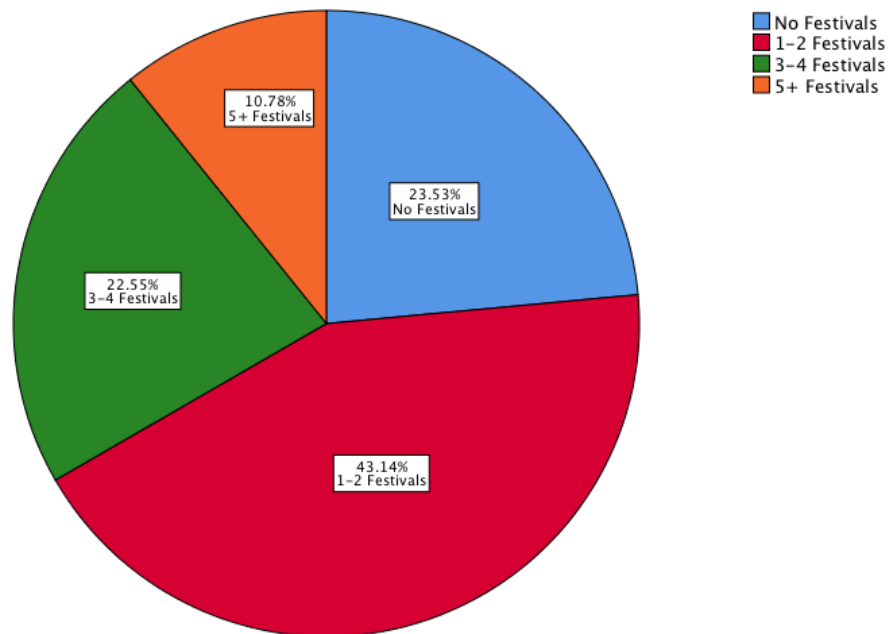


Figure 5: The presence of WCF-funded films in other top festivals following their world premieres (n=102)

Contrary to the intuitive assumption that premiering in a major festival makes it much more likely for films to secure slots in other key events on the calendar, the post-premiere festival trajectories of WCF-funded films pale in comparison to the illustrious

¹¹⁰ In rare cases where a film world-premiered in a local festival before celebrating its international premiere in an event that falls into the ‘top’ or ‘major’ festival categories as defined here, I counted the international premiere rather than strictly focusing on the first public exhibition of the film.

¹¹¹ It is also quite noteworthy that every single completed film in the data set (n=102) did premiere in a film festival instead of directly opening in commercial theaters.

list of world premieres they enjoy. As shown in Figure 5 above, more than 43 percent of WCF films travel to only one or two other key festivals after their premieres while around 23.5 percent of them get to play in relatively minor events only. It must be kept in mind, however, that with the global expansion of the festival circuit, the run of a film in festivals around the globe can last up to two years. With a significant number of films only recently completed after receiving funding during the 2015 or 2016 sessions, the festival selections data on several of these films is inevitably partial. Another fact that potentially contributes to the underwhelming numbers above is the eligibility requirements of major film festivals. Almost every festival in the world considers films that have been theatrically released before the festival's start as ineligible. For the films that make the transition from the festival premiere to commercial screens rather quickly, an extensive tour of further festivals becomes irrelevant. Furthermore, as the inter-festival competition for premiere screenings or exclusive titles intensifies, it becomes more and more unlikely for films to be selected for a large number of important events.¹¹²

Another crucial factor that determines whether a film travels widely after its initial bow is the critical reception it elicits in the festival where it celebrates its world premiere. It can safely be assumed that films which are met with greater critical acclaim and audience appreciation are more likely to be invited to other festivals compared to those that are unfavorably received. But, as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, critical acclaim is a difficult variable to operationalize or measure; the reception of films

¹¹² This is particularly significant in relation to festivals that are geographically close to each other because most of these events insist on regional premiere status. For example, there is little overlap between the programs of the Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro festivals even though both of them are included in the top events category here.

varies greatly depending on the cultural context, audience expectations, the political climate, and a wide range of other factors. Therefore, while I acknowledge the potential impact of the critical consensus on the festival trajectory of a film, I avoid constructing a vague, debatable variable about this notion. Even though many of the variables here are treated as indirect indicators of the critical consensus around a film, there is not a single, clearly-defined reception variable used in the hypothesis tests presented below (unlike, for example, the Metacritic score variable seen in some aforementioned studies).

4.4: Hypothesis Testing

The first batch of hypotheses to be tested are concerned with the impact of various factors on the amount of funding allocated to each project.¹¹³ Given the variables in the data set, the following potential factors will be investigated: production country (in terms of the nationality of the director), co-production status, festival recognition of previous works by the same director, experience level of the director, and whether the same director has received WCF funding for another project before. Based on these pairs of variables, I propose the following hypotheses:

H1a: Projects from Latin America are more likely to receive higher amounts of funding compared to those from Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Eurasia, and Africa.

H1b: The projects directed by filmmakers who have presented films in major international film festivals in the past are more likely to receive higher amounts of

¹¹³ All the tests in this section were run at the 95 percent confidence interval (0.05 significance level). The results of these tests are presented in the tables below.

funding compared to those directed by filmmakers who have had no festival success before securing WCF support.

H1c: The projects directed by established filmmakers are more likely to receive higher amounts of funding compared to those directed by first or second-time filmmakers.

H1d: Projects that have a second co-production partner beyond the compulsory German involvement are more likely to receive higher amounts of funding compared to those that do not have a second co-production partner.

H1e: The projects directed by filmmakers who have received WCF support for another project in the past are more likely to receive higher amounts of funding compared to those directed by filmmakers with no existing connection to WCF.

The amount of funding allocated to projects may also depend on the total annual budget of WCF and the number of projects sharing that total amount. However the total annual budget of the fund remains near-constant throughout the time period under analysis, so the potential impact of this factor is erased. The impact of the total number of projects funded in a year is tested with a separate hypothesis (H6) below.

To check hypotheses H1a, H1b, and H1c; one-way ANOVA tests were performed because the nominal variables on the production country, previous festival success, and level of directing experience have three or more categories. To check hypotheses H1d and H1e, independent-samples T-tests were performed because the nominal variables on co-production status and WCF-funding for two separate projects by the same director have only two categories each.

Results below indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between the average amount of funding allocated to projects from any pair of two regions; $F(4, 119)=1.411, p=.235$. Even though Latin America (given its prevalence in the data set) was used as a point of reference in the hypothesis above, the same relationship can be expressed by highlighting any WCF-eligible region. Hypothesis H1a is rejected.

Table 3 below also indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the average amount of funding allocated to projects directed by filmmakers with

Table 3: One-way ANOVA results for hypotheses H1a, H1b, and H1c

	<u>Amount of Funding Allocated (in Euros)</u>		
	Mean	Standard Deviation	p-Value
<u>Country</u>			
Latin America	39,554	9,921	0.235
Southeast Asia	43,750	10,472	
Middle East	40,833	11,857	
Eurasia	50,625	22,110	
Africa	41,083	16,978	
<u>Previous</u>			
None/Minor	40,407	13,486	0.584
Sidebar	42,794	11,883	
Competition	45,455	20,671	
<u>Experience</u>			
Debut	39,712	11,522	0.488
Second	43,118	10,840	
Established	41,579	16,403	

any two levels of past festival success; $F(2, 69)=.542, p=.584$. The number of observations is smaller because debut films are excluded from this sample. Filmmakers with no previous work to their credit have not presented any films in major film festivals before by default. Hypothesis H1b is rejected.

To check hypothesis H1c, I created a new variable named *EXPERIENCE*. This is a combination of the existing variables about directorial debuts and second films. For debut films, this variable takes the value '1.' For second films, *EXPERIENCE* is recorded as '2.' For all the other projects with more established directors, it is coded as '3.' Results above indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between the average amount of funding allocated to projects from any pair of experience levels; $F(2, 121)=.721, p=.488$. Hypothesis H1c is rejected.

Regarding the independent-samples T-tests for hypotheses H1d and H1e, there is no significant difference in the amount of funding allocated for any of the groups. Between the average amount of funding awarded to projects with a second co-producer beyond the German involvement ($n=66$, mean=41,667; standard deviation=13,960) and those without ($n=58$, mean=40,707; standard deviation=11,960), the difference is not statistically significant; $t(122)=-.408, p=.684$. Therefore hypothesis H1d is rejected. While the difference in mean values indicates a slightly higher amount of funding awarded to projects with a second co-production partner, the difference is too small to be statistically meaningful.

Between the average amount of funding awarded to films directed by filmmakers who have previously received WCF support for another project ($n=22$, mean=38,182;

standard deviation=10,182) and those directed by first-time WCF awardees (n=102, mean=41,873; standard deviation=13,507), the difference is, again, not statistically significant; $t(122)=1.208$, $p=.229$. Therefore hypothesis H1e is rejected. Surprisingly, the difference in mean values indicates a slightly lower amount of funding awarded to projects directed by returning recipients, but the difference is too small to be meaningful in this case as well.

Table 4: Independent-Samples T-Test results for hypotheses H1d, H1e, and H2b

	<u>Amount</u>		
	Mean	Standard Deviation	p-Value
<u>Co-Production</u>			0.684
No	40,707	11,960	
Yes	41,667	13,960	
<u>Repeat</u>			0.229
No	41,873	13,507	
Yes	38,182	10,182	
<u>Award</u>			0.377
No	40,444	13,773	
Yes	44,167	12,583	

The second batch of hypotheses presented below treat *AMOUNT* as an independent variable instead of a dependent one and explore its impact on a number of other variables including *TERRITORIES* (and consequently *TICKETS*) and *AWARD*.

Based on the variables in the data set that could potentially be impacted by the amount of funding a project receives, I propose the following hypotheses:

H2a: The higher the amount of funding a project receives, the longer it takes for that film to reach the completion stage.

H2b: The higher the amount of funding a project receives, the more likely it becomes for that film to win an award in the festival where it world-premieres.

H2c: The higher the amount of funding a project receives, the more likely it becomes for that film to be sold to a higher number of territories for distribution.

As the films that receive higher amounts of funding are usually the more ambitious productions with a larger scale, it would make sense for them to take longer to be completed compared to smaller, more modest productions. Furthermore, considering how WCF support functions as a prestigious seal of approval and presumably increases the likelihood of securing additional funds from other initiatives, projects that receive higher amounts from WCF may take longer to be fully funded as their producers manage several other funding applications beyond WCF. The *TIME* variable measures the amount of time that passes between the funding decision and the premiere of the completed film in years. Since both *AMOUNT* and *TIME* are scale-level variables (as opposed to nominal), a correlation analysis is performed to test hypothesis H2a. For H2b, an independent-samples T-test is run because *AWARD* is a binary variable. Similarly to H2a, hypothesis H2c is also tested by conducting correlation analysis as *TERRITORIES* is measured at the scale level.

The results indicate that there is indeed a correlation between the amount of funding a film receives from WCF and the time that it requires to reach completion following the funding decision ($n=102$, $r=.473$, $p<.001$). Therefore, hypothesis H2a is supported. The Pearson co-efficient is relatively low at .473, which means that the correlation is not very strong. Instead, the correlation is moderate. However, the p value of $<.001$ shows that the relationship is statistically significant not only at the .05 level, but at the .01 level as well.

When it comes to winning awards in major festivals, the independent-samples T-test does not reveal any significant difference between the average amount of funding received by films that go onto win awards ($n=12$, mean=44,167; standard deviation=12,583) compared to those that do not ($n=90$, mean=40,444; standard deviation=13,773). The difference is not statistically significant; $t(100)=-.888$, $p=.377$. Therefore hypothesis H2b is rejected.

In terms of sales of rights to European territories, the amount of funding allocated by WCF has no significant impact. There is no correlation between the amount of funding a film receives from WCF and the number of territories it is sold to ($n=102$, $r=.169$, $p=.090$). The Pearson co-efficient is so low at .169 that the correlation is very weak regardless of its statistical significance or its lack thereof.¹¹⁴ Therefore, hypothesis H2c is rejected.

¹¹⁴ This point can be reiterated by using the number of tickets sold instead of territories. It can be safely assumed that the higher the number of territories a film is released in, the more tickets it sells. A quick correlation analysis decisively confirms this relation ($n=102$, $r=.873$, $p<.001$).

In the third batch of hypotheses to be tested, I focus on the invitations WCF films receive from important festivals for their world premieres. First, one must investigate the factors that potentially influence the likelihood of securing a berth in major festivals like Berlin, Cannes or Venice. This question treats the selection as a consequence, meaning that *PREMIERE* acts as the dependent variable. Suggesting a couple of independent variables that can feasibly be related to *PREMIERE*, I propose the following hypotheses:

H3a: Projects from Latin America are more likely to premiere in major film festivals compared to those from Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Eurasia, and Africa.

H3b: Projects directed by filmmakers who have previously presented films in major festivals are more likely to premiere in these events compared to those directed by filmmakers without such pedigree.

Since both of these hypotheses are about whether a film premieres in a major festival or not, I created a new binary variable about festival selection for the world premiere by recoding *PREMIERE* into a more compact variable. Projects that are coded as '1' (premiere in minor or local festival) and '2' (premiere in a top festival outside the three majors) are combined into '1' ('no major') in the new variable *PREMCOMB* while projects coded as '3' through '5' (premiere in Berlin, Cannes, or Venice) in the original *PREMIERE* variable are recoded as '2' ('yes major'). Of the 102 total projects, 40 (39.2 percent) fall into the first category of not premiering in one of the three major festivals while 62 (60.8 percent) has indeed secured a premiere berth in Berlin, Cannes, or Venice.

PREMCOMB is a binary variable measured at the nominal level. Production country for H3a and previous festival success by the same director for H3b are both

categorical variables, also measured at the nominal level. All the dependent and independent variables in both of the hypotheses are nominal. There are fewer than five observations in some cases, therefore a Fisher's Exact Test for contingency is performed to test both H3a and H3b.

Table 5: Premiering in major festivals and country of origin

	Minor/Top Premiere (% in Row)	Major Premiere (% in Row)	% in Major Premiere Column
Latin America	22 (44.9%)	27 (55.1%)	43.5%
Southeast Asia	2 (18.2%)	9 (81.8%)	14.5%
Middle East	9 (47.4%)	10 (52.6%)	16.1%
Eurasia	3 (42.9%)	4 (57.1%)	6.5%
Africa	4 (25.0%)	12 (75.0%)	19.4%
Total	40 (39.2%)	62 (60.8%)	100.0%

Results of the tests indicate that there is no statistically significant relationship between the country (region) of origin and the likelihood of premiering in a major film festival; $p=.335$. Therefore hypothesis H3a is rejected. But it is worth noting that while almost half (43.5 percent) of the WCF films to have premiered in a major festival have been Latin American, the share of films to premiere in major festivals within the total output of that region is highest in Southeast Asia (81.8 percent). Though a larger number of Middle Eastern films have been completed with WCF support, more African and Southeast Asian films than Middle Eastern ones have managed to secure a berth in major events. On the other hand, the presence of films from Eurasia in these festivals is close to

non-existent, with only 6.5 percent of all WCF films to premiere in such festivals emerging from this region. Even though the larger volume of total output increases this number to 16.1 percent for the Middle East, in terms of penetrating into major festivals, Middle East fares even worse than Eurasia with only 52.6 percent of films from the region getting into major events.

Table 6: Premiering in major festivals and previous festival success of the same director

	Minor/Top Premiere (% in Row)	Major Premiere (% in Row)	% in Major Premiere Column
No Experience	16 (76.2%)	5 (23.8%)	14.7%
Sidebar Experience	8 (27.6%)	21 (72.4%)	61.8%
Competition Experience	1 (11.1%)	8 (88.9%)	23.5%
Total	25 (42.4%)	34 (57.6%)	100.0%

Even though there are 124 films in the entire data set, 52 of them are excluded from the test for H3b because of their debut film status. Directors of debut films have no previous experience in presenting their work in film festivals by default. Of the 72 remaining projects, 13 have not yet been completed.¹¹⁵ These are also excluded from this analysis because incomplete films cannot premiere in festivals, major or otherwise, by default. This leaves an eligible subset of 59 projects.

¹¹⁵ Accurate as of November 8, 2017.

Results of the Fisher's Exact Tests indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between the festival success of previous films by the same director and the likelihood of the WCF-funded project's premiering in a major film festival; $p < .001$. Therefore hypothesis H3b is supported. Projects directed by filmmakers who have previously presented films in major festivals are more likely to premiere in these events compared to those directed by filmmakers who have not.

Obviously, being invited to major festivals for world premieres is not only a consequence of existing factors; but rather, it can also be considered as a cause that leads to further festival play, sales to different territories, box office success, or funding opportunities for the same filmmaker's new projects. In the fourth batch of hypotheses to be tested, I treat *PREMIERE* (or its binary variation *PREMCOMB* when necessary) as an independent variable. I propose the following hypotheses:

H4a: Films that premiere in one of the three major festivals are more likely to play in other top festivals following their world premieres compared to those launched at minor or top (non-major) events.

H4b: Films that premiere in major festivals are more likely to be sold to a larger number of European territories for theatrical distribution compared to those launched at minor or top (non-major) events.

H4c: Films that premiere in major festivals are more likely to sell a higher number of tickets at the European box office compared to those launched at minor or top (non-major) events.

H4d: If his or her WCF-funded film premieres in a major festival, it becomes more likely for the same director to secure WCF funding for a second time compared to filmmakers whose WCF-funded films premiere in minor or top (non-major) events.

Since both *PREMIERE* and *FESTIVALS* are nominal variables, a Fisher’s Exact Test is performed to test hypothesis H4a. This applies to hypothesis H4d as well because *REPEAT* is also a binary variable. For H4b and H4c, one-way ANOVA is used as the relevant variables, *TERRITORIES* and *TICKETS* respectively, are measured at the scale level. Results of these tests are presented below.

Table 7: Premiering in major festivals and being shown in other top festivals (in terms of number of films, n=102)

	Minor Fest Premiere	Top Fest Premiere	Major Fest Premiere
None	7	12	5
1-2 Festivals	3	26	15
3-4 Festivals	1	14	8
5+ Festivals	0	2	9

Results of the Fisher’s Exact Tests indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between premiering in a major film festival and the likelihood of being selected for other top festivals after the world premiere; $p=.005$. Therefore hypothesis H4a is supported. These findings convincingly demonstrate the influence the three major events have on the entire festival circuit. The rosters of Berlin, Cannes, and Venice are highly significant for other top events as well because their programming is built around

selections from the pool of films previously screened in these three events. Celebrating its world premiere in a major festival considerably increases the number of other top festivals a WCF-funded film can travel to. Conversely, films that premiere in minor events have a more difficult time in securing a large number of festival invitations for screenings beyond the world premiere. In fact, there is not a single project in the WCF roster to have been invited to five or more top festivals after being launched in a minor event.

Results in table 8 below indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between the average number of European territories a film is sold to and the level of the festival where its world premiere is held; $F(2, 99)=11.861, p<.001$. Based on the very small p-value ($p<0.05$) and the positive F value, it can be concluded that films which premiere in major festivals are sold to a significantly higher number of European territories compared to those that premiere elsewhere. Therefore hypothesis H4b is supported.

Since, as shown earlier in footnote 114 in relation to hypotheses H2b and H2c, there is a close correlation between the number of tickets sold and the number of territories a film is released in, it would make sense to expect H4c to be supported as well. Nevertheless, because of the time lag between a film's premiere in a festival and its theatrical release, a successful premiere in a major festival may lead to robust sales to several territories without necessarily resulting in impressive box office numbers. Films are quickly sold to many territories in festivals, riding on positive reviews and heightened buzz the festival provides. But a few months later, when the film eventually opens in

commercial theaters after traveling to many other festivals, that buzz may long be dead for various reasons.¹¹⁶ In such cases, the box office performance of a film fails to reflect the strong interest it has generated during its festival bow. This potential discrepancy necessitates a separate test for hypothesis H4c.

Table 8: One-way ANOVA results for hypotheses H4b and H5a (a, b, c significant at the 0.05 level)

	<u>Territories</u>		
	Mean	Standard Deviation	p-Value
<u>Premiere</u>			
Minor	0.45 ^a	0.69	<0.001
Top	1.26 ^b	2.42	
Major	4.76 ^{a, b}	5.29	
<u>Previous</u>			
None/Minor	1.95 ^c	4.20	0.028
Sidebar	2.59	4.20	
Competition	6.78 ^c	6.20	

As Table 10 below demonstrates, there is a statistically significant relationship between the average number of tickets a film sells at the European box office and the level of the festival where its world premiere is held; $F(2, 99)=4.313$, $p=.016$. It can be safely stated that films that premiere in major festivals sell a significantly higher number

¹¹⁶ I am grateful to Mr. George Lentz (Senior Vice President of Scheduling, Operations, and Acquisitions at IFC TV and Sundance Channel) for bringing this point to my attention during a conversation we had at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in October 2017.

of tickets at the European box office compared to those that premiere elsewhere.

Therefore hypothesis H4c is supported. It is also worth noting that, while there is indeed a statistically significant relationship between the variables *PREMIERE* and *TICKETS*, it is not as strong as the one captured by hypothesis H4b ($p < 0.05$ holds, but the p-value for H4c is notably higher than the p-value for H4b; $0.016 > 0.000$).

Table 9: Premiering in major festivals and receiving WCF funding for a second time

	Funded Once (% in row)	Funded Twice (% in row)	% in Funded Twice Column
Premiere in Minor Festival	11 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0.0%
Premiere in Top Festival	22 (75.9%)	7 (24.1%)	36.8%
Premiere in Major Festival	50 (80.6%)	12 (19.4%)	63.2%
Total	83 (81.4%)	19 (18.6%)	100.0%

According to the Fisher's Exact Test results, there is no statistically significant relationship between premiering in a major film festival and the same director's likelihood of receiving WCF support for a second project; $p = .202$. Therefore hypothesis H4d is rejected. But one striking aspect of these results is the complete shut out of WCF films which premiere in minor festivals in terms of their directors' receiving funding for a second time. Since 2005, eleven filmmakers received WCF funding twice, resulting in 22 projects; 19 of which have been completed as of November 2017. Of these 19 films, none

were directed by filmmakers whose WCF-supported projects were launched in minor or local festivals.

Given the significant impact of previous festival success on the world premiere screening of a new project by the same director (as shown with hypothesis H3b), it is necessary to further investigate the relationship between the variable *PREVIOUS* and the other variables in the data set. Specifically, I am interested in exploring the potential impact of the ‘name recognition’ factor acclaimed directors can bring on the commercial prospects of their projects. Therefore, I propose the following two hypotheses on the relationship between *PREVIOUS* and *TICKETS* or *TERRITORIES*:

H5a: Projects directed by filmmakers who have previously presented films in major festivals are more likely to be sold to a larger number of European territories compared to those directed by filmmakers without such pedigree.

H5b: Projects directed by filmmakers who have previously presented films in major festivals are more likely to sell a higher number of tickets at the box office compared to those directed by filmmakers without such pedigree.

The rationale behind writing two separate hypotheses for the two variables on commercial performance is to account for the pre-sales of films to territories before they are actually completed. It is possible for some films directed by firmly established filmmakers to be pre-sold to several territories before completion. But if the completed film does not meet the expectations the director’s brand value creates, such pre-sales may not lead to solid box office collections. Therefore, the main question analyzed in hypotheses H5a and H5b is whether the cachet some directors build through past festival

success can significantly increase the commercial success of their most recent work regardless of the critical reception of the new film itself.

Table 10: One-way ANOVA results for hypotheses H4c and H5b (a, b significant at the 0.05 level)

	<u>Tickets Sold</u>		
	Mean	Standard Deviation	p-Value
<u>Premiere</u>			
Minor	508 ^a	1029	0.016
Top	10,462 ^b	34,638	
Major	42,433 ^{a,b}	83,890	
<u>Previous</u>			
None/Minor	16,399	41,810	0.202
Sidebar	24,275	80,836	
Competition	64,839	74,837	

As the independent variable here, *PREVIOUS*, is measured at the nominal level with three categories and both *TERRITORIES* and *TICKETS* are measured at the scale level; hypotheses H5a and H5b are checked by running one-way ANOVA tests. Similarly to hypothesis H3b, these two hypotheses are only applicable to completed films directed by second-time or more established directors. Therefore the number of observations is, once again, 59 instead of 124 or 102.

Results presented above (Table 8) indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between the average number of European territories films directed by

filmmakers with previous festival success are sold to and the corresponding number for those directed by filmmakers without comparable cachet; $F(2, 56)=3.798, p=.028$.

Therefore, hypothesis H5a is supported.

A similar relationship is not found when the number of tickets sold is used as the dependent variable instead of the number of territories a film is released in. Table 10 above shows that there is not a statistically significant difference between the average number of tickets sold at the European box office for films directed by filmmakers with previous festival success and the comparable number for those directed by filmmakers without the same level of past recognition; $F(2, 56)=1.645, p=.202$. Therefore, hypothesis H5b is rejected.

Finally, in addition to the hypotheses tests presented above, I have conducted another correlation analysis to statistically confirm a significant trend observed across WCF selections over the past twelve years. As shown in the descriptive statistics section (Figure 1), there has been a substantial increase in the number of projects selected for funding each year since 2015. The aforementioned launch of the WCF Africa and WCF Europe programs caused the number of films funded in the last three years to rise noticeably. To test the impact of this development on the average amount of funding allocated per project, a correlation analysis can be run. Logically, keeping it in mind that the total budget of WCF does not fluctuate significantly, the expectation is that the average amount of funding endowed per project will decrease as the total number of projects funded per year increases. Therefore, I propose the following hypothesis:

H6: The more recent the funding recommendation for a project is the smaller the amount of funding allocated to that project is likely to be.

For the funding date, I used the year of the funding recommendation even though there are typically two sessions per year, one in July and one in November. Projects that were selected in the same year were coded the same regardless of the month of the funding decision. Therefore the variable *DATE* has eleven categories, with category '1' corresponding to 2006 and '11' corresponding to 2016. The amount of funding is measured by the previously described variable *AMOUNT*. Since both variables are measured at the scale level, a correlation analysis is used to check the relationship outlined in hypothesis H6.

The results indicate that, as expected, there is a statistically significant difference between the amount of funding endowed to films selected in the early years of WCF's existence and to those selected more recently; ($n=108$, $r=-.364$, $p<.001$). In other words, hypothesis H6 is supported.¹¹⁷

4.5: Analysis and Conclusion

The first batch of hypotheses (H1a to H1e) are all rejected; however, this is an interesting case where the rejection of the hypotheses points to a positive trend. The main point conveyed by these results is that WCF does not discriminate between projects by relying on a simplistic criterion such as the nationality of the director, co-production

¹¹⁷ The number of observations here is 108 instead of 124 because I left 2005 out of this analysis. There were three rounds of funding awarded in 2005 while all other years had two rounds. Therefore films funded in 2005 could not be compared with those funded in other years.

status, or the acclaim past works by the same director may have received. Instead, WCF's criteria for project selection and for the allocation of specific amounts of funding to each project cover a wider, more complex spectrum of factors including the perceived artistic merit of the proposed project, its cultural authenticity and significance, or the fund's commitment to supporting young and emerging talent.¹¹⁸ The geographic region a project hails from or the existing goodwill a director may ride on while proposing a less compelling new project do not seem to have any impact on WCF's decisions, at least not as stand-alone factors that can catapult films into funding success solely on their own.

The strongest relationship proven by the statistical tests above is the positive impact of premiering in a major film festival on the commercial prospects of feature films, in terms of both box office revenues and sales of rights to different territories. This is a particularly significant point in the case of WCF given the sustained success of WCF-supported films in securing berths in Berlin, Cannes, or Venice for their world premieres. The link between festival selections, awards recognition, and commercial performance have been explored both qualitatively and quantitatively in various other contexts. Focusing on the Academy Awards in the United States, Dodds and Holbrook empirically proved that 'winning an Oscar for best picture contributes to a film's revenues' and that 'the awards for best actor and best actress make an additional difference' (1988, 85).

¹¹⁸ I repeated the statistical tests for hypotheses H1a through H1e several times, coding the *AMOUNT* variable in different ways. In addition to the scale-level measurement used above, I created new variables at the nominal level. Creating binary variables for films that received amounts more or less than 40,000 or 50,000 euros do not change the results. Nor does a categorical variable coded for films that received less than 30,000 euros; between 30,000 and 50,000 euros; and more than 50,000 euros yield a different outcome. Hypotheses H1a through H1e are all rejected in all cases, regardless of which variable is used for the amount of funding allocated to each project.

While rather obvious in its results given the global prominence of the Oscars in the media, their study provides a useful model for the quantitative analysis of film awards and box office revenues.

Similar arguments have been developed around the festival circuit as well, replacing the Academy Awards with presence in important festivals in the same equation. But this relationship has proven more complicated in the case of film festivals because of the highly fragmented nature of the circuit and the wide range of festivals in existence with varying levels of prestige and visibility. Not surprisingly, it has been qualitatively argued that the most prestigious events have the biggest positive impact on the critical and commercial prospects of the films they screen. For example, De Valck and Soeteman have claimed,

the amount of value added by screening a film in a festival competition depends on the position and prestige of the festival. With the large number of film festivals and competitions around, not every prize will make a big impact and prestige may indeed be marginal (2010, 293).

Similar arguments have been raised by other scholars as well. Supporting this view in her analysis of the circulation of Latin American films in film festivals around the world, Laura Rodriguez Isaza has noted,

each festival's potential to transfer symbolic capital to films and filmmakers depends on its institutional prestige. This means that top awards at a high-profile event, as in the case of Venice, are widely recognized as being more important and prestigious than those events with a lesser profile, such as San Sebastian or Cartagena (2012, 27).

Both of these studies provide valuable insights about the significant role festivals play in promoting films and improving their profile as they move beyond the festival circuit into

theatrical and ancillary distribution. While the symbolic capital and value associated with festival presence is discussed on a conceptual level, concrete consequences such as box office figures or success in securing distribution are not spelled out by the authors. The results presented in this chapter operationalize the impact of festival selections and awards in more concrete terms by focusing on admission numbers, amounts of funding awarded by WCF, and sales of rights. Both the festival trajectory of the WCF-supported project and the festival success previous works by the same filmmaker have enjoyed have been considered in this regard.

Treating distribution prospects and box office performance as an outcome or concrete embodiment of the symbolic value festivals bestow upon the films they screen has notable precedents in the existing literature. For instance, David Andrews compares the festival circuit with the specialty commercial exhibition sector and concludes that ‘what gives the festival network an edge over the art-house circuit in cultural significance is that it has been able to dictate which art movies have been distributed to art houses across the globe’ (2010, 6). In other words, festivals function as gatekeepers that determine which films manage to secure distribution and reach the theaters specializing in art (used as a synonym for independent and/or transnational cinema) films. This present chapter provides empirical evidence to statistically support the argument Andrews qualitatively makes. Combining the quantitative methodological approach found in the aforementioned studies on the North American awards circuit and Hollywood films with the theoretical discussions about film festivals, symbolic capital and value addition quoted above; I reach the conclusion that premiering in a major film festival and traveling

to other top events following the premiere significantly increases the likelihood of getting distribution in several territories and enjoying box office success for projects partially financed by funds like WCF. This may not be a surprising revelation, yet it confirms the value of investing in a festival premiere for reluctant producers with limited resources.

One of the more notable results revealed above is the recent trend about the increasing numbers of projects supported every year. This is a consequence of WCF's strategic push into films hailing from Africa, which is a much-needed intervention considering the problematic absence of African films during the initial years of the fund and the difficulties African filmmakers face in getting their projects off the ground. However, this increase in quantity comes at a cost with the average amount of funding endowed per project, an already modest amount within the larger scope of feature film budgeting, decreasing even further. While a logical policy implication would be the launch of other sub-initiatives like the WCF Africa program aimed at films from other territories (such as 'WCF Southeast Asia' or 'WCF Eurasia') to keep the number of projects emerging from all WCF-eligible regions at a balanced level, this does not seem very likely in the near future because of budgetary constraints. Perhaps a solution could be the launch of temporary sub-initiatives on an alternating basis, with region-specific programs remaining active for a limited number of years before being replaced by a similar program aimed at another territory.

The relationship between a director's past festival success and the likelihood of a new work by the same director securing a world premiere berth in a major festival is not surprising. Festivals invest in directors, directors and producers are usually glad to return

to festivals that have positively impacted the life cycles of their earlier films, and it makes sense for a filmmaker who is capable of making a film worthy of major festival selection to make another one with a similar level of artistic merit. Furthermore, the boost in visibility festival success provides to filmmakers also increases the degree of anticipation for their new films, which in turn become hot commodities for festival programmers precisely because of the anticipation cultivated at past events. A more surprising relationship revealed in this chapter occurs between existing festival success and the commercial prospects of a new work outside the festival context. While the name recognition factor and high levels of anticipation can result in robust market activity with pre-sales to several territories, these sales do not always translate into handsome box office revenues. Ticket sales depend on many other factors besides the funding structure of a film, its festival success, awards recognition, or the past achievements of its director. The marketing push the local distributor gives to a film, the reviews it receives in the lead up to its commercial release, the public word of mouth (which can be quite different than the critical consensus), its appeal in terms of star power or accessibility may all contribute to its fate at the box office.

A number of shortcomings of the analysis presented above must be acknowledged. The most notable omission is a control group. The failure to include a control group with projects that did not receive funding from WCF stems from WCF's (and all other funding bodies') policy to not disclose information about projects which were denied financial support. Potentially interesting comparisons between successful and rejected applications in terms of festival trajectory, box office performance, or

awards recognition are all excluded from this study because of the lack of access to relevant data. All the hypotheses tested in this chapter are restricted to the domain of WCF success stories and are concerned with subgroups within the larger -yet inherently limited- pool of projects recommended for WCF funding.

The total sample size is 124, which is not a huge number and may be increased in similar analyses of older funds such as Hubert Bals. However, in comparison to some other studies that focus on funding, box office, and critical acclaim; 124 is not a small sample size. For example, Litman's (1983) pioneering study about the effect of Academy Awards on box office collections uses a pool of 125 films because the author considers total budgets as a variable and production costs of most films from the period under analysis (1972 to 1978) are not known. Sommers's (1984) research on the very same question about the Oscars utilizes an even smaller pool of films with only 46 cases included. It must also be noted that the 124 films used here constitute the entire set of projects supported by WCF since its launch and are not intended to be representative of a larger group of films. Furthermore, as indicated above, all the tests performed in this chapter are either robust regardless of the sample size or have been conducted with a sufficient number of observations in each subgroup. Therefore, the relatively small sample size does not pose a problem for the statistical tests discussed in the previous section.

This chapter has provided empirically supported arguments about the funding structures of feature films from the Global South, their presence on the international film festival circuit, and their commercial prospects beyond the festival context. The insights

found in this chapter complement the more specific, case-by-case analyses presented in chapters two and three from a broader perspective by utilizing large-scale data. The next chapter shifts the attention from the films (and filmmakers) to the audiences that consume them, with the intention of exploring how several points conveyed thus far are embodied in actual festival sites.

CHAPTER 5

AUDIENCES

This chapter approaches the film festival phenomenon with an emphasis on the plurality of audience groups participating in these events. Major film festivals with concurrent film markets usually bring various audience groups together. Public viewers who purchase tickets to watch the films in the selection, film critics who attend multiple festivals every year and benefit from various privileges and services offered by the festival organization, industry professionals including distributors, producers, and programmers are among the several groups whose distinct agendas and priorities might potentially clash in the festival setting.

Audiences are not external to festivals; every film festival is designed, programmed and organized with a specific audience in mind. Certain types of films are invited to festivals because they are presumed to appeal to a particular audience group, film screenings are accompanied by many collateral events that speak to different segments of the audience, screening schedules are organized in ways that prioritize specific audience groups over others. This chapter demonstrates some of the ways through which the multiplicity of different audience groups is reflected in the infrastructures of major film festivals. Ticketing and accreditation systems, juries and prize mechanisms, spatial arrangement of festival venues, organization of the selected films into various sections, financial structures including sponsorships all provide a diverse set of examples regarding the mechanics of festival organization and its impact on audiences. I introduce all these factors as elements that complement or challenge a

performative idea of being an audience member during a major film festival. The main purpose of this chapter is to question what it means to be an audience member in a film festival and to unpack the institutional practices surrounding this performance of audience membership.

Many existing studies on film festivals have focused on audiences and attempted to define these events through audience behavior. In the following section, I review the major conceptualizations of film festival audiences in the academic literature. I discuss approaches that frame festival audiences as ‘stakeholders’ with conflicting goals, as large groups of participants who prioritize commerce over cinephilia or vice versa, and as agents in an interconnected ‘network.’ Then I explore a flexible, performative category of audience membership in the context of film festivals, especially utilizing the ‘spectacle/performance paradigm’ as introduced by Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst (1998). In order to situate this paradigm within the historical trajectory of audience research, I briefly discuss the other paradigms in Abercrombie and Longhurst’s taxonomy, and explain why the proposed paradigm is the most useful theoretical tool for studying film festival audiences. As an application of this paradigm, I discuss the participatory, active, and demonstrative audience behaviors observed in festivals, particularly in the contemporary age of alternative exhibition technologies such as online streaming and virtual reality. I go on to illustrate how this idea of performativity is observed in actual festival settings, using field notes and research materials I collected while attending the major European film festivals in Berlin and Cannes.

Drawing attention to audience behavior when studying WCF and other comparable funding initiatives is significant for several reasons. First, from the fund administrators to the members of the selection committee or from the filmmakers who apply to WCF with new projects to the general viewers who watch the completed films, all agents in the entire chain of film production from financing to exhibition come together during film festivals. How do they experience the festival, what kind of activities do they perform during the event? Answering these questions helps us understand funding initiatives in a more comprehensive manner. Second, as discussed in chapter two, the potential appeal of films for different segments of the audience is a notable criterion in the selection of projects to be supported by WCF. Therefore, it is useful to concretely discuss how audiences react to WCF films when they eventually reach the screens during film festivals. Finally, analyzing audiences is a way of connecting the two main poles of this study, film festivals and funding initiatives. Film funding is an endeavor beyond regulations and financial activities. The impact of film funds becomes evident during film festivals, when the supported projects finally meet audiences. Audience reception marks the key instant when funding initiatives, with all of their regulations and policies, bear fruit, yielding tangible results. The mechanics of festival organization, including financially supporting projects and selecting completed films, have a direct influence on how this instant is experienced and manifested by various festival-goers.

All the observations mentioned in the rest of the chapter as well as all the data and materials analyzed below come from the following international film festivals I have attended: Berlin International Film Festival in 2011-2015 and 2017, and Cannes Film

Festival in 2013-2017. This list includes eleven major festivals (six editions of Berlin and five editions of Cannes). Obviously, this set lacks diversity in terms of the types of events included. I have limited the discussion to the specific cases of Berlin and Cannes (which are the key events for WCF because of its association with the former and the prevalence of its films premiering in the latter). I do not claim that the observations and arguments presented here are applicable to the extremely broad and fragmented festival circuit in general. I realize that there are hundreds of film festivals in various categories, catering to diverse audience groups and illustrating organizational practices which are notably different from the ones discussed below.

5.1: Audiences in Film Festivals

When categorizing film festivals, many scholars have referred to the primary target audience groups of different events, using these groups as the main criterion for distinguishing some festivals from others. Mark Peranson introduces two broad categories; ‘audience festivals’ and ‘business festivals’ and notes that (general) audiences and critics have different interests when they attend these two types of events (2009, 25-26). He argues that audiences are a ‘lesser concern’ for business festivals because there is a belief that they will see anything that has been ‘branded by the festival’ and not complain. On the other hand, he also states that critics attending the same events are treated differently by the organization and ‘artier’ films are selected for the ‘special press’ (28). Taking a similar approach, Jonathan Rosenbaum divides festivals into two slightly different but comparable groups; ‘those that mainly exist in order to facilitate seeing

movies and those that mainly exist to facilitate selling movies' (2009, 154). The first category roughly corresponds to audience festivals in Peranson's taxonomy while the second category is reminiscent of business festivals. Both of these attempts to map out the festival circuit depend on a segregation of target audiences; film professionals or the general public. Also offering a comparable categorization, Kenneth Turan devotes the first chapter of his book-length study to the most celebrated of film festivals, Cannes, describing the festival as an example of 'festivals with business agendas' (2002, 14). This is only one of three categories in Turan's taxonomy, the others being festivals with 'geopolitical' and 'aesthetic' agendas. This categorization implies that some festivals are organized with industry professionals in mind while others prioritize general audiences located in a specific part of the world, often with the aesthetic or political content of films (instead of premiere status, sales of distribution rights, potential for glossy red carpet events etc.) being the main criteria for selection. Cindy Wong's (2011) study of four prominent festivals demonstrates a similar multiplicity of agendas and audience groups. After discussing the most widely known events in Berlin, Cannes, and Venice; she devotes a full chapter to the Hong Kong International Film Festival. The inclusion of Hong Kong alongside the three major festivals can be explained by the author's familiarity with the event and the prominent role Hong Kong Film Festival presumably played in her own experiences as a festival-goer. Hong Kong is a festival that cultivates a tradition of cinephilia among local audiences as it screens many films that have premiered elsewhere in addition to a large number of classic films. It also has a regional focus in its programming with films from the Far East always featured very prominently.

In other words, Hong Kong differs significantly from business festivals such as Cannes or Berlin, which are more directly market-oriented.

One of the most obvious indicators of the plurality of audience groups in film festivals may be the selection of the films to be screened. Analyzing the factors that determine what type of films are invited to which festivals, Jeffrey Ruoff (2012) brings together many different perspectives on festival programming in an edited volume. Programming a film festival does not simply mean picking the best of the available crop of films in a given year, rather it is a far more complicated task which involves navigating sponsor interests, public attention, and critical approval. Most festivals in the world build specific brands for themselves and try to attract films and filmmakers that are deemed to be good fits for that particular brand.¹¹⁹ Films are invited to festivals and placed in program sections with distinct identities primarily based on the presumed appeal they hold for specific audience groups (instead of a merely aesthetic or artistic criterion that informs all festival selections). Popular blockbusters that will be released in every multiplex shortly after their festival premieres attract large crowds of fans to the red carpet events and keep the sponsors happy, while lesser known and more challenging films (whose lifecycles are closely tied to their runs on the festival circuit) are presented in other sections for film critics, adventurous distribution companies, and hardcore cinephiles.

There are more overtly theoretical discussions of film festival audiences in the literature as well. Modifying Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory (briefly mentioned in

¹¹⁹ This is a point I have already raised in chapter two in an attempt to determine the specific brand identity of WCF and the Berlinale.

chapter one, henceforth ANT) in order to study the film festival phenomenon, De Valck claims that ANT has two significant advantages: relational interdependence, and the inclusion of both human and non-human actors in the network. She explains relational interdependence in the context of film festivals as follows:

Relational interdependence implies that there is no hierarchical opposition between the actors and the network. Despite the misleading hyphen, ANT does not distinguish between actor and network, between agency and structure or between micro and macro level. Instead it focuses on processes as circulating entities, on movements and interactions between various entities that are produced within these relations (2007, 34).

The application of ANT signals a significantly different approach to film festivals, in which various agents and their activities are in a multidirectional relationship with the regulatory, infrastructural, and socioeconomic factors that traditionally define the event. Different agents do not operate within a preexisting, separate, fixed environment called the festival; instead they actively make up the festival. The second major advantage of ANT is its inclusion of non-human agents in the network as well as humans. Most of the agents described in the existing literature (filmmakers, distributors, exhibitors, sales agents, festival programmers, and the general public) are humans. Over the course of an actual film festival, however, one's experience is shaped by non-human actors such as accreditation and ticketing policies, varying levels of access, or travel and accommodation conditions as much as it is shaped by interactions with the other human actors in the network.

These human agents are identified as 'stakeholders' by Ragan Rhyne, who includes filmmakers, members of the press, the general public, administrators of funding and financing initiatives, sales agents, programmers and so forth in a crowded list of

agents who populate the festival circuit. Rhyne notes that despite the present discourse of circuits, networks, and interconnectedness, the current festival landscape is hardly cohesive. She argues that the festival circuit is being constituted through ‘the negotiation of varied, and sometimes conflicting, motivations of stakeholders’ (2013, 148). Rhyne's claim is one of the most explicit declarations of the plurality of individuals and interests that actively make up the ever-extending festival circuit.

The notion of stakeholders is utilized in the analyses of other comparable types of cultural events and occasions as well. Writing on music events through the lens of festivalization and placemaking, Jonathan Wynn defines ‘occasions’ through the combination of several key components including multiple stakeholders. Given the different milieu he is working in, Wynn identifies a separate set of stakeholders such as municipal governments, nonprofits, and trade organizations. The definition he provides for occasions is as follows: ‘there are key stakeholders within a particular social and geographic area that can mobilize *resources* to create an occasion for a finite time period’ (2015, 247, emphasis in original). Throughout his analysis of the music festivals in Austin, Nashville, and Newport, he bountifully illustrates the plurality of stakeholders in the festival environment by quoting artists (using their comments both on and off the stage), political authorities and administrators, fans, and volunteers. He notes that these varied perspectives do not always co-exist seamlessly and festivals can deviate from the official narrative. The festival experience can consequently entail a wide range of motivations, expectations, goals, and activities constantly alternating between harmony and conflict.

In addition to the media and film scholars quoted above, scholars of economics and administrative sciences have shown interest in film festival audiences. When examined as tourist attractions, especially in terms of their positive impact on local economies, festivals constitute significant sites where participants with a wide spectrum of different motivations come together. Studying festival audiences is a useful step in building strong brand identities for festivals, attracting sponsors and securing financing, designing efficient marketing campaigns aimed at the correct target audience and boosting the visibility of these events. Furthermore, the better a festival knows its audiences, the more likely it becomes for the organization to satisfy the participants and ensure the continued attendance of loyal audience members. For these reasons, the study of film festivals in administrative sciences has often revolved around audience motivations, with the key question being ‘why do audiences attend film festivals?’ Using survey data collected in the Valdivia International Film Festival in Chile, Andrea Baéz-Montenegro and María Devesa-Fernández highlight the existence of three types of attendance motivations. They state that

the first is linked to leisure (...). This source of pleasure is related not only to the cinema program, but also to the event’s atmosphere (...). A second issue relates to professional matters (...). The third is linked to the enthusiasm for cinema itself, that is, the chance to see films outside the usual mainstream cinema program available at commercial theaters (2017, 189).

The first factor is crucial for members of the general public while the second one is the most central concern for market participants and film critics. It is also worth noting that the authors, despite writing from a scholarly tradition that focuses on the economic

aspects of film production rather than the medium-specific qualities of the films screened, emphasize a shared fondness for cinema as one of the key motivations.

Their findings are in line with the results of a similar study conducted during the Transylvania International Film Festival in Cluj, Romania by Yolal et al. (2015). The study draws from the literature on tourist motivation and details the sources of 'pleasure' film festivals offer to their participants. The most prominent motivating factor among those surveyed in this study is 'socialization' followed by 'escape' and 'event novelty.' The authors also draw attention to the importance of factors such as 'togetherness' and 'building community cohesion' (267). Focusing on single editions of relatively small events which are primarily aimed at local public audiences and cinephiles instead of the international press or professional industry representatives, these studies do not directly account for the multiplicity of audience groups in film festivals (notably absent are the wide range of market activities). But they do provide hints about the types of activities members of the general public engage in when they attend film festivals. Participatory and shared aspects of festival attendance, more so than the satisfaction of cinephile urges, come to the front in these analyses.

Unwin et al.'s (2007) study of festival audiences in the context of the events in the United Kingdom utilizes theories of consumer behavior to answer a different question regarding festival attendance. The authors use data collected through focus groups and interviews, asking questions like 'how do film festival customers become aware of a film festival program?' or 'do patterns of developing awareness vary according to whether the consumer is a high, mid-range or infrequent festival-goer?' (232). The study is dated;

print catalogues and e-mail communications are frequently mentioned while festival websites and especially social media are hardly brought up. It is also worth noting that only the members of the general public are included in the study, leaving out participants with a professional affiliation with the film industry. Nevertheless, the results highlight several performative behaviors ranging from contacting the festival offices to inquire about the program to purchasing catalogues and brochures or building word of mouth during the event by talking to fellow audience members about the films.

It is crucial to note that many of the binaries I have explored thus far cut across multiple sites of cultural production and consumption and to recognize the festival site as only one of many such domains. Obviously the general public and industry professionals exist as separate audience groups, as very large categories within contemporary film culture, even outside the extremely specific context of a film festival as well. From the blockbuster culture to the distribution of art house films in commercial theaters, every corner of the film industry is marked by a similar plurality of audience groups. However, festivals constitute an ideal environment for heightened manifestations of this ever-present divide because they operate according to peculiar organizational mechanisms not observed elsewhere. Conceptualizing film festivals as sites where several ‘discursive formations’ are manifested explicitly, Janet Harbord observes that,

festivals produce a regularity of organization to the different discursive formations that cut across [their] site[s]. Certain propositions and assumptions appear in various discourses, echoed and repeated in ways that are sometimes conflicting and, at other times, congruent: that ‘art’ film is in conflict with commercial forces, that European film struggles against American dominance, that ‘serious’ film festivals are opposed to the cosmeticized industries of tourism and a service economy (2002, 61).

In this chapter, I argue that participating in a film festival as an audience member can also be conceptualized in connection to such conflicting discursive formations. Belonging to a specific audience group, in other words participating in a film festival as a part of the general public or as an industry professional, is a performance which makes the distinctions and conflicts listed by Harbord very evident and tangible. Film festivals are sites where different types of films, cinematic traditions, and commercial interests co-exist or collide, and audiences themselves are not situated outside these complex relations. Audience membership in the context of a film festival presents a similar binary of categories, and can be understood as a similarly discursive formation, a performance not based on any inherent characteristic or rigid identity marker. Being an enthusiastic cinephile who attends festivals primarily to enjoy films not available elsewhere, when placed in contrast to the category of being an industry professional who attends festivals primarily with business related goals in mind, forms a comparable binary opposition. Types of audience practices presented here can be considered as discursive constructions, demonstrated through performative behavior and shaped in large part by the organizational structures of film festivals.

5.2: Performance and Audience Behavior

Throughout this chapter, I refer to ticket-buying festival audiences as the ‘general public.’ While this term is practical to differentiate this audience group from critics and other industry professionals, it lacks nuance. Even though they do not have a professional

affiliation with the film industry, general audiences in film festivals differ from the vast mass of cinema-goers in substantial ways. As most festival tickets are notably more expensive than regular theater tickets and the logistics of attending a festival (most notably costs of travel and accommodation) are quite pricey, it is not a stretch to assume that the 'public' in film festivals refers to a relatively affluent segment of the society. Similarly, since most festivals screen films in various languages with subtitles and many films screened in festivals require a basic level of familiarity with other media texts (a literary source, a cinematic movement, earlier works by the same artist), we can expect the festival public to be well-educated to a certain extent. Keeping these demographic factors in mind, the general public in the context of film festivals should be clearly distinguished from casual cinema-goers, whose income and education levels, intensity of engagement with the film medium, and consequently cinematic tastes are presumably very different. Within the scope of this study, the term 'general public' merely indicates film festival audiences who attend these events without a professional affiliation with the companies represented in the film market or other media platforms.

There are a number of key aspects that need to be addressed when analyzing those who attend festivals with a professional affiliation as well. First, it must be noted that, despite the segregation I shall illustrate below, film industry professionals actually function in close proximity to the general public. In my estimation, most of the industry professionals would not desire to alienate public viewers; for film critics, one of the main purposes of journalistic work is to provide snapshots of the festival experience for the general public and reach as wide a readership or following as possible. For distributors,

programmers, and exhibitors, festivals provide an extremely valuable opportunity to assess the reactions their films elicit from public audiences before the film reaches commercial screening venues. Second, every individual critic's experience at a film festival is likely to be markedly different from those of his or her colleagues (because of selection of films to see, several professional commitments, various socioeconomic variables) and it is unlikely for any two audience members to have exactly identical festival experiences. Furthermore, in the current media environment, it is possible for an ordinary film enthusiast to function as an online critic or even have a broader readership than most of the established professional critics. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that the distinction between the audience groups mentioned in this chapter is not as sharp as it used to be and that the line separating public and professional viewers is getting more and more blurry.

Keeping all these factors in mind, I argue that the practice of being an audience member in film festivals involves very different sets of activities depending on one's identification with one audience group or the other. In festivals, it is not uncommon to observe loud and exaggerated manifestations of one's participation as an audience member. The heightened quality of audience activities in film festivals closely resembles Richard Schechner's definition of performance. He states that performance is 'behavior heightened, if ever so slightly, and publicly displayed; twice behaved behavior' (1993, 1). What distinguishes audience behavior in film festivals from traditional instances of film exhibition and reception is precisely this awareness of being part of a spectacle and being in front of other viewers. This knowledge of being seen results in demonstrative, highly

visible behavior; which becomes an inherently spectacular, yet mundane part of the festival experience over the course of the entire event. Such behavioral patterns can be observed not only in the screening hall, but throughout the complete festival experience, even when some audience members (especially fans, as a part of the general public) may not encounter an actual film at all.

Recognizable patterns of conduct have long been acknowledged as a key component of *social occasions*, of which film festivals constitute a particularly spectacular example. In his canonical account of social occasions, Erving Goffman defines this notion as a

wider social affair, undertaking, or event, bounded in regard to place and time and typically facilitated by fixed equipment; a social occasion provides the structuring social context in which many situations and their gatherings are likely to form, dissolve, and re-form, while a pattern of conduct tends to be recognized as the appropriate and (often) official or intended one (1963, 18).

In narrowing down the rather broad category of social occasions to the specific case of film festivals, it is possible to claim that festivals carry a particular etiquette, established codes of acceptable and expected behavior. As I shall illustrate with examples of such patterns from actual festival sites in the sections below, it becomes evident that ‘appropriate’ audience behavior in festival settings often includes highly animated, pronounced manifestations of one’s participation in an inherently spectacular event.

Furthermore, these performative behaviors can definitely be associated with the sense of narcissism evoked by the privileges most festivals provide to their audiences. Being the first person to watch a film, having the power to form the general opinion over it, being invited to present your work under the spotlight, receiving prestigious awards,

having the rare chance to interact with your favorite stars can all form a basis for ‘performed’ audience membership by speaking to one’s narcissistic tendencies.

What is particularly noteworthy about this notion of narcissism, a central component of the spectacle/performance paradigm discussed below, is that it is not an individual condition. On the contrary, the performative aspect is a characteristic of the entire festival audience, be it the industry professionals or the general public, and is not limited to individuals with a specific type of personality. When introducing the new approach they suggest, Abercrombie and Longhurst state that they employ ‘a relatively restricted sense of the term “narcissism” which nevertheless can adequately describe a way of behaving and thinking that is characteristic of a society as a whole and is therefore not restricted to a personality type’ (1998, 89). For the purposes of this chapter, this particular idea of shared narcissism is applicable to the festival setting as the heightened behaviors I mention below are not performed by specific individuals, but rather observed throughout the entire population of festival-goers.

The idea of narcissism is, in fact, only one component of a larger paradigm introduced by the authors. The spectacle/performance model proposed by Abercrombie and Longhurst follows earlier approaches to audience research, labeled by the authors as the ‘behavioral paradigm’ and the ‘incorporation/resistance paradigm’ (37). The first of these perspectives assumes that audience members are passive receivers who respond to stimuli they encounter during media consumption. Most of the traditional media effects research, especially in its early stages when the ‘magic bullet’ approach was still

supported, conceptualized audiences as a vast mass of viewers who directly absorb all media messages.

The second approach assigns a more active interpretive and cognitive role to audiences as it focuses on ideological readings of media texts, often informed by social structures that divide the audience. Most widely studied examples of such formations include race, gender, and ethnicity. But despite the relative activeness of audience members, viewing practices are still analyzed in relation to one's distinct encounter with a stimuli like a film. Individuals become audience members only on the specific, temporary occasion of encountering a media text with a message waiting to be decoded. However, in the proposed spectacle/performance paradigm, the authors do not consider the experience of being an audience member as an act which is carried out only upon viewing a specific media text. Instead, being an audience member is understood as an ongoing performance, a mundane part of everyday life. When applying this perspective to the study of audiences in the context of film festivals, it is important to distinguish mundane audience behaviors from the organized spectacle that surrounds them. The festival itself may be a spectacle, or an extended series of spectacles; but audience behavior during festivals is inevitably mundane, for it is carried out as a part of one's daily routine. The paradigm addresses audience research at the contemporary point where the spectacle becomes mundane and permanent. I argue that film festivals provide one notable example of this shift as they function as sites where a continuum of heightened performances becomes almost mundane; not because it loses its capacity to draw

attention to itself, but because it invades the entire daily existence of festival-goers, the general public and industry professionals alike.

While the spectacle/performance approach has not been directly applied in the study of film festivals before, Kirsten Stevens explains the increasing popularity of film festivals in the Australian context by drawing attention to a similarly performative or participatory aspect. She states that ‘the popularity of festival screenings is symptomatic of a broader shift in viewing habits in which viewers demand more than the simple exhibition of films’ (2016). Festivals offer various audience groups many diverse types of collateral and participatory experiences beyond watching a film in a theater. For industry professionals, film festivals function through a series of meetings, deals, and similar market activities in addition to watching films. For the general public, festival experience is distinct from regular film viewing in commercial theaters thanks to the spectacle that surrounds the exhibition process, whether because of glamorous red carpet events or simply because of the time and space constraints that turn festivals into unique, one-time events. As Stevens argues, all these practices offer audience members in film festivals a ‘participatory rather than passive film experience which caters to discussions and greater audience interaction with the films displayed’ (187). At this point, it is significant to note that the temporal trajectory Abercrombie and Longhurst sketch with their three paradigms follows exactly the same shift Stevens outlines. This is a shift from a traditionally passive conceptualization of audience behavior based on media consumption to a more active, productive, and participatory understanding of what kind of activities being an audience member exactly includes.

A noteworthy consequence of this shift towards participatory experiences beyond the traditional narrative film format has been the surprisingly smooth transition of filmmakers -whose work has long been widely acclaimed on the festival circuit- from the arthouse theater to museums and the modern art world. Many filmmakers who have received support from WCF have exhibited their work in several formats in art galleries and incorporated these creative endeavors in their feature films, using the same material in different ways to create pieces that complement each other. Tiago de Luca, writing about spectatorial practices in relation to slow cinema, draws attention to this trend when he notes, ‘it is striking that many filmmakers who have crossed over to art galleries in recent years (...) often recycle their own cinematic works’ (2016, 35). Apichatpong Weerasethakul’s WCF-funded *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* was accompanied by a multimedia project named *Primitive*, consisting of short films, video installations, and photograph exhibitions.¹²⁰ Established auteur directors like Hou Hsiao Hsien and Tsai Ming Liang made films commissioned and largely funded by famous European museums.¹²¹ Many of these films have been exhibited in museum halls after their extensive tours on the festival circuit and some filmmakers like Tsai Ming Liang have shifted their attention almost entirely to installations and experimental multi-

¹²⁰ The origin of the project comes from a book called *A Man Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, whose main character is named Boonmee. As Weerasethakul travels across rural Thailand to find the surviving relatives of Boonmee, he reaches the village of Nebua, which is known as the location where a bloody war between communist farmers and the totalitarian government forces took place in August 1965. *Primitive* describes this political legacy and the spiritual aspects of Boonmee’s reincarnations through an eight-channel video exhibition, a book, a single channel looped video, and a short film; all of which revolve around the same characters and locations as the feature length narrative film. Further information about the project can be found here: <http://kickthemachine.com/page80/page22/page13/page62/index.html>. Accessed August 12, 2017.

¹²¹ Hou’s *Flight of the Red Balloon (Le Voyage du Ballon Rouge, 2007)* was commissioned by Musée d’Orsay while the Louvre Museum commissioned Tsai’s *Face (Visage, 2009)*.

platform projects. One of the most high profile examples of such crossover cases between major film festivals and prestigious museums; Abbas Kiarostami's final work -a compilation of two dozen short films titled *24 Frames* (2017)- is discussed further below.¹²²

It must be acknowledged that the move towards a more participatory understanding of audiences, the development of 'active audiences' as a key concept occurred long before Stevens' work on the festival phenomenon. As one of the most influential scholars of audience research, and fandom in particular, Henry Jenkins grappled with the notion of audience activity and participation -which is the most fundamental component of Abercrombie and Longhurst's performance/spectacle paradigm- in several of his works. Writing on what he calls 'interactive' audiences, he identifies three characteristic aspects of the contemporary media landscape; the ability of consumers 'to archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media content;' the promotion of 'Do-It-Yourself' subculture in media production; and the 'flow of images, ideas, and narratives across multiple media channels' (2006, 135-136). Jenkins argues that these changes in the economic systems and technologies that govern media production and consumption lead to significant modifications in the behaviors of audience members. He states that 'members may shift from one community to another as their interests and needs change, and they may belong to more than one community at the same time' (137). His discussion of interactive audiences closely resembles the plurality

¹²² Kiarostami's son Ahmad Kiarostami, who completed *24 Frames* after his father's passing in 2016, expresses a desire to show the project at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in this interview: <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/24/arts/abbas-kiarostami-24-frames/index.html>. Accessed July 7, 2017.

of audience groups and performances in film festivals. Festival-goers, similarly to the audience members in Jenkins' analysis, may move from one group to another over time or can participate in festivals in more than one capacity at the same time. Illustrations of this point are provided in the sections below.

The third factor mentioned by Jenkins regarding the flow of images across multiple media channels is of particular significance for film festivals. While Jenkins associates this multiplicity of media channels to franchise building and brand recognition, the diversity of media channels is also a key tool for festivals in order to offer more participatory content to their audiences. Writing more than a decade ago, Jenkins correctly predicted that 'creative activity will shift from the production of texts or the regulation of meanings toward the development of a dynamic environment' (145). Pierre Levy, predating Jenkins' analysis and extensively quoted in his work, makes a similar case when he claims that media events will take a form that 'transforms interpreters into actors' (1997, 123). While these discussions do not explicitly link the evolution of audience behavior to the notion of performance, their acknowledgement of the active work media spectators carry out beyond traditional reception and interpretation of given messages should be seen as a fundamental step in understanding audience behavior as a performance. I argue that film festivals form one of the major sites where the shift in patterns of creative activity is most evidently observed.

How exactly do film festivals facilitate participatory behavior? As mentioned in the Stevens quote above, going beyond the simple exhibition of films is necessary to meet the audience's demand for participatory film experiences. It is no coincidence that

major festivals like Cannes and Berlin devote a substantial section of their rosters to works that do not easily fit into the traditional feature-length narrative film category. Multi-episode works which are actually made for television, installations and video pieces that continue their lives in museums rather than cinema halls after their festival premieres, experimental films, short and medium length efforts, anthologies that bring several short works that revolve around the same theme, technological experiments in IMAX or other ultra-wide screening formats, or virtual reality pieces that require the use of a special head set are invited to film festivals more and more frequently. In the Berlinale, there is even a specific section entirely reserved for installations and performative works named 'Forum Expanded.'¹²³ Some of the short films in the Forum Expanded program are paired with short films from other sections and thematic clusters of three or four shorts are screened in the main festival venues as well. Furthermore, many screenings in the 'Berlinale Special' section¹²⁴ are accompanied by panels or talks with the filmmakers. Many documentaries are included in this section with the purpose of providing a space for open discussions about the significant and timely issues the films deal with. Most of the Berlinale Special screenings are held in a venue named Haus der Berliner Festspiele, where the spatial arrangement of the stage, the screen, and the seats is

¹²³ Launched in 2006, 'Forum Expanded' is a subsection of the independent sidebar 'Forum' and it presents a wide range of films, multi-screen installations, videos, and performance art in multiple venues around Berlin. The restrictions regarding premiere status, running time, or screening format (DCP, 35 mm, Blu Ray etc.) are considerably looser in comparison to other sections of the festival.

¹²⁴ The Berlinale Special program screens films in non-traditional formats such as multi-part series, documentary films, and films on current events. Films that fail to meet the premiere status requirements for the competition section can also be shown here, celebrating their European or German premieres.

relatively more suitable for panel discussions and audience interaction compared to the other large venues of the festival.

Since 2015, Berlinale Special also includes a subsection titled ‘Berlinale Special Series,’ which screens television series and multi-episode works on the big screen, providing an international platform for works not actually made for the cinema hall. In addition, it is worth noting that with the inclusion of the Cinestar Event cinema among the official festival venues, the Berlinale has become the first one among major film festivals to use an IMAX screen for its projections. This cinema is frequently utilized in the projections of films not shot in IMAX because films in this format remain a rarity in festival selections, but the mere inclusion of the venue among festival cinemas opens up the possibility of screening IMAX films as a part of the Berlinale line up. Perhaps the most significant indication of the institutionalized acknowledgment of such alternative screening formats occurred in 2011 when the first Sunday¹²⁵ of the Berlinale was entirely devoted to 3-D films. All the three films that celebrated their premieres in the biggest venue of the event, as a part of the prestigious official selection, were made in 3-D and they were strategically programmed on the same day.¹²⁶

The 2017 edition of the Cannes Film Festival marked another important occasion for participatory experiences beyond traditional film exhibition. This was the first year

¹²⁵ The first Saturday and Sunday are always among the most valuable screening days in many festivals including Cannes and Berlin because almost all the accredited guests arrive by this time, no one leaves this early, the film market is in full flow, and the weekend holidays boost the interest of the general public.

¹²⁶ The three 3-D films mentioned here are Michel Ocelot’s *Tales of the Night (Les Contes de la Nuit, 2011)*, Wim Wenders’ *Pina (2011)* and *The Cave of Forgotten Dreams (2010)* directed by Werner Herzog.

when two films financed by Netflix played in competition, completely bypassing theatrical release and made available for instant streaming following their festival premieres. Additionally, two television series were included in the official selection of the festival as a part of the 70th anniversary celebrations. 2017 marked the first year with a virtual reality project included in the official selection. Another special screening for the 70th anniversary brought a feature film version of a multi-screen installation to the cinema hall, with the project in question likely to enjoy an extensive life in museums around the world in addition to its travels on the festival circuit. It must be noted that unlike the consistent and egalitarian presence of works in alternative formats in the Berlinale program, the selection of all these projects in Cannes may not indicate a fundamental shift in programming strategies. Not only did 2017 present a good excuse to accommodate the films mentioned above as a significant anniversary edition, but also all the films in question were directed by established filmmakers who had developed good relations with the festival in the past. The Netflix productions *Okja* (2017) and *The Meyerowitz Stories* (2017) both feature recognizable actors who have appeared in several other Cannes films before. The former brings Tilda Swinton and Jake Gyllenhaal together while the latter benefits immensely from an ensemble cast including Dustin Hoffman, Ben Stiller, and Adam Sandler. *Okja*'s director Bong Joon Ho has premiered films like *The Host* (*Gwoemul*, 2006) and *Mother* (*Madeo*, 2009) in sidebar sections in Cannes. The two series, the second season of *Top of the Lake* (2017) by Jane Campion and the reboot of *Twin Peaks* (2017) by David Lynch, are similarly outstanding cases rather than the norm because their creators are former winners of the Golden Palm and presidents of the

Cannes jury. The virtual reality project *Carne y Arena* (2017) is directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu, who has been invited to Cannes competition on two previous occasions, winning the prize for best director in 2006. Abbas Kiarostami, who was working on an experimental piece consisting of two dozen slightly animated tableaux before his death, was remembered when the feature film version of the project titled *24 Frames* premiered in Cannes posthumously. Like the aforementioned filmmakers, Kiarostami was among the most esteemed guests of Cannes throughout his career, winning the Golden Palm in 1997 and presenting his films in competition four additional times. Based on all this pedigree, the presence of films in alternative formats in Cannes 2017 can be interpreted as an indicator of the festival's continued support for the respected auteur directors whose careers are intertwined with the recent history of the festival rather than a fundamental or permanent shift in programming tendencies.

Forum Expanded and Berlinale Special have become successfully integrated into the Berlinale program; these are permanent sections which are widely promoted by the festival and celebrated by enthusiastic audiences. In contrast, it must be noted that the inclusion of the aforementioned projects in the Cannes official selection caused quite a stir and met with stark opposition from certain circles. The National Federation of French Cinemas (FCNF) officially objected to the selection of films that will not have a theatrical release in France for the competition and demanded the Netflix productions to be withdrawn or disqualified. The festival organization eventually released an official statement, refusing disqualification of already invited films but announcing that films that do not commit to a theatrical release in France will be ineligible for the competition

effective from 2018.¹²⁷ *Top of the Lake* was screened in one of the smaller theaters instead of the large main venue for competition, out of competition and anniversary projections. *Twin Peaks* arrived in Cannes not as a premiere screening like the rest of the selection, but four days after its first showing on US television. *Carne y Arena* proved almost impossible to see for majority of the audience as it was not listed in any of the screening schedules or guides and advance reservations were required to experience the film in its intended format.¹²⁸ In short, the attempts to offer festival audiences participatory viewing experiences beyond traditional exhibition were plagued by logistical and infrastructural difficulties. Perhaps most telling was the programmers' reluctance to establish a permanent section similar to Forum Expanded and present all these works together in that specific segment of the line up. Instead, some of the aforementioned films received the royal red carpet treatment like regular competition films while some others were presented as low key special screenings. Based on how spread out these screenings were and the fact that the festival organizers refused to launch a relevant program section, it is highly likely that the notable prevalence of works in alternative formats was a one-off decision linked to the anniversary rather than an indication of significant changes in programming strategy. As the premier film festival in the world, Cannes' inclusion of television productions, virtual reality experiments, and

¹²⁷ For the official announcement of the festival on this issue, see the press release dated May 10, 2017: <http://www.festival-cannes.com/en/press/press-articles/communique/articles/press-release-of-the-festival-de-cannes>. Accessed July 5, 2017.

¹²⁸ For the details of the virtual reality screenings (from the limitation of three viewers at a time to the requirement of reaching the venue with specific cars assigned by the festival), see Mark Peranson's round up piece for the *Cinemascope Magazine*: <http://cinema-scope.com/columns/cannes-at-70-bad-times-good-time/>. Accessed July 6, 2017.

modern art projects in its line up can be understood as a meaningful sign for the increasing presence of such works in festival rosters all around the world. It can be speculated that this trend is likely to gain steam in the next few years, but this is no more than a prediction. It must also be emphasized that this turn towards participatory viewing experiences in film festivals remains an ongoing process and the final outcome of these rather turbulent trials is not clear at this juncture.

5.3: Festival Infrastructures and Organization

In his book-length analysis of three prominent music festivals, Jonathan Wynn (2015) describes festivals as a ‘complex and adaptable phenomenon,’ drawing attention to the constantly evolving dynamics and dilemmas inherent in every festival organization. He observes that on one hand, ‘there are moments of cohesiveness’ and quickly adds that on the other hand, ‘there are always incongruities and departures from the official narrative.’ Various embodiments of such deviations can include ‘people occupying different roles at the same event (e.g., the aspiring musician volunteering at SXSW¹²⁹)’ or ‘simple juxtapositions wherein two different people have two very different experiences alongside each other.’ Based on these observations, he concludes his analysis of music festivals by stating that ‘any collective event is a convergence of harmonious and conflicting motivations and perspectives, a knot of people’s lives and experiences in contemporaneous activity’ (245). In this section, I illustrate a similar balance of institutional control and improvised audience activity in the context of film festivals

¹²⁹ South by Southwest (SXSW) is an annual conglomerate of film, interactive media, and music festivals held in March in Austin, Texas.

through concrete examples from the festival sites in Berlin and Cannes. Film festival locations can be considered as dynamic sites of cultural production, constantly alternating between the segregation and unification of several audience groups. On one hand, every agent participating in a festival has subjective priorities, preferences, and purposes, which contribute to the formation of clusters of individuals with similar agendas and the widening of the gap between them and other groups of agents, whose agendas are considerably different. On the other hand, once formed, these groups are not completely fixed or rigid, as disparate stakeholders on the festival circuit can in fact be the very same individual, embodying a set of different concerns and objectives which are traditionally seen as separate from each other. Each individual festival-goer can (in many cases need to) wear multiple hats and alter his or her performance of audience membership according to the constantly evolving power dynamics and organizational practices observed in the course of a major festival. Consequently, these negotiations of group formation and segregation define one's experience at a festival to a large extent.

The Berlinale is often considered as one of the three major European film festivals alongside Cannes and Venice (Mezias et al, 2008, 7). The festival enjoys unmatched public participation while simultaneously maintaining its status as a significant gathering for industry representatives; the 2017 edition was no exception with 334,471 tickets sold to the members of the public and 9,550 trade professionals attending the concurrently organized European Film Market.¹³⁰ Taking place in a metropolitan city

¹³⁰ For the stats related to the 2017 edition of the Berlinale, see the press release dated February 21, 2017: https://www.berlinale.de/en/archiv/jahresarchive/2017/08_pressemitteilungen_2017/08_pressemitteilungen_2017detail_37268.html. Accessed June 29, 2017.

across more than a dozen different theaters, the Berlinale clearly illustrates the points summarized above. The central venue that hosts the official premieres of the films in the competition and the opening and closing ceremonies is the 1600-seat Berlinale Palast in Potsdamer Platz. Next to the Palast is the Grand Hyatt Hotel hosting the press center, where photo-calls and press conferences take place. Press screenings (accessible only with a press badge approved by the relevant office of the festival) are held at 9:00 a.m. and at noon in this theater. A limited number of tickets for the general public are sold only for the official premieres held after 4:00 p.m. (red carpet events with the film cast and crew in attendance) but these are both more expensive than regular festival tickets and very difficult to obtain because they sell out extremely quickly. Instead of these gala screenings, the majority of the public is encouraged to see the films in the day-after repeat screenings held at Friedrichstadt Palast, which is slightly larger but impractical for the press because it is further away from the press counters and a press badge alone is not sufficient for admission. Consequently, if a film is programmed in the main competition of the festival, members of the press and the general public have no option but to watch the same film in different venues in different screening slots.

Also on the same street as Berlinale Palast is the Cinemaxx theater, which hosts the press screenings for the secondary official program of the festival 'Panorama.'¹³¹ Most journalists and market participants do not need to leave Potsdamer Platz for the majority of the festival and can navigate the program with ease without worrying about

¹³¹ The Panorama program is an extensive combination of new works by established directors, debut films and documentaries. It is a non-competitive section and films in this section do not need to be world premieres, European premieres are also eligible.

transportation. Potsdamer Platz is the house for industry events; the public access is limited in this area. There are no repeat screenings of the competition films in Potsdamer Platz theaters until the very last day of the event. During the festival period, public access to Grand Hyatt is closely monitored by security personnel and film critics are often asked to present their badges to gain access to press counters in the building. Traffic on Potsdamer Strasse is controlled, and the general public is directed to specific areas for celebrity sightseeing (there are designated areas around the side entrance of the Grand Hyatt and in front of Berlinale Palast). Ticket counters for the public and the press are also located in different buildings (the Hyatt for the press, the Arkaden shopping mall for the public). For most of the film critics writing for mainstream media outlets, an average day's work includes catching as many press screenings as possible, attending press conferences, conducting interviews with filmmakers whose work is selected for the festival, and covering the most coveted section, which is the competition. It must be noted that these activities differ significantly from one festival to another and that different groups of critics writing for diverse types of publications have other distinct priorities or duties. Having said that, during the festivals I have attended myself, I have encountered a large number of trade reviewers, journalists from daily newspapers, and critics from popular monthly magazines, who closely follow the routine outlined above. One's interaction with audience members from the general public is inevitably minimal and the spatial arrangement of festival venues deepens this segregation between the audience groups.

These spatial arrangements shape many other aspects of festival organization and have a direct influence on how different audience groups experience the event, significantly altering how performative audience behavior is observed in festival venues. Wynn introduces three types of patterns in festival organization, each corresponding to different levels of institutional control and accessibility. The ‘confetti’ pattern ‘brings together the widest array of actions, organizations, and experiences. This arrangement affords the least amount of control over encounters, situations, and gatherings’ (2016, 281). This pattern is not easily applicable to major film festivals because the management of concurrent film markets and industry events -closely regulated and inaccessible for the general public- necessitates a certain degree of institutional control. The second pattern, the ‘core’ pattern, allows ‘mixed levels of admittance and perhaps using public and private spaces.’ Wynn states that ‘a core-patterned occasion might have an assortment of official and unofficial gatherings and situations that are all part of the larger occasion.’ I argue that this pattern offers a good descriptive framework for the Berlinale considering the fact that the festival uses several venues across the city, with varying levels of access granted to accreditation holders and the general public, and combines a strictly regulated official selection with independently organized sidebar sections in its vast screening program. The third pattern proposed by Wynn is the ‘citadel’ pattern, which ‘consolidates and isolates events within a bounded and definable space.’ The resulting occasions are ‘tightly controlled, as entry and egress are limited, activities are regulated with little external influence, and roles are likely to be strictly defined’ (280). As I shall demonstrate below, Cannes Film Festival offers a very prominent example of the citadel pattern as it

takes place almost exclusively in a massive building, whose entrances are closely monitored by dozens of safety guards. The building is accessible only for those who possess a festival-approved badge and every aspect of the organization is strictly and extensively regulated.

The division of the program into several sections with a clear hierarchy between them is another organizational strategy, which feeds the separation of professional and public viewers. The largest screening room in the Cinemaxx theater, the main venue for the Panorama section, has 595 seats, notably fewer than the main venue for competition screenings. This can be seen as an indication of the privileging of competition films (around twenty titles, majority of which are directed by established auteur directors, selected for the most exclusive section) over the films in other sections (for example, Panorama screens more than fifty titles and tends to include many films with more obvious public appeal, the same applies to the aforementioned Berlinale Special section as well). As a further illustration of this point, competition films get a page (or half a page) of their own in the catalogue while all other films are only briefly mentioned or merely listed.¹³² The most widely distributed version of the screening guide is not organized by date, time, or venue, but according to section; with competition screenings presented first and most prominently. In terms of their target audiences, competition is the primary section for film critics because high-profile competition films create valuable material for media coverage while the general public can see films from Panorama and

¹³² This point only refers to the 'Berlinale Journal' which is free of charge and is widely available in all festival venues. In addition to the journal, there are section-specific brochures, in which every film gets more space. For the 2017 brochures, see the festival website: <https://www.berlinale.de/en/programm/programmbroschueren/index.html>. Accessed June 29, 2017.

other sections more easily because ticket prices are lower, there are a larger number of screenings and accessing screening venues is easier. All these factors illustrate the key point that the festival organization alters one's experience as a member of the general public or as an industry professional. The prominence of the competition over all the other sections, the design of catalogues, brochures and similar literature, and the arrangement of festival locations are all instrumental in this regard.

Many WCF-supported films premiere in the Cannes Film Festival every year; Cannes also hosts the most active film market in the world. Therefore, it is useful to analyze the comparable organizational structures in Cannes from a similar point of view. The segregation of the general public and the industry professionals is even more evident in Cannes, where the prioritization of the competition over other sections is also visible and pronounced. There are no public tickets available for purchase; only those lucky enough to have connections with the Cannes elite, sponsoring institutions, or some of the influential companies in the film market can find invitations for red carpet events. All the entrances to the main location, Le Palais des Festivals et des Congrès, are protected by security guards and only those who possess a festival-approved accreditation or an invitation can enter the building upon presenting relevant documentation. Several rounds of bag searches with metal detectors are also performed before one is allowed inside the venue. It is practically impossible for a member of the general public to pass through all these steps without an accreditation. The general public is given access only to independently but concurrently organized sidebar sections Quinzaine des Réalistes

and Semaine de la Critique, both of which also prioritize accreditation badge holders.¹³³ Actually, the definition of being an audience member in a festival like Cannes may not even include watching films for members of the general public. Instead, the idea of the festival audience in this case refers to a group of people who wait in long lines for hours, fight in order to get just a glimpse of their favorite stars, and approach the festival as a touristic sightseeing tour rather than a cultural event. From this perspective, it can be argued that activities associated with being an audience member in a festival like Cannes, especially for the general public, is more physical in nature than interpretative or cognitive.

The privileging of the competition over the other sections is reflected in institutional practices and infrastructural factors in Cannes and Berlin alike. Similarly to Berlin, the press attending to the Cannes Film Festival is directed towards the films in the competition. For filmmakers and sales personnel, having a film invited for the competition is much more valuable than being selected for the other sections. The separate schedule for press screenings only includes films in the competition and the official selection, but not the aforementioned sidebars. Also, while all the films in competition are followed by press conferences, films in the other sections such as Un

¹³³ These two programs present their films during the same time period as the official selection of the Cannes Film Festival, but they have their own screening venues (away from the Palais, but on the same street named La Croisette), selection committees, sponsors and so forth. Quinzaine des Réalistes shows around 18 films every year and is non-competitive. Semaine de la Critique is competitive, but only first or second films are eligible for awards because the section aims to discover and promote new talent. It screens only seven films in its competition, each shown on a separate day of the week that the name alludes to. There are a small number of special screenings alongside the main roster in both of these programs. Additionally, they both invite a few short films as well.

Certain Regard¹³⁴ do not have specially designated press conference slots. Most of the competition films are screened at 8:30 a.m. to avoid conflicts with films in other sections or at 7:00 p.m. when the general public is likely preoccupied with the red carpet extravaganza for a more popular film (sometimes playing out of competition).

Accreditation categories and ticketing systems, as two of the major gatekeeping mechanisms in festivals, also contribute to the segregation of audience groups and the prioritization of the competition. In Berlin, in addition to the aforementioned difference in locations of the ticket counters for the public and the press, the number of tickets reserved for each group is limited. Even with a festival-approved badge, critics must obtain tickets (which are slightly different from public tickets in terms of design and color and can be acquired free of charge) to see films in public screenings. Considering the fact that some films in sections other than the main competition do not have press screenings, attending public screenings with a ticket can rarely become an obligation. When there is no designated press screening for films in some sections, all audiences including the press need to see the films together in the same public screenings, which are accessible only with a ticket.¹³⁵ Since the majority of the tickets in these repeat screenings are reserved for public audiences, press tickets run out very quickly and many

¹³⁴ Introduced in 1978, Un Certain Regard is the second competitive section of the Cannes Film Festival's official selection. This section has its own jury and awards, screens 18-20 films per year, and its screenings are held in Salle Debussy in the Palais. Innovative and original films, which are deemed too challenging or obscure for the competition, are usually placed in this section. Several debut films (a rarity in the competition) are invited to Un Certain Regard every year.

¹³⁵ For example, many of the films in the Panorama section in Berlin do not have press screenings. All the screenings of these films are public and press members must obtain tickets to see them alongside the general public.

critics get shut out unless they make an effort to get their tickets on the day before the screening in question. Furthermore, critics are not allowed to get more than one ticket for any film or tickets for different screenings of the same film. Evening galas with preceding red carpet events for the competition films are reserved for the public and invitation-holders only, press members have no access to these premiere screenings.¹³⁶ On the other hand, it is quite difficult for a member of the general public to secure festival accreditation, because accreditation privileges are granted by the festival management only to those who provide samples of previously published work, an appointment letter signed by an authorized editor, and proof of coverage from earlier festivals if applicable. What all these mechanisms ensure is that the presence of press in public screenings is minimal, and the public has no access to press screenings at all.

While there are no publicly available tickets for screenings in Cannes, the accreditation system is designed in a way that guarantees a similar segmentation of different audience groups - in this case between the press and the market participants. Unlike Berlin, accreditation badges within broad categories such as the press are not uniform in Cannes. Press members are assigned colors representing different subcategories (white being the most privileged in terms of access to screenings, yellow being the least advantaged) and further color categories are used to differentiate between other groups of professionals (producers, sponsor representatives, sales and exhibition personnel, festival programmers and so forth). Individuals with press badges cannot get

¹³⁶ A limited number of journalists who work for daily publications such as major newspapers can have access to evening galas, but this is not even acknowledged in any of the relevant brochures or the official screening schedule.

‘invitations’ (which are not different from tickets and are obtained free of charge) and must see the films in press screenings. Most of the other groups of professionals can secure a limited number of invitations, allocated according to a complex ‘point’ system, but cannot attend press screenings. The color categories and the point system also determine whether one gets an orchestra seat or a seat in the balcony in the larger auditoriums of the Palais, both of which have their specific dress codes, time constraints for arriving at the venue before the screenings, and certain behavioral expectations.

The central argument I make in this section of the chapter is that the two main points discussed so far, segregation of audience groups and prioritization of the competition, determine how each audience member *performs* his or her membership within the relevant audience group. For example, it is very common to applaud or boo films to vocally express initial opinions in press screenings but in public screenings, applause is almost mandatory and booing is extremely rare. The applause in public screenings and official premieres is always sustained, usually takes the form of a standing ovation, and includes a certain level of exaggeration to honor the film casts and crews present in the auditorium. On the other hand, the applause in press screenings is muted and kind as critics show a certain degree of appreciation but refrain from demonstrating clear enthusiasm -unless the particular film in question turns out to be an unqualified critical triumph-.¹³⁷ It can be interpreted as an indicator of the instant reactions the film elicits from critics. One comparable indicator may be silence in the auditorium after the

¹³⁷ During the festivals I have attended, I have observed that there is some applause at the end of almost every press screening. Yet continued, loud, and enthusiastic applause was reserved only for a small number of films like *A Separation* (*Jodaeiye Nader az Simin*, 2011), *Carol* (2015), and *Toni Erdmann* (2016).

screening of a festival film but complete silence at the end of the closing credits is a rare occurrence (I do not recall such a screening in the festivals I have attended). Another factor that shapes similar audience membership performances, such as whether one needs to walk on the red carpet before entering the auditorium or how long before the projection one should arrive in the venue, is one's accreditation category and consequent seating priority.

During official screenings, audience members who wish to express unfavorable opinions tend to be more vocal if they are seated in the balcony rather than the orchestra section because anyone associated with the production of the film in question or serving in the jury is always given a central orchestra seat. While audience members seated in the balcony may walk out of screenings more easily, the presence of the film crew in the orchestra section presumably makes it less likely for viewers in that section to leave the venue before the end of the film. Critics with low priority colors wait in lines for hours to enter the venues while those with higher level badges simply arrive at the last minute and take the seats reserved for them.¹³⁸ It can even be speculated that the arduous queuing process can affect one's appreciation of films. As competition films carry a seal of approval for being selected for the most significant and exclusive section, critics see them with higher levels of expectation and tend to be less tolerant towards them. 'Not a bad film, but unworthy of a competition slot' or 'could have been a sidebar film, but too

¹³⁸ Perhaps the most legendary and inexplicable performative aspect of attending press screenings in Cannes is the waves of voices screaming the name 'Raul' if the film to be screened is an anticipated one and finding a seat has been particularly challenging. Gala screenings are not much easier to get into unless you have an invitation with an assigned seat, but a 'Raul' scream is practically unheard of when it comes to these red carpet events.

minor for the competition' are common comments one hears in major festivals. While this is difficult to quantify or measure, it is often the case that films screened in sidebar sections are reviewed from a warmer, more tolerant perspective. On the general public side -in the case of the Berlinale-, tickets for competition films sell out more quickly than those for the films in other sections despite being notably more expensive.¹³⁹ Audience performances such as waiting in lines to acquire tickets, making financial investments, celebrity sightseeing, engagement with the films during screenings, expressing and discussing opinions about the films with fellow audience members are notably intensified if the films in question are presented in the main competition rather than a sidebar.

The fact that these audience categories and the performances associated with them are constructed through infrastructural, organizational, and institutional aspects of film festivals (as opposed to an inherent and fixed quality individuals making up a specific group share) implies that these roles are very flexible and that each audience member can move from one group to another across multiple festivals, perhaps even during the very same festival. Benefiting from a different set of privileges and navigating different organizational structures; there does not seem to be any reason why a film critic would not be able to simultaneously belong to the general public category or engage in market activities. On the other hand, the proliferation of online critics, Twitter celebrities with thousands of followers, popular bloggers covering festivals indicate that this flow of

¹³⁹ A more clear illustration of this point can be found in the Venice International Film Festival, where tickets for prime time competition galas cost around 45 euros while tickets for other sections can be purchased for 8-10 euros. For ticket prices in the Berlinale, see the general program brochure: https://www.berlinale.de/media/pdf_word/service_7/67_ifb_1/67_IFB_Programm_Web.pdf. Accessed June 30, 2017.

performances can work both ways. Festivals grant press badges to film bloggers if they have a sufficiently large readership, allowing some enthusiastic members of the general public to enjoy press facilities even though they do not work as professional, full-time film critics or journalists. Accreditation applications in both Berlin and Cannes are collected through detailed forms on online portals, which require applicants to provide live web links, disclose numbers of page visits, and prove their social media reach by indicating the numbers of their ‘followers’ and ‘likes.’

Many members of the press attend festivals with several goals in mind; providing coverage of the event for their publications (this can take the form of film reviews, interviews with filmmakers, or observations from the festival site), selecting films for smaller festivals in their advisory capacity, and serving a number of organizations that reward acclaimed films or promote specific causes.¹⁴⁰

On the market side, several buyers and distributors in the film market come from a background in film criticism. For example, Dr. Ahmet Boyacioglu, who organizes the Turkish Pavilion in order to promote Turkish cinema during the festivals in Berlin and Cannes, is also known as a film critic. Most of the Turkish distribution companies focusing on arthouse films (such as BirFilm, Chantier Films, and Fabula) employ former film critics. All the major festivals in Turkey (Istanbul International Film Festival, Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival, If! Istanbul Independent Film Festival) have

¹⁴⁰ These activities include the distribution of collateral prizes awarded by the International Federation of Film Critics (FIPRESCI) in every major festival, awards created for the promotion of LGBT issues such as the Teddy Award in Berlin or the Queer Palm in Cannes, or the Cannes Palm Dog given to an animal performer in order to raise awareness about animal rights. Film critics serve on the juries of these prizes and handle the logistics of organizing such initiatives.

advisory boards, consisting of film critics who recommend titles they watch in foreign festivals to the main festival team.¹⁴¹ This plurality of professional activities performed by film critics is observed everywhere in the world, for example, with many regular contributors to the famous film magazine *Film Comment* serving on the selection committee of the New York Film Festival organized by The Film Society of Lincoln Center in New York. Eduardo Antin (better known as Quentin), former director of BAFICI and a film critic himself, draws attention to the importance of this connection when he recalls the early days of his festival. He remembers,

I was always convinced that the critics were our secret weapons (...). A network of friends gave us sufficient information and recommendations to be able to mount the program [of the first BAFICI]. Fortunately, in previous years, without ever thinking that we would some day be in charge of a festival, we had cultivated the friendship of a group of critics' (2009, 47).

Film critics' involvement in the festival circuit in capacities beyond providing media coverage illustrates the point that one individual often functions as several stakeholders condensed into one throughout a film festival. Despite the organizational structures that separate film critics, market participants, and the general public, these audience groups do manage to come together and even overlap to a certain extent. There are several practices that allow critics and market professionals to interact during the festivals in Berlin and Cannes. Even though a market badge does not grant one access to press screenings or vice versa, in actual practice, festival-goers often work around this segregation. The 08:30 a.m. screenings in Cannes are listed in the press schedule as

¹⁴¹ Company names and information about professional activities are taken from Berlinale's official catalogue of participating industry representatives, titled 'Who is Where' (the 2017 edition).

specially designated press screenings, but it is very common for market badge holders to obtain invitations for these screenings based on the aforementioned point system. The invitations for early screenings can be obtained more easily compared to official evening premieres, therefore a large group of market participants watch competition films in the morning alongside the press. In fact, it is desirable for potential buyers and rights holders to see the films in the same screening with the press since they get the chance to evaluate the critical reception the film is likely to elicit before it reaches wider audiences.

Similarly, some films in the Cannes and Berlin official selections are shown in the main auditorium only once, in a combined press and industry screening.¹⁴² In these cases, the lone projection functions as both the official premiere and the press screening, with all badge holders -regardless of their categories- watching the film together. Conversely, members of the press can access market screenings if they contact the sales agent or the rights holder before a market screening and get an individual approval. This practice is especially common if the film critic also serves in a programmer's capacity for another festival or has a scheduled interview with the filmmaker. There is no official rule preventing this practice in either festival.

To a limited extent, festival organizations themselves provide opportunities to accommodate the interaction between members of the press and market participants. In Berlin, a section titled 'LOLA' screens local films produced by German companies in the

¹⁴² Nuri Bilge Ceylan's *Winter Sleep* (*Kis Uykusu*, 2014) was one such example when it played in competition in Cannes. The decision to screen the film only once was likely motivated by its 196 minute running time. When Lav Diaz's *A Lullaby to the Sorrowful Mystery* (*Hele Sa Hiwagang Hapis*, 2016) played in competition in Berlin, it was shown in the Berlinale Palast only once because of its 485 minute running time.

past twelve months. This section is organized for market purposes, with the aim of promoting German cinema and increasing the visibility of German films in international markets. Line up of the LOLA section is not made public or listed in the general screening schedule since these screenings are directly aimed at market participants from foreign countries. However, members of the press can attend LOLA screenings simply by presenting their press badges and see the films alongside distributors, exhibitors, and festival programmers. All types of accreditations are sufficient to gain access to LOLA screenings. The film market in Cannes and ‘Village International,’ where the national pavilions are located, are accessible with a press badge even though the primary audience group for both of these is the market professionals. Perhaps the most unrestricted platform for the interaction between different audience groups takes place on the last day of each festival, which is devoted to the repeat screenings of films that have premiered earlier in the same event. Even though financial constraints and other professional commitments frequently mean that journalists and industry representatives leave before the last day in major festivals, festival-goers who stay until the end of the event have the opportunity to catch the films they missed in these repeat screenings, which are accessible to all badge holders regardless of their category (as well as the general public in the case of the Berlinale). The last day of the festival is devoted to reruns in Cannes and Berlin alike and both press members and industry representatives can attend these screenings alongside the general public.¹⁴³ This is particularly useful for viewers who

¹⁴³ The reruns in Berlin cover all sections and tickets can be purchased for all films. The reruns in Cannes, on the other hand, are devoted to the competition only and the badge system remains in place without any tickets available for purchase by the general public (though all types of badges have access to screenings on the last day).

wish to watch the most acclaimed titles or the films that have created the biggest buzz earlier in the festival. Films that are favorably reviewed by trade publications like *Variety* and *Screendaily*, or are sold widely to various territories in the film market, or carry positive hype because of their placement in the program,¹⁴⁴ or arrive in festivals as international premieres (instead of world premieres) after opening to rave reviews in their countries of origin can enjoy more positive buzz as the festival progresses and become priority viewing during the last-day reruns for all audience members. The reruns in Berlin take place on the day after the awards ceremony, therefore these screenings allow festival-goers to see the winners of the official prizes distributed by the jury. Through all the practices mentioned above, festivals strategically establish a delicate balance between keeping different audience groups at a certain distance from each other and facilitating their interactions, collaborations, and overlapping activities.

5.4: On the Festival Site

The wide range of experiences I have gained throughout my career attending several major film festivals in various capacities have shaped my thinking about many of the theoretical and applied issues raised thus far in this chapter. The first international film festival I attended was the 2011 edition of the Berlinale. As a contributor to the Turkish monthly cinema magazine *Altyazi*, I had published a number of pieces and the

¹⁴⁴ On the rare occasions when a debut film from an unknown director is included in the Cannes competition instead of a sidebar, that film arrives at the festival carrying positive buzz because it is assumed that the main reason for its inclusion is artistic merit instead of cast and crew pedigree or red carpet appeal. For example, when László Nemes' *Son of Saul* (*Saul Fia*, 2015) premiered in Cannes competition, the surprising inclusion of an obscure Hungarian debut in competition had already raised anticipation. The film ended up receiving highly positive reviews and was sold worldwide for distribution.

‘Talent Campus’¹⁴⁵ initiative of the Berlinale was brought to my attention. I applied to the ‘Talent Press’ division for young film critics and was invited to the festival as one of eight participants. Even though I was given a press badge and was hoping to provide coverage for *Altyazi* upon my return, the activities that marked my first festival experience were quite distinct from those of a participant attending with a regular press accreditation. I managed to see around two dozen films from various sections; but I spent most of my time in Berlin in film criticism workshops, editorial meetings, mentoring sessions, and panels on which several established names shared their expertise. After an informal gathering, the first day of the festival was devoted to a day-long series of meetings, a photo-call, and roundtable discussions. The core component of the program was the publication of a daily in which reports, reviews, and interviews written by the eight participants were published and widely distributed in festival locations. Our articles were also published on the Talent Press website, the website of the FIPRESCI, and the Goethe Institute’s webpage (the latter was among the sponsors of the initiative). We were given a list of assignments, we needed to see certain films some of which we would not have seen otherwise, and conduct interviews during the time slots that were already set up for us. Four experienced and famous film critics were the mentors in the program and

¹⁴⁵ Initiated in 2003 as ‘Berlinale Talent Campus,’ and later re-branded as ‘Berlinale Talents,’ this program brings around 250 young professionals from the film industry to Berlin during the festival. It offers a rich program of talks, panels, and workshops alongside project development and networking opportunities. Directors, screenwriters, editors, sound designers, composers, actors, cinematographers, producers, and film critics all participate in area-specific events that contribute to their professional development. The panel quoted in chapter three and my interview with Claudia Llosa were both conducted within the scope of the Berlinale Talent Campus program in 2011.

each of them was assigned two participants.¹⁴⁶ As a participant, my task was to complete my assignment (which could be seeing a film, attending a panel, or conducting an interview), write a draft of my daily report, and work with my mentor on the piece in the afternoon before the firm deadline of 5:00 p. m. for the submission of the final version to the editors. On the last day of the Talents program, some Talent Press articles were published in a best-of edition and distributed free of charge in many festival venues.

The educational value of a program like this is obvious and it is worth noting that the festival launches a new generation of film critics on the international circuit through such an initiative as well. Many of the participants return to Berlin in consequent years, provide detailed media coverage from the festival, and serve in multiple roles as programmers, advisors, and jury members. But beyond these benefits, two aspects of this experience are particularly worth noting for the purposes of this chapter: first, it is significant to note that the festival organization directly shapes how participants navigate the festival site and experience the event. From arranging the interviews to providing the list of tasks to be accomplished, one's participation (or performance of being a 'talent') is accommodated and directed by the festival itself. Second, despite the pre-defined roles they are assigned, all the participants manage to wear multiple hats during their time in Berlin. As long as they complete their assignments on time, Talent Press participants are welcome to see other films and spend their time as they please. I saw fifteen of the

¹⁴⁶ The four mentors were Chris Fujiwara (contributor to *Senses of Cinema* and *Film Comment* among other publications), Dana Linssen (editor of the Dutch film magazine *Filmkrant*), Derek Malcolm (former film critic for *The Guardian* and *The Evening Standard*), and Stephanie Zacharek (*Time Magazine*, formerly film critic for *The Village Voice*). My assignments and writing were supervised by Ms. Zacharek.

sixteen films in competition that year, reviewed some of them for *Altyazi*, and wrote the catalogue descriptions for two Berlinale films when they were screened in the Istanbul International Film Festival two months later. In other words, I -like all my fellow Talent Press participants- both followed the program Talent Campus had prepared for us and worked as a regular film critic reporting from Berlin at the same time.

Over the years, I have returned to Berlin in different roles, all of which meant different activities, goals, and manifestations of festival participation. In 2012, I went to Berlin with a press badge, but without a clear idea of what the extent of my coverage for *Altyazi* would be. I thought of myself primarily as an enthusiastic cinephile and wanted to delve open-mindedly into the diverse, mammoth program of the festival. Robert Koehler criticizes festivals' 'aversion to cinephilia' or their 'unwillingness to place cinephilia at the center of festivals' activities.' (2009, 81). However, placing cinephilia at the center was exactly what I hoped to do in my second visit to the festival and my experience in 2012 was very different from the previous year. I was able to discover many exciting films from various sections and experience the same event that I had attended with a busy professional agenda the previous year, this time in 'willingly amateur' ways that satisfied my fondness for the medium. I did not restrict myself to the competition and saw more than fifty films, I went to different parts of the city to see a film in almost every screening venue, attended public screenings alongside local viewers from the general public. I took some valuable festival time -which I could normally devote to some writing assignment, attending a meeting or transcribing a recorded interview- to watch my favorite film of the festival -*Tabu* (2012) directed by Miguel Gomes- for a second time in a public repeat

screening, even willingly shedding some tears during the most melodramatic stretches of the film together with my fellow audience members.

As I went to Berlin with more clearly defined professional agendas in the next few years, I observed that the activities festival participation entails change considerably and that these activities are performed in a strangely self-aware manner. When my priority during the festival was the press coverage I was assigned to provide, as it was the case in 2013, I made an effort to catch press conferences including the opening day event with the members of the jury, watched a popular animated feature playing out of competition and produced by a major American studio -*The Croods* (2013) by Kirk De Micco and Chris Sanders- even though I knew it was going to be theatrically released right after the festival. It was significant to see the live transmission of the awards ceremony in Cinemaxx; I did not have access to the actual closing gala in Berlinale Palast, but I needed to report the winners quickly. I contacted the PR agents of the films in the program even before I arrived in Berlin and set up interviews with filmmakers. I took some time away from the screenings to take part in group interviews and roundtables, in which one filmmaker answers the questions posed by several journalists and everyone is free to use each other's questions when they publish their versions of the interview. Despite my aversion to forming decisive opinions about films without allowing myself sufficient time to think, I started quickly rating films on a scale of five stars - because I was asked to participate in a grid¹⁴⁷ which brings together star ratings assigned

¹⁴⁷ The *Tess Magazine* grid I participated in during the Berlinale in 2013 can be found at <http://www.tessmag.com/2013/02/22/tess-jury-grid-berlinale-2013/>. Accessed August 8, 2017. A more recent grid I participated in can be seen here: <http://icsfilm.org/features/cannes-2016-the-grid/>. Accessed August 9, 2017.

by several critics and also presents an average score for each title- and writing short, instant tweets about the films I watch. Simply put, I knew that I was attending the festival as a film critic and I deliberately acted like one. This conscious performance of audience membership had an indirect yet undeniable impact on how I experienced the event in various ways, from my evaluation of the films in different selections to my time management habits.

Perhaps the most significant festival experience I can draw from when it comes to market activities and the key question of film financing occurred during the Cannes Film Festival in 2013 when I served as a member of the jury in the aforementioned La Semaine de la Critique section. I was invited to the jury upon the suggestion of a colleague I had met during the Berlinale Talent Press, who had started working as a programmer for La Semaine in addition to her work as a film critic. I was provided with a daily jury schedule before my arrival and was given a priority badge (priority access was valid only for La Semaine and not the screenings of the official selection). There were four jurors including me, with the other members of the jury coming from Brazil, China, and France. On the day before the first screening in our section, we had a meeting with the artistic director Charles Tesson and the program manager Rémi Bonhomme, discussed the meaning and function of the prize we were going to award,¹⁴⁸ met the president of our jury French director Mia Hansen-Løve, and participated in a photo call. In addition to the seven films in competition, we were kindly asked to attend the gala

¹⁴⁸ The prize is named ‘Prix Révélation France 4’ and comes with a monetary award worth 4,000 euros, sponsored by the France 4 television channel. As the name ‘discovery’ suggests, the goal is to honor a work of particular innovation and creativity.

screenings of the four films playing out of competition including the opening and closing selections. Of course, the most significant items on our agendas were the jury deliberations, which took place across two meetings, with the second one lasting a considerable amount of time. There were several lunch meetings held in the Nespresso Beach, sponsored by the titular company that also sponsors the Grand Prix of the section. We interacted with representatives from the television channel France 4, who wished to meet the members of the jury that was going to award the prize that carries the name of their station. Since French Televisions,¹⁴⁹ including France 4, are very actively involved in financially supporting film production in France and that almost every French film shown in Cannes receives funding from the France Televisions group, the representatives were extremely busy attending screenings in several sections and meeting numerous professionals from every branch of the film industry. Hansen-Løve had other meetings about the production of the new film she was going to shoot in the fall of that year -which went onto become *Eden* (2014)- in addition to jury duty. All the other members of our jury were film critics, therefore everyone was attending screenings in other sections and writing reviews for their publications alongside lunch meetings and jury deliberations. Attending screenings in other sections meant leaving the privileges of jury membership in a sidebar section behind and operating under the restrictions and regulations of the main festival. Once again, our performances of jury membership were largely shaped by the agendas we were given by the organization, yet we were also able to bring several

¹⁴⁹ France Televisions is the public national broadcaster in France. The state-owned company operates a large media group consisting of five national channels (including France 4) and 24 regional stations.

performances of audience membership together. Festival participation, as always, meant privilege and restriction at once.

In terms of how these varied experiences of audience membership relate to the central question of funding initiatives, the recollections above lay the foundations for a number of speculative yet grounded comments about programs such as WCF. First, it is worth noting that selection committee members and program directors negotiate a diverse set of interests, tastes, and goals. All of the curatorial decisions mentioned throughout this dissertation, ranging from determining the projects to be financially supported to the selection of prize winners during festivals, constitute activities far beyond choosing the most artistically accomplished or commercially appealing title from a given pool of nominees. No single factor clearly outweighs the others; festivals want to screen films that would impress highbrow critics, attract popular media attention, sell a sufficient number of tickets to the general public, please the sponsors, and enjoy healthy commercial lives after the event. Of course, a single film cannot tick all of these boxes on its own, but all curators make an effort to create a balanced and diverse set of films that would satisfy all the expectations listed above. Since the eventual destinations of WCF-supported films are these very festivals themselves, it can be argued that WCF selection committees are also aware of this multiplicity of interests and they come up with similarly balanced rosters that appeal to a wide range of audience groups instead of relying on a single criterion such as picking the best arthouse titles, the most socially relevant films, or the most commercially viable projects and so forth.

Second, as the active participation of France 4 representatives in the Cannes Film Festival indicates, funding bodies are not only interested in the realization of the projects they support, but they also closely monitor the trajectories of their films in festivals and beyond long after the completion of the films. This point can easily be applied to WCF as well; the annual catalogue of WCF lists all the films that have been supported since 2005 and advertises the key festival screenings and notable awards for each title. During my research trip to the Cannes Film Festival in 2017, I saw Vincenzo Bugno, the program manager of WCF, several times in the screenings of films supported by the initiative. The presence of WCF films in other festivals is announced prominently by official press releases before major events like Cannes and the festival quickly releases congratulatory notes when a WCF film receives a prestigious recognition such as the Golden Palm or an Academy Award nomination. Funding initiatives like WCF keep a keen eye on the entire life cycles of the films they support, their activities cover a far more extended time period than the initial endowment of monetary resources or the realization of the project.

Third, a surprising number of individuals mentioned above have backgrounds in film criticism even though their current occupations are more closely linked to film markets or festival organization. From the artistic director of La Semaine de la Critique Charles Tesson to majority of the festival programmers including the colleague who recommended me for jury duty, from the experts and mentors of the Berlinale Talent Campus to all the members of our jury including the president Mia Hansen-Løve,¹⁵⁰ every individual mentioned here has been or is currently involved in professional film

¹⁵⁰ Though Hansen-Løve is best known as a writer and director, she actually wrote film reviews for the famous French journal *Cahiers du Cinema* before she started making films.

criticism. Given the prevalence of former and active film critics in prominent positions in similar initiatives as well as practically every corner of the festival galaxy at large, it is not a surprise to see that film critics have some influence on which projects are selected for WCF funding. For example, Egyptian film scholar Viola Shafik and Nigerian film critic Jahman Oledajo Anikulapo have recently served as members of the WCF selection committee. Considering these high levels of involvement, the consequent critical approval many of the WCF-funded films receive upon their festival premieres, and how crucial this critical support is for the survival of many independent filmmakers on the challenging global film market without much commercial viability, it can be argued that film criticism serves a fundamental function in the development and sustenance of transnational arthouse cinema beyond providing media coverage or evaluating films in their completed form.

The recollections above paint a picture of multiple stakeholders from cinephiles to film critics, programmers, mentors in educational initiatives, and jury members. Yet the most significant point these past experiences reveal is the plurality of *stakes*, and not necessarily the *stakeholders*. The most obvious illustration of this embodiment of varied goals, motivations, and performances by a single individual is the fact that all the perspectives discussed above -ranging from that of an enthusiastic cinephile to professional film critic, or from young mentee chasing professional development to jury member following an institutional routine- are based on the festival attendance and participation of the same, single person. The aforementioned plurality of roles fulfilled by film critics during major festivals also supports this argument. Not only is it possible for

frequent festival-goers to adjust their performances of audience membership from one audience category to another across events, but it is also possible for one festival-goer to act as several stakeholders at once during the very same event.

5.5: Conclusion

There is not one ‘audience’ in the context of film festivals, there are several categories of audience membership that festivals bring together, albeit while keeping them at a strategic distance from each other. This is accomplished by employing several organizational mechanisms; ranging from programming decisions to the division of the program into sections with varying levels of prominence, or from granting access privileges to a certain audience group while denying another to the design of festival catalogues and other similar literature. This is particularly evident in major events like Cannes and Berlin, where the main festival, which enjoys immense media attention, is accompanied by a concurrent film market, which mostly remains invisible to the public eye despite attracting thousands of industry representatives.

Throughout this analysis of film festival audiences, I have implicitly assumed that film spectatorship and festival participation occur only in physical event sites under institutional regulations. However, I realize that this is not always the case in the age of digital cinema, online film viewing, and streaming. One significant recent phenomenon on the festival circuit has been the emergence of online film festivals and web-based platforms that offer streaming services in collaboration with festival organizations or

rights holders. De Valck has questioned the impact of similar developments on the festival circuit when she raised the question

Why wait for a festival to screen the newest horror films from Japan, when you can purchase them online? Why travel to Venice when you can watch a DVD at home? The question, in short, is whether film festivals will become superfluous in a market of abundance? (2008, 19).

This inquiry proved prophetic as film viewing at home has found its way into the workings of film festivals in the years since the publication of De Valck's piece. Venice Film Festival has launched an initiative named 'Sala Web' in partnership with the streaming platform 'Festivalscope,' presenting around a dozen films from the official selection to worldwide audiences concurrently with the actual event held in Lido, Venice. An online film festival focusing exclusively on French cinema has completed its seventh edition in 2017 and facilitated more than 405,000 viewings of the selected titles to audiences based in more than 200 territories.¹⁵¹ Many market participants attending Berlin and Cannes in capacities ranging from programmer to distributor or sales representative have memberships for an online film viewing portal named 'Cinando,' which allows rights holders to show their most recent festival titles to prospective buyers and selection committees through watermarked and protected digital screeners. Likewise the New Directors/New Films Festival, organized jointly by The Film Society of Lincoln Center and The Museum of Modern Art in New York, offers a limited number of online viewing 'tickets' to audience members from around the globe.

¹⁵¹ For all the official numbers about the online 'My French Film Festival' see the website of the event: <http://www.myfrenchfilmfestival.com/en/>. Accessed July 8, 2017.

Similarly to the aforementioned case of filmmakers transitioning from narrative cinema to working in alternative formats in the art world, the proliferation of online festivals is an on-going process currently in its nascent phase. There is an important restriction to be noted in each example listed above: Sala Web in Venice offers only 400 tickets per film and never includes films from the main competition. Other major festivals like Cannes and Berlin have not yet officially established comparable platforms even though their films can become available on FestivalScope or Cinando if the rights holders choose to offer a digital screener. The French Film Festival only presents films that have already played in a large number of festivals before reaching online viewers. In short, on-site festival participation remains the most common and prominent form of attending film festivals. This may no longer be exclusively the case, but becoming an audience member in the context of film festivals continues to largely denote being present in the festival location during a particular and finite time period, seeing the films alongside fellow audience members, and engaging in several professional activities on the festival site.

Watching films in the comfort of one's living room obviously offers a very different set of dynamics compared to traditional festival experiences. Audiences who follow online festivals choose the time and location of the 'screenings' themselves (which diminishes the 'event' status festival occasions usually hold), have the option to pause, rewind, or fast forward films if they wish to do so, and likely watch the films on their own. In contrast, on-site festival participation is an invariably communal experience. Festival-goers follow strict schedules with specific time slots and locations assigned to each one-time screening. Most significantly -at least for the purposes of this chapter-

festival-goers, who attend these events with a great variety of goals, priorities, motivations, and responsibilities in mind, engage in dialogues and interact with each other; they collaborate on shared duties or perform overlapping tasks. Online film viewing evens out many major differences between separate audience groups, erasing the performative aspect of their behaviors because of its solitary nature. Such solitary viewing experiences fall out of the scope of this chapter because the arguments presented here all revolve around a plurality of audience groups, segregated or united.

A theoretical discussion of diverse groups of festival audiences can benefit from situating the analysis within the performance/spectacle paradigm, introduced by Abercrombie and Longhurst. In its recognition of the increasingly active and participatory nature of audience practices, the narcissistic tendencies of festival-goers as a whole, and the mundane character the festival spectacle gains through regular repetition; the performance/spectacle paradigm provides a suitable conceptual framework for understanding how one experiences a film festival as an audience member. Consequently, it becomes evident that the agents populating the festival circuit may not be defined by their fixed qualities, goals or characteristic activities, but they may rather be understood as actors who function through many volatile and flexible performances, surrounded by the mechanics of festival organization.

CONCLUSION

Funds associated with European film festivals often operate around a major paradox. On one hand, the most fundamental mission of these initiatives -supporting cultural production in regions without developed media industries- implies a commitment to universalism, or perhaps to globalization in an optimistic sense that partially levels the massive discrepancy between Europe and the Global South in terms of access to resources and infrastructure. On the other hand, these funding bodies frequently emphasize the ‘authenticity’ of the cultures depicted in the ‘foreign’ films they support, underlining the otherness of the ‘indigenous’ recipients and consequently making their difference more evident and pronounced than it would be otherwise. In order to reach a global platform that is supposed to bring artists from all around the globe together, filmmakers from the Global South first need to prove how unique and genuine their native identities are. Literary scholar Kwame Anthony Appiah (1992) rejects both of these positions; he criticizes the universalism argument for merely being a Eurocentric pose in disguise while simultaneously claiming that the ‘nativism’ perspective remains rooted in a colonial understanding of culture, which, in his opinion, is too nostalgic and problematically obsessed with the notion of authenticity. One of the key purposes of this dissertation has been to explore the ways through which a similar double bind is observed in contemporary film industries around the world.

The apparent contradiction outlined above is not merely an obstacle filmmakers need to overcome to gain access to financial resources. Beyond its economic and practical consequences, this process of navigating the complex territory between

cinematic universalism and cultural authenticity has found thematic and narrative embodiments in internationally recognized films emerging from the Global South. As many of the directors whose films have been discussed in earlier chapters are closely linked to Europe (by holding a dual citizenship, having been educated in a European country or settling in a European city) while maintaining ties with their home countries, their highly personal works reflect their alternating positions between two or more cultures, countries, societies, and identities. From combining unexpected sources of music on the soundtrack in *Félicité* to blending dialogue in several different languages in *The Wound* and *The Milk of Sorrow*, a wide range of strategies have been analyzed in relation to this thematic preoccupation. In narrative terms, two key tendencies have been identified. The first is to tell stories that are rooted in traumatic historical events that have scarred entire nations (such as the civil wars in Algeria and Peru or the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile) despite the apparent focus on a single protagonist. The second is to depict ceremonial events, rituals, highly choreographed and performative incidents with clear expected patterns of behavior. It was demonstrated that dance routines, weddings, stage performances, idiosyncratic gatherings occupy a significant amount of screen time in every WCF film analyzed in the preceding chapters.

One of the essential functions of all these strategies can be summarized as situating the films in very particular temporal and spatial coordinates while simultaneously giving them a transnational, fragmented character that defies rigid categories of nationhood. I am deliberately referring to time and space as such intertwined notions because they constitute the key components of David Harvey's

discussion of postmodernism in cinema. Many of the aspects I have highlighted in WCF films throughout bring Harvey's definition of cinematic postmodernism to mind: WCF films draw from a very eclectic web of cultural references, they are unafraid to disorient the viewer with fragmented narratives, open-ended storylines, or contemplative sequences without narrative momentum; they inventively cut between multiple storylines, and time frames. All of these qualities are in fact highly reminiscent of how Harvey describes postmodern films in *The Condition of Postmodernity*. He argues that, of all the art forms, cinema 'has perhaps the most robust capacity to handle intertwining themes of space and time in instructive ways. The serial use of images and the ability to cut back and forth across space and time, free it from many of the normal constraints' (1989, 308). Even though one must be careful not to bring the diverse set of contemporary films that benefit from the support of European funding bodies associated with film festivals together under the broad umbrella of postmodernism, it is worth noting that many of the thematic and aesthetic elements discussed in this dissertation are genealogically linked to the postmodern condition.

Harvey's discussion compares Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) and Wim Wenders' *Wings of Desire* (*Der Himmel über Berlin*, 1987); two films the author describes as 'a piece of pop art' and 'a piece of highbrow cinema,' respectively. In such a categorization, it is obvious that all the WCF films would belong to the latter group. Their affinity with the European arthouse cinema tradition is not surprising given their financial dependence on European institutions, the stark conditions they face in their domestic markets in terms of local box office, and how crucial securing a premiere berth in a major

European festival is perceived to be for their entire lifecycles. Nevertheless, throughout this dissertation, I have been careful not to overemphasize this resemblance between a western brand of quality ‘auteur’ cinema and the WCF films from the Global South because the data analysis revealed multiple surprising points of divergence. The statistical analysis in chapter four showed that, barring a few exceptional cases with top festival prizes, the average sales and box office performance of WCF films in major European markets remains underwhelming despite their success in securing prestigious premiere slots. Many directors rejected comparisons with established European directors during our interviews (Alain Gomis’ refusal to associate his work with the Dardenne Brothers or Benjamin Naishtat’s reference to New Argentine Cinema instead of any European source of inspiration are clear examples). Commercial Hindi musicals were identified as a point of reference for *Until the Birds Return* while films by Lucretia Martel, Patricio Guzmán, and Pablo Larraín (as opposed to any European or North American films) were discussed in relation to *Los Perros*. Based on all these arguments and evidence, it is important to realize that the relationship between Europe and filmmakers from the Global South is more complex and multifaceted than it initially seems to be.

Ian Aitkin claims that ‘any use of globalization as a model for the study of European cinema must involve historical and sociological contextualization, and the empirical study of aspects of production, distribution, exhibition, and finance’ (2005, 85). There is no denying all the Latin American, Southeast Asian, and African films explored in this dissertation are at least partially European. However, globalization is a tricky framework to approach the European influence on world cinema especially if it takes a

Eurocentric position. As argued by Aitkin, this study brought textual analyses informed by historical or socioeconomic factors, and a quantitative approach that pays attention to the financial aspects of film production and exhibition together in order to avoid the trap of reinforcing a false European superiority.

According to Wimal Dissanayake, the theorization of three major issues has been influential on contemporary world cinema scholarship; ‘the nature of cinematic representation, the role of ideology in cultural production, and the importance of female subjectivity in cinema’ (2009, 883). Even though my inquiry about the roster of films supported by WCF was not initially informed by Dissanayake’s formulation, it became evident in conclusion that the three factors he highlights are central to the study of film festivals and the brand of world cinema they promote through their financing initiatives. Representation of minorities and marginalized groups (such as the indigenous peoples of Peru in *The Milk of Sorrow* or the Xhosa people in *The Wound*) emerged as a sensitive issue directors grappled with in their work. The conflict between the hegemonic state discourse and the vulnerable individual, particularly in terms of the erasure of the public memory and the silencing of the opposition, was the central theme in *Beauty and the Dogs*, *Los Perros*, and *Until the Birds Return*. Several films including *Félicité*, *Pendular* and *I am Not a Witch* prioritized the perspective of their female protagonists and offered narratives that defy the traditional male gaze by assigning women active, commanding roles. Therefore, it gradually became clear that these factors outlined by Dissanayake should be seen as significant strategies in navigating the aforementioned paradox between cinematic universalism and cultural authenticity.

In addition to these broad thematic concerns about culture and identity, the analyses presented in earlier chapters revealed another major trend in WCF selections. I argued that transnational funding bodies based in Europe, instead of contributing to the sustained development of film production in the Global South through investments in infrastructure, prefer to engage in temporary, project-based transactions which ensure the continuous flow of films suitable for festival selection. Descriptive statistics shown in chapter four illustrate a striking prevalence of first or second films in the WCF roster, which signals that many young filmmakers are unable to sustain a filmmaking career in their home countries despite having an impressive start because of the continued absence of necessary infrastructure. Film festivals invest in isolated projects that hold promise of a successful run on the circuit, but show little interest in contributing to a long-term change. Claudia Llosa's remarks about the expensive cost of traveling from Peru to Europe and the impossibility of maintaining a creative career in her native country are quite striking because they paint a very different picture compared to the glamorous, affluent image a Golden Bear win or an Academy Award nomination evokes. Even for more established names like Alain Gomis, every Euro endowed by funding bodies counts because the commercial prospects of their work remains slim. In this rather dark financial landscape, the funding allocated by initiatives like WCF is useful to complete one project and save the day against all odds, but there is little optimism for permanent improvement of filmmaking conditions. Unlike the national and regional funds mentioned in the first chapter, transnational festival funds like WCF invest only in production and distribution of a small number of individual projects without allocating any funds to pre-production

and script development programs, workshops aimed at young and emerging talent, building studios, laboratories or other facilities and so forth. Even though these projects may sometimes initiate a temporary boom in local film production or create a short-lived wave of optimism in the domestic film industry (as it was the case in Peru following Llosa's success), these periods of relative positivity cannot be sustained in the long run.

An indirect yet significant consequence of this lack of long-term investment is the domestic dismissal many WCF films face in their home countries despite international acclaim. Without film education, sufficient screening venues, or a continued supply of local films, it is practically impossible for a large body of informed film viewers to suddenly emerge on its own. Audiences do not come to appreciate and support good cinema overnight, out of nowhere. Cultivation of a strong film culture and a knowledgeable audience base necessitates educational resources and financial investments that initiatives like WCF can hypothetically provide - at least in part. Yet European film festival funds opt to collaborate with directors and production companies only, shying away from any negotiations with state authorities or local institutions. It would be naive to expect a European fund to blindly allocate thousands of Euros to the building of a cinema hall or a film studio in Africa, of course. But the complete absence of any mechanism that would support collaborative efforts to improve filmmaking and exhibition infrastructures, or even a brief mention of such an intent in the descriptions and regulations of funding programs, is a troubling aspect of the whole practice of transnational film funding.

One particular type of investment in infrastructure that has become increasingly essential and inevitable in the past decade is concerned with the digitization of

filmmaking and exhibition technologies. Digital technology has frequently been celebrated for bringing the costs of feature filmmaking down considerably and allowing hundreds of filmmakers to realize their projects with limited resources. Digitization is now an integral part of any discussion on film festivals and projects supported by their funding initiatives as almost every film that has received WCF support in recent years is shot and exhibited digitally. Berlinale's history with digital cinema dates back to more than a decade ago, with a press release from February 2004 announcing that 'Sony has provided the Berlinale with three multi-format HD players. Hence in 2004 festival audiences will be able to watch digital cinema for the first time at many venues.'¹⁵² As a striking illustration of the rapid rise in prevalence of digital cinema, a comparable press release from February 2017 notes that 'almost all of the more than 2,500 screenings at the Berlinale and the European Film Market will originate from Digital Cinema Packages (DCP).'¹⁵³ In fact, it would not be a stretch to identify the film festival circuit as one of the most significant venues where the impact of digital technology has been extremely evident and powerful. One of the biggest advantages of digital cinema is the logistical ease of creating and transporting films in the DCP format compared to the hefty and sensitive film reels from the pre-digital era. Kirsten Stevens (2012) argues that this advantage is far more crucial for festival organizers and programmers than it is for commercial theater owners because in regular theatrical exhibition a small number of

¹⁵² See the press release dated February 6, 2004: https://www.berlinale.de/en/archiv/jahresarchive/2004/08_pressemitteilungen_2004/08_Pressemitteilungen_2004-Detail_602.html?openedFromSearch=true. Accessed January 28, 2018.

¹⁵³ See the press release dated February 14, 2017: https://www.berlinale.de/en/archiv/jahresarchive/2017/08_pressemitteilungen_2017/08_pressemitteilungen_2017detail_37076.html?openedFromSearch=true. Accessed January 28, 2018.

films are shown a large number of times in the same venue whereas in festivals a very large number of films are shown very few times in several different venues. From this point of view, the logistical advantages of digital filmmaking technologies should improve the diversity and range of programming in major film festivals, with a larger number of films from different countries being able to make the costly trip to key venues in Europe. Data presented in earlier chapters illustrate this expansion from various angles. A diversity report which analyzes the Berlinale rosters of a thirty year period, reviewed in chapter three, identifies Latin America, Asia, and Africa as regions whose presence in festival selections have substantially increased in the past three decades. Informed by these findings, I argue that the launch of WCF in 2005, crucially coinciding with the start of the aforementioned rapid digitization process, has been a cornerstone of this rise in programming diversity. Statistics presented in chapter four also point in a similar direction, with a high percentage of WCF films from these regions celebrating their world premieres in prestigious intentional festivals including the Berlinale. Festival organizers and programmers continue to deal with the process of digitization, constantly trying to find new ways of incorporating works produced in digital formats or with the support of online platforms in their line-ups. The controversies surrounding the inclusion of two Netflix productions in the main competition at Cannes, the conscious efforts festival organizers have shown to showcase multi-episode works or audiovisual experiments that were intended for galleries and museums instead of cinema halls can all be understood as small steps in an ongoing, complicated journey towards the seamless integration of digital technology and emergent media forms into the film festival circuit.

This process has also caused a profound evolution in what becoming an audience member means, as comprehensively analyzed by scholars such as Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst (1998) as well as Henry Jenkins (2006), whose works have focused on participatory audience cultures and the performative or creative aspects of audience behavior. From the interest filmmakers interviewed in chapter three have expressed in interacting with audience members in festival screenings to the collateral practices (ranging from applauding or booing films to celebrity sightseeing and participating in red carpet extravaganzas) one observes on festival sites, many findings discussed above reveal that this move towards a participatory and/or performative conception of audience behavior influences how film festivals and operate in the contemporary world cinema scene.

Dina Iordanova's work builds a crucial bridge between this impact of digitization on film festivals and the transnationally produced films that she terms 'peripheral cinema.' It is quite obvious that the vast majority of the films funded by WCF fall into this category of peripheral filmmaking. Whether called 'peripheral' as Iordanova does, or termed 'accented' in Hamid Naficy's (2001) terms, the common denominator for all WCF selections is that they are films outside the mainstream, commercial prospects are only of secondary importance for their filmmakers. Iordanova argues that this independence from powerful commercial entities such as major studios or mainstream chain exhibitors no longer creates an insurmountable obstacle before access to these types of peripheral films. She celebrates the 'unprecedented access to the most recent offerings of world cinema' on digital platforms and notes that 'peripheral cinema is much more visible than

ever, (...), more of this type of rare cinema is going to come online' (2013b, 46). This, I argue, is one of the key factors that connect the two main types of institutions analyzed in this dissertation; film festivals and funding initiatives. Though much theoretical and empirical work regarding the intersection of film festivals, funding programs, and digital media technologies remains to be done; it can be safely stated that digital filmmaking technologies and online platforms as a major source of financial revenue form increasingly essential components of the activities carried out by initiatives such as WCF. WCF films are shot digitally, travel to festivals around the world in the DCP format, and their inability to penetrate into the commercial theatrical exhibition sphere is at least partially remedied by their availability on online platforms.

Even though this project maintained a deliberately narrow focus on the case of the Berlinale and WCF for various reasons discussed in the introduction, many of the findings presented in the chapters above hint at significant trends that are applicable to the broad film festival circuit at large. Perhaps the most notable conclusion in this regard is the characterization of the film festival phenomenon as a safe domain of resistance and artistic independence against the hegemonic influence of the highly commercialized, overtly capitalist mainstream film industries. It is crucial to note that this resistance or independence is not merely confined to the realm of economics; instead the economic structures that create inequality and marginalize non-conformist forms of cultural production are closely linked to ideological, political, or social constructions. The lack of domestic state support mentioned by multiple filmmakers in chapter three, the difficulties they face in dealing with controversial social issues or painful chapters from the recent

histories of their countries point at a more expansive, more directly political form of hegemonic power, even oppression. This interconnectedness of economic inequality and cultural or ideological hegemony has been addressed in great detail by several canonical studies, such as Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) aforementioned work on the social construction of taste.

Situating film festivals on the side of resistance to hegemonic political and economic powers in this (im)balance marks a significant step in the theorization of the festival phenomenon because this perspective diverges substantially from the public imaginary surrounding the festival circuit. In emphasizing the glamorous red carpet events, the presence of famous stars, glossy aspects of festival organization and participation; the popular discourse on festivals often frames these events as a part of a larger, capitalist economic system. In this narrative, films go to festivals for promotional purposes, they are propelled to the commercial exhibition sphere following their run on the circuit, and festivals thrive on media attention, robust markets, or large numbers of tickets sold to the public. The alternative perspective that largely shaped this dissertation, on the other hand, presents a different view of festivals, which embraces the presence of obscure, unconventional, daringly uncommercial films in their programs. Filmmakers who cannot enjoy artistic or economic freedom elsewhere can have the opportunity to produce and present their works with the help of global film festivals without compromising their vision. WCF is only one example of many different tools or mechanisms through which major film festivals like Berlin accommodate independent, financially disadvantaged filmmakers in their attempts to overcome the social and

economic obstacles they face while making deeply personal, formally inventive, culturally specific, and politically charged films.

The final point I want to make concerning the festival circuit and transnational film funds in general can be described as the flip side of the resistance argument presented above. Without being dismissive of the highly valuable efforts of film festivals in supporting cultural production in the Global South and in enabling filmmakers to produce films despite financial or political hardship in their home countries, I would like to express my reluctance to over-emphasize this artistic independence narrative. A sufficiently nuanced discussion of film festivals and funding bodies associated with them must also pay due attention to the shortcomings of this system. There is an inherently neocolonial dimension to the practice of allocating European state funds to films developed and produced in formerly colonized nations. This complicated relationship between the funds and the recipients can be traced in the regulations of WCF, which mention elusive and problematic notions such as cultural authenticity or specificity, as well as in the resulting films themselves, which flirt with folkloric exploitation of their cultural surroundings in their frequent depiction of highly ceremonial, ritualized events.

Furthermore, the empirical picture revealed in chapter four is rather disappointing, with many filmmakers struggling to sustain their careers in the long term and their films remaining largely undistributed, unseen, unavailable despite the critical acclaim they receive. In fact, it can be argued that the cultural capital festivals attain by associating themselves with well-received films and the boost in prestige they consequently benefit from (which has financial implications as well, in the form of sponsorships and

increasing annual budgets) outweigh their initial investment in monetary terms or the rewards filmmakers from the Global South receive for their efforts in this transaction. Film festivals and transnational funds may indeed function as crucial platforms of resistance against the political and economic pressures of mainstream media industries; but whether that resistance has any tangible impact or potential for meaningful change beyond the autonomous, closed, and expanding-yet-limited network of film festivals is a different question altogether. It is on this cautiously critical note that I would like to conclude this project.

APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW REQUEST E-MAIL

Hello,

I am a Ph.D. student in film studies in the University of Massachusetts Amherst. I have also been writing film criticism and providing festival coverage for *Altyazi*, the oldest and most widely read film magazine in Turkey (I am originally from Turkey).

I will start writing my dissertation this semester and my research topic is the relationship between film festivals and film funds. I plan to focus on World Cinema Fund associated with the Berlin Film Festival.

I have admired Mr./Ms. (director's name) work for a long time and written extensively on his/her films. Since (film title) received production support from the World Cinema Fund and enjoyed an extraordinarily successful run in film festivals; I believe his/her work is very central for my research project.

Would it be possible to contact Mr./Ms. (director's name) for an interview regarding my dissertation? I would be glad to inform him/her about the possible questions, logistics, his/her rights (withdrawal at any time, multiple rounds of editing etc.) and such matters. I can also provide more information about myself (a CV, writing sample etc.).

If I need to contact some other address for interview inquiries, can you please direct me to that address?

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Kind regards and best wishes.

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW WITH BENJAMIN NAISHTAT

Question: At the time of the application for production support from Berlinale's World Cinema Fund, how advanced or early a stage was your project in?

Naishtat: At the time of applying to WCF (mid 2012), the project had been developed for almost two years. We had already obtained a production funding grant by the Argentine National Film Fund and had been selected and assisted to Cinemart, probably the most important film project market for the arthouse type.

Question: How involved was your German co-producer in compiling the application? Would you consider their involvement essential from an artistic point of view, beyond fulfilling an application requirement?

Naishtat: We applied to WCF without having a German counterpart yet. This was unusual but [we were] admitted, and it was due to the fact that until then we had failed to find a suitable German producer willing to join us in the making of the film. We got the WCF grant anyways and were then bound to find a German production house. We asked Vitakuben's Leif Magne Tangen whom we had met at Cinemart because he was involved in the arts world as well as film, and we thought the project could have some interest within the arts world- which in time it did not. It would be fair to say that the artistic involvement of the German counterpart was low, since he came onboard few months before production started and also because WCF does not comply you as grantee to involve any German artistic elements, crew or actors.

Question: Would you say the funding obtained from WCF was essential for the completion of your project? A common rhetorical strategy in justifying the use of European public funds to support projects from elsewhere is to emphasize that ‘these projects could not have been made otherwise’ or that ‘such funds are very significant for the survival of independent/art house films in these regions.’ How would you assess these statements?

Naishtat: Indeed WCF was essential to the completion of the production funding. Project budget was roughly 300.000 Euro at the stage in which we received the grant, and we had until then as only funding that of the INCAA (Argentina’s National Film Fund) which was about 180.000 Euro. WCF put us 30.000 Euro closer, but most importantly, through its prestige it gave us international projection which was essential further down the line to keep gathering funding (from Ibermedia and Doha Film Institute which completed the budget), and for festival attention. I would agree that European public or semi-public international film funds are very significant to the survival of independent and arthouse films around the world. For once, a vast majority of countries (and not only third world) do not have any public funding structures at all. In those places, funds as the WCF are pretty much the only available institutional sources of funding filmmakers and producers will have. In the countries where there is some kind of public funding, such as Argentina, those funds will often close the finance gap arthouse projects have. Financing gaps for this kind of projects are inevitable because the public funding structures are conceived to be completed by private partners, who will only bet on projects they think will have their investment recouped. A project like *History of Fear* could have never gotten any kind of

private investment in Argentina, and it was only thanks to institutional international funding that it came to light.

Question: After securing the WCF funding, did you have an easier time attracting other funding bodies, further co-producers, cast and crew members etc.? Do you think being associated with a prestigious institution such as Berlinale opened other doors for you to realize your project?

Naishtat: As I mentioned earlier, indeed the WCF added international projection to the project and made it easier to finish financing and catch attention from sales agents, festivals and arthouse industry actors in general on an international scale.

Question: How similar or different the project submitted in the funding application and the completed film are to each other? Did the project undergo very significant changes from the WCF-funding stage until it reached its final form?

Naishtat: The project was very much similar to what the film was in the end. The project had on earlier stages changed a lot, but when we applied to WCF we felt it had a mature development and there was barely any rewriting after that.

Question: When *History of Fear* received WCF support, you were making your first film. Do you think being a young first-time director made it easier or more difficult for you to secure funding for the project? Some funds specifically favor first or second films, while others prefer established names.

Naishtat: In all cases making a first film will be very difficult and it is in no way an advantage. Certainly some funds focus on first and second features, but still the competition in first films is enormous and you have to take into consideration that you as a filmmaker are at that stage a complete unknown. Having said that, the international projection of your first feature will be determinant to ease international financing opportunities for the second.

Question: You are one of the very few filmmakers to have received WCF support for two projects. The first, *History of Fear*, was a major success, selected for Berlinale competition and winning many awards in other festivals. Do you think the success of the earlier film made *Rojo* a more appealing project for the WCF jury?

Naishtat: I wouldn't consider *History of Fear* a major success, considering its critical harvest at the time of the Berlinale premiere and the fact that, apart from the festival circuit, the film remained largely unseen -in comparison with, say, other Argentine films that premiered in Berlinale, such as *El Custodio*. I am certainly more willing to believe that they found my current project *Rojo* appealing and pertinent enough as give it a grant -which I believe, was decided by a committee totally different from that of *History of Fear*.

Question: Can you comment on the extensive festival journey of *History of Fear*? How integral is the festival circuit in the production, exhibition, and distribution of your work?

Naishtat: For a film like *History of Fear*, which has a slight narrative drive and focuses on atmosphere and formal approaches to social comment, the festival circuit will be the natural environment. It was thanks to the festival circuit that the film was screened in over 30 countries, also allowing myself as a director to join the film in many of those places. Through those festival attendances I was able to interact in Q&A's with audiences around the world, engaging in rich and fulfilling debates with people from the most diverse backgrounds. This is of course a major reward for any filmmaker and particularly for a first film. Networking-wise, the festival circuit opens a number of opportunities not only for the distribution in at least some of the territories where those festivals are held but also for upcoming projects. Such was the case for myself with a particular case, the Festival of Jeonju (South Korea), which after giving an award for *History of Fear*, granted me a spot on the *Cinema Project* consisting of a carte blanche to shoot a small scale feature fully financed by them.

Question: Some of the WCF-supported filmmakers mentioned moving towards installations, art pieces, exhibitions in museums etc. because it is 'more secure financially.' Do you agree that the difficulty of securing funding for feature film production force (or encourage) filmmakers to seek funding from other sources or work in different forms/formats?

Naishtat: I certainly agree that it is not easy at all to finance film projects, both arthouse or mainstream. As for considering other formats, I would do it out of curiosity or

intuition. I do not think any of the arts formats or forms provide much financial security, nor I expected to have such a thing when I decided to do films.

Question: In terms of theatrical release beyond festivals, what kind of experiences have you had with *History of Fear*? How do you evaluate the admission numbers and audience reactions your film elicited in Argentina and abroad? Would you say the festival trajectory of the film had a positive impact on its theatrical performance?

Naishtat: The film was released in Argentina (2300 admissions), France (2000), Brazil (3000) and Uruguay (likely under 500). So it is accurate to say that theatrical releases were fairly disappointing. The festival circuit should have helped spreading the buzz, and by giving prior coverage to the film. But it was not enough as to get people in theaters.

Question: *History of Fear* has a very distinctive, fragmented narrative structure, rejecting standard storytelling conventions. It also has an extraordinary, sustained sense of unease, whose source eludes the viewer throughout the film. Do you think these elements, making the film ‘less accessible for audiences’ but contributing to a unique directorial signature at the same time, had any impact on how appealing or challenging your project was for funding bodies?

Naishtat: I would think that the funding bodies seek for diversity and innovation in formal approaches, and maybe *History of Fear* fit their expectations in those regards. Having said that, and with a sense of self-critique and retrospection, I would say that

audience accessibility should not be spared in the favor of directorial signatures, certainly both things can and should coexist.

Question: Funds often put an emphasis on the cultural authenticity of projects and the nationality of the director. Do you think that your films grapple with the notions of ‘Argentine identity’ or ‘Argentine society’ in any way? Would you associate your work with any cinematic movement that has emerged from Argentina or Latin America such as ‘New Argentine Cinema’ among others?

Naishtat: In the Argentine context, *History of Fear* would belong to the generation that came right after the *New Argentine Cinema*, both thematically and formally. Certainly there are dialogs among Latin-American filmmakers and films and I would like to think of myself as a Latin-American filmmaker. That said, the globalization has certainly arrived to the arthouse film world and we see now generational convergences that surpass the national or regional background of the filmmakers.

APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW WITH CLAUDIA LLOSA

Question: In most South American films, especially those from Brazil, the pace is very fast, reflecting the hectic nature of daily life. But your films have a leisurely pace. The rhythm is almost meditative.

Llosa: I didn't want to give the viewer the time to get a glimpse of what they're seeing, but take their time and understand what is going on. The frame itself contains enough information for the viewer and I want them to go to the different places to see different layers of the film. Be sure that you don't lose your audience losing time, but consciously tell them 'I don't want you to rush.' It is in our country culture that time is different than in Europe. It is circular, not linear. Time is a personal conception and I want to involve this feeling and space in that type of extension, like you never know what time it is. Like the clock man in *Madeinusa*. I am trying to go with that rhythm of the nature, to express the idea of rhythm.

Question: Both of your films are set in places with very specific identities where people have strong religious leanings. Does that relate to your personal experience, how you grew up?

Llosa: I am a girl of the city. I was born in Lima. Because of my father we traveled a lot, but always as a visitor. When I was a little child, so, I always had the feeling that I belonged to a place that I didn't belong. I am Peruvian and [live] in a big city and speak Spanish, so it feels European, but it's not. It is probably [a] multicultural society but its

actually fragmented, without communication. That is something that really touches me from the very beginning. I consciously wanted to relate to this important problem we as a country have to deal with. But somehow we don't.

Question: How do you link such issues with the narratives of your films?

Llosa: It is there really, but you need to put it in a conscious level to make people talk about [these] things that matter to me. One of the first images of *The Milk of Sorrow* is that of a woman blossoming inside. This has to do with roots. I wanted to talk about matters that are important to me, like migration from country to Lima, the violation of the woman and inheritance. These are the things I lived during my youth in Peru. It is not something I will do all the time, I can do films that have nothing to do with social [society] or politics but I can say that both these films are about that.

Question: Even though the plots of your films are disturbing and controversial, you approach them in a very restrained, mature manner.

Llosa: It has to do with my personality. I do believe that everybody is entitled to say whatever they want to say. When I finish a film, that film does not belong to me. I have to respect the opinions and because I respect that opinion, I have to analyze it. Art has richness of interpretation and it is that richness that brings me responsibility. These subjects are so difficult and complex; they are like prisms. I have to be [polistratic?] because when you look like this and look like that, it is different. So in that way,

rationally I accept everything but emotionally, of course it is difficult. But as a filmmaker I have to leave that at home.

Question (Dorothee Wenner): *The Milk of Sorrow* was a film that was partly funded by the WCF, and everyone here was totally happy about the success of our dear colleague. When you started out making a film in Peru, it is a country that doesn't have a big funding system, it doesn't have a lot of cinemas. When you recollect how you started out this project, when and where the pitfalls? When was it very difficult to attain what we put as a motto to our WCF - that is 'the more local, the more international' - that sounds like a very good idea but it could be very tough thing to realize especially for a filmmaker coming from a country that doesn't have a lot of cinematic infrastructure?

Llosa: Yes, indeed it is very difficult. I suppose you all know that. But in my case, I have the opportunity to live in Barcelona, I also have double nationality, Italian nationality. That means I can receive the funding of European governments as if I was a director from Europe. So I have somehow the best of both worlds. I also started a production company with my first feature film *Madeinusa*. I started that film as a co-production with Spain and we had an amazing experience with both of them - one is a company in Madrid, the other in Barcelona. They helped me to start the second one immediately. I was writing just during the post-production of *Madeinusa*. So both films are kind of a diptych. It is the same main actress. I just needed to go further in what I wanted to say with my first film and I had the same support of producers. When I started with *Madeinusa*, European co-productions were at the best time ever, it was kind of easy to start raising the money.

But with *The Milk of Sorrow* was at a very difficult moment. We had a lot of problems to find the co-production partners [while] preserving the identity of the film. We started with Peru and actually WCF was the first fund we received. It was the point of start to build up the rest of the funding. It is like a big step and it depends on the other one, the other one, it is a long process.

Question (Dorothee Wenner): Can you give us one more example of what you found was difficult in order to fulfill all the criteria for the international money coming into the project?

Llosa: A difficulty was the script. The script is about a girl who has a potato inside herself and it is growing, blossoming during the film. The idea to understand what was the importance of that, the inheritance of violent conflict, the war, of things we are still not able to say out loud - because it was very difficult in my country to talk about what happened in that period. For me, it was important to actually make the project easy for people to understand the importance of the project. I wrote so many letters and essays about things surrounding the project in order to present to a co-producer, with samples and photos. I really built a world surrounding the project, not only showing the script but showing a lot of information, research, talking about things that are so different and strange for others. Then you have to work with so many people from abroad. In this case I worked with for all the main chiefs of the crew were from Spain. I had to make them connect deeply with the profound necessity of the story. That is a process that has to build in time, with a lot of enthusiasm, love and care. And you need to find the right persons to

do because not everybody goes to a country and understands deeply the roots of its problems. So I think the translation between all parts, the producers, holding them all together in one message that contains all that you need to say was the most difficult part.

Question (Dorothee Wenner): What is your approach towards English? Let's assume somebody gives you as much money as you need but says you have to shoot in English.

Llosa: Both of my first two films are related to themes that have to do with beliefs, myth, and the Andes culture. Quechua language is very important in these films and it was very important to communicate in Quechua even though I don't speak Quechua myself. I can understand perfectly well when my actors are performing well or not. If it is human you can relate to it, it is not about language. It totally depends on the subject you are touching. In my case, it was important to have the dichotomy between Quechua and Spanish, the opposition between the modern society versus tradition and ancestral Andes culture. How difficult it is to communicate with these two worlds that are same country, but it is a fragmented country in a way.

Question (Dorothee Wenner): How important is it for you to live where you live with regards to the stories you are telling and the work set-up you need in order to make the films you want to do?

Llosa: When I started living in Europe ten-twelve years ago, the situation in Peru was totally different. At that time you had almost one film shooting in five years or so. It was very difficult even to work in the system, it was too little. Imagining to be a filmmaker

was like trying to become an astronaut, it was not possible, not a question. I did not actually come to Europe [having] decided to become a director. I just became one. But it is very important to live in both worlds because it is very difficult to live only off the films you do. In Barcelona, I am able to teach in a university and come to festivals [like Berlin] because it is near. From Peru, you have to save a lot of money just to come to Europe once or twice a year. So it would make it very difficult for you if you want to meet co-producers, go to markets, to just stay in contact with people you already know. It is much easier to go back to Peru where you know everybody and in one second you are part of the county again and you don't have to build everything from zero again.

Question (audience member): What do you think is the impact of your films on the local film community? Do you think people get inspired, do you get new people learn how to work with cameras, new writers?

Llosa: In my films, the impact was amazing in both of the sides. When you are making a film in a country that doesn't have an industry, you have to build your way every day. You don't have the experience to just go to a place and know what is going to happen. There is a lot of energy put into just understanding how to do simple things. For example. how to bring the material back to Europe? We didn't have a way to do that. So we made pizza boxes and put all the developed material into pizza boxes, we didn't have typical boxes that are safe enough to travel. Every detail you have to build it up. So everybody is touched by that, by fighting. People from Peru learn a lot from people from abroad and the other way around. People that work in the film business in Peru are people that do

[so] because they love cinema. They don't work because of money. They build their entire careers in the love of film. And that energy is somehow lost in a very big industry. So I think both sides fall in love with the other one. I actually try to encourage melting pots in my crew because I always think they will find ways to grow in that process.

APPENDIX 4

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN TRENGOVE

Question: When I looked at the list of the funds that supported *The Wound*, it is really impressive. Almost every major fund supported this film. Can you talk a little bit about the funding process?

Trengove: It was a difficult film to make for all the obvious reasons. Subject matter is obscure, political, deals with heavy issues. It is contentious and controversial in South Africa. So there wasn't a lot of support at home. Fortunately, there are these amazing, mostly European film funds. For all of those reasons, we reached out to an international community to get the film made. They do this crazy thing where they give you money for free. You have to work hard for it, it is competitive and you have to deal with a lot of rejection but we were very fortunate that there were these amazing people in different places that understood what we were doing and got behind it. Festivals are a whole other thing. The festivals create these development workshops. It is a very interesting thing. It took me a while to understand it, but it is a multifaceted thing. They create these sort of development workshops. On the surface it is about helping filmmakers develop their scripts and introduce them to financiers and help you take the next few steps. But on another level, it is also about cultivating a relationship between the festival and the filmmakers. You go through this process, then you are branded as part of the family. It is a way of keeping these channels between filmmakers and festivals open. It helps a lot of people in meaningful ways, I think. It is about festivals taking some kind of responsibility

in order to stay relevant and to put interesting films on. They have got to be a part of putting those films on.

Question: You already have such a long history with Berlin from the Talent Campus to presenting the film here. Among other funds and festival experiences, where do you place Berlin in particular?

Trengove: I think very high. It had to do with the time we came here but I think the script really benefitted from the time at the Script Station. I was introduced to an amazing Dutch script consultant and she was very instrumental in helping me find some certain direction with the story. But it was also a very pivotal moment. Some of the other workshops we did early on were instrumental in the final financing of the film, more so than the actual creative development because a lot of that had already happened. I think, for me, Berlin stands out especially for the Script Station.

Question: The film has a very visceral impact, a sensual dimension to it. A part of it is that the screenplay is deliberately stripped down in a positive sense, it is freed of any melodrama or excess. Was it something you had at the script stage or did you take things out as you went along?

Trengove: From the beginning, there was this idea that there were very few elements in the story. It happens outside of society, so there is no cities or infrastructure, like signifiers you would associate. There is just these men, and no women in the film, in an outside natural space. So already there was a stripped down principle from the beginning.

But we shot much more. Certainly the script was much fuller, there was an entire storyline we ended up taking out. So I think the visceral feeling you describe came a lot in the edit. I have to give my French sales agent from Pyramide credit, who stayed close throughout the editing process, always pushed me to keep taking more out and just trust that it was all working.

Question: There seems to be a more political and social dimension that is about patriarchy and homophobia not just in this specific group, but as a broader issue. And then there is a human dimension about loving or desire. How do these co-exist for you?

Trengove: It certainly started with the political idea. It was very much a response to a political climate that we are in in South Africa, but also around the world. But I think that my sensibility is visceral. It was about wrestling with an abstract idea in my own body and in my own feelings. I personally don't respond to films that are overtly intellectual. I have to feel something in order to think about it. I do hope we avoided agenda, it is not about a cause, it is not about activism, it is not about saying 'this is how the world should be.'

Question: Was there a short film that served as the basis of this, or was it something totally separate?

Trengove: Yes, there was a short film that was a precursor but it doesn't have anything to do with what *The Wound* is now. It came out with my collaboration with a novelist whose first novel was about a young man who goes into the initiation. It was a very interesting

book and there was one chapter that I responded, so we thought of making a short film. It is similar in the sense that it deals with similar themes, it deals with the initiation, but it is a completely different story.

Question: If you had not received the European funding that you did, how would the project change, would it even be possible to make it in the first place?

Trengove: It is nice that we are talking about something different because we have been getting a lot of the same questions. There is a certain kind of film that would not exist if it was not for these European funds. But it is obviously a problematic thing. For world cinema to be solely reliant on European film funds makes it vulnerable. There is a danger of tailoring your film to the funds. You have to appeal to this organization, but you also have to resist that influence, power. It is an ancient colonial kind of interaction. There is this idea of the European master and these films from the developing world that come and ask for money. But I have to say that there are extraordinary people administering these funds, people who really understand the importance and the value of these kinds of films, and who set as a very high priority, artistic independence.

Question: Maybe it is not the best question for you because this is your first film. But do you think being here, achieving this success, having cultivated these relationships will be an advantage moving forward?

Trengove: It helps because I have now proven that I can do something. The first one is hard because you need to convince people to that you can do something you haven't done

before. Every film presents its own challenges and I will have to pitch my idea all over again. But at least these people know me and they know my work. So a lot of that initial complication is avoided.

Question: The film is not trying to prove its authenticity to appeal to a European authority, it doesn't feature a white man's perspective. But does it make it more difficult for you to be understood when you are talking to producers, apply to festivals?

Trengove: Well, thank you, that means a lot. We don't have a white character who is guiding us through this story, who is providing us with a second hand glimpse into this custom. There were a lot of people who just did not respond and did not give us funding. But people who did come on board got it. I did not feel that I had to combat that within the team I was working with. But maybe that perception was out there. We faced a lot of rejection. I know it looks like everybody came on board but there were also a lot of people who said no.

APPENDIX 5

INTERVIEW WITH ALAIN GOMIS

Question: This film is about a woman, but it is also about a city, Kinshasa. Why did you choose this city?

Gomis (translated from French by translator): In a way, Kinshasa is a very universal city because it represents other cities. It is a city without make up, and relationships between people [there] are really direct and sincere. It is also because the infrastructure is so fragile, it is almost as if it does not exist. It is in this way after war, dictatorship, colonialism. It is like a city of wild capitalism.

Question (anonymous journalist): The film is fiction, but looks like a documentary. I want to ask about the proportions between these two worlds, because nowadays documentaries and fiction are more and more similar.

Gomis (translated from French by translator): Again, it is like a film without make up. It could look like a documentary but my desire is to be really sincere and natural, to approach the reality of Félicité without any artifact. To be powerful, deep, and sincere. But it is a movement. The beginning is more like fiction, and we go into something more and more simple.

Question (anonymous journalist): How did you meet Vero as this is the first film she has done?

Gomis (translated from French by translator): We had casting [sessions] and she was there, but she was not very confident about coming because she was quite famous. But people around her really gave her the desire to try and it was very successful. When I first met Vero, I did not think she was right because I was looking for someone older. But she really brought her soul and she was deeply involved in this character. So she made me change my perspective on this character, she made the character stronger.

Question (anonymous journalist): The way you shoot, attach the camera to the character, reminded me of *Rosetta* by Dardenne Brothers. Were they an influence in the construction of this film?

Gomis (translated from French by translator): No, I know their films very well and respect them a lot. But I did not want to make a sociological film at all. Their films are very specifically Belgian. I, as a French/Senegalese/Bissau-Guinean, arrived in Kinshasa to make a film. My strongest desire was to show the inside of myself in this character of Félicité. In terms of shooting style, I wanted to stay really free, that is why I took a small group and light [equipment] to make this film, to stay very flexible. For me, the difference is that I do not want an interview [with the character]. I really wanted the public to go inside the intimacy of Félicité. To surrender, to give up, to really open the soul of the character without putting any frontier. And for an actor or actress, or for any human being in general, to let somebody come inside your comfort here, you need to be really close. When you are here, and then here [moves hands to signal proximity], you

have a different kind of relationship. First you are like ‘this is okay,’ then you are like ‘I am confident.’

Question (anonymous journalist): The music is very important. A magical moment is when we hear the song by Arvo Pärt. Why did you choose that particular piece?

Gomis (translated from French by translator): It is a natural, organic choice. For me it is a very immediate connection. When I came to Kinshasa, I realized this quickly. It is a city with a very strong musical tradition. I also discovered that the classical music scene there is very lively. People who do other jobs during the day, maybe as a driver, play classical music at night. Music in Kinshasa is music we can also hear in Europe. There is also this orchestra, they are so generous, they love this music, live this music. They are workers, not professional musicians but every night they go and play Haydn, Mozart. In a way, how come we cannot imagine that this is it, that they simply do? It is natural, some things are connected wherever you are. You have Arvo Pärt here, and there [in Africa, and in Europe], but for me it is the same because it is the same connection.

Question (anonymous journalist): You said in an interview, ‘not being able to love one’s own life is one of the greatest forms of violence there is.’ For Félicité, the worst thing happens, but then she chooses to be happy. For you, is happiness a choice?

Gomis: No. I don’t think so. You say that. Maybe at some point, if you are honest enough and ready to lose everything, magical things can happen. Sometimes, you need to lose everything you have to be able to see the small things. This is what happens to Félicité.

She is a very strong woman. But somehow, she is disconnected from real life because she is always fighting. She doesn't even allow herself to love herself. In this struggle every day, she destroys herself. Everyone around her, all the media even, tells her to not love herself, her life. Happiness is not that easy, it is not a choice. It is a long journey, you need to let happiness come inside you.

Question: Can you talk a little bit about the funding and financing of the film in relation to the festival?

Gomis: This is a film with a very small budget, it doesn't have very grand commercial prospects. So coming to a great festival and finding partners who would help us make the film was very important. It is true that you find partners in great festivals. It is also important for all the people who engaged in the film, committed to this film to finally come to a big festival like Berlin at the end. In our society, for films that do not have obvious commercial outlook, there is a very bad stigma attached. And festivals, being in a festival, liberates us from that a little. Funds like WCF or Hubert Bals in Rotterdam, many different things like that exist, like CNC in France. They give us a little bit of freedom in the film industry, which is always about money. There is a very different way of doing things if you have a small budget and fortunately funds like WCF and Berlinale help these small films. There is an obsession with money, but festivals allow the filmmakers to show something else. We need that.

Question: The film was funded in part by WCF here and your previous film was in competition here, and now you are presenting this one.

Gomis: I am happy to be here. We are very happy to show the film here, even if sometimes people just say ‘what is this?’ We are grateful that we have the opportunity to make a film like this. It is hard, but it is also a great pleasure. It was a big love, a big commitment. Every day on the set was a big pleasure even if it was really crazy. There are always hundreds of things you want to do. You want to shoot, you want to include a symphony orchestra in the movie! So let’s go! Even the sequences in the hospital, it is a real hospital. It is hard, there is no money, you hear people crying because somebody dies three times a day. And you are here, shooting. Every day on this one was like that, very intense. So you owe something to these people. So we are very happy to have them [people who worked in the film or are depicted in it] all here.

Question (anonymous journalist): We talked a lot about the film and its making but can you talk about the character of Papi?

Gomis (translated from French by translator): Tabu [not Papi] in fact. I love this guy, really. He is a weak man. He is very bulky, large. But he has certain weaknesses. There is a kind of humanity in him that I like. He drinks a lot, but in fact he is very nascent, he has not been responsible for anyone in his life. He has never had the responsibility and it is a weakness. But then they meet, and what is a man, what is a woman, what is a couple? They live together, they heal each other, accept each other.

APPENDIX 6

INTERVIEW WITH JULIA MURAT

Question: What was the starting point? From where did the project start?

Matias Mariani: We always imagined it as the start of a relationship, the moment that they decide to live together. Am I right in saying that?

Murat: Yes, we had this idea that they don't really know each other before actually they start living together. It is a decision, spur of the moment for them. It is not like they were planning for a while to live together. But at the same time, I talked to the actors, and they were rehearsing a scene, where it is the first time that they [characters, not actors] meet, which was that they meet in a [dance] piece she makes with her company. He doesn't like dance at all, he is there just because he has a friend. So the actors came up with this back story.

Question: What kind of preparatory work did you do? So much of the film is about movement, something you cannot really put on paper.

Matias Mariani: We started by indicating in the script where the scenes dealing with art would be, without describing them. Then Julia organized a workshop with one sculptor and a choreographer, and then that was incorporated into the rest.

Murat: Yes, but that was like four years ago. Then we came back to the script, did the casting and talked to the actors, and went back to the script once again. We did two months of rehearsals for the dance scenes, and then went back to the script again. So the script was made with the dance the whole time.

Question: When you were introducing the film yesterday, you talked about the funding situation in Brazil and the new regulations there. Can you talk a bit about the process of gathering financial sources together? How essential were the European festival funds for this film in particular?

Murat: The first thing we got was a local fund from the city of Rio de Janeiro, and this was for development. And with that one we did the workshop. Then we got the Hubert Bals Fund, we started the casting and improved the script. And then we got Ibermedia, also for development and for pre-production. Then we got ANCINE, the national fund I was talking about yesterday, and then we got WCF. So it was like a mix of international and local, national funds.

Question: This is a very personal film, somehow falling outside of the types of cinema that are often thought to appeal to funding bodies, films with a social or political agenda. Did you have any difficulty in getting across what you were going for?

Murat: I would say so. I think we had the national ones because I had already made *Found Stories* and it was successful. So in Brazil, we already had the possibility to fund the film a little bit more easily. But it was quite difficult for people to understand the film by reading the script. Usually they would read the script and say that the film was very conceptual. They weren't really able to see the narrative, the story inside the script because there are so many things about dance and sculpture in the middle. When people read the script, they had difficulty to understand the film that is now on the screen.

Mariani: I think it is also interesting that Julia's first film *Found Memories* got a lot of funds from outside Brazil, but Brazil itself didn't commit to the film until it was already in Venice, already well received. So I think they felt a little bit challenged by that. In a way, they also invested early in the project because they felt that they almost lost an opportunity.

Murat: I also said a lot about that in the interviews. I kind of pushed them, they had to! Now that we are in Berlin, let's see what happens!

Question: Did you construct the whole story, for yourself as writers, or was it in movements, slightly more abstract?

Murat: It was conceptual because the initial idea was to talk about equilibrium in dance, sculpture and love. So we wanted to make a story that allowed us to talk about equilibrium and have dance, sculpture also. That concept was the basis of three stories, then we built a narrative around it.

Mariani: It was a big challenge for me because when I write, I usually think of situations, but Julia's proposal was shocking to me. 'We are going to make a film about equilibrium.' Okay, but what is the story? She said 'let's figure out a story that fits on that, and not the other way around.' Then I said, how can you do that? So in the beginning it was bit tough.

Question: Then would you say there never really is an equilibrium in relationships, especially when artists are involved because they need their own space?

Murat: The beginning of the film was a performance by Marina Abramovic, she did in the 1970s, it is called *Rest Energy*. Two people are in front of one another, and there is a bow and arrow between them, and the arrow is facing her heart. And they are in equilibrium, if one of them gets movement, the arrow is going to go straight to her heart. For me, that image was the image of a relationship, which is basically, ‘there is no equilibrium, but somehow you have to constantly look for equilibrium, otherwise you are going to hurt yourself.’

Question: One of the most striking aspects for me was that we hardly ever leave the warehouse. Even when there is a football scene, it is indoors. What was the rationale behind this insistence on staying indoors?

Mariani: Julia is a very practical filmmaker. At first it was an economic restraint, let’s make a film that we can make with a small budget. So maybe that was the first seed. But then in different drafts, we did go out and we did see the city and stuff like that. And then we had a wonderful consultant, Miguel Machalski, an Argentine/French screenwriter. He worked with us a lot and one day he said ‘you guys need to be brave, need to put it all in there. You are kind of trying to put it all in there but also not, and it is weird, it is not working.’ He took out all the scenes from outside and it was a big decision.

Murat: Yes, and I think it adds a lot to the claustrophobia of the relationship. That is the formal choice that talks about the relationship, that says ‘you cannot run away from it.’

Question: Where did this idea of the line come from?

Murat: It is an idea we had much before the film. I always find the idea of a string, a border interesting. Initially we were thinking of a line from Mexico to Rio de Janeiro!

Mariani: So when she proposed the idea of equilibrium, I kind of brought that back from the back of my head. For me it talks about how you are intrinsically connected. You cannot escape, but the actual line is conceptual, imaginary.

Murat: In the script, the last scene was not that one. It was that she used to cut the line. It was kind of saying ‘you have to cut the tie.’ But I think it is much more beautiful that we now have the pendulum and the circle, it goes on.

Question: An actress who can dance or a dancer who can act, what was your priority in casting?

Murat: In the beginning, my priority was the dance and I started looking for dancers and worked only with dancers. And Raquel, she was actually an acrobat with Cirque du Soleil for three or four years. So her past was much more acrobatics than dance. But when we did the test, she was the best one in drama. She was also good in dance, so it was quite difficult for me to decide which one was more important. Because if the dance scenes did not function, the film itself would melt. But at the same time, it was also a film and drama was of course necessary to make you engaged with the film. So we actually started working with her on the dance scenes for almost a year and she really dedicated herself. She is someone who made a lot of dance classes, she lost a lot of weight.

Question: What did you take from the workshop you mentioned earlier to the script?

Murat: I felt that dance and sculpture needed to go one with the other. After some time creating the sculpture and dance, we completely changed the script, the order even.

Before, it was like three different languages.

Mariani: And as a writer, I had not been to a dance rehearsal before. I didn't know how people behaved, how dancers talked to each other. So for me, it was not possible for me to write about it before actually seeing how people behave, how they relate, how do they convey an idea.

Murat: And it is the same thing with the sculpture. It was more difficult to write about sculpture. In dance, you put all the ideas out there, sculpture is more inside, internal.

Mariani: You see so many films with artists working, but it is so fake, so idealized.

Painters splashing paint on a big canvas. In the beginning, Julia said 'this is what we need to avoid, this kind of over-idealization of the artistic process.' It should look like hard work, with real sweat. We saw that New York film.

Murat: With short parts from Coppola and Scorsese. As a film it is not bad, but in Scorsese, maybe Coppola, there is an artist and whenever he creates, it is suddenly there! Okay, this is what we want to avoid.

Question: When the reviews come for their work in the film, she doesn't even want to hear but he reads them anyway. It is almost like another challenge, another friction in addition to their personal relationship. Professional and personal affect each other for these characters.

Murat: I would say it is exactly same thing with dance, sculpture, and narrative. It is impossible to define a way, both of these things intervene each other. That is also how it is in my own life. I think we draw a lot from our own lives. We also always, whenever we read the critics, if it is good, we just let go because it should not inflate your ego. But if it is bad, it really touches you.

Question: Some of the love scenes are pretty intense and physical. This grounds the story in a way; against all the concepts, you need this physicality.

Murat: I think the sex scenes were very important for me because the sex changes according to where you are in a relationship. I want to show that somehow. The sex is not the same every time they have sex. Every time they have sex in different positions, but also with different intention, love, different affection. And I want to show sex as this normal thing in relationships, part of the relationship, it changes with the relationship. I did not want to put more importance on the sex or romanticize it. It is strange that because of that, sex scenes become stronger, people usually talk about them after the film. Because we tried to make these scenes very normal scenes. We did write the scenes, the positions, what they would be doing. That was difficult for me to rehearse and for the actors also. It is not something you can rehearse.

Question: One dance scene stands out from the others. In most scenes, she is seen rehearsing with her headphones on. But once, she just turns on the volume and lets herself go and dances.

Murat: That is the only dance scene which is completely narrative. It is not part of the rehearsals. She just goes, and feels, and that could be a performance. The way she approaches real life and the way she turns it into a performance. Like the scene where she reads a book and then we realize this is actually a performance. She did not pretend to create at that moment but something happens. I think it has a different layer. It is the first moment she is actually inside of her heart, she has no judgement.

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Filmography

Aala Kaf Ifrit (Beauty and the Dogs). Directed by Kaouther Ben Hania. 2017. Tunisia, France, Sweden.

Amores Perros. Directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu. 2000. Mexico.

L'Avventura. Directed by Michelangelo Antonioni. 1960. Italy, France.

Batalla de Chile, La: La Lucha de un Pueblo sin Armas (The Battle of Chile). Directed by Patricio Guzmán. 1975-1979. Venezuela, France, Cuba.

Bienvenue Chez Les Ch'tis (Welcome to the Sticks). Directed by Dany Boon. 2008. France.

Blade Runner. Directed by Ridley Scott. 1982. United States, Hong Kong.

Bread and Roses. Directed by Ken Loach. 2000. United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Switzerland.

Botón de Nácar, El (The Pearl Button). Directed by Patricio Guzmán. 2015. France, Chile, Spain, Switzerland.

Carne y Arena (Virtually Present, Physically Absent). Directed by Alejandro Gonzalez Iñárritu. 2017. United States, Italy, Mexico.

Carol. Directed by Todd Haynes. 2015. United Kingdom, United States.

Cave of Forgotten Dreams. Directed by Werner Herzog. 2010. Canada, United States, France, Germany, United Kingdom.

Chacun son Cinéma ou Ce Petit Coup au Coeur Quand La Lumière s'éteint et que Le Film Commence (To Each His Own Cinema). Anthology film directed by various directors. 2007. France.

Cidade de Deus (City of God). Directed by Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund. 2002. Brazil, France.

Ciénaga, La (The Swamp). Directed by Lucrecia Martel. 2001. Argentina, France, Spain, Japan.

Contes de la Nuit, Les (Tales of the Night). Directed by Michel Ocelot. 2011. France.

Croods, The. Directed by Kirk De Micco and Chris Sanders. 2013. United States.

Custodio, El (The Minder). Directed by Rodrigo Moreno. 2006. Argentina, France, Germany, Uruguay.

Eden. Directed by Mia Hansen-Løve. 2014. France.

En Attendant Les Hirondelles (Until the Birds Return). Directed by Karim Moussaoui. 2017. France, Germany, Algeria, Qatar.

Félicité. Directed by Alain Gomis. 2017. France, Belgium, Senegal, Germany, Lebanon.

Gwoemul (The Host). Directed by Bong Joon Ho. 2006. South Korea.

Hele sa Hiwagang Hapis (A Lullaby to the Sorrowful Mystery). Directed by Lav Diaz. 2016. The Philippines, Singapore.

Himmel über Berlin, Der (Wings of Desire). Directed by Wim Wenders. 1987. West Germany, France.

Historia del Miedo, La (History of Fear). Directed by Benjamin Naishtat. 2014. Argentina, France, Germany, Uruguay, Qatar.

Historias Mínimas (Intimate Stories). Directed by Carlos Sorin. 2002. Argentina, Spain.

Histórias que Só Existem Quando Lembradas (Found Memories). Directed by Julia Murat. 2011. Brazil, Argentina, France.

I am not a Witch. Directed by Rungano Nyoni. 2017. United Kingdom, France.

Intouchables. Directed by Olivier Nakache and Eric Toledano. 2011. France.

Jodaeiye Nader az Simin (A Separation). Asghar Farhadi. 2011. Iran, France.

Junainat al-Asmak (The Aquarium). Directed by Yousry Nasrallah. 2008. Egypt, France, Germany.

Kis Uykusu (Winter Sleep). Directed by Nuri Bilge Ceylan. 2014. Turkey, Germany, France.

Land and Freedom. Directed by Ken Loach. 1995. United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, Italy, France.

Liverpool. Directed by Lisandro Alonso. 2008. Argentina, France, Netherlands, Germany, Spain.

Loong Boonmee Raleuk Chat (Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives). Directed by Apichatpong Weerasethakul. 2010. Thailand, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Spain, Netherlands.

Machuca. Directed by Andrés Wood. 2004. Chile, Spain, United Kingdom, France.

Madeo (Mother). Directed by Bong Joon Ho. 2017. South Korea.

Madeinusa. Directed by Claudia Llosa. 2006. Peru, Spain.

Making of. Directed by Nouri Bouzid. 2006. Tunisia.

Mat i Syn (Mother and Son). Directed by Aleksandr Sokurov. 1997. Russia, Germany.

Meyerowitz Stories (New and Selected), The. Directed by Noah Baumbach. 2017. United States.

Moartea Domnului Lăzărescu (The Death of Mr. Lăzărescu). Directed by Cristi Puiu. 2005. Romania.

Mujer sin Cabeza, La (The Headless Woman). Directed by Lucrecia Martel. 2008. Argentina, France, Italy, Spain.

Niña Santa, La (The Holy Girl). Directed by Lucrecia Martel. 2004. Argentina, Italy, Netherlands, Spain.

Nostalgia de la Luz (Nostalgia for the Light). Directed by Patricio Guzmán, 2010. Chile, Spain, France, Germany, United States.

Nueve Reinas (Nine Queens). Directed by Fabián Bielinsky. 2000. Argentina.

Okja. Directed by Bong Joon Ho. 2017. South Korea, United States.

Pendular. Directed by Julia Murat. 2017. Brazil, Argentina, France.

Perros, Los (The Dogs). Directed by Marcela Said. 2017. France, Chile.

Pina. Directed by Wim Wenders. 2011. Germany, France, United Kingdom.

Pizza, Birra, Faso (Pizza, Beer, and Cigarettes). Directed by Israel Adrián Caetano and Bruno Stagnaro. 1998. Argentina.

Post Mortem. Directed by Pablo Larraín. 2010. Chile, Germany, Mexico.

Route Irish. Directed by Ken Loach. 2010. United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Italy, Spain.

Qu'est-ce Qu'on a Fait au Bon Dieu? (Serial (Bad) Weddings). Directed by Philippe de Chauveron. 2014. France.

Rak ti Khon Kaen (Cemetery of Splendor). Directed by Apichatpong Weerasethakul. 2015. Thailand, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Malaysia, South Korea, Mexico, United States, Norway.

Rosetta. Directed by Jean Pierre and Luc Dardenne. 1999. Belgium, France.

Sang Sattawat (Syndromes and a Century). Directed by Apichatpong Weerasethakul. 2006. Thailand, France, Austria.

Saul Fia (Son of Saul). Directed by László Nemes. 2015. Hungary.

Sud Pralad (Tropical Malady). Directed by Apichatpong Weerasethakul. 2004. Thailand, France, Germany, Italy.

Sud Sanaeha (Blissfully Yours). Directed by Apichatpong Weerasethakul. 2002. Thailand, France.

Tabu. Directed by Miguel Gomes. 2012. Portugal, Germany, Brazil, France, Spain.

Teta Asustada, La (The Milk of Sorrow). Directed by Claudia Llosa. 2009. Spain, Peru, Germany.

Tickets. Directed by Ken Loach, Abbas Kiarostami, and Ermanno Olmi. 2005. Italy, United Kingdom.

Timbuktu. Directed by Abderrahmane Sissako. 2014. Mauritania, France.

Toni Erdmann. Directed by Maren Ade. 2016. Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Romania.

Tony Manero. Directed by Pablo Larraín. 2008. Chile, Brazil.

Top of the Lake: China Girl. Directed by Jane Campion and Ariel Kleiman. 2017. Australia, United Kingdom, New Zealand, United States.

Tuche 2 - Le Rêve Américain, Les. Directed by Olivier Baroux. 2016. France.

24 Frames. Directed by Abbas Kiarostami. 2017. Iran, France.

Twin Peaks. Directed by David Lynch. 2017. United States.

Venice 70: Future Reloaded. Anthology film directed by various directors. 2013. Italy.

Viento se Ilevò lo Que, El (Wind with the Gone). Directed by Alejandro Agresti. 1998. Argentina, France, Netherlands, Spain.

Wind that Shakes the Barley, The. Directed by Ken Loach. 2006. Ireland, United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Spain, France, Belgium, Switzerland.

Visage (Face). Directed by Tsai Ming Liang. 2009. France, Taiwan, Belgium, Netherlands.

Voyage du Ballon Rouge, Le (Flight of the Red Balloon). Directed by Hou Hsiao Hsien. 2007. France, Taiwan.

Wound, The. Directed by John Trengove. 2017. South Africa, Germany, Netherlands, France.