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## TRENDS IN CULTURAL JOURNALISM

### The Development of Film Coverage in Cross-National Perspective, 1955-2005

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#### Abstract

Various studies report that cultural journalism increasingly focuses on service and entertainment instead of serious arts coverage. The press prioritizes popular culture over traditional high arts to growing extent. However, this shift in journalistic attention doesn't necessarily signify a straightforward decline in aesthetic standards, as popular cultural forms like film have developed along the lines of high art principles in the past decades. This article charts trends in American, Dutch, French, and German film journalism between 1955 and 2005. It demonstrates that coverage is typified by a serious aesthetic approach from the 1970s onwards. The principles of art are seen to steer journalists' attention to an important degree: the review remains the predominant journalistic genre, and newspapers devote more attention to films by prestigious directors than strictly commercial moviemakers. As such, film's prominence in the press doesn't seem to indicate a decline in serious cultural journalism but rather a reevaluation of a popular cultural form.

#### KEY WORDS

arts coverage; commercialization; cultural journalism; film journalism; popular culture; reviews

## Introduction

Recent worries about the state of professional journalism include reporting on arts and culture. Increased competition between the media, the fragmentation of media audiences, and the dwindling readership of print newspapers seem to result in more efficient news production and a trend towards lifestyle or service journalism (Eide and Knight 1999; Kristensen and From 2012). In cultural journalism, this seemingly translates into a focus on news and entertainment instead of serious arts criticism, catering to the needs of the reader (Hellman and Jaakkola 2011; Verboord and Janssen 2015). Scholars have demonstrated a shift towards treating cultural products as consumer commodities instead of cultural artefacts (Jansson 2002; Kristensen and From 2012), and the growing presence of a journalistic instead of an aesthetic approach to arts journalism (Hellman and Jaakkola 2011). This might relate to trends in the profession of cultural journalists, as younger generations seem to enter the profession via degree programs in journalism or media studies instead of extended study in the humanities (Hovden and Knapskog 2015).

Kristensen (2010) argues that current cultural journalism has developed to represent a continuum between culture, lifestyle, and consumption. Related, studies have shown that over time the press has given priority to popular cultural forms like popular music, film, and television fiction over traditional high arts such as classical music, literature, and theatre to growing extent (Janssen 1999; Janssen, Kuipers, and Verboord 2011) - a development pessimists regard as a sign of the deterioration of serious cultural journalism (Kristensen 2010). However, this shift in journalistic attention does not necessarily signify such a straightforward decline in standards upheld by newspapers at all. Verboord and Janssen (2015) find that while newspapers increasingly cater to the needs of today's readership by focusing more on popular culture, this trend is not necessarily accompanied by the rise of lifestyle perspectives. Moreover, many forms of popular culture have by now developed institutional frameworks that strongly resemble those of the high arts (Janssen, Kuipers, and Verboord 2011). Scholarly work reveals how for example popular music and film have emancipated into diversified cultural forms that include artful products (Baumann 2001; Van Venrooij and Schmutz 2010). In these cases, the press has been shown to apply the principles of art to what is traditionally deemed pop culture (Hicks and Petrova 2006; Kersten 2014; Kersten and Bielby 2012), thereby aiding the constitution of its overall differentiation and legitimacy. As such, the so-called "culture wars" in newspapers, the struggle between principles of high art and commercial culture, might be taking place *within* cultural forms instead of *between* them.

Film in particular is seen as a form of popular culture that comes out of the culture wars a winner, having become rather dominant in newspapers' cultural coverage (Heilbrun 1997; Janssen 1999; Janssen, Kuipers, and Verboord 2011). Film's ascent on the cultural ladder has been well mapped. The idea that film can be viewed as art is widely accepted, yet far from all movies are granted this title (Barthel-Bouchier 2012; Baumann 2001; Kersten and Bielby 2012). This raises the question of *which type* of film has risen to such prominence in the press and whether this rise should even simply be interpreted as an increased focus on pop culture *per se*.

This article examines the development of film journalism in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States between 1955 and 2005. By charting which types of films

receive journalistic attention in national quality newspapers over the years, and how these films are reported on, it aims to uncover whether the shift towards this form of “popular culture” in fact represents a decline in serious cultural journalism or should be understood as indicative of a more complex development.

### **Cultural Journalism in Decline?**

The commercialization of the media industry has led to fierce competition in the past decades: fragmented audiences are drawn away from newspapers by online outlets and publications are forced to find new, efficient approaches to journalistic topics (Hellman and Jaakkola 2011; Kristensen 2012; Kristensen and From 2012). According to Eide and Knight (1999, 526), news media in advanced market democracies have increasingly assumed the task of “service journalism”: content, format, and mode tend to be adjusted to the everyday life world of the audience. In a complex consumer society and under the influence of close relations between advertisers and the press, service journalism in particular offers guidance with regard to matters of consumption (Kristensen and From 2012). Newspapers are seen to advise consumers rather than inform citizens, with journalists avoiding taking up “an obviously pedagogical position vis-à-vis its audience” (Eide and Knight 1999, 527) and choosing to employ a more popular discourse.

With regard to arts and culture coverage, scholars observe various consequences of these trends. Following Jansson (2002), “reflexive accumulation” – i.e. the increased interconnectedness of economic and cultural processes – leads cultural products to be discussed as commercial commodities instead of cultural artefacts to growing extent (Kristensen and From 2012). On the one hand, this translates into the downplaying of serious arts criticism in favour of news, entertainment, and service (Hellman and Jaakkola 2011; Kristensen 2010; 2012). Hellman and Jaakkola (2011, 785) suggest that cultural journalists now tend to lean on a journalistic paradigm instead of an aesthetic paradigm, acting as representatives of the journalistic field in the art field instead of as representatives of the art field in the newspaper. Whereas the aesthetic approach revolves around retrospective in-depth analysis and opinionated criticism by an expert, verbalized in reviews, the journalistic approach consists of objective and informative reporting by non-specialized journalists and includes various journalistic genres.

On the other hand, commercialization of cultural journalism, combined with processes of cultural declassification in the late twentieth century (DiMaggio 1991, 1992), has meant that, while overall cultural coverage is shrinking, cultural forms generally categorized as popular culture gain prominence at the cost of the traditional high arts (Heilbrun 1997; Janssen 1999; Janssen, Kuipers, and Verboord 2011; Verboord and Janssen 2015). For example, film, television fiction, and popular music now receive more attention while art forms such as theatre, literature, and classical music lose ground. As such, newspapers seem to adjust to the existing life world of the public instead of prescribing what specialists might deem most valuable, and pop culture seems to be on the winning side in the “culture wars”. Whether this change of

focus can simply be understood as to signify a decline in serious cultural journalism, however, remains to be seen.

The various realms of what is usually dubbed “popular culture” have emancipated since the second half of the twentieth century. These genres have developed institutional frameworks not unlike those of the high arts, including extensive government support for the cultural industries, prestigious prizes, festivals, and academic scholarship (Janssen, Kuipers, and Verboord 2011). Within sectors like popular music, rock music, film, and television fiction, more artful sections have been differentiated (Baumann 2001; Lavie 2014; Regev 1994, Van Venrooij and Schmutz 2010). Cultural journalists, as important gatekeepers to the cultural field, played no small role in this; by applying high art principles and aesthetic criteria to pop culture, they distinguished culturally valuable products and subgenres from their lesser counterparts, thereby lending legitimacy to these cultural forms as a whole (Schmutz et al. 2010). Their increased attention for and critical assessment of music albums or TV series can thus not simply be regarded as a lack of seriousness in cultural journalism but may rather signal the elevation of popular culture. Whether this is actually the case depends on *which types* or subgenres journalists choose to pay attention to, and *how* they choose to do so.

### **Popular Movie and Art Film**

In the US in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, film was generally seen as a form of light entertainment for the working-class masses, not as a cultural product of potentially artistic merit (Baumann 2007). It was not until the 1960s that circumstances allowed film to be promoted as art. In contrast, the idea of film as art was accepted at an earlier stage in Europe (Elsaesser 2005; McDonald and Wasko 2008). Baumann (2007) stresses three major developments crucial to the realization of the legitimate art world for film: changing opportunity space, institutionalization of practices and resources, and the founding of a legitimating ideology. The aesthetic standards critics put in place proved highly influential (Baumann 2001). In their newspaper reviews, critics adopted “auteurism”, recognizing the film director as the sole creative force from whose genius the entire production sprouts (Sarris 1962). In Europe, this rationale had been deployed since the 1920s, when directors were already largely regarded as *auteurs*. The growing importance of auteurism in the American film field has become apparent through the increased prominence of directors in film coverage (Baumann 2007) and serves as an indicator of the emergence of an art world for film.

Despite the now widely accepted idea that film can be viewed as art (Baumann 2007), and filmmakers as artists, far from all movies and directors are granted these titles. In fact, the popular movie and the art film are often represented as two opposing paradigms in one cultural field. This is in line with Bourdieu’s (1993) model of the “field of cultural production”, which clearly distinguishes between cultural fields that are concerned with producing either mainstream commodities for mass audiences or works of artistic worth for the selected few. Most sociologists of the arts have accepted the idea that the legitimization of cultural products results from the interaction between the various actors in a particular field, who provide them with economic and/or symbolic capital (Allen and Lincoln 2004; Becker 1982). Cultural

producers are commercially successful when they acquire enough economic capital, and reach artistic merit or prestige when provided with symbolic capital. For example, film audiences grant a movie economic capital (i.e. commercial success) by buying tickets. A movie's success in terms of box office returns is crucial to the position its maker can claim in the field (Allen and Lincoln 2004), as reputation is key in the field's risky "hit or miss" business model (Bielby and Bielby 1994; Kapsis 1989). Peer filmmakers reward films with symbolic capital (i.e. prestige) through film festivals and award ceremonies like the Cannes Film Festival and the Academy Awards (although the latter have become a prominent commercial vehicle as well) (Baumann 2007; De Valck 2007; English 2005). Prizes serve as a claim to authority, providing "an institutional basis for exercising, or attempting to exercise, control over the cultural economy, over the distribution of esteem and reward on a particular cultural field – over what may be recognized as worthy of special notice" (English 2005, 51). As recent research shows definite intertwining and overlap between films characterized by either commercial success or prestige (Kersten and Verboord 2014), we use economic and symbolic capital in this study for a gradual rather than dichotomous positioning of the films that journalists choose to report on.

Of course, the film field has witnessed further changes since the emergence of the US film art world in the 1960s (Baumann 2007). In the last few decades of the twentieth century, commercialization forced the film field to continuously come up with new and elaborate strategies to appeal to larger audiences to help them break box office records (McDonald and Wasko 2008). The expensive blockbuster mode of film production has proven its profitability and remains strong in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Baker and Faulkner 1991; Bordwell 2006; Elberse 2013). Making movies has become the business of major media conglomerates with multi-million dollar budgets that allow for state of the art special effects, the inclusion of star actors, and an array of possibilities for synergy (Wasko 2001). As no one is able to predict which of these expensive films will become hits, playing it safe and staying within the borders of mainstream commercial film is often regarded the best option. Independent producers of artistic films struggle to get their risky films financed and distributed.

Meanwhile, the hierarchies between and within cultural forms are seen to crumble (Janssen, Kuipers, and Verboord 2008; 2011), as audiences become more omnivorous in their cultural tastes (Peterson and Kern 1996; Van Eijck and Knulst 2005). These trends of commercialization and declassification (Hesmondhalgh 2006; Prior 2005) combined result in the exchange of filmmaking strategies and principles between the fields of art film and commercial movie (Kersten and Verboord 2014). Over time, novelties make their way to the mainstream filmmakers. Art-house cinema lends strategies, in particular marketing strategies, from the commercial producers in order to survive the increasingly tough economic climate in the cultural industries (Drake 2008). As a result, more artful films have succeeded at the box office in recent years (e.g. *Black Swan* (2010)), while commercial movies have reached critical acclaim in more than one case (e.g. *Avatar* (2009)).

This article examines the development of film journalism in four Western countries over a fifty-year period. It aims to shed light on how the turn towards film in cultural journalism may be interpreted by looking at the types of film reported on and the manner in which this is done.

## Data

For our cross-national study of film journalism, we collected data on films that were covered in the Dutch, French, German, and American newspapers in four reference years; 1955, 1975, 1995, and 2005<sup>1</sup>. We aim to chart the types of film receiving attention over the years and across national contexts.

We selected newspapers that are primarily read by the intellectual and cultural elite because these papers determine to a considerable extent whether and how subjects are discussed within other media and the wider community, and thus fulfil a key role in processes of cultural valorization. Within this category of newspapers, we selected those with a national or supra-national distribution, which had the largest paid circulation and appeared during the entire period studied here: *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* for France; *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* for Germany; *NRC Handelsblad* and *De Volkskrant* for the Netherlands; and *The New York Times* for the US. We focused on four constructed weeks in order to avoid data distortion by the in- or exclusion of certain days of the week or seasonal influences. Our data consisted of 1,902 articles about film in total. The data demonstrate a steady increase in attention for film between 1975 and 2005 (in absolute numbers). The large amount of articles on film published in 1955 is due to *The New York Times*, which published almost 50% of all articles in this reference year.

All articles were allocated codes for a wide range of variables; this included characteristics of the articles themselves (e.g. journalistic genre) as well as the film titles reported upon (e.g. genre, country of origin). In addition to the sampled newspaper articles, online film databases such as the Internet Movie Data Base (IMDB.com) and Box Office Mojo (boxofficemojo.com) served as important sources of information.

Regarding film directors as central figures in film production, we focused on their symbolic and economic capital. We measured a filmmaker's symbolic capital as the amount of prestigious (inter)national film awards and nominations the director received in the decade prior to the relevant reference year, this included the three most prestigious prize categories (Best Picture, Best Director and Best Foreign (Language) Film) of the Academy Awards, the Cannes Film Festival, the French César Awards, the Deutscher Filmpreis and the Dutch Gouden Kalveren. The directors' economic capital was measured by their previous films' performance on annual box office lists in the decade prior to the relevant reference year. We allocated codes for whether the movies these directors made in this period were listed in the American and French box office top 20 in the years of their release (unfortunately, box office lists for Germany and the Netherlands were not available to us for all reference years).

## Results

### *Journalistic Genre*

Our data sample of film journalism in France, Germany, the Netherlands and the US between 1955 and 2005 consisted of a total of 1,902 newspaper articles in total. About 90% of all articles dealt with newly released films (and below, we will only consider these 1,662 articles). This

could be interpreted as a sign of service journalism or consumer guidance as it demonstrates what is newly available in the cinemas. However, logically, new films are simply the ones that hold news value and are therefore relevant to newspapers and their readers. The journalistic genre of these articles on new movies then determines our understanding of their predominance.

Overall, the most prominent journalistic genre in film coverage is the review (Table 1). Only in 1955 did another genre - the news report (often featured in *The New York Times* in this period) - take up the highest percentage of articles. As such, we do not record a trend towards more news, entertainment and service that is typical of service journalism.

[Table 1 near here]

### *Film Type*

We find film coverage to be spread out over different new film titles quite evenly; the number of films covered relative to the number of articles published stays the same over the years and whereas there are a few outliers (most notable in 2005 were for example *Million Dollar Baby*, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, *Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith*, and *Der Untergang*, we do not see high concentrations of films across the sample.

All reviewed films were coded for their main genre, which led to a rudimentary division of drama, comedy, thriller, SF/Fantasy, Musical, Cartoon/Animation, and Documentary films. Table 2 shows that the drama film receives most attention overall, in all sample years and all four countries (but considerably less so in the US, particularly in 2005). Drama is generally regarded the most serious film genre and tends to achieve the most critical acclaim (i.e. prestigious film awards are most often won by dramas). Significant shifts are to be found in the other film genres. There is an increase in journalistic attention for SF/Fantasy film, which seems to fit industry trends: the box office hit lists of the past decades are dominated by fantasy franchises like *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, and *The Lord of the Rings* as Hollywood studios have realized the great commercial potential of this particular genre (Thompson 2003). In the data, this genre is indeed mostly represented by franchises like *Spiderman* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The demise of the musical in film coverage also fits developments in film production, as this type of film was produced considerably less after the collapse of the American studio system (Neale 2008). The attention for the documentary seems to shift over the years, however the larger percentage in 1975 is probably related to the smaller N in this sample year. The relative increase in coverage of this film type in 2005 is due to the release of Michael Moore's sensational *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Overall the attention for cartoons and animations increases over the years, probably due to a process of revaluation of the genre, not in the least stimulated by the more sophisticated productions of Pixar Animation Studios since the late nineties (in 1995 Disney's *Pocahontas* is most notable, in 2005 DreamWorks' *Shark Tale*). The four countries show some particularities: for example, the French newspapers cover more comedies, which might relate to the popularity of the French comedy film on the national market (Barthel-Bouchier 2011). The German papers do not cover cartoons/animations, which might be due to a traditionally more conservative, hierarchical approach to culture (Janssen, Kuipers and

Verboord 2011). The *New York Times* pays relatively more attention to both SF/Fantasy and thriller, which could indicate a more popular approach to film.

[Table 2 near here]

Next, we collected data on the country of origin of the films that receive press coverage. Table 3 shows how many of the reviewed films were domestic or foreign productions, and how many were coproduced by the respective countries.

[Table 3 near here]

Here, we see that overall domestic and foreign productions trade places over the years – domestic productions decline while foreign productions incline. However, this overall trend is in opposition to what happens in two out of four sample countries – the French and particularly the German newspapers pay more attention to foreign products over time. Despite protectionist measures, the French film market does experience trends of globalization (Barthel-Bouchier 2011). The German numbers show the rapid growth of Hollywood’s revenues from the German market since the 1970s, and possibly the emigration of a generation of German filmmaking talent to Hollywood (where some of them became quite successful, famous examples are Moritz Borman, Roland Emmerich, and Wolfgang Petersen) (Krämer 2008). In the Netherlands, the Dutch film has gained interest over the years: stimulating funding schemes have resulted in a number of domestic film hits, particularly since the turn of the century (examples are *Costa!*, *Zwartboek*, *Alles is Liefde*, and a range of successful children’s films). However, this is in relative terms: the Dutch film market is still very strongly dominated by foreign, mostly US, movies. The American newspaper in this sample increases its coverage of foreign films in time; this, and particularly the high point in 1975, is most likely related to the strong decrease of Hollywood output after the collapse of the Studio System and the revaluation of film as an art form that led to an interest in so-called *auteur* films from abroad in the sixties (Baumann 2001).

All articles were then coded for the person or entity primarily focused on (i.e. the principal actor that received the most attention in the text), if any, such as actors, directors, production companies, or screenwriters. Between 1955 and 1975, the proportion of film items focusing on the film director greatly increases (Table 4). From the 1970s onwards, the director appears as the principal feature in film journalism.

[Table 4 near here]

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

In view of the increased centrality of the film director in critical discourse, we took a closer look at the director’s position. As film increasingly became regarded as the expression of



directors' ideas, expectations regarding screenplays also changed; such personal artistic vision is less likely to be expressed through adaptations of existing screenplays or cultural products. To live up to the idea of the individual *auteur*, directors increasingly wrote their own material. Indeed, our data show that the covered films feature a "director-screenwriter" to a growing extent. Whereas in 1955 only 17.1% of all discussed films were written and directed by the same individual, by 1975 this percentage had risen to 42.3% (Table 5). The frequency of articles about adaptations or remakes of existing material such as novels, plays, musicals and operas drops throughout the years, consistent with the rise of the director-screenwriter. This would indicate a focus on more esteemed filmmakers.

[Table 5 near here]

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

As a means of measuring their symbolic capital, we coded directors of the discussed films for winning or being nominated for prestigious awards in the ten years leading up to the newspaper article in question. The percentage of film items devoted to movies by award-winning directors doubles between 1955 and 1975, then remains around 30% in the following decades (see Table 6). This trend is more salient in European papers than in the *NY Times*, which shows no significant shifts between the four sample years. However, the *NY Times*, unexpectedly, does start out with a higher percentage of articles on movies by such prestigious filmmakers in 1955. The attention for movies by acclaimed directors generally reaches its peak in the 1970s (with the exception of the French newspapers) and declines slightly afterwards. Nevertheless, this inclination to review films from directors with symbolic capital appears to have taken root and remains present in film journalism throughout the years.

[Table 6 near here]

We expected an increase in newspaper coverage of films by commercially successful movie directors in the third quarter of the twentieth century. This would fit the overall commercialization of the media and film fields in general. It would also demonstrate a turn towards service journalism; an increased focus on more mainstream consumers' tastes would bring film journalism closer to readers' everyday life. We therefore assessed whether the

filmmakers responsible for the films discussed by journalists grew more or less commercially successful over the years. To do so, we checked whether they succeeded in producing films that appeared in the annual French and American box office top 20 in the decade prior to the reference year. Unexpectedly, we find that the relative attention for movies by commercially successful directors diminishes after 1955, despite an increase in the total absolute numbers (Table 7). In fact, the percentages tend to be cut in half between 1955 and 2005. This trend is salient in the newspapers of all four countries. In addition, the data show no significant cross-national differences, apart from the difference displayed in 1995 due to the very low number of films by popular directors in German newspapers.

[Table 7 near here]

Films by commercially successful filmmakers do not gain prominence in film coverage in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the US. The increased attention for film therefore does not appear to be a strict turn towards straightforward popular culture products.

Now that we have looked at the newspaper coverage of films by commercially successful or prestigious directors separately, we turn our attention to these types of film in relation to each other. Are films by either type of director more often reviewed in the newspapers? And what does the presence of both symbolic and economic capital mean in terms of critical attention? In order to answer these questions, we combined the variables for the symbolic and economic capital of the reviewed films' directors (see Table 8).

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

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

[Table 8 near here]

## Conclusion

Our data confirm the increased attention for the cultural genre of film over the past decades, as uncovered by previous scholarly work (Heilbrun 1997; Janssen, Kuipers, and Verboord 2011). This growth of the amount of newspaper articles on movies does not, however, seem to indicate the straightforward decline of serious cultural journalism. Our analysis of film coverage in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States shows that this coverage mostly consists of reviews, a journalistic genre that is seen to typify a serious aesthetic approach

(Hellman and Jaakkola 2011). Secondly, the director features as principal actor in the majority of film items from the 1970s onwards. This fits the notion that films can be assigned to specific artists instead of just regarded as products of communal labour, and thus film journalists' application of high art principles (Baumann 2001). Moreover, newspapers to growing extent pay attention to films by directors who functioned as the sole creative talent in charge of these productions, consolidating the roles of director and screenwriter. This is mirrored in the decrease of articles on film adaptations or remakes.

When writing about cinema, film journalists devote articles to movies by prestigious directors to a growing extent over the years; this percentage doubles between 1955 and 1975, peaks in the seventies and then stays at around 30% in the following decades. This trend is more salient in the European papers than in the US but is consistent over time. We expected this to be countered by a development in the opposite direction in the late twentieth century, but did not find any increase in coverage of commercially successful moviemakers. In fact, in the overall dataset, prestigious filmmakers have a larger share than their more commercial rivals from 1975 onwards.

These findings show that while film has become a dominant cultural form in cultural journalism, its prominence in the cultural pages of quality newspapers does not necessarily (solely) indicate an inclination towards the principals of popular culture. It rather demonstrates the revaluation of this cultural form and therefore it's increased relevance for newspaper readership. Of course, film journalism covers prestigious as well as commercial film products but the uncovered trends do show that the principles of what film *art* comprehends steer journalists' attention to an important (and lasting) degree. Furthermore, these norms seem to hold despite the occurrence of trends in both the film and media fields that are likely to undermine them. We can conclude that the eminence of cultural forms that are deemed popular culture does not constitute a deterioration of serious cultural journalism per se. Shifts towards lifestyle or service journalism (Eide and Knight 1999; Kristensen and From 2012; Verboord and Janssen 2015) might be looked for *within* the coverage of film, television fiction, or popular music, or even within coverage of traditional high arts for that matter. Follow-up research is needed to chart trends in overall coverage within these cultural forms specifically. Also, as research shows how cultural journalists alternate between more aesthetic and journalistic approaches (Kersten and Bielby 2012; Van Venrooij and Schmutz 2010), future studies are required to qualitatively typify the discourse employed in discussing matters of culture across the board, thereby giving much-needed insight into the inner workings of cultural journalism today.

## NOTES

1. This research was part of the larger research project *Cultural Classification Systems in Transition*, which studied cross-national trends in newspaper coverage of arts and culture in the second half of the twentieth century. For more information on the overall project, its sampling procedures and measurements, see Janssen, Kuipers and Verboord (2008; 2011), and Verboord and Janssen (2015).

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**Table 1** Film items (%) by type of newspaper article, 1955-2005 (N=1605, missing 57)

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



**Table 2** Film items (%) by film genre, 1955-2005 (N=1590, missing 72)

A. Entire sample	1955	1975	1995	2005	X <sup>2</sup>
Drama	52.6	51.9	54.1	47.1	
Comedy	14.9	14.8	16.2	16.9	
Thriller	18.9	16.0	16.8	15.2	
SF/Fantasy	0.7	2.5	4.8	5.5	
Musical	6.7	3.0	-	0.7	
Cartoon/Animation	0.7	0.4	2.0	1.8	
Documentary	5.5	11.4	6.0	12.9	
<i>N</i>	435	237	351	567	***
B. France	1955	1975	1995	2005	
Drama	58.8	53.4	53.9	47.6	
Comedy	16.0	14.8	17.0	25.3	
Thriller	17.6	18.2	19.1	15.3	
SF/Fantasy	-	3.4	5.0	3.5	
Musical	2.5	-	-	1.3	
Cartoon/Animation	0.8	-	0.7	2.2	
Documentary	4.2	10.2	4.3	4.8	
<i>N</i>	119	88	141	229	ns
C. Germany	1955	1975	1995	2005	
Drama	59.3	63.0	62.1	55.3	
Comedy	14.8	7.4	19.0	9.6	
Thriller	18.5	18.5	10.3	9.6	
SF/Fantasy	-	-	1.7	6.4	
Musical	7.4	11.1	-	-	
Cartoon/Animation	-	-	-	-	
Documentary	-	-	6.9	19.1	
<i>N</i>	27	27	58	94	**
D. Netherlands	1955	1975	1995	2005	
Drama	50.0	51.6	62.5	53.1	
Comedy	18.1	16.1	10.9	11.5	
Thriller	19.4	21.0	12.5	10.6	
SF/Fantasy	-	-	3.1	3.5	
Musical	8.3	3.2	-	0.9	
Cartoon/Animation	-	-	6.3	2.7	
Documentary	4.2	8.1	4.7	17.7	
<i>N</i>	72	62	64	113	**
E. United States	1955	1975	1995	2005	
Drama	49.3	45.0	43.2	35.1	
Comedy	13.4	16.7	17.0	12.2	
Thriller	19.4	6.7	20.5	22.9	
SF/Fantasy	1.4	5.0	8.0	9.9	
Musical	8.3	3.3	-	-	
Cartoon/Animation	0.9	1.7	2.3	1.5	
Documentary	7.4	21.7	9.1	18.3	
<i>N</i>	217	60	88	131	***
F. Differences between countries	1955	1975	1995	2005	

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

**Table 3** Film items (%) by film origin, 1955-2005 (N=1636, missing 26)

A. Entire sample	1955	1975	1995	2005	X <sup>2</sup>
Domestic	55.7	32.8	36.6	38.5	
Foreign	39.6	60.7	58.7	56.4	
Coproduction	4.6	6.5	4.7	5.1	
<i>N</i>	454	247	361	574	***
B. France	1955	1975	1995	2005	
Domestic	43.9	35.2	31.3	38.6	
Foreign	49.6	50.5	61.1	55.4	
Coproduction	6.5	14.3	7.6	6.0	
<i>N</i>	123	91	144	233	ns
C. Germany	1955	1975	1995	2005	
Domestic	50.0	17.2	21.7	26.3	
Foreign	34.4	79.3	68.3	69.5	
Coproduction	15.6	3.4	10.0	4.2	
<i>N</i>	32	29	60	95	*
D. Netherlands	1955	1975	1995	2005	
Domestic	5.7	17.9	14.9	26.3	
Foreign	94.3	82.1	85.1	70.2	
Coproduction	-	-	-	3.5	
<i>N</i>	70	67	67	114	*
E. United States	1955	1975	1995	2005	
Domestic	78.2	53.3	71.1	57.6	
Foreign	18.3	43.3	28.9	37.1	
Coproduction	3.5	3.3	-	5.3	
<i>N</i>	229	60	90	132	***
F. Differences between countries	1955	1975	1995	2005	
All countries	***	***	***	***	

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

**Table 4** Percentage of film articles focusing on director (N=1662)

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

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

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

**Table 5** Percentage of film items devoted to films by director-screenwriters (N = 1559, missing 3)

A: Differences across time	1955	1975	1995	2005	$\chi^2$
All countries	17.1	42.3	37.4	43.6	***
France	24.1	45.5	30.4	44.3	***
Germany	23.1	40.7	44.8	43.8	ns
Netherlands	25.4	45.9	45.5	44.1	*
US	9.7	34.5	37.5	42.1	***
<i>N</i>	415	234	350	560	
B: Cross-national differences	1955	1975	1995	2005	
All countries	**	ns	ns	ns	

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

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

**Table 6** Percentage of film items devoted to movies by award-winning directors (N=1559, missing 3)

A: Differences across time	1955	1975	1995	2005	$\chi^2$
All Countries	15.2	33.8	28.3	28.8	***
France	12.1	22.7	36.2	28.5	***
Germany	7.7	40.7	31.0	25.3	*
Netherlands	6.0	47.5	18.2	36.0	***
US	20.9	32.8	21.6	25.4	ns
<i>N</i>	416	235	350	560	
B: Cross-national differences	1955	1975	1995	2005	
All Countries	**	*	*	ns	

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

**Table 7** Percentage of film items devoted to films by directors with box-office success in the past decade (N=1559, missing 3)

A: Differences across time	1955	1975	1995	2005	$\chi^2$
All countries	39.0	29.5	18.0	18.2	***
France	39.7	26.1	23.2	19.3	**
Germany	26.9	29.6	5.2	13.7	**
Netherlands	32.8	31.1	13.6	16.2	**
US	42.2	32.8	21.6	21.4	***
<i>N</i>	162	69	63	102	
B: Cross-national differences	1955	1975	1995	2005	
All countries	ns	ns	*	ns	

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

**Table 8** Percentage of film items devoted to films by directors with commercial success and prestige (N = 1,559, missing 3)

A. Entire Sample	1955	1975	1995	2005	$\chi^2$
Neither commercial success nor prestige	60.0	51.3	63.8	62.0	
Commercial success	24.8	15.0	8.3	9.3	
Prestige	1.0	19.2	18.6	19.8	
Both commercial success and prestige	14.2	14.5	9.7	8.9	
N	415	234	350	560	***
B. France					
Neither commercial success nor prestige	57.8	61.4	52.9	61.4	
Commercial success	30.2	15.9	10.9	10.1	
Prestige	2.6	12.5	23.9	19.3	
Both commercial success and prestige	9.5	10.2	12.3	9.2	
N	116	88	138	228	***
C. Germany					
Neither commercial success nor prestige	73.1	37.0	69.0	66.7	
Commercial success	19.2	22.2	-	8.3	
Prestige	-	33.3	25.9	19.8	
Both commercial success and prestige	7.7	7.4	5.2	5.2	
N	26	27	58	95	**
D. Netherlands					
Neither commercial success nor prestige	67.2	42.6	72.7	57.7	
Commercial success	26.9	9.8	9.1	6.3	
Prestige	-	26.2	13.6	26.1	
Both commercial success and prestige	6.0	21.3	4.5	9.9	
N	67	61	66	111	***
E. US					
Neither commercial success nor prestige	57.3	51.7	69.3	63.5	
Commercial success	21.8	15.5	9.1	11.1	
Prestige	0.5	15.5	9.1	15.1	
Both commercial success and prestige	20.4	17.2	12.5	10.3	
N	206	58	88	126	***

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

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