

***Transnational Cultural Transactions:  
Distributing American Teen-girl films in France, 1986-2006***

by

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in American studies  
and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
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***Transnational Cultural Transactions:  
Distributing American Teen-girl films in  
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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation analyzes the cultural translation performed by French film distributors – whom I call transcultural intermediaries – in the process of marketing Hollywood *teen-girl films*, perceived in France as a uniquely American product. This visual brokering alters the representation of teenage girls so as for the construction of the French audience for teen-girl films to be possible. In the process of translating promotional artifacts, the teen-girl is inscribed within the French antiamericanism discourse, an unwitting act of resistance to the cultural hegemony Hollywood represents abroad.

My analysis contributes to conversations in cultural and media studies as well as in transnational feminism by showing how young women's bodies bear the brunt of commercial and national feuds across borders through advertisement. This project challenges the assumption among teen-film scholars that there are universal teenage values; questions the disciplinary separation between film and marketing of films; elaborates on the works of scholars who see transnational exchanges on various levels as leading to hybridizations of cultures without defining the meanings emerging from this hybridization; finally, helps better understand the mechanism of gender identity construction using translation as the bridge between decoding and re-encoding, thereby critiquing the stereotyping of teen-girls as they are reinvented to fit local cultural imaginaries.

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If we do indeed keep trying to establish those grounding conditions, so that we can undo the harm being done on the gender level through the international civil society and treating gendering with the respect it deserves, because it is the first semiosis of culture itself, then I believe, we will have revised our tasks and not thought too soon, that we share a globalized world, which is our home, where a mother tongue is a translation.

Gayatri Spivak

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## INTRODUCTION

"It's not personal, it's national."  
Hailey Graham (*Stick It*)

Hailey Graham's characterization of her othering by the world of gymnastics after walking out on her team during the final of the national championship curiously echoes the plight of Hollywood teen-girls in French promotional artifacts.<sup>1</sup> When she enters the French film market, the American teen-girl is systematically turned into a vapid bimbo. This has nothing personal: it is national. Such reductive, sexist and nationally othering semantics is recurrently used by translators of Hollywood teen-girl films in France. What might appear as lost in the process of translation, must be recognized as a different version, richer in so much that there is the added layer of the French imaginary of the American teen-girl as sexually available and unsophisticated. The translation, whether verbal or visual, drastically affects the meaning conveyed by the film's narrative.

My study focuses on a select group of Hollywood films, the teen-girl films, distributed in France over a twenty-year period (between 1986 and 2006). This period is one of transition between what can be considered the

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<sup>1</sup> I call these: teen-girl films. They are an offshoot of Cinderella. The narrative of all these films includes basic elements of the Cinderella tale, described in the trailer for the 1987 re-release of the Disney film as: "take a wicked stepmother, 2 jealous step sisters, 1 fairy godmother, then put them together and what have you got? It's Walt Disney's classic Cinderella! It's the love story to end all love stories!" While the all important prince is not listed, he and Cinderella as a princess get ample screen time within the first 28 seconds of the trailer, which completes the picture showing a glimpse of the lowly, silent beginnings, of the makeover and of the ball. All these elements are present, although adapted to our times in the teen-girl films.

'classic' film distribution and the 'new' (affected by digital technologies). These two decades also mark the birth and development of a new film genre (the teen-girl film) and its markets worldwide. My analysis specifically focuses on the work of international film distributors whom I call transcultural intermediaries; I consider them to be cornerstones of the relationship linking producers and consumers in two different countries, the United States and France. Their work is all the more important when the cultural product they sell, the teen-girl film, is perceived in France as uniquely American. Therefore, I analyze the advertising artifacts (posters, trailers, made-for-television information) as texts in translation informed by Franco-French discourses. Comparing Hollywood film marketing artifacts for French markets with those produced for US markets brings to light French forms of resistance to American cultural colonization through a dynamic process of othering of the colonizer, informed by the long established French antiamericanism discourse.

The rise of the teen-girl film coincides with a time when the teen-movies were in the process of being subdivided into various genres based on gender and when "[m]arketing took firm hold of global Hollywood in the Reaganite 1980s."<sup>2</sup> While in the United States Ronald Reagan instituted deregulation, France was experimenting with its first socialist government. Beyond the tensions opposing the two countries, especially in the field of cultural production, they had one important thing in common: an inclination toward cultural protectionism. In France, policies were implemented to

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<sup>2</sup> Toby Miller et al. *Global Hollywood 2*, Updated ed. (London: BFI, 2005), 260



protect cultural diversity; in the United States on the other hand, it is the absence of governmental intervention that led to cultural protectionism. The primacy of the English language (both in movie theaters and in schools) and the ruthlessness of the domestic competition led to a concentration of financial, creative and institutional resources by Hollywood.<sup>3</sup> As John Trumbour argues,

[w]hile most accounts [of Hollywood's supremacy] begin with the sheer size and affluence of the US domestic audience as distinctive market advantages, there have been other prominent features that played critical roles in securing US supremacy in the global film trade, whether through state-industry cooperation, the building of new distribution networks and procedures, or mastery over a process called the New International Division of Cultural Labor (NICL, sometimes pronounced 'nickel') that mobilizes the spatial mobility of capital, a globalized workforce, and the longstanding US leadership in developing 'the legal codification of film as intellectual property'.<sup>4</sup>

The most visible output of this global cultural industry, beyond the undeniable financial stronghold that international multimedia conglomerates represent, are sophisticated advertising campaigns. Transcultural comparisons of the content of promotional artifacts for Hollywood films, such as my study, explore the practice of globalization without necessarily "mock[ing] the concept of cultural imperialism as a grotesque and strident simplification."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This is also the time when multiplex theaters mushroomed in the United States, and later in France. Many of these theaters have been built by Hollywood related companies. See Timothy Shary, *Generation Multiplex: The Image of Youth in Contemporary American Cinema*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002)

<sup>4</sup> "John Trumbour, "Hollywood and the World: Export of Die"; *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2008), 211

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, 218

It is during the 1980s, as Ruby Rich explains it, that subtitled films diminished in numbers on art house screens in the United States.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the 1979 "President's commission of Foreign Language" revealed that "not one state had foreign language requirements for high-school graduation, and many did not even require schools to offer foreign language instruction."<sup>7</sup> In the US, then, it is the lack of demand for subtitled films in the 1980s, rather than an influx in demand for English speaking films that led to a *de facto* predominance of Hollywood in the domestic market; in France on the other hand, quotas were imposed by the socialist government which also funded national film productions so as to achieve the same end: cultural protectionism.<sup>8</sup> Although the result is clearly similar, the steps taken to achieve it are drastically different, and so is, consequently, the consciousness of one's nation's cultural position in the world. In the Reagan and Mitterand era, while the French policies are clearly a response to the threat of cultural colonization presented by the United States, the American people's monolingualism is promptly equated with monoculturalism and consequently a desire to see the world leveled to a homogenous whole after the American model. Less a conscious desire to colonize, the expansion of the American domestic market into the world market is driven both by the quest for profit

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<sup>6</sup> Ruby Rich, "To Read or not to Read: Subtitles, Trailers, and Monolingualism" in *Subtitles: On the Foreignness of Film* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2004) Rich suggests that there are two recent exceptions to this rule: *Run, Lola, Run* (Tom Tykwer, 1998) and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Ang Lee, 2000)

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, 162

<sup>8</sup> Scholars such as John Hill or Andrew Higson and Richard Maltby argue in favor of governmentally funded cinemas in order to preserve cultural diversity world-wide. Andrew Higson and Richard Maltby, Andrew Higson and Richard Maltby, eds., "*Film Europe*" and "*Film America*": *Cinema, Commerce and Cultural Exchange, 1920-1939*, Exeter studies in film history (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), 21

and by an assumption that the rest of the world shares similar tastes. This is not the case, however, as the need for translation of marketing artifacts for Hollywood teen-girl films in France exemplify.<sup>9</sup>

Transcultural analyzes of film marketing have seldom been conducted. Film scholars such as Lisa Kernan, Justin Wyatt, H  l  ne Laurichesse or Robert Marich primarily focus on domestic (US or French) marketing and distribution.<sup>10</sup> Toby Miller (et al.) and Paul McDonald and Janet Wasko take the lead, on the other hand, in analyzing the Hollywood industry abroad; in that case, however, the focus is primarily on statistics and little on specific analysis of content (such as the construction of marketing campaigns for Hollywood films abroad, for instance).<sup>11</sup> The scholar that comes the closest to my study is Martine Danan's 1995 article on Hollywood in France; based on interviews with film distributors in France, her study focuses mainly on the institutional and structural hurdles they encounter, not the translated modes of address of promotional artifacts they may produce.<sup>12</sup> My analysis then is intended as a contribution to redress this imbalance, so that we can begin to

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<sup>9</sup> In some ways, I would argue that the need for Hollywood to 'remake' foreign films is an extreme example of adaptation and translation: the content of the films themselves need to be adapted to audiences in the United States, while only marketing artifacts are altered to adapt to audiences' habitus in the rest of the world. It goes without saying that there is still an audience, in the US, for foreign films; this is limited to art houses these days, however. Ira Deutchman even hinted to the fact that audiences in the 1980s were still more open to foreign films than people are today. Interview with author, 1/22/09

<sup>10</sup> Lisa Kernan, *Coming Attractions: Reading American Movie Trailers*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004); H  l  ne Laurichesse, *Quel marketing pour le cin  ma ?* (CNRS, 2006); Robert Marich, *Marketing to Moviegoers: A Handbook of Strategies Used by Major Studios and Independents* (Burlington, MA: Elsevier Focal Press, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> McDonald and Wasko, *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry* (Malden: Blackwell Publications, 2008)

<sup>12</sup> Martine Danan, "Marketing the Hollywood blockbuster in France.," *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 23, no. 3 (Fall95 1995): 131

improve our understanding of the cultural transactions at work in the translation of marketing artifacts for Hollywood films in France.

My research, in sync with translation scholars such as Gayatri Spivak, Abé Mark Nornes or Lawrence Venuti, shows that a precise focus on (film marketing) translation demonstrates that the idea of the United States' imperialism and a certain cultural homogenization of the world are simplifications of complex and ongoing cultural transactions.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, my research focuses on the work of the international film distributor, the transcultural intermediary as agent of transcultural negotiations. By engaging in a detailed analysis of the artifacts produced by mid-level sector corporations that are film distribution companies, I locate my contribution within the liminal space between the United States and France; between product (and the industry that produces it) and consumer; between undifferentiated (by gender) teen-movies and the teen-girl film; and between marketing focused on print and broadcast media and the still developing marketing strategies making good use of the Internet. My study is therefore situated between the important contribution by Judith Williamson's classic *Decoding Advertisement*, following which scholarship has been primarily centered on (advertising) text and the following decades' scholarship on the site of reception of these texts, the consumers.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> "Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: More Thoughts on Cultural Translation | translate.eipcp.net," <http://translate.eipcp.net/transversal/0608/spivak/en>; "Gayatri Spivak, "The Politics of Translation" in L. Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2000); Lawrence Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (London: Routledge, 1998); Markus Nornes, *Cinema Babel: Translating Global Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007)

<sup>14</sup> Key scholarship on advertising as text include: Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* (London: Boyars : Distributed

However, little has been written about the middle-men/women in the site of film advertising and their work in cultural translation. It is in the field of marketing and design that the first impulse to understand the role and function of encoding a message within an advertising text can be located. Scholars such as Paul du Gay, Sean Nixon and Matthew Soar have "led the way in opening up important, heretofore neglected possibilities for fruitful cultural inquiry."<sup>15</sup> It is in the wake of that scholarship that my contribution belongs. Yet, none of these scholarly inquiries consider transcultural exchanges. The marketing of foreign films readily shows that the importation of objects created within the field of cultural productions even from as dominant a country as the US requires much by way of translation. If one simply flips through *Translating Hollywood*, the beautiful book published by poster collector Sam Sarowitz in the spring of 2008, it becomes obvious that Hollywood has long (Sarowitz' collection starts in the 1940s with such films as Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane*) considered important the investment in translation and adaptation. The process of adaptation of promotional artifacts for films sold in a different country, with different cultures, clearly goes

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by Calder and Boyars, 1978); Jean Kilbourne, *Deadly Persuasion: Why Women and Girls Must Fight the Addictive Power of Advertising* (New York: Free Press, 1999); Steven Heller, *Design Literacy: Understanding Graphic Design*, 2nd ed. (New York City: Allworth Press, 2004); *Looking Closer 5* (New York: Allworth Press, 2006); Jonathan E Schroeder, *Visual Consumption* (London: Routledge, 2002); Celia Lury, *Consumer Culture* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1996); Angela McRobbie, "YOUNG - WOMEN - AND - CONSUMER - CULTURE," *Cultural Studies* 22, no. 5 (2008): 531; Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (London: Sage Publications, 1991)

<sup>15</sup> Sean Nixon, *Advertising Cultures: Gender, Commerce, Creativity, Culture, representation, and identities* (London: SAGE, 2003); Open University, *Production of Culture/Cultures of Production, Culture, media, and identities* (London: Sage in association with the Open University, 1997); Matthew Soar, "Encoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising Production," *Mass Communication and Society* 3, no. 4 (2000): 415.,418

beyond a word-for-word transfer of meaning, an understanding of the concept of translation more akin to a caricature. The changes in titles and poster photographs, the differing choices of selected scenes as well as the pace of the trailers, the narrative focus, and the construction of gender all suggest that the idea of homogenization is at best reductive.<sup>16</sup> As such my research contributes to conversations in the field of transnational and globalization studies.

My corpus is composed of the posters, trailers and made-for-television promotional artifacts made for markets in both France and in the United States for twenty-five Hollywood films.<sup>17</sup> It is complemented by press-kits or electronic press-kits for a handful of these films as well as by three very enriching interviews with professionals of the film industry. Although I had intended to focus primarily on interviews with professionals and any data that they could share with me (budget numbers, press-kits and other junket materials, insider information as to the negotiation process etc...), I soon realized that interviews were seldom granted to researchers who were not

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<sup>16</sup> The narrative framework of Cinderella will certainly be recognized across borders, but what the identification with such a character means to different audiences depends on social and cultural situations of spectators. For instance, if we take a look at the French and American posters for *Bring it On!*, we can tell right away that the film was 'pitched' differently in the two countries. In the American poster, the emphasis is placed on the key narrative drive: the cheerleading competition, which is omitted from the French version, where cheerleading doesn't really exist, other than as a uniquely American thing. In France instead, it is the heterosexual love interests that are highlighted. The differences between posters (and trailers) reveal that the ideal audience that marketers have in mind in France and in the United States have different tastes, expectations and assumptions.

<sup>17</sup> The teen-girl film genre includes films that have been produced outside of Hollywood. Such movies as *The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love* (Maria Maggenti, 1995) or *Love & Basketball* (Gina Prince-Bythewood, 2000) follow the same narrative arc. However, within the disparity of budgets of Hollywood films, there is more continuity of marketing campaigns across studios, than across all American productions. Therefore, I limited my research to Hollywood films that were release in the movie theaters in France.

from prestigious institutions or had no in. My focus, therefore, was naturally guided toward the content of the promotional artifacts film distributors and marketers produce.

While the Internet will be the focus of my future research endeavors, my analysis centers on the three media of promotional artifacts that are the key of contemporary forms of marketing: posters, trailers and made-for-television advertisements. Each of these three key artifacts is the object of a case study: their respective histories and the specific questions a transcultural content analysis may raise. Such questions include: what can we learn about globalization from a transcultural comparative analysis of posters? Can the claim that Hollywood sells American to the world be sustained when comparing trailers for Hollywood films made for US and French markets shows that the definition of American is translated? How do local laws affect the translation?

This study is a qualitative comparative analysis of promotional artifacts. Through my three case studies I analyze closely the differences between the US and French posters, trailers and made-for-television ads and shows by deconstructing the visual syntax utilized in both countries. Since the central object present in all these visual constructs are young women, I focus more particularly on the translation of the Hollywood teen-girl's characteristics. Such an analysis allows for a reading of one aspect of the so-called transnational cultural (or transcultural) exchanges, namely the cultural habitus(es) on both sides of the Atlantic. Indeed, at the heart of the visual language used by marketers to construct selected niche audiences, is a set of

dispositions or acquired schemes of perception manipulated by marketers in order to sell American mainstream productions to French mainstream viewers.<sup>18</sup>

This study is driven by one key question, which will be answered through the course of the five following chapters: since advertising campaigns for Hollywood films in France rely heavily on translation, how fixed or coherent can the meaning of American teen-girls be? Such works as Mandy merck's *America First* or Simon Anholt and Jeremy Hildreth's *Brand America: The Mother of All Brands* point to the necessity to interrogate the fixity of meaning attached to the concept as well as objects branded as American.<sup>19</sup> However, neither has much interest in analyzing the semantic differences inscribed within the concept once national and cultural borders are crossed. In the following five chapters, my analysis of Hollywood teen-girl films promotional artifacts for France will specifically address this issue.

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<sup>18</sup> Repeatedly, the distributors of independent films I talked to made clear to me that they would pick a film only if they could imagine an audience for it, and would proceed constructing the campaign after this specific audience, without really ever being more specific. I am therefore working my way back from the images constructed by the distributors to understand the audience that they may have had in mind. To this end, I mainly borrow from Ien Ang, who led to a more systematic focus on audience construction with his now classic 1991 publication *Desperately Seeking the Audience*. He based his analysis of audience construction on the assumption that "Quite obviously, before there was television, there was no such thing as a television audience. The television audience then is not an ontological given, but a socially-constituted and institutionally-produced category." (Ang, 3) Like him, I am assuming that before there were teen-girl films, there was no such thing as a teen-girl film audience, neither in the United States, and less so even in France. I will therefore focus on the construction of this category through a close analysis of the promotional artifacts produced by transcultural intermediaries to sell teen-girl films. See Ien Ang, *Desperately Seeking the Audience* (London: Routledge, 1991)

<sup>19</sup> *America First: Naming the Nation in US Film* (London: Routledge, 2007); Simon Anholt and Jeremy Hildreth, *Brand America: The Mother of All Brands* (Cyan Communications, 2005)



In the first chapter, I locate my study in three historical contexts: first in the history of film industries in the United States and in France, then in the evolution of marketing techniques and finally within the French discourse of antiamericanism. The second chapter seeks to position my research within theoretical conversations around gender and consumerism, transculturalism, translation and “national” culture. The following three chapters constitute the core analysis of my evidence. Through chapter three, four and five, each devoted to one of the three advertising media utilized to sell Hollywood films in France (posters, trailers and made-for-television ads and shows), I will seek to understand what a transcultural comparison of promotional artifacts for Hollywood films can teach us about global exchanges and local gender constructions.

## CHAPTER ONE

### HISTORICIZING FRANCO-AMERICAN EXCHANGES IN THE FIELD OF CULTURAL PRODUCTIONS: ARTICULATING FILM AND MARKETING SUB-FIELDS

A film's production, its promotion and exhibition are collective endeavors; members of this very large team are responsible for highly specialized tasks that do not require the same skills, and do not overlap, except to the extent that they work on the same film. Considering the vast number of individuals involved in the creation of a film, and later in that of its distribution artifacts, it is surprising that the director and the studio (the producers) have received all the critical and scholarly credit for decades.<sup>20</sup> Distributors often make decisions without considering the filmmakers' desires: this is a product of the structure of the film industry. Processes of translation make promotional material independent from the content of the film itself, especially when the film is crossing cultural borders that strip it of most recognizable frameworks of interpretation within the host culture. In the process of marketing a film to a foreign audience, the marketers engaged

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<sup>20</sup> C.A. Griffith's article *Below the Line* (2001) is an excellent example of scholarship attempting to open up the focus of film studies to aspects of the film industry that have been understudied or simply ignored. She focuses specifically on the set technicians and argues that there is much power inscribed in these shadow team players. More attention is being given to distributors as well lately; however, so far, the focus has mainly been on the function of distribution and marketing (Laurichesse, Farchy, Marich, Squire) or on the kind of evidence that posters can be (Abel). So much as I can tell, no systematic analysis of promotional artifacts produced for the release of a film has been conducted so far, although the issue of theorization of posters and press books has been raised on H.Film on 14 June, 2008. C.A. Griffith, "Below the Line: (Re)Calibrating the Filmic Gaze" in Randall Curren and Jacqueline Bobo, eds., *Black Feminist Cultural Criticism* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2001)

in promoting films become *de facto* transcultural intermediaries since the narrative content and genre are not easily recognizable by local viewers. In that context, the title will be translated (this is a verbal and cultural adaptation), the tagline will be transformed and so will the rest of the poster, trailer, television spots / shows and websites. The artifacts created by marketers often highlight the cultural and national origin as a characteristic and possibly a hook for the product they are selling. In other words, the spectator who purchases a ticket for a teen-girl film has positively responded to the distributor's effective audience construction; beyond the ticket for that specific Hollywood film, the spectator is buying into a social position.<sup>21</sup>

The sale of *Pretty in Pink* (Howard Deutch, 1986) to the French market offers a great example of the complexities inherent in selling an American film in France. At the time of its release in 1986, *Pretty in Pink* did not have an equivalent in the domestic productions, nor in imports from any other countries. Being at the forefront of an emerging genre in Hollywood, *Pretty in Pink* became the 'concept' that later American teen-girl films would follow. Foremother of the teen-girl film genre, *Pretty in Pink* emerges as a leading high concept film for the teenage girl market.<sup>22</sup> As all high concept projects, *Pretty in Pink* was conceived of as a product that should sell, and therefore, ought to be tailored to the desires of a specific audience: young women. Its promotional campaign as well as its audience were therefore constructed in a

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<sup>21</sup> Ang, *Desperately Seeking the Audience*.

<sup>22</sup> In his now famous *High Concept* (1994), Justin Wyatt defined this type of film as a type of production placing great emphasis on style and "the integration of the film with its marketing." Justin Wyatt, *High Concept: Movies and Marketing in Hollywood*, 1st ed., Texas film studies series (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 20

dialectic relationship. From its poster design, soundtrack, broadcasting on television, and its prominent position in the first youth film festival in France,<sup>23</sup> *Pretty in Pink*, high concept film par excellence, was created for the consumption and entertainment of teen girls: its promotional campaign constructed the teen-girl genre and its audience.<sup>24</sup>

The object of this chapter is to provide the historical background for my contemporary analysis of the marketing of Hollywood teen-girl films in France. To this end, I will first give a brief overview of the relationship between France and the United States within the film industries since its inception; then I will draw the history of marketing and how it impacted the way Hollywood films are made. Although I focus on the development of marketing in France, it is clear that this profession has always very much been seen as such from France. The last part of this chapter is devoted to the appearance and meaning of the concept of Americanism in France and

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<sup>23</sup> A two minutes segment presented on national news (Journal Télévisé d'Antenne 2 now renamed France 2) on 1 June 1986 introduces the first Festival du film pour l'enfance et la jeunesse. The segment can be found through the free access (archives pour tous), online archives of the INA (Institut National de l'Audiovisuel). Included in this segment is a short clip of *Pretty in Pink* (*Rose bonbon* in French), which was in competition in 1986 at this festival, conceived of as the equivalent for youths of the Cannes film festival.

<sup>24</sup> This claim contradicts the work of scholars of teenage films who do not distinguish between different national film productions and traditions. Sociologist Robert Bulman is the only scholar of teenagers in films who openly worries about the cultural specificity of these films, albeit in the last chapter of his book. He claims that "only in contrast to the cinema of other countries can we be certain that Hollywood films truly express something about the American culture." (Bulman, 6) He thus contrasts his study of American high school films with about thirty foreign films, from such diverse origins as Japan, Sweeden, Canada, France, Great Britain and a few others, making it a point to underline how rare high school films are abroad. The cultural specificity of American high schools and in turn, of the films representing this unique experience, allows Bulman to "suggest that films both reflect and shape culture," (Bulman, 7) and that to understand the films one needs to understand the context in which they are consumed; however, this is a step Bulman does not take, as it is beyond the argument of his book.

the development of a discourse of antiamericanism. These historical scapes emphasize the idea that neither cultural productions nor discourses emerge in a vacuum: analyzing the construction of film advertising requires the larger context of the histories of the institutions that produced them and the imaginary expressed through representations that fit in discourses located in a specific time and space.

### **Franco-American relationships in the field of cultural productions**

Scholars from disciplines as varied as history, art history, demography and more have often echoed *Time* publisher Henry Luce's description of the twentieth century as 'the American century.' Marked by the spread of its products, images and ideas, this movement became more obvious in the aftermath of the Second World War, especially with the creation of the Motion Pictures Association (MPA) in 1945. However, on an economic and cultural level the American presence becomes already notorious in the interwar era, as Jeffrey H. Jackson suggests in his analysis of the introduction of jazz in France in the 1920s and 1930s in *Making Jazz French* (2003):

Although as historians have discussed, the most intensive thrust of *americanisation* did not begin until after World War II, critics in the interwar era had already begun to see the power of American culture and money at work, and they considered the bustling economy of the United States and the mass-produced consumer goods it provided as a measure for life in the modern age. US businesses eagerly invested in war-torn Europe, and American officials believed that US consumer goods would act as a 'leavening agent' to help raise Europe's economic activity and quality of life as it rebuilt itself. Americans who traveled to France - whether as tourists, as employees of US firms, or in jazz

bands - brought an entire culture with them, according to many French observers.<sup>25</sup>

Yet, the crux of Jackson's argument centers less on the American cultural *colonization* of France (even if it may have been experienced as such by some) than he does on the cultural dialogue that he sees expressed through *translation* of jazz music for French audiences. In his argument, this musical translation implies a merging of American and French sounds, a reinvention of jazz through the use of different musical instruments and the insertion of French rhythms.

The development of means of communication and transportation - such as telephone and radio or trains and planes - allowed for increased mobility of people and goods around Europe and around the world. This, in turn, emphasized a rapid increase in trans-Atlantic exchanges. Shanny Peer's study of the tail end of World's Fairs (her book, *France on Display*, focuses on the 1937 Paris fair) offers another excellent example of the cultural dialogue engaging France and the US in the 1920s and 1930s. Her study illustrates the importance of what she calls "dramatic stages and centralized forums for the international exchanges of information, ideas, products and technologies."<sup>26</sup> As the last World's Fair was held in New York in 1939, Nazi Germany was invading Poland thereby starting the Second World War. The war changed the relationship across nations - between France and the US among many - in drastic ways that are still visible today.

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<sup>25</sup> Jeffrey H Jackson, *Making Jazz French: Music and Modern Life in Interwar Paris*, American encounters/global interactions (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 5

<sup>26</sup> Shanny Peer, *France on Display: Peasants, Provincials, and Folklore in the 1937 Paris World's Fair*, SUNY series in national identities (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 5

If music, World's Fairs, gastronomy<sup>27</sup> or literature for instance offer significant meeting points of French and American cultures, they are not the only expressions of transnational exchanges in the field of cultural productions. Film is a very important one of them; the intersection between the French and US film industries and markets are legion. The fact that France is the only country who had over a decade long competition with the US film industry on US soil is only the beginning of a long story. This exceptional relationship proceeds even within the MPA (Motion Pictures Association), otherwise an institution of US world domination, which has a special award (the Michel d'Ornano award) to reward French screen writers and distributors for their work. This award is given yearly at the American film festival of Deauville, another oddity in the relationship between the United States and France.<sup>28</sup>

#### Trans-Atlantic Competition: From Silent to Sound

Although still something of a contentious date, most scholars in the United States and around the world (especially in France) tend to agree that the cinema as a commercial medium was born on December 28, 1895, when the Lumière brothers held the first public - and paid - screening at the Salon Indien du Grand Café in Paris.<sup>29</sup> As for most great inventors however, the Lumière brothers were competing against Thomas Edison in the United

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<sup>27</sup> Stephen L Harp, *Marketing Michelin: Advertising & Cultural Identity in Twentieth-Century France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> Although I could not find anything to this effect, the fact that Michel d'Ornano was mayor of Deauville in 1975, when the film festival was created cannot be simply chance. Indeed, while it is said that the festival was the brain child of Lionnel Chouchan and André Halimi, it is doubtful that such an endeavor would have been successful without the help and support of the mayor.

<sup>29</sup> see the Institut Lumière website for the original documents: <http://www.institut-lumiere.org/francais/films/1seance/accueil.html>

States and the Skladanovsky brothers in Germany, to cite only the two most famous competitors of the French firm. At this point in film history, these small companies led by inventors were mainly competing over technological discoveries, practicality and reproducibility of the technology, from the cameras that would record to the projectors that would project images (often the same instrument at this time). The film industry, from its inception, was fed by competition: companies have always been fighting whether over technology, quotas or moral messages in the first fifty years, or over markets nowadays.

While the Lumière brothers did not remain in the competition for very long, France's two most prominent film companies were created in the last years of the nineteenth century: Pathé and Gaumont.<sup>30</sup> Both companies were world leaders in the first decade of the twentieth century: they were the first to integrate vertically<sup>31</sup>, to get organized and sell their product throughout Europe, the United States and also throughout the various European countries' colonies. When World War One broke, the two companies owned everything from the laboratories producing negatives, to the movie theaters

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<sup>30</sup> Pathé Films was created in 1896 and Gaumont in 1895; however, it is important to consider the fact that there were at times hundreds of production and distribution companies, being created for a specific project, and then disappearing. For more on the French film industry in the 1910s through the 1930s, see Trumpbour (op. Cit.), Claude Forest, *Economies contemporaines du cinéma en Europe: L'improbable industrie* (CNRS, 2001); Kristin Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment: America in the World Film Market, 1907-34* (London: BFI Pub, 1985)

<sup>31</sup> Vertical integration describes a mode of ownership of companies, which provide services or products that are complementarily hierarchized. In the case of the film industry, vertical integration means that a company will own everything from the production of cameras and film to the theaters in which the films will be exhibited.



in which the movies were going to be screened.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, beyond their leadership within France and Europe, Gaumont and Pathé more particularly had entered the US markets, and were flourishing across the Atlantic.<sup>33</sup> By the end of the war however, the American film industry dominated Europe,<sup>34</sup> even if Pathé had an important enough backlog of films that the war did not affect the business for the first year or so.<sup>35</sup> The diminishing European film supplies caused this reversal, thus creating a need for films that US companies were only too happy to provide.

In fact, as film historian Kristin Thompson describes it, "during 1915 and 1916, a number of American stars and films captured the popular and intellectual audiences of France for the first time."<sup>36</sup> If the reduction in French film production was the cause for part of the increase of American, Italian and British films screened in French theaters during WWI and in the direct aftermath of the war, the US know-how in selling films and their focus on stars both made a drastic difference as well. These two characteristics of the US film industry highlight the most significant differences between the French and American industries, from the 1910s to the present day.<sup>37</sup> By 1918, the French film industry started emulating the focus on stars predominant in the United States, but the return to production rates sufficient to answer the demand and compete with foreign productions was

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<sup>32</sup> "Charles Musser, "L'Industrie du Cinema en France et aux Etats-Unis entre 1900 et"; Benghozi P.J./Delage, ed., *Histoire economique du cinema français* (L'Harmattan, 2000), 75

<sup>33</sup> Thompson, 4

<sup>34</sup> Thompson, 49

<sup>35</sup> Thompson, 51

<sup>36</sup> Thompson, 87

<sup>37</sup> Musser, 76

slow.<sup>38</sup> The presence of US film in France was influential and significant enough to lead the French to experience this presence as domination. To fight the overwhelming presence of US productions in France, European countries, including Germany, formed alliances in 1924.<sup>39</sup>

It is both the intervention of governments in the late 1920s (in the shape of quotas) and the invention of sound in 1927 that most significantly challenged – if briefly – the US domination of the European markets.<sup>40</sup> While a fantastic invention in and of itself, sound implied languages, and distribution companies now had a new hurdle to overcome: translation. There were two standard ways to solve this new problem other than subtitles: dubbing or recasting the film and producing a make up in the language spoken in the country where it was to be sold. Clearly, the latter version was the most expensive, but the most reliable in terms of results; the early dubbing technology was not really reliable. Audiences would frequently laugh at the first attempts at dubbing films.<sup>41</sup> The quotas and technological challenges reduced the market share of US film industries in France by 20% from the late 1920s to the late 1930s.<sup>42</sup> Notwithstanding the French reluctance to engage in the production of ‘talkies,’ it is thanks to this invention, and the challenges it represented for US and other European

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<sup>38</sup> Thompson, 90

<sup>39</sup> Thompson, 112-3

<sup>40</sup> However, Trumpbour’s research shows that the French film producers were not necessarily rushing to produce ‘talkies’ as they considered the invention of sound as counter productive in the quest for a uniquely cinematographic language. Sound, in the mind of Jean Cocteau or René Clair, was bringing cinema back to the theater where it started in terms of aesthetics and performance. See Trumpbour, 245-6

<sup>41</sup> Thompson, 160

<sup>42</sup> To be more specific, the French share of its domestic market grew from 10% in 1926 to 33% in 1936 (during the 1920s, the US held 75% of the French market). See Trumpbour, 259-60

distribution companies, that the French film industry experienced a revival in the 1930s. This revival was short lived however, as the Second World War had an even longer lasting impact on the relationship between US and French film industries.

### The Cultural Colonization of Europe

The direct aftermath of the war set the stage for the second half of the century's transnational relationship between Europe and Hollywood. Indeed, although some exchanges in the fields of technology as well as in aesthetic terms were already happening in the 1920s and 1930s, the post-WWII era more clearly defined the nature of the Franco-American dialogue. Until today, trans-Atlantic exchanges in the film business are economically dominated by the US industry over all of their European counter-parts. This economic domination is the product of the convergence of numerous factors: the slim availability of films produced in Europe in the aftermath of WWII, an audience hungry for American films, favorable outcomes of important governmental negotiations and a very successful American film distribution and exhibition system that could recover all investments within the domestic market before even hitting the international scenes.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, "L'arrangement Blum-Byrnes à l'épreuve des faits," 1895 13 (December 1992): 3-49, 5-7. Not a minute was lost in feeding hungry French audiences with Hollywood films: among a new currency, a new government and military power, the US army landed on the beaches of Normandy in 1944 with Hollywood films (their number varies between 40 and 60 depending on sources). Ironically, these films represent only a small portion of the US films exhibited in France in the months following the liberation (the French call it liberation; the US call it invasion. It is there after referred to as liberation, following the French expression.): when Vichy outlawed US films in 1940 in the occupied zone (and then extended this censorship to the entire country by 1941), copies of US films were hidden in numerous places, including the basement of the Palais de Chaillot by the infamous Henri Langlois (he is to become the head of the Centre National de la

The creation of the MPA (Motion Pictures Association) in 1945 is telling of the United States' willingness to "reestablish American films in the world market" in the aftermath of World War Two.<sup>44</sup> Originally much more accurately named the 'Motion Picture Export Association of America' (its name was changed in 1994), this organization's role is to protect the US film industries' interests abroad and "guarantee[s its] litigation infrastructure."<sup>45</sup> While mostly focused on copy rights issues today, the MPA has always been commonly referred to as 'the little state department,' which allows for a pertinent insight in the way this body sees itself in the world. In the post-WWII era, the MPA's battles were mainly fought over quotas imposed by Western European countries, such as France.<sup>46</sup> More simply, the MPA was also lobbying the French Quai d'Orsay and any other institution that may not

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Cinématographie in 1946). These copies were exhibited during the chaotic months of the liberation; there is no way to assess how many of these films were screened. (Pells, 220) However, that does not take into account the German investment in the French film industry as distraction, nor the maintenance of film production during the war, as exemplified by Margaret Butler's research on the relationship between film and community in France and Britain during WWII and its direct aftermath. "The entry of the Germans into Paris in June 1940, however, threw the film industry into confusion. Production was curtailed, and leading directors and actors including Julien Duvivier, René Clair, Jean Gabin, Charles Boyer and Michèle Morgan left for Hollywood. For Jewish personnel, the Nazi invasion had more sinister implications. A law of October 1940 prohibited Jews from working in any branch of the cinematographic industry, although designer Alexandre Trauner and composer Joseph Kosma among others were able to continue working under Marcel Carné's protection by using pseudonyms. Under the circumstances, their contribution to the making of *Les Enfants du paradis* (Marcel Carné, 1946) was a triumph against all the odds. The COIC [Comité d'Organisation des Industries du Cinéma] officially sanctioned antisemitism in 1941 by ordering l'assainissement, the 'purification', of the profession. Despite the occupation of Paris and the relocation of some people like Carné and writers Jacques Prévert and Charles Spaak to the South, the capital remained the centre of the film industry." Margaret Butler, *Film and Community: Britain and France: From La Règle Du Jeu to Room at the Top* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 27

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.mpa.org/AboutUs.asp>

<sup>45</sup> Miller, 214

<sup>46</sup> Irwin M. Wall, *The United States and the making of postwar France, 1945-1954*, 1991.,119

have been broken in the post war period in order to override the Nazi imposed and Vichy enforced laws against films produced in the United States.<sup>47</sup> Because of its long lasting concern for US film industries' protection, the MPA has been involved in international trade agreements such as the GATT in 1993 or the post-WWII negotiations such as the Blum-Byrnes agreements.

The 1947 so-called Blum-Byrne agreements are frequently referred to as the foundation of the dialogue between the United States and France by film historians. The assumption often is that these agreements were largely in favor of US film companies and therefore allowed Hollywood to impose itself on France *because* of these agreements. Since 1947, legion French film critiques, film producers and scholars saw the agreements as 'selling out' to the Americans. The document itself, called 'arrangements,' only represents a very minor part (two pages) of a larger agreement tackling Franco-American economic relationships at large.<sup>48</sup> Siding with Richard Abel and Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, I read the agreement as suggesting that the negotiations conducted by Leon Blum saved the French market from being flooded by more US productions than its market could use; in the perspective of an avid crowd wanting American films and underground Hollywood productions resurfacing randomly, any form of limitation should have been welcome.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Jeancolas, 9

<sup>48</sup> Jeancolas, 17

<sup>49</sup> That said, according to Jeancolas, not all exhibitors followed the rules, and simply proceeded showing only American films, even though they were supposed to include French films in their programs (4 weeks of French production for every trimester was the agreed upon number, in the arrangements). The text imposed a limitation of the number of visas that could be delivered to American companies, but said nothing

Although I have not seen this argument made anywhere, I would imagine that the contentious figure of Leon Blum among the film industry might have fed the discontent of most, in the aftermath of the Blum-Byrne arrangements.<sup>50</sup>

A second factor of US domination was the apparent French hunger for American films; it seems to be less so an appetite for American culture, rather than a desire for “good” films.<sup>51</sup> While the French film industry had suffered much damage during the war (studios and theaters destroyed, loss of technicians, actors, etc.) the 220 French films that were available directly after the war (either because they had been made under Vichy, or before the war), and 54 of which had been released in 1944 were not considered good, even by the chauvinistic French critique of the time.<sup>52</sup> Hollywood was offering a standardized form of entertainment that would frequently be critiqued precisely for its uniformity; but in the aftermath of WWII, this uniformity allowed audiences around the world to know what to expect when they purchased a ticket for a Hollywood film – especially considering the lack of steady quality of the local (French) productions at the time. Yet, considering that there is little to no data in regards to audience reception in the mid to late-1940s, it is hard not to speculate and make a definitive statement as to what audiences were looking for.

A third factor of American domination of the Western world’s film

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about the owners of theaters and their part of responsibility in this equation. See Jeancolas, 29-30

<sup>50</sup> See Trumbour, 252, where he suggests that the Blum government, in the 1930s, were not very receptive to demands from the film industry (especially in terms of quotas). See also Pells, 217

<sup>51</sup> It seems that good here means entertaining and consistent.

<sup>52</sup> Jeancolas, 9

industries in the direct aftermath of WWII is the vertical integration of the studios. The studios' prevalent position would temporarily be shaken when their structure was challenged as a consequence of the Paramount case, an anti-trust law-suit of 1948. As much as the vertical integration of the studios (following the French company Pathé) contributed to Hollywood's gradual rise to world power, their forced dismantlement impacted them negatively for a short period of time: the anti-trust laws prevented the studios from owning all steps of the film industry from the production to the exhibition. However, the sale of the studios and the reorganization of Hollywood companies so as to primarily focus on financing films and distributing them world wide eventually led Hollywood to strengthen its position as world leader.

Thanks to the French New Wave and Brigitte Bardot, however, the 1960s saw an increase in exportation of films from France to the US and thereafter, an increase in the number of French directors going to Hollywood to remake one or more of their films, or make another one in the same vein; François Truffaut is a good example of such a move. Through these mainly art house films, film scholar Vanessa Schwartz argues that there was a more pervasive influence of French culture on US film production, developing into an actual exchange.<sup>53</sup> This aspect of the conversation between French and US film industries has been of particular interest to film scholars who have focused on the aesthetic influence of the French on the American and vice

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<sup>53</sup> Vanessa R Schwartz, *It's so French!: Hollywood, Paris, and the Making of Cosmopolitan Film Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

versa.<sup>54</sup> It is in the 1960s as well that the role of the distributor will finally be defined legally on the European level. While individual countries may have had a definition of the role and rights of the distributor in their laws, the European definition published on 15 October 1968 allows for more uniformity across European countries. In parallel, Hollywood studios organized in so-called 'joint ventures' in the 1960s, so as to maximize their efficiency in the field of distribution. Buena Vista joins Gaumont and Fox joins UGC in France for instance.<sup>55</sup>

### **Marketing history: how the science of selling influenced the world of cultural production**

#### Marketing history: constructing audiences and promotional artifacts

At each of the three major steps in the evolution of marketing as an industry and a discipline there is a basic shift in the conception of the audience: its birth is mainly characterized by the promotion of private businesses' products. This is the 'classic' idea of marketing: in this view, the single most important idea is that the consumer's happiness is contingent upon the consumption of the promoted object or activity, be it a soap, vacation, film or car. The second step of the discipline of marketing is so-called *social* because it focuses on informing the public about non-profit organizations and their work; it is often seen as a more genuinely caring step. Finally, the third important step that the discipline of marketing took

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<sup>54</sup> These trans-Atlantic conversations proceeded in more ways than have been studied by film and other scholars so far: the negotiations involved in the translation of promotional artifacts for Hollywood films are only part of these possible elaborations.

<sup>55</sup> Forest, 53, 106



was *societal*. This final version is geared toward a more all-encompassing understanding of society so as to better answer the *needs* of communities. The consciousness of the impact of one's work on society is here revealed, and marketers have since been constructing ideal audiences partly based on audience research and partly on their own intuition, that is to say they have been segmenting the social landscape for the purpose of the specific campaigns as they are developing them.<sup>56</sup>

American style advertising – as well as music and film - was a source of fear and fascination for the French in the 1920s.<sup>57</sup> From this period on, it became quite obvious for French film distribution companies that US film companies had more disposable income to invest in the promotion of their film and invested between 5 and 10 percent of the expected box office gross in advertisement;<sup>58</sup> indeed, Charles Pathé's decision to sell most of his properties (studios, laboratories and more) to US companies as a response to his fear of American competition is made clear when he says:

It became necessary to recognize that ... the United States, with its boundless possibilities, would take possession of the global market probably forever. The war had only hastened a little the achievement of this supremacy. Favored by the magnitude of their interior market which from the standpoint of box office receipts represented 40 to 50 times that of the French market – and may have been around three-fourths of the world market – the Americans could put considerable sums into the execution of their films, completely amortizing on their territory and then come to conquer the export

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<sup>56</sup> Franck Cochoy, *Une histoire du marketing: Discipliner l'économie de marche (Textes à l'appui. Serie Anthropologie des sciences et des techniques)* (Decouverte, 1999), 246.

<sup>57</sup> Jeffrey H Jackson, *Making Jazz French: Music and Modern Life in Interwar Paris, American encounters/global interactions* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 5

<sup>58</sup> Douglas Gomery and British Film Institute, *The Hollywood Studio System: A History*, New ed. (London: BFI, 2005), 134

market in all countries.<sup>59</sup>

Pathé's decision to relinquish to his US opponent not only the US domestic market, but also the French one so easily – and perhaps too hastily – has been read as modesty by some, and cowardice by others. Whether Pathé was a realist or a pessimist, his assessment provides a great insight in the mind of French businessmen working in the field of cultural production, especially the mass-produced ones. Whether from a pro- or anti-American perspective, the French, starting in the 1920s, commonly agreed with Charles Pathé to say that US cultural products represented the powers that be.

However, it is interesting to note that for Pathé, what is important in the US supremacy in the sub-field of large-scale cultural productions is less the cultural or national background.<sup>60</sup> What is key is the early investment in marketing and the size of the domestic market where US film producers have a chance to amortize their film before even thinking about selling them abroad for further profit.<sup>61</sup> The fact that Americans benefit from a much

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<sup>59</sup> John Trumbour, *Selling Hollywood to the World: US and European Struggles for Mastery of the Global Film Industry, 1920-1950*, Cambridge studies in the history of mass communications (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 227

<sup>60</sup> Indeed, what he does not mention is the supremacy of the first national chain of movie theater in the US, Publix, created by Sam Katz in collaboration with Paramount. More important yet, is the fact that Publix theaters covered the entire US, and more so the fact that "Publix [had] training sessions, supervised by John Barry, [that] were conducted in the Paramount theater, 20 stories below Sam Katz's office. Each class of about 50 learned the system and options for local promotion and publicity. They were told to expect to create an event a day so as to draw free media attention. Publix experts taught neophytes how to plant pre-written stories in the newspaper. Many motion picture insiders scoffed at the idea that the skills of show business could be taught, but Sam Katz had no doubts. He knew his Public system depended on a trained, skilled class of managers on the local level, and the investment in training them would pay off many times over in the long run." Gomery, 129

<sup>61</sup> "Sam Katz established a publicity and promotion department by hiring experts from up and down Madison Avenue, and from America's top universities. Publix supplied its own press kits, not relying upon Hollywood studios. The typical Publix

larger domestic market than the French (Pathé evaluates it at 40 to 50 times more) is even more important when one considers that the majority of movie theaters at the time would have been concentrated in Paris and a few large province cities such as Bordeaux or Lyon. In other words, a focus on the regional characteristics of France makes Pathé's argument all the more pertinent as it reduces considerably the French market.<sup>62</sup>

Furthermore, from the 1930s on, Hollywood was making good use of scientific market research techniques developed by George Gallup in order to gain a more sophisticated understanding of their audience and the effect of the film stars on these audiences (France was lagging far behind, using none).<sup>63</sup> In fact, film historian Jean-Pierre Jeancolas suggests that the eight big Hollywood companies (Paramount, MGM, Fox, United Artists, Warner, RKO, Columbia and Universal) had enough money to conduct the necessary market research all over Europe. Whether much of the Hollywood advertisement was based on intuition or market research conducted throughout Europe and providing Hollywood distributors with what they considered to be a scientific (therefore objective) view of European desires,

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promotional manual contained model advertisements, sketches, and photographs to send to local newspapers, suggestions about how to place advertising, and ideas for stunts." Gomery, 132

<sup>62</sup> While films such as Harry Potter may now get 1000 copies circulated in France on opening week end, this exuberant number is brand new: indeed, no more than 400 copies were ever circulated in the early 1990s and an average of 40 ten years before that. This increase can be explained on one hand by the increase in multiplexes, which allows for the same film to be screened in multiple theaters at the same time; this drastic increase in copies circulating is partly responsible for the increase in distribution budgets. See Yves Evrard et al., *Le Management des Entreprises Artistiques et Culturelles*, 2nd ed. (Economica, 2004), 103

<sup>63</sup> Gallup served some Hollywood companies, but did not have a monopoly: Handel's Motion Picture Research Bureau worked for MGM for instance. See Janet Staiger, "Announcing Wares, Winning Patrons, Voicing Ideals: Thinking about the History and Theory of Film Advertising," *Cinema Journal* 29, no. 3 (Spring 1990): 3-31., 18

US companies had a serious advantage over the French (and other European countries) who were simply busy reconstructing their film industry.<sup>64</sup> The scientific turn of marketing is significant in terms of film advertisement because the 1950s are the period when Hollywood reconceptualized its consumer from “‘everyone’ to ‘someone-in-particular’.”<sup>65</sup> Such a shift eventually happened in France as well.

Contrary to the US, where the marketing of culture became a predominant focus of marketing agencies in the 1970s, in France, the government’s policies focused on making culture accessible to all.<sup>66</sup> The Maisons de la Culture, subsidized by the French government, were taking care of communicating cultural events; film historian H el ene Laurichesse argued that the marketing of culture did not take hold in France until the 1970s because the government stifled private companies’ involvement. The privatization of Culture only arrived as a consequence of the closing of Maisons de la Culture in the 1980s.<sup>67</sup> To this day, according to Laurichesse, marketing only represents between 6 and 10 percents of the production budget of a French film, while it represents up to half of the production

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<sup>64</sup> Jeancolas, 20

<sup>65</sup> Staiger, 17

<sup>66</sup> The next important change in the marketing business is a more formal turn toward the marketing of culture in the 1970s, according to marketing historians like Franck Cochoy. Posters and trailers have been produced to advertise films to audiences since the early 1910s if not before. Therefore, for marketing historians to situate the birth of the marketing of culture in the late 1960s suggests that they do not consider film, a mass-produced entertainment, as Culture (theater, opera, museums). In fact, W.J Baumol and W.G Bowen’s classic 1966 work on the economy of the arts titled *The Outbreak of the Cost Disease* arguing in favor of state interventions for the arts does not include film. Regardless of the cultural object advertised, however the budget invested by French companies for marketing either in the 1960s or today does not compare to the level of investment of American companies.

<sup>67</sup> Laurichesse, *Quel marketing pour le cin ema ?*, 10

budget of an American film.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, these numbers, however low, already represent a considerable increase (they doubled over the last ten years).<sup>69</sup>

In the United States today, the budget of production and marketing will often be equal; the marketing of European productions still remains at the level of the marketing of independent productions in the US that is quite limited in terms of budget and scope. French scholars of film marketing like Claude Forrest or H el ene Laurichesse argue that the marketing of film needs to be developed.<sup>70</sup> While members of both French or US film industries assume that most feature films are made to be experienced in the theater, only Hollywood studios will invest heavily on means to advertise their films and attract viewers in theaters. It seems that in the French logic, perhaps thanks to governmental subsidies, if the film cannot make money while it is showing in the theaters, at least it is the place where it will earn its notoriety and prestige.<sup>71</sup>

#### The academic disciplines of marketing

In the post WWII period, the behavioral sciences influenced heavily market research techniques: new economic theories and techniques of codification of the market and society appeared to be quite influential.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 102

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 131

<sup>70</sup> Forrest, 53

<sup>71</sup> Of course, festivals are the other ideal venue to reach this end, but the public attending such events is quite limited, and usually, the festival serves as a launching pad for films to sell to the movie theaters' audiences. This logic, however, might be fundamentally challenged by the Internet and the development of home cinema throughout the Western world and in the US in particular. This is outside of the scope of my research for this project, but will be of prime interest in the future.

<sup>72</sup> Cochoy, 161

Over the first 40 years of existence of the discipline of marketing, two opposite tendencies emerged: the work done in the academy had gradually taken a different route than the one taken by practitioners. Because practitioners relied heavily on the *scientific* root of their trade, they were less inclined than scholars to question the ethical ends of their work. It was assumed that relying on scientific data to construct an audience was not only legitimate but efficient.<sup>73</sup> The creation of the Marketing Science Institute (1962) emerged of the need for an institution to mediate between theory and practice.<sup>74</sup> Marketing is one area where the two are tightly related, almost to a fault, as many scholars across disciplines – especially ones following the Frankfurt School's approach - tend to assume that marketing departments are simply devoted to training the new generation of marketers to further cultivate mass-culture. The emerging field of critical marketing has been spending a lot of time and energy justifying the pertinence of their work, within the discipline, while it tries to satisfy critiques outside the field.<sup>75</sup>

Because in the 1970s, most scholars and practitioners of marketing had to contend with critiques coming from a variety of different ends of the political spectrum, marketing turned more pointedly social. Still very much focused on appearing scientific (with a strong influence from economics and the social sciences), the discipline of marketing broadened its horizon to include more non-profit accounts in order to appear more socially inclined.

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<sup>73</sup> Ang was one of the first in his study of television audience to critique the concept of institutional ways of thinking about television audience as a monolith.

<sup>74</sup> Cochoy, 166

<sup>75</sup> Saren et. Al. *Critical Marketing: Defining the Field*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Elsevier / Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007)

This inclination to be politically correct was accompanied by a growth of vocal critiques of advertising content. Public figures like Jean Kilbourne was important in voicing her critique of the objectification of women through advertisement. In response, advertising agencies adopted / co-opted the values of these critics: commercial feminism was born. The likes of Kilbourne went on to denounce the co-optation of feminist values by the mainstream and marketing companies in print advertising.<sup>76</sup> Commercial feminism is a problem that Angela McRobbie is particularly concerned with, especially the absence of critical reading within media and consumer culture scholarship, which she assessed in an article titled "Young Women and Consumer Culture."<sup>77</sup> When it is to be expected that marketing companies sell ideas and identities beyond services and objects, the role of the critic becomes all the more important.<sup>78</sup>

In the marketing of film, like in the field of marketing and culture, in general the US has always been and remains ahead of France.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, while by the 1980s there were a few publications on the topic in English, it is not before the late 1990s and early 2000 that French scholars started to

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<sup>76</sup> Jean Kilbourne, *Deadly Persuasion: Why Women and Girls Must Fight the Addictive Power of Advertising* (New York: Free Press, 1999), 296. See also Kelley Massoni's dissertation, *Bringing Up Baby: The Birth and Early Development of Seventeen Magazine* (The University of Kansas, 2007), especially her chapter on advertising.

<sup>77</sup> Angela McRobbie, "Young Women and Consumer Culture." *Cultural Studies* 22 (5) 2008

<sup>78</sup> Cochoy, 218-28; Colbert, 11

<sup>79</sup> If replaced in the history of such schools internationally, France clearly appears to be a little behind. Indeed, in the US, the narrowing down and specialization of the marketing of ideas and of the arts and culture appears in the 1970s and becomes more common through the 1980s. Although some scholarly publications are available in English and French on the topic starting in the 1970s, it takes time for these conversations to find practical applications.

focus on questions of marketing and culture.<sup>80</sup> The creation of programs to train professionals in the field of marketing of culture in France is quite telling of the gradual importance this specialized area is taking. Although film scholar H  l  ne Laurichesse does not get into any specifics as to what she means by professionalisation of the marketing of film, I understand it as referring to the creation of optional classes in the management of art and culture at the national school for Economics (HEC – Hautes Etudes de Commerce) since 1993. In addition, since February of 2002, students can now major in the management of art and culture. Specific training elicits better results because the management of art and culture requires the marketers and distributors not only to know their products to endow them with symbolic value, but also to be able to construct audiences adapted to the cultural product at hand.<sup>81</sup>

The predominant idea in most scholarly works focusing on the marketing of culture is that culture is not just another product. While the debate focused on cultural exception is at the center of the concerns of most French academics, marketing scholars in the United States have been more concerned with the specific needs, knowledge and skills required to sell culture. Accordingly, the first research in this field focused on audience analysis and the specific needs and expectations of such audiences was made in the US. In 1978, Paul Dimaggio, Michael Useem and Paula Brown published *Audience Studies of the Performing Arts and Museums*, a pioneer

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<sup>80</sup> Farchy, 162

<sup>81</sup> The following case studies give ample illustrations of this not being the case: in fact, the familiarity with US high-school culture seems mostly cursory.



work in the field of audience studies and culture that became influential in the field of marketing of culture. In response to these researchers' findings, markets were segmented and strategies were formulated so as to better construct audiences and promotional artifacts.

As television became more common within suburban homes in the 1960s and the demographic for moviegoers dropped in age, audience studies influenced the way the marketing of film was conducted. Later, in the 1980s and 1990s, the convergence of the development of multiplexes and the increase in TV channels' investment in production and distribution further changed the landscape of film marketing. Corporations gathering production, distribution and exhibition started investing larger amounts of money in marketing in order to reach larger audiences more rapidly and cover their expenses faster by grossing more money on the first week-end of release; this technique is called saturation.<sup>82</sup> In fact, in the United States, it is the numbers of opening Fridays that lead distributors and exhibitors to make decisions in terms of number of screens and duration of exhibition. The advantage of distribution companies who work with or own television networks is that the box-office numbers matter less since there is always already the possibility for the film to be shown on TV and make more money through this secondary channel. The approach of marketing changed further yet as computers entered the private sphere. There is no accounting for the

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<sup>82</sup> Saturation is a very expensive film marketing technique as many more copies of the films have to be made so as to make the release in hundreds of theaters at the same time possible. Since then, studios have upped the ante as films like the Harry Potter series are released worldwide on the same day, which represents thousands of screens. The distribution costs incurred by the copies of the film to be printed will be reduced considerably in the near future with the switch to digital projectors, allowing for digital copies of the film to be circulated much faster and for free.

future of the film industry at this point, but the Internet and digital technologies will have an important impact.

### Merging marketing and film: the high concept film

This branching out of marketing strategies lead towards more interest in gathering data so as to make audience construction possible.<sup>83</sup> The Hollywood blockbuster emerged out of this impulse to limit (financial) risks by knowingly tailoring a film after a particular audience. Justin Wyatt demonstrated that in the late 1970s and early 1980s the so-called high concept film emerged. What mainly distinguishes the high concept film from Hollywood film productions is the fact that it can be summarized in a single sentence that can be translated in a single, striking image. In other words, everything in a high concept film is geared toward consumption/marketing/promotion. The conception of this genre of Hollywood film is voluntarily and consciously tailored for specific audiences, mostly the youth market. The poster is a fundamental aspect of the high concept film because the image is the pitch for the film: the poster is a summary of the film in a single-striking image. It is with the high concept film *Jaws* (Spielberg, 1975), that film-marketers in the US systematically started using television as a way to reach larger numbers, but also better defined audiences.<sup>84</sup>

Justin Wyatt identifies five recurring characteristics in the so-called

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<sup>83</sup> Staiger, 18

<sup>84</sup> *Billy Jack* (Laughlin, 1971) is said to have been the first using saturation techniques that *Jaws* imitated. See "Letter from California: The Cobra: Reporting & Essays: The New Yorker," [http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/01/19/090119fa\\_fact\\_friend](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/01/19/090119fa_fact_friend)

high concept films: aesthetic, star, music, character and genre.<sup>85</sup> Although all of Wyatt's criteria are not necessarily present in all films, all the teen-girl films follow a similar narrative structure, have a similar character and include a predominant emphasis on music. This is the case for *Pretty In Pink* (Deutch, 1986), a case study addressed briefly by Wyatt in his study, and the blueprint for 1990s and early 2000s teen-girl films. Since *Pretty In Pink* and *16 Candles* (Hughes, 1984), the teen-girl film and high concept movies in general have been branded by film distributors focusing on longer term investments: the realization that a film has a short product-life cycle forced the investors in the industry, the distributors in particular, to think beyond even the merchandise that can extend the life-cycle of a film by a few months. Therefore, to ensure recognition and desire across films, a focus on celebrities and film genre (as well as music and occasionally directors) became a systematic focus of high concept films. Branding techniques were borrowed from marketing and systematically applied to film. Actors and actresses, narratives (adaptation of famous novels for instance) or directors are key ways to brand a film and increase the visibility of the film therefore minimizing the financial risks by enhancing the chances of high returns. The fame of the actor or of a best selling novel are selling points that most films depend upon.

An integral part of the high concept film, the celebrity is one of the key characteristics of the marketing of Hollywood films; it relies on the recognition of the star and the values s/he embodies. During Hollywood's

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<sup>85</sup> Wyatt, 24

classical era, stars answered a determined set of expectations the audience had in terms of genre or narrative.<sup>86</sup> Hollywood's focus on stars quickly became a threat and an object of mockery from the French perspective.<sup>87</sup> This was expressed by French poster-makers who voluntarily tried to stray from the American way of making posters: by focusing on the star and little to nothing else (I will elaborate on this in chapter three). Today, the teenage girls staring in these films come with a barely lessened load of expectations: while in the US teen-girls celebrities are assumed to represent a quintessential US teenager (with global appeal);<sup>88</sup> in France the same lead character is branded as American. If the name of an actress, actor or director can function to sell a film domestically, once it crosses borders, the most important factor often becomes the film's nationality. Branding a film as American seems to be the recurring factor of teen-girl films that often do not have an actress nor a director that can carry the film. Since the post-WWII period the American film had a recognizable, entertainment value that made them uniquely American and led French audiences to want more. The actor is a key branding factor, as the investment on one film blurs into the next

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<sup>86</sup> Based on the analysis of stars by the likes of Richard Dyer in the United States or Edgar Morin in France, I have selected the use of the term celebrity to refer to teen-girl films' lead actresses. Indeed, stars are imbued with much symbolic power that celebrities might partake in on occasion without the iconic aura of the objects of Morin and Dyer's studies: Marilyn Monroe or Brigitte Bardot. For more on stars see Edgar Morin, *The Stars* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005) and Dyer, Richard. *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987)

<sup>87</sup> Trumpbour, 241

<sup>88</sup> Mandy Merck ed. *America First: Naming the Nation in US Film* (London: Routledge, 2007) In her introduction, Mandy Merck suggests that "the universal appeal of US media" is mocked in numerous films including *American Dreamz* (Paul Weitz, 2006), 19

because of the heavy emphasis placed on the actress or actor and the anticipation they create.

### **French antiamerican discourse: what locating promotional artifacts for US cultural productions means**

Whether it is in the field of cultural production or throughout the history of marketing, it has been established in the first part of this chapter that the presence of Hollywood films in France has been perceived with a mixture of “accommodation, emulation, resistance and fear.”<sup>89</sup> Likewise, the common association of marketing with American culture and modernization has elicited negative comments from French scholars and public intellectuals, the presence of such images being perceived as invasive and qualified of colonization since the 1950s. Whether the US product inspires a positive or a negative response, its presence is noted as other, and as such, it enters a discourse of what I call antiamericanism, a literal translation of the French noun (*antiaméricanisme*). Although this concept is translated as anti-Americanism in the French-English Collins dictionary, I prefer to use the French looking concept because, as will become clear in the rest of this chapter and project, the discourse of antiamericanism has less to do with the United States than it does with France. Seeing how this noun is the only one in the French language with a prefix in anti- followed by the name of a

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<sup>89</sup> Neil Campbell, Jude Davies, and George McKay, eds., *Issues in Americanisation and Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004). 9

country, the unique relationship between France and the US is apparent.<sup>90</sup> The cultivation of this discourse is post-colonial to the extent that a former colonizer (France) is resisting the cultural colonization of a contemporary colonial power (The United States).<sup>91</sup> The rest of this chapter will therefore be focusing on two aspects of this French discourse, which nourishes the stereotype of American teen-girls in promotional artifacts for Hollywood films and creates a filter through which US products are consumed and understood in France: on one hand the political scene and on the other the public intellectual feuds.

Reactions to the presence of US products on French soil have been read by US and French scholars alike mainly as telling of the French desire to preserve full autonomy in the field of cultural productions.<sup>92</sup> *Le Monde's*

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<sup>90</sup> Philippe Roger, *L'ennemi Américain: Généalogie De L'antiaméricanisme Français*, La couleur des idées (Paris: Seuil, 2002), 16

<sup>91</sup> As Roger argues, it has not always been a discourse of resistance or 'defense.' Instead, through most of its history, the discourse of antiamericanism assumes French superiority. Since the US's invasion of Cuba in 1898, that is not the case any longer, as this is where Roger locates the shift in how French viewed themselves in relationship to the US. Fear will characterize the twentieth century French antiamerican discourse. Roger, 212

<sup>92</sup> The discourse of antiamericanism is common across European borders and took a variety of different shapes over the twentieth century. John Trumbour offers one example, as he focuses on the common ridicule experienced by Hollywood products either in the US or abroad, in the following case, Germany in the 1920s: "The time does not seem far off when this proud position will be held probably, by the humble Kaffir or Hottentot of the movie-civilized kraals of Africa, whose intellectual and moral reactions to the unhappy ending, for instance, will then be carefully studied, with the help of charts and diagram, in the selling and producing offices of Hollywood." (Bakshy, 1928) Likewise, Victoria de Grazia suggests that it is in the late 1910s and early 1920s that "French intellectuals also began to draw on France's own deep well of imperialist topoi and stereotypes to speak of their own 'colonization,' and the term 'imperialism,' which previously had been reserved for economic monopolies, came to be used to characterize cultural domination, as in 'American cultural imperialism.' Against it, in addition to protection for the film industry, regulations were passed to copyright the French national cultural patrimony so as to prevent foreign (meaning US) film companies from exploiting as set backgrounds familiar national monuments like the Arc de triomphe, the Opera, and

editorial page declaration on September 12, 2001: "Nous Sommes Tous Américains" is telling of the contradictions inscribed within the Franco-American relationships. The echo to J.F. Kennedy's 1962 famous "Ich bin ein Berliner" was "met with popular outcry in France from citizens who presumably would have preferred their sympathy for the victims to be expressed with a 'Nous sommes tous New Yorkais,' and not via identification with the country at large."<sup>93</sup> This focus on autonomy from US culture has also frequently been tied to insecurities in terms of French identity construction. The fact that antiamericanism statements diminished as the presence of other threats increased, such as immigration, is telling of the hierarchy of discourses of fear within France.<sup>94</sup> But that is only part of the picture, because the antiamericanism discourse is not disappearing: while since the 1980s the focus has been on domestic political issues (racism), governmental policies went crescendo in an attempt to protect French cultural productions, as evidenced by the 1993 GATT negotiations, to cite only the most obvious example.

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Notre Dame." De Grazia, Victoria. *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance Through Twentieth-Century Europe*. (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005., 306) McDonald and Wasko echo these thoughts when they claim: "Emitting Menckenesque tones of disdain for the American 'hick' and the African Hottentot, Bakshy held out hope that 'cultured people all over the world' would eventually clamor for 'standards of quality, and not those demanded by the world 'boobery'." In 1926 the Berliner Zeitung am Mittag had similarly blamed the country bumpkin and rural idiocy for Hollywood's global success, what the newspaper called a strategy of 'flabbergasting the farmer': 'The Americans count on the innocence of the farmer, who is removed from civilization by many days' travel out on his prairie. All these masses of gold, silver, cut-glass chandeliers, thick carpets, pages in fancy costumes, all this carries a farmer into fairyland, while it turns our stomach.' (United States Embassy Berlin, 1926)" see McDonald and Wasko, *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry*, 209

<sup>93</sup> Kristin Ross Andrew Ross, *Anti-Americanism* (NYU Press, 2004), 5

<sup>94</sup> Richard F. Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (University of California Press, 1997), 226

### Origins of the term and first stereotypical expressions

Following the cultural origin of the verb 'to Americanize' leads back to the aftermath of the Declaration of Independence, when defining a so-called *American* identity became a prime concern for the newly independent states. The term therefore was endowed with positive characteristic as it was meant as a call to cultivate the cultural autonomy of the new American nation. The term entered the French language for the first time in 1855, in Charles Baudelaire's critique of the painting exhibition of the World's Fair. It is to be found again in the January 18, 1867 entry of the Goncourt brothers' journal. In both of these instances, the verb 'américaniser' has a negative connotation, as both use it to express the fear of losing the French cultural autonomy to American domination.<sup>95</sup>

As Phillipe Roger has suggested, in Baudelaire's case more than fear nourished his negative translation of Americanism: it takes its roots in his opposition to Rousseau's Jansemism, and by association, anything related to the cult of nature, so close to Rousseau's heart.<sup>96</sup> That is to say, the French understanding of the concept of Americanism is filtered through Franco-French intellectual conversations. A focus on translation of such a concept as Americanization is telling of the fluidity of meanings and their need to be located in time and space. In fact, "conventionally Americans see 'American innocence, hope, optimism, freedom, opportunity, and modernity versus European decadence, decay, pessimism, social and ideological conflict, war, whereas Europeans reverse the polarity, so that 'America is seen as

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<sup>95</sup> Joëlle Farchy, *La fin de l'exception culturelle?* (CNRS Éditions, 1999), 203

<sup>96</sup> Roger, 68, 98



irredeemably avaricious, materialistic, frantic, violent, culturally sterile, standardised, vulgar, without spirit or soul - in vivid contrast to a refined, mature, sophisticated, socially conscious and responsible European civilisation'."<sup>97</sup>

Looking at contemporary uses of Americanization, there predominates an awareness that the concept is too simplistic to define even the process of identity construction within the US. Andrew and Kristin Ross warn in their introduction to *Anti-Americanization* that "taking Americanism seriously means accepting vastly exaggerated versions of ideals, traits and postures that are believed to be quite distinct from those of other cultures and countries."<sup>98</sup> This focus on the stereotypical nature of Americanism, the focus of much of the critiques of the Myth & Symbol School, who attempted to give Americanism legitimacy through scholarly discourses only become grotesque when translated in French and negatively connoted.<sup>99</sup> The most critical definition of Americanization in recent scholarship is to be found in the edited volume by Neil Campbell, Jude Davies and George McKay titled *Issues in Americanisation and Culture*. They do clearly emphasize the positive and negative connotations that the term has been given by different scholars in recent years. Even if they write from a European perspective, a pure translation and border crossing focus is far from their primary concern. They suggest that the scholarly arguments opposing theorists of transnationalism

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<sup>97</sup> Campbell, Davies, and McKay, *Issues in Americanisation and Culture*, 8 (citing Pells)

<sup>98</sup> Ross, 1

<sup>99</sup> Important voices in the Myth & Symbol School includes Henry Nash Smith, Leo Marx, Bruce Kuklick or Barbara Welter. See Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Harvard University Press, 2007)

and globalization regards Americanization either as synonymous of homogenization or of a process of hybridization that takes different forms in different countries.

From letters written by French visitors traveling in the United States in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to books on natural history and diaries of political and literary figures of the time (not all of which are French), Philippe Roger follows the antiamericanism discourse. His close analysis of French and a few other European texts (primarily novels, plays, scholarly and political essays) lead him to pin-point the key characteristics of American culture as it was depicted in Europe from its inception. The youth and feminization of the newly founded United States was repeatedly observed, with various consequences, such as lack of elegance, manners, intellectual curiosity, wit, culture or cuisine. As descendants from the first settlers, it was believed that women had a disproportionate libido in comparison to their male counterparts.<sup>100</sup> As a consequence, American women were seen since the early Republic period as sexually promiscuous.<sup>101</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, perhaps in correlation with the suffragette movement, the American wife became an object of derision (and fear?) and fascination in France, as she was perceived as the epitome of the American "type."<sup>102</sup> North America, at the turn of the century was seen in France as a "gynocratie;" American men were seen as its first victims.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Roger, 28, 66

<sup>101</sup> Roger, 46

<sup>102</sup> Roger, 247

<sup>103</sup> Roger, 251

The first instance of focus on American teenage girls in France occurred in the 1920s and coincides with the growing fear of American cultural imperialism. While the critiques of the United States as a gynocratie emerged from a mixture of critical and amused French views, the teenage girl brought out straight fear. Whether one looks at French novels, plays, newspaper articles or photographs of flappers, the American "girl" (as she was called in French) is recurrently represented as a threat to French traditions and well-being.<sup>104</sup> The possibility for sexual promiscuity is only a small part of this image: her freedom and power of manipulation are recurrent images too. Already in the 1920s the American teenage girl was a threat to the French masculine domination, as Diana Birdcall, lead character of *Des Américains Chez Nous*, a novel by Raoul Gain published in 1928, exemplifies.<sup>105</sup> Her lack of containment (contrary to the American wife who does not represent such a threat) make her an allegory for the French fear of American cultural imperialism and a foremother to the contemporary Hollywood teen-girls.

Long before the concept of antiamericanism made it into the French vocabulary in 1948 (and then in the dictionary in 1968), the sentiment was present and laying the foundations for stereotypical images as common as that of the teen-girl today. Roger suggests that although the idea had been around for over two hundred years, the cold-war served as a catalyst for the concept to emerge: as France and most of the world became the battleground for East-West diplomatic and military tensions, antiamericanism

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<sup>104</sup> Roger, 252-6

<sup>105</sup> Roger, 256

became a discourse in France as common as its counter opposite antisovietism. This turn of the antiamerican discourse is best explored through the political scene.

### The political scene

In the direct aftermath of the Second World War, the popular opinion of American presence in Europe and of US products were generally positive, as suggested earlier by the pronounced taste for American entertainment. That popular taste was not necessarily shared by all, however, and most notoriously not by the first post WWII French president: General Charles de Gaulle. His stance on the United States is at best distant, as his decisions to keep the US military out of France or to endow France with nuclear armaments against the wishes of the US government positioned France purposefully on the margins of American political and military influence. The Gaullist regime is generally best characterized by its coolness toward America; this, however, does not constitute antiamericanism, it participates to the discourse in ways that may not have been intended by de Gaulle.

Clear expressions of the antiamericanism discourse in the 1950s are to be located instead within the pro-USSR speeches given by public figures such as Jean-Paul Sartres, for instance.<sup>106</sup> More pertinent to my research, the creation of the ministry of culture, headed by André Malraux, is an important step in the cultivation of the antiamericanism discourse in France. Malraux promptly took practical steps toward the funding of the French film industry – taking the control of the National Center for Cinematography created in

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<sup>106</sup> Roger, 430

1946, is the most striking example - and toward the preservation of uniquely "French" expressions in the cultural industries, especially cinema.<sup>107</sup>

The economic and cultural dialogues between France and the US were relaxed in the 1970s, when Valéry Giscard d'Estaing became president: although a Gaullist himself, he leaned further toward pro-American policies.<sup>108</sup> Richard Kuizel argues that the French antiamericanism relaxed in the 1970s because

Washington began to appear weak and indecisive: first came the defeat in Vietnam, then the near impeachment of President Nixon, followed by the vacillations in American policy under Presidents Ford and Carter; yet another humiliation in Iran gave the French more concern about Washington's firmness than its hegemony. American 'arrogance,' which had seemed so oppressive in the 1960s, faded in the diplomatic defeats and political turmoil of the 1970s.<sup>109</sup>

If we follow Kuizel's logic, the French perspective of the US and their political position toward America is fundamentally fed by French insecurities as the deflated American image has a direct impact on French perception of the US. In turn, French cultural policies are altered so as not to appear as protectionist as they have been in the past and will be in the future.

When socialist president François Mitterrand was elected in 1981, the relations between France and the US became tense again for a short period of time. Mitterrand's agenda was about as antithetic to Reagan's as could possibly be: the intent was to put France on the right track to prepare for a

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<sup>107</sup> The CNC was in fact a creation of the Vichy government; but it was not given its name until 1946.

<sup>108</sup> It is interesting to note that Michel d'Ornano (referred to earlier as mayor of Deauville when the American film festival was created) was Giscard d'Estaing's minister of industry and of culture, respectively from 1974 to 1977 and 1977 to 1978.

<sup>109</sup> Kuizel, 214

socialist future. Mitterrand nationalized banks, started numerous programs of domestic renovations and positioned France on international issues in ways that were not pleasing to the Reagan administration.<sup>110</sup> That resurgence of coolness was however short-lived as with the election of Jacques Chirac as prime minister in 1986 started the first and longest cohabitation of the Vth Republic. The direct consequence of Chirac's arrival in power was a relaxation of the Franco-American relationships best exemplified by the completion "of the negotiations with the Disney corporation to build its European version of the Disneyland amusement park outside of Paris."<sup>111</sup> The same holds true for the two consecutive presidencies held by Jacques Chirac.

However, looking more closely at the cultural policies of France and Europe regarding their film industries during the late 1980s and early 1990s, one must acknowledge that many steps were taken to promote European productions and the distribution of European films. At the end of the 1980s' for instance, France was successful in convincing the E.U. members to allocate part of their budget to European audiovisual productions. In 1989, the *Eurimage* agreements allocated money for the distribution of European films for the first time in the history of Europe.<sup>112</sup> These original agreements gave way to the more elaborate five-year programs MEDIA, MEDIA II and MEDIA PLUS starting in 1991. Closer to us, the 2005 UNESCO General Conference is a great example of a world wide focus on preserving cultural

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<sup>110</sup> Kuizel, 219

<sup>111</sup> Kuizel, 223

<sup>112</sup> Farchy, 103

diversity: "France and Canada co-sponsored the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which gave renewed support to the cultural exception in winning a crushing 148-2 victory, with the United States and Israel casting the twin dissenting votes."<sup>113</sup> 9/11 altered the political and military Franco-American relationship. While the tendency has immediately been to back the US, the Franco-American political relationships gradually worsened as President George Bush's administration made decisions to respond to the events of 9/11 in unilateral ways. The peak was reached upon the US invasion of Iraq, at which point Chirac publicly stated his opposition to the conflict. These events did not directly impact the economic relationship, but were echoed throughout the cultural sphere.

#### Public intellectual feuds

A fundamental opposition was noted by French historian Pierre Nora who, in 1976, qualified the dialogue between French and US intellectuals as 'impossible' because of their opposed understanding of the concept of revolution. While some American scholars are arguably anti-American, they do not enter the animated French scholars and public intellectuals' conversations on Américanisation and antiamericanism. While most of this feud is entertained by publications in book format, newspapers such as *Libération* or *Le Canard Enchaîné* follow suit in printing editorials and satirical opinion pieces on a regular basis. The heart of the recent debates opposes Gaullist Jacques Thibau to the likes of Raymond Aron, Michel Crozier and

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<sup>113</sup> McDonald & Wasko, 210

Alain Peyrefitte, who all expressed pro-American opinions. The fuel of the debate primarily lies in the fear of American cultural domination. Even if Thibau himself in *La France Colonisée* admits that French culture would be quite weak if Mickey Mouse represented a real threat, he still maintains a line of arguments that imply the fear of American cultural domination. Yet, Thibau builds his antiamericanism argument primarily on numbers: from the growing box-office results of American films to the diminishing shares of French films in the movie theaters or the increase in American films showed on French television.<sup>114</sup> As he further argues against pro-American policies of the French government, he uses obsolete readings of the Blum-Byrnes agreements as selling out to the Americans, which I questioned in the first part of this chapter. His respondents are less interested in praising American culture than in focusing on the intrinsic pervasiveness of all cultures in the global economy.

Michel de Certeau convincingly settles this conversation between pro and antiamericanism public intellectuals and scholars when he suggests that the presence of American cultural products is understood by the French people in so many different ways that it cannot be summarized in the two extreme and polar opposite arguments. He even suggests that as a consequence, there is no anticipating a single response to US popular culture, but instead, that it is safer to assume that the French reinvent it and appropriate it in diverse and often sophisticated ways. Although perhaps a little dated, de Certeau's argument published in 1974 in *L'invention du*

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<sup>114</sup> Jacques Thibau, *La France Colonisée* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980), 62



*Quotidien* clearly establishes the limitations of a project focusing on real audience members, taking therefore the risk of a lack of unity.<sup>115</sup> The redundancy of othered Hollywood teen-girls is more telling of the persistence of an antiamericanism discourse in France.

A different argument illustrating de Certeau's claim of the French appropriation of everything American, is that of Jean Baudrillard in *Amérique*, published in 1986.<sup>116</sup> In this travelogue of Baudrillard's trip to New York, Los Angeles and the Western deserts, Baudrillard describes the US as a cultural wasteland. More importantly, using his idea of simulacra, he argues that tourists' imagination is filled with preconceived ideas of what the urban and desert landscapes look like, outside of which the US does not exist. It is because films and other images have preceded the real experience of these spaces that a myth of the US has been constructed, which frames all experiences.<sup>117</sup> Baudrillard is quite dismissive of the US's ability to produce anything other than mass-mediated images for fast consumption and disposal; in that, he exemplifies the European love/hate relationship with the country: more importantly, *America* reveals the constant engagement of Europeans with an imaginary America that comes to supplant the real one.

The Situationists considered modernization and Americanization, which were de facto associated in France, to be a form of colonization. In their view, the actual colonization of France by Germany, or that of territories like Senegal or Indochina by France was replaced by "the colonization of

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<sup>115</sup> *L'Invention Du Quotidien* (Paris: Union generale d'editions, 1974, 1980)

<sup>116</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Amerique* (Paris: B. Grasset, 1986)

<sup>117</sup> Baudrillard, 116

everyday life" perpetrated by the United States. In their view, modernization was a form of oppression, not a liberation, which the mainstream American discourse defends. In the view of the Situationists, the result of modernization (and Americanisation) is uniformization and the accumulation of material wealth, which forces individuals in a system (capitalist) that fundamentally alienate them from themselves and who they are. Guy Debord and the Internationale Situationiste, offshoot of the Dada movement also provide an interesting view of the US from a French perspective. With a basic driving assumption that the modernization of France was leading toward the alienation of the workers, their call never to work: "Ne Travaillez Jamais!" is a definitive appeal to the French masses to resist conventionalisms.<sup>118</sup> Likewise, replaced in the context of their anti-bourgeois stance, the Situationiste's denunciation of the "colonization of everyday life" is more an expression of their awareness of the forced routine imposed on people by modernization, than a direct call to resist Americanization. However, the association between modernization and Americanization was a commonly received idea that even finds its way in Baudrillard's *America* when he says: "America is the original version of modernity. We are the dubbed or subtitled version."<sup>119</sup> This assumed association of modernization and Americanization is then understood as a movement toward distance from authenticity and the genuineness of traditional life.

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<sup>118</sup> Jean-Louis Rancon, Alice Debord. *Guy Debord, Oeuvres*. (Paris: Gallimard Quarto, 2006.), 89

<sup>119</sup> Baudrillard, 76

## CHAPTER TWO

### DECODING-RE-ENCODING: LOCATING THE CULTURAL INTERMEDIARY THROUGH TRANSLATIONS OF THE AMERICAN TEEN-GIRL INTO L'ADOLESCENTE AMERICAINE

Looking at the promotion of the same object of large-scale cultural productions in two different countries raises one central question: how do cultural contexts affect the modes of communication bridging a foreign product and its consumers? The previous chapter established that although similar fields are to be found in France and in the United States,<sup>120</sup> these fields' histories and the history of their relationship to the political field differ.<sup>121</sup> In turn, the cultural productions emerging from these two countries are different and so is consumers' habitus. As a consequence, a single object,

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<sup>120</sup> The political field is a given, but an active film industry / field is less so; France is an exception in that regard, as its history of conflict with the film industry in the United States exemplifies (see chapter one).

<sup>121</sup> Bourdieu defines the concept of field as "a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning independent of those of politics and the economy" (1984), 162. In Bourdieu's view, the field of cultural production is split in two subfields, on the one hand the restricted production, an autonomous field encompassing literature and art (any area where the production of art for art's sake is prime, that was the focus of Bourdieu's analyses) producing objects endowed with high symbolic value; on the other hand, the large-scale production subfield caters to the masses and is therefore subjected to both the market (because financial profit is the goal) and the field of power (because of laws and regulations limiting both production and markets). In the field of film productions, the distinction between these two subfields is not quite as clear cut; however blurry, it can be argued that independent productions fall in the restricted production category whereas studio films and generally speaking big productions will fall on the mass / large-scale production subfield. Although Bourdieu might be inclined to put both of these cinemas in the mass-production subfield, I would argue that, acknowledging the possibility for a degree of overlapping, (most do not show in the same theaters, frequently are not addressing the same segments of the population, and are not produced under the same conditions) they can be treated as two separate fields. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984)

produced on either side of the Atlantic, needs to be adapted to local tastes in order to find its market.<sup>122</sup> If some transnational and globalization scholars have argued that homogenization or hybridity are key words to understand the 'global' world, it is my contention that because markets, histories (film, political for example) and tastes remain localized, a single object's symbolic value will need to be translated in order to talk to local consumers' habitus. This act of translation performed by the transcultural intermediary generates a filter through which the object is consumed and outside of which it makes little sense.<sup>123</sup>

Such a perspective needs to be located within a theoretical framework rooted in post-colonial and transnational scholarship such as the works of Gayatri Spivak, Arjun Appadurai or Inderpal Grewal: the twentieth and twenty-first centuries global world is characterized by a constant flow of objects, ideas, images and people, whose identities are the fruit of a never-ending process of negotiations across cultures; that is, they are in translation.<sup>124</sup> In fact, my research echoes Stuart Hall's theorization of the meaning of globalization as translation. In his own words: "It may be

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<sup>122</sup> Most of my two conversations with Ira Deutchman was geared toward the promotion of two French films in the US, namely Jean-Jacques Beineix's *Diva* and Francois Truffault's *The Last Metro*. Based on these conversations, it appears that adaptation and translation are key words of the distribution branch of the film industry on both sides of the Atlantic (and possibly every where).

<sup>123</sup> I am aware of the contemporary trend to use the concept of translation as a metaphor for (postnational) identities, geopolitical relations, time-space models, politics of display in a museum and much more. This, in my view and that of the few scholars discussed below, is one of the pitfalls of cultural studies these days. I propose instead to use translation more literally.

<sup>124</sup> "Gayatri Spivak, "The Politics of Translation""in Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*; Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Public worlds v. 1 (Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Inderpal Grewal, *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2005)

tempting to think of identity in the age of globalization as destined to end up in one place or another: either returning to its 'roots' or disappearing through assimilation and homogenization. But this may be a false dilemma. For there is another possibility: that of 'translation'.<sup>125</sup> The identities in translation are what Hamid Naficy has called 'exile' or 'accented' identities: those of members of diasporas anywhere in the world.

While I write from the vantage point of what Inderpal Grewal describes as the transnational migrant (one that allows me to have one home in France and one in the USA), I would like to take distance from scholars such as Stuart Hall or Homi Bhabha's use of translation as a metaphor.<sup>126</sup> In *The Question of Cultural Identity* for instance, Hall suggests that translation "describes those identity formations which cut across and intersect natural frontiers and which are composed of people who have been dispersed from their homelands."<sup>127</sup> In this view, translation is like identity construction, a never-ending process dependent on one's position in relation to different networks (Appadurai's scapes). While translation scholars agree that there is no permanence in translation, their focus on linguistic texts (for the most part), allows for some grounding of the argument: the general consensus upon which most contemporary translation scholarship is based on is that "translation necessarily rewrites and reorders."<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage, 1996), 310

<sup>126</sup> Grewal, *Transnational America*

<sup>127</sup> Hall, 310

<sup>128</sup> Venuti, 4

The purpose of this chapter is to locate my research within the theoretical conversations that my data illuminate. In three parts, I will show how: 1) the cultural intermediary's role as "shaper of tastes"<sup>129</sup> is a cornerstone of large-scale cultural productions in the twenty first century;<sup>130</sup> 2) cross-cultural visual exchanges performed by the transcultural intermediary are rooted in Stuart Hall's concepts of encoding / decoding; 3) translation at the same time contributes to construct local audiences (thereby preserving the local status quo, reinforced as a consequence of transnational feuds and cultural protectionisms) and serve as a counter-hegemonic tool in cross-cultural conversations. It is with works that investigate the process of visual construction feeding off and cultivating myths of ethnic, national, gendered or sexed others and norms that my own work finds affinity. I will therefore locate my study at the intersection of the disciplines of media, translation and cultural studies as well as transnational feminisms and consumer culture. Linking these three parts, and underlying the following three case studies, is the idea that while the purpose of translation is to construct a French audience for a foreign product, the transcultural intermediary (unwittingly) reaffirms the masculine domination and cultivates the discourse of anti-americanism.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Nixon, Du Gay, 498

<sup>130</sup> Pierre Bourdieu's concepts *field* and *habitus* are useful to compare industries of large-scale cultural productions across borders; however, because his theoretical framework is only meant to analyze a single culture, and not necessarily thought about as a tool for transcultural comparisons, the role of the cultural intermediary (which I will thereon call transcultural intermediary) is crucial to bridge two cultures.

<sup>131</sup> I am understanding and using the concept of discourse as Michel Foucault did in *The Archeology of Knowledge*, which is his clearest attempt at defining his understanding and use of the concept of discourse. In this text, as I read him, Foucault conceives of discourse as a set of diverse practices that gain their meanings

## Why the (trans)cultural intermediary matters

According to Bourdieu, large-scale cultural productions, more so than small (or restricted)-scale cultural productions, require a mediator in order to communicate their existence to mass (or popular) audiences. His use of cultural intermediaries applies to all individuals who bridge production and consumption, among which he counts public relations, design, packaging, or sale. Marketing and advertising people belong to this part of the workforce as well in Bourdieu's mind.<sup>132</sup> As he describes it, the cultural intermediary is particularly subject to pressures of the field of power due to his / her position between mass-produced objects and the masses of consumers. As a consequence, although Bourdieu recognizes the potential for high economic capital in such endeavors as marketing and distribution, he sees cultural capital, creativity and autonomy as particularly stifled because they do no more than answer "a pre-existing demand, in pre-established forms."<sup>133</sup>

Bourdieu has a low opinion of the cultural intermediary whom he calls

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in relation (and give meaning) to the space and time within which they were produced and that reveal power dynamics. More importantly, this understanding of discourse assumes ruptures; every enunciation is therefore unique but repeatable and informs the history of its own resurgences (or absence). Likewise, the translations of promotional artifacts for Hollywood teen-girl films (unique but repeatable enunciations) in France partake in the antiamericanism discourse that reveals the French masculine domination. In other words, my study is a form of archeology in so much that I offer a structural analysis of the process of enunciation (the construction of promotional artifacts) that constitute the discourse (of antiamericanism). Michel Foucault, *L'Archéologie du savoir* (Gallimard, 1977)

<sup>132</sup> What is particularly interesting in terms of my research is that Bourdieu includes critics within the cultural intermediary; this turns out to be particularly prescient as the made-for-television shows that present segments of films to promote them to a large audience do no more but bridge the product and the consumers: a savvy hybrid of promotion of critique. (see chapter 5)

<sup>133</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1996), 142

“shaper of tastes;” as he assumes that his / her job is to reaffirm popular tastes and ideas while remaining in the shade, Bourdieu in fact, by deeming the cultural intermediary unimportant, makes his / her work invisible.<sup>134</sup>

The concept of the cultural intermediary has been used by many scholars in disciplines as diverse as linguistics, sociology, cultural studies and media studies. It has been applied to the works of artists (Paulo Henriques Britto, Lise Skov),<sup>135</sup> teachers of foreign language and individuals involved in the advertising business, such as creative executives (Matthew Soar), branding consultants (Liz Moor), marketers, public relations or sales representative (Du Gay and Nixon). It was adapted to the profession of personal trainer by Jennifer Smith Maguire.<sup>136</sup> Although a handful of these

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<sup>134</sup> Bourdieu's lack of interest in large-scale cultural production may also be linked to Theodor Adorno's idea that conformism (to the dominant values) was a key word of capitalist modes of production. That is essentially why Bourdieu dismisses the cultural intermediary; this raises the question of the autonomy of the cultural mediator, a fundamental question that will be discussed here after.

<sup>135</sup> In Paulo Henriques Britto's paper titled *Elizabeth Bishop as Cultural Intermediary*, there is little to no attempt at defining the term; instead, in fact, as the narrative proceeds, and the work of Bishop in Brazil is elaborated upon, it appears that the author really mistakes the cultural intermediary for the cultural broker. The unease of Bishop in the position of a specialist of another culture and representative of it abroad are traits that belong to the cultural broker and have nothing to do with the cultural intermediary. Likewise in Skov's work, although she points to the key characteristics of the cultural intermediary as defined by Bourdieu (bridge between production and consumption and endowment of the object with symbolic value), she also suggests that “At the same time, they are also cultural intermediaries in the sense of mediating between East and West, between the global and the local.” (Skov, 567) This last characteristic is not noted by Bourdieu as belonging to the cultural intermediary; it truly belongs to the cultural broker.

<sup>136</sup> Liz Moor, “Branding consultants as cultural intermediaries,” *Sociological Review* 56, no. 3 (2008): 408-428; Soar, “Encoding Advertisements”; Agnes Rocamora, “Fields of Fashion: Critical insights into Bourdieu's sociology of culture,” *Journal of Consumer Culture* 2, no. 3 (November 1, 2002): 341-362; Lise Skov, “Hong Kong Fashion Designers as Cultural Intermediaries: out of Global Garment Productions. Routledge,” *Cultural Studies* 16, no. 4 (2002): 553; Keith Negus, “The Work of Cultural Intermediaries and the Enduring Distance Between Production and Consumption. Routledge,” *Cultural Studies* 16, no. 4 (2002): 501; Jennifer Smith Maguire, “The personal is professional: Personal trainers as a case study of cultural



scholars address transcultural exchanges, the majority of them strictly speaking focus on professions listed by Bourdieu as belonging to the category cultural intermediary: a bridge between production and consumption in the large-scale sub-field of cultural productions within one nation. It is the cultural intermediary's role as in-between production and consumption that makes him / her the perfect locus from which to observe the more complex transcultural exchanges at the heart of processes of adaptation and translation of Hollywood teen-girl films' promotional materials prepared for French audiences.<sup>137</sup>

In the face of a diversity of cultural capitals that create large-scale cultural products and an equally diverse societal make-up consuming them, not only do large-scale cultural productions become important objects of

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intermediaries," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 11, no. 2 (June 1, 2008): 211-229

<sup>137</sup> A focus on the transcultural intermediary has several consequences. Matthew Soar pointed to the limitations of Judith Williamson's classic *Decoding Advertisement* (1978) demonstrating that analyzing the middle-men/women in the field of advertisement was pertinent to make critical cultural analyses more complete. He further critiqued Adorno and Horkheimer's idea of the culture industry (analogous to Bourdieu's view of the large-scale cultural industries) arguing that "the class position and dynamic of these particular workers can be understood as characterized by uncertainty and instability." (Soar, 416) This further implies as well a more fluid approach to such notions as culture of economy, since the transcultural intermediary dabbles in many fields in the process of negotiating over meaning across two cultures (the same goes for the scholarship in media and translation such as that of Hamid Naficy who write a political economy of television in his third chapter, for instance. His suggestion that advertisers primarily think about their peers as ideal audiences is confirmed by my finding that the Key Arts Awards are key to the film advertisement industry in the US. Yet, Andrew Higson suggests: "There is of course no guarantee that all audiences will make sense of these experiences in the same way, since audiences will translate each experience into their own cultural frames of reference, using them in different contexts and for different ends. (Higson, 17) To my knowledge, there is no equivalent to the Key Arts Awards in France; this, however, would not preclude their ideal audience to be their peers, as journals and sheer competition makes them aware of each other. However, research in marketing as well as conversations with distributors make that aspect quaint, where they speak more readily of producing their objects for an ideal audience (that does not encompass their peers, officially).

analysis, but making the work of the cultural intermediary visible becomes all the more significant. The creation of promotional artifacts aimed at mainstream consumers requires cultural intermediaries to have or gain an in-depth knowledge of a number of habitus(es) other than their own in order to address the right segments of the population.<sup>138</sup> This means that what Bourdieu dismissed as the popular masses need to be considered as diverse entities, with unique cultures and identities within the main-frame of the national societal make-up. Following Bourdieu's logic, these different sub-cultures' habitus(es) will be different (with over-lapping similarities).

This means, therefore, that for a genre as unique in France as the teen-girl film, the market will have to be created (audience construction), not because there are no French teenage girls, but because their field is vastly different from those of the teen-girls portrayed in Hollywood teen-girl films. No matter how refined the segmentation will be, however, transcultural intermediaries cannot know whether their advertising will be successful (box office returns). In fact, while French marketers can rely to some degree on audience research conducted by the government (CNC) or occasionally by distribution companies, there is no test preview that would allow to adapt the film to the audiences' liking as it does in the US. This, to me, is an affirmation of a degree of autonomy (denied by Bourdieu) within mass-produced culture.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> This is a term borrowed from marketing that describes a discreet part of the population based on gender, age, class, race, ethnicity and other such descriptors of society.

<sup>139</sup> The cultural mediator taking on the promotion of such a film has a lot of creative work ahead of him/her; the cultural mediator, as an autonomous agent with a large

Within a national cultural make-up growing more diverse under the influence of the fluid circulation of objects, ideas and people across borders, cultural intermediaries are not only bridges between products and consumers (marketing), but they also bridge two cultures, adapting meanings for foreign objects, ideas and cultures (translation). They might therefore be better described as translators of symbols, as they lead targeted individuals to buy into the symbolic values of objects these people may otherwise have overlooked. Because of this added transcultural function, Bourdieu's concept of cultural intermediary needs to be elaborated upon so as to bridge the local (or the national) entity to the global (or foreign) entity/ies. Not only does the cultural intermediary create symbolic value to a cultural object produced within the borders, his / her abilities need to be expended to linguistic and cultural translation.<sup>140</sup> Bourdieu's cultural intermediary must be expanded to

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amount of leverage within the fields of mass-cultural productions, needs to be analyzed as ruling over his/her own field: advertising. In so much that it is widely recognized that marketers acknowledge that "Risk-reduction strategies did not eliminate risk;" (Miller, 260), their responsibility is to minimize risk. Marketing research can only participate in reducing the risk, not eliminating it. Likewise, Moor's work on branding agencies suggests that "there are reasons to be cautious in assuming that cultural intermediaries are able to shape tastes and influence consumer dispositions; even when engaged in an explicit effort to interpret or influence consumer behavior through the selective appropriation of 'legitimate' culture, branding consultants often overestimate their capacity to understand the tastes and preferences of a target audience, and base their decisions on personal experience, speculation or stereotype, which in turn may lead to pronounced and expensive failures." (Moor, 424) Furthermore, while Bourdieu assumes that the cultural intermediary simply bridges a product that's been created based on already existing demand, it seems important to note the fact that there is rarely any symmetry between the creation of a film and its consumption. Although marketing people make their way up the ladder in Hollywood, they can only assume that a film may seduce an American audience based on their experience selling similar products; the result, however, is never guaranteed, and is less so even once the film crosses borders.

<sup>140</sup> The concept of cultural translation originated with Homi Bhabha who attempted thereby to find an alternative to theories of multiculturalism. Bhabha argues that migrants' identities are in translation, located permanently in the third space. For

include an ability to translate symbolic meaning and value inscribed by one nation's culture into another's.

In order to elaborate on Bourdieu's cultural intermediary for transcultural ends, I turn to the field of anthropology, where the cultural broker has assumed the function of cross-cultural negotiator. The basic definition of the cultural broker echoes the responsibilities of the international film distributor: the cultural broker "purveys values but deliberately changes emphasis or content," as anthropologist Robert Paine explains, and "stand[s] guard over the crucial junctures of synapses of relationships which connect the local system to the larger whole."<sup>141</sup> Placed against the transnational political and economic backdrop, the (trans)cultural broker / intermediary of visual constructions of Hollywood's teen-girl is a cornerstone of contemporary youth consumer culture and cultural identity formation. Within that framework, various film distribution companies constitute the nodes that

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Bhabha, translation and hybridity are synonymous; translation therefore offers much opportunity for transgression and represents a challenge to national orders. As will be seen below, I am using the concept of translation much more literally, basing my argument on tangible linguistic and visual texts. Homi Bhabha's key ideas in terms of cultural translation are developed in *The Location of Culture*. For a critical conversation on the concept of cultural translation, and the adoption of translation in cultural studies, see the website *Translate* (<http://translate.eipcp.net/>). The official purpose of this project is "intended to establish a platform to develop a thorough critique of the concept of cultural translation: by establishing its limitations, thus sharpening its profile and unfolding its concrete potential" (Hito Steyerl). It includes recent publications by Gayatri Spivak, Michaela Wolf or Etienne Balibar among other, mostly European scholars.

<sup>141</sup> Because Paine's definition is much more elaborate (it involves four levels: the go-between, the broker, the patron and the client; the broker is clearly just one of the four.). This leads such anthropologists as Margaret Connell Szasz, for instance, to use the concept 'cultural intermediary' as a neutral term across the four concepts provided by Paine (*Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994)). She does not, however, seem to be aware of the Sociological meaning of the concept. Robert Paine. *Politically Speaking: Cross-Cultural Studies of Rhetoric*, Social and economic papers no. 10 (Philadelphia: Institute of social and economic research : Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1981), 8, 21

compose the network of cultures feeding off one another across national, economic, and other borders. At the meeting point of nodes, the translator of promotional artifacts for Hollywood teen-girl films bridge the transcultural and national (cultural broker) as well as the consumers and products (cultural intermediary); the distributor of international films, whom I call transcultural intermediary, stands at the median between the anthropological and the sociological concepts.<sup>142</sup>

The role of the transcultural intermediary is to bridge the national and the transnational, as well as the foreign product and the local consumers, through promotional artifacts. Distributors of foreign films, in a given country are in the position of the transcultural and visual intermediaries, because they are the ones who best understand the synapses of communication; they are thus best positioned to examine these “crucial junctures.” While the distribution of any cultural product within a national territory requires the performance of the transcultural intermediary, the crossing of borders implies that meanings will have to be adapted to better respond to desires of local consumers. To explore the construction of meaning bridging product and consumer (originating from different cultural groups informed by different habitus and cultural and economic capital), a close analysis of the modes of communication used to advertise Hollywood films is required. To this end I turn to Stuart Hall's framework of encoding / decoding.

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<sup>142</sup> I like the neutrality of the term intermediary, so what was missing was the idea of border-crossing cultural exchange nicely expressed by transcultural.

### **Conceptual shift: from Encoding to Re-Encoding**

When Roland Barthes analyzed advertisement as that which "arises from an existing association between concept and form, on which it then builds its own supplementary system of signification,"<sup>143</sup> he assumed that societies have a homogenous set of myths at their core reiterated by an elusive author.<sup>144</sup> The common set of narratives and images that he assumes to constitute a cohesive cultural language (this "association between concept and form") is disembodied in Barthes' theory and includes no apparent awareness of power struggle.<sup>145</sup> Barthes' system therefore needs to be supplemented with a theoretical framework that transcends his basic semiotics in order to meet the analytic demands of contemporary market-specific marketing created by a now visible agent (the kind of work that is based on precise knowledge of the segments of society for whom the "association between concept and form" will make sense). Barthes'

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<sup>143</sup> Susan Sellers, *Myth and Fairy Tale in Contemporary Women's Fiction* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 6

<sup>144</sup> Any such homogenous core, in modern societies is the product of the selective work of a handful. As Jane Darcy explains it: "The ideology that has underpinned the main literary and visual fairy tales since Perrault's collection of tales *Histoires pour contes du temps passé* is essentially that of the middle class, which has been the dominant social and political group since the eighteenth century and was in an emergent state earlier than this. Their values and attitudes are represented in the important and influential collections of tales and films and they, rather than the 'folk' or peasantry, become the primary audience for the tales. So the kinds of tales that tend to be selected in the Perrault and Grimm collections and whose tradition Disney has followed have heroes whose resourcefulness and cunning are rewarded and whose direction is definitely upwardly mobile." Darcy, 186

<sup>145</sup> The focus of Barthes on the construction and self-reaffirmation of a visual form of discourse leads to hide the bodies or agents actively working at producing them (who are of no interest to Barthes). Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework allows for the production of discourse and meaning to be so to speak re-embodied, as there is a location for agents within the social construct, where they did not have a tangible place. To a degree, Bourdieu complements Michel Foucault as well, as although Foucault's discourse focuses on bodies contributing to discourses, these bodies have no place outside of the discourse; the transcultural intermediary's enunciations are he disjuncted interventions in the French antiamerican discourse.

framework, furthermore, does not provide the tools to analyze the construction of systems of signification specific to sub-cultures belonging to the larger whole but with their own independent sets of supplementary systems of signification not necessarily understandable beyond their group. To elaborate on Barthes' semiotic reading of advertisement, then, I turn to Stuart Hall's ways of complicating the basic analytical tools proposed in Barthes' 'Rhetoric of the Image' by focusing on the necessary articulation between the site of production of signs and the site of their reception, between encoding and decoding, in Hall's terms.<sup>146</sup>

Stuart Hall's project in his article titled "Encoding/Decoding," which was first published as a chapter of *Culture, Media, Language* in 1980, primarily aims at pointing to the limitations of classic semiotics. Indeed, he suggests that the standard analysis of language in denotated and connotated meaning does not leave room for a diversity of possible readings of the implied (connotated) meaning. Instead, Hall's model of analysis allows for disjuncture between the encoding (the site of construction of meaning by the television producer in his analysis, or the film marketer in mine) and the decoding (the reading of promotional artifacts for Hollywood teen-girl films by viewers within their own cultural capital). In other words, semiotics proposes a system in which the "articulation of an arbitrary sign – whether visual or verbal – with the concept of a referent is the product not of nature but of convention, and the conventionalism of discourse requires the

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<sup>146</sup> These concepts were borrowed by Hall from Umberto Eco. Eco developed this system for linguistics in the mid-1960s; Hall in turn adapted it for visual culture.

intervention, the support, of codes."<sup>147</sup> This system, according to Hall, neglects the interpretative aspect of language: it does not leave room for understanding outside the "dominant (or preferred) cultural order."<sup>148</sup> Semiotics, denies agency both at the site of encoding and at the site of decoding: Stuart Hall's system brings back agency in the articulation between production and consumption.

Design and advertisement scholar Matthew Soar argued that a focus on encoding was sorely missing from the study of advertisement, and as such, he proposed to expand the scholarship by offering the first study of what it means to encode. He did so based on his analysis of advertisers' perspectives of their own work (through 9 interviews, 8 of which were conducted with men). He argues that:

Hall's important article "Encoding/Decoding" may serve to highlight my basic point here: We have witnessed the emergence of audience research within cultural studies and associated concerns with the myriad issues of cultural reception — in short, decoding. Hall's essay has been particularly influential in this respect, yet the first half of his couplet (i.e., encoding) cannot be said to have helped to foster a similarly fruitful line of inquiry, let alone a canon.<sup>149</sup>

While scholars such as Soar or others in the fields of advertising and design have expanded on the meaning of encoding, a further step needs to be taken: one that includes transcultural exchanges. I call the adaptation of Hall's system to the transcultural world decoding / re-encoding. Its end is to illuminate the transcultural negotiations

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<sup>147</sup> Hall, 170

<sup>148</sup> Hall, 57. Hall asserts that this perspective is only one of at least three ways to read texts: the dominant, the negotiated and the oppositional cultural orders.

<sup>149</sup> Soar, 418



inscribed in the adaptation and translation of foreign advertising for a given culture. A focus on re-encoding clearly expands on the literature focusing on encoding by adding the transcultural dimension to a theoretical framework that has so far only been used to consider a single cultural and/or national product.

Stuart Hall recognizes that in some cases, a "failure in communication" will need to be recognized: using promotional material made for the US in France would lead to such failures in communication because dominant codes, the set of preferred meanings that the marketers will have constructed the posters around, will not be familiar to French audiences. Hall's system therefore, needs further elaboration so as to be applicable to transcultural analysis. The application of Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding, in the form of decoding/*re*-encoding, to promotional artifacts made for Hollywood teen-girl films in France allows for the act of adaptation performed by the transcultural intermediary to be analyzed in detail. This allows us to see that the ways in which gendered representations are constructed will by necessity be altered for the trans-border circulation of large-scale cultural products.<sup>150</sup> What is fundamental to my project then is less the US origin of

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<sup>150</sup> This process will be elaborated upon in the following pages. For now, however, let me simply say that in the process of resisting American cultural 'colonization,' French marketers (unwittingly) participate in the antiamericanism discourse by representing the Hollywood teen-girl as a vapid bimbo (as was seen in the previous chapter). This process is further illuminated by theories of translation focusing on the impact of translation on the colonized: "Translation produces strategies of containment. By employing certain modes of representing the other - which it thereby also brings into being - translation reinforces hegemonic versions of the colonized, helping them acquire the status of what Edward Said calls representations, or objects without history." (Niranjana, 3). When this logic is reversed, that is to say, when the colonized takes the responsibility of translating the colonizer, it is the body of the colonizer that is appropriated by the colonized. In effect then, the American teen-

these films; rather it is the fact that they are sold and consumed as American in France, in ways that make sense to French people only. This implies that re-encoding the teen-girl film posters, trailers and made-for-television ads for the French audience makes them a part of the French antiamericanism discourse, a set of conventions which might be readily accepted in France, but which may make no sense to Americans themselves.<sup>151</sup> Part of the French discourse of antiamericanism for instance includes the stereotype of the sexually available high school and college age girl, which in the United States will be marked as uniquely American but with global appeal.<sup>152</sup>

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girls become "objects without history," blank slates upon which French antiamericanism slurs can be projected.

<sup>151</sup> Although the images used draw from a uniquely French cultural discourse, it seems fair to say that there are several antiamericanism discourses in France: they will vary in degrees of articulation, knowledge as well as dislike. My parents, for instance, would instantly refute the idea of a French antiamericanism on the grounds that, having been to the country numerous times, they clearly see part of its complexity and therefore cannot express a blanket antiamericanism statement. However, when prompted, they will readily agree to see that Americans have no cuisine, no fashion, a 'young' culture, all elements part and parcel of the antiamericanism discourse described in the previous chapter.

<sup>152</sup> Although Bourdieu does resist the notion of universal values and criteria, the argument I am making does not dabble in the aesthetic argument Bourdieu's is seeped in. He is in conversation with Immanuel Kant, who, in *The Critique of Judgment* (1790) argued that the expression of judgment (taste) is universal and necessary (as well as disinterested and final without end.). Bourdieu, on the other hand, suggests that taste is socially constructed, that is it depends on what he calls habitus, the set of dispositions that has been ingrained through years of education (formal and not so formal) and experience. What my research focuses on rather is meaning construction: how the French understand the teenage girl in comparison with their American counterparts, and how as a consequence, the American teen-girl will be recognized as other within the French discourse. None of this has to do with aesthetics: they are vapid bimbos, but remain superficially beautiful (that's another conversation: it is arguable that beauty encompasses the character and not only the superficial aspects of a person.). Contrary to what the Myth and Symbol school believed, the evidence I have collected clearly shows that there is no such thing as an intrinsic American (or French) tastes: it is constructed as part of an ongoing set of conversations across borders. Furthermore, although I position my analysis within a fragment of the Atlantic world, I am by no means implying that the Franco-American dialogue can be understood in abstraction from the rest of the world.

## **Visual Translation: Making the Performer Visible so as to see the Reaffirmation of the Masculine Domination**

As defined above, the transcultural intermediary bridges the foreign product and the potential consumers through translation.<sup>153</sup> The act of translation is best described as a performance in translatability. Jacques Derrida qualified his French translation of the line "When mercy seasons justice" from *The Merchant of Venice* as performative because the switch from season to the French *relever* "puts to work the language, first of all, without adequation or transparency, ... assuming the shape of a new writing or re-writing."<sup>154</sup> What putting the language to work means within Derrida's understanding of translation is based on the assumption that a word-to-word or even a word-for-word translation is never possible. Starting from this

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<sup>153</sup> Abé Mark Nornes pinpoints the barebones of the act of film translation when he defines it in *Translating Global Cinema*, published in 2007, as "a negotiation process [which] begins with the translator and ends with the spectators". (Nornes, 8) What is important in this statement is the idea that a translation, like a performance, is inherently intended to be seen, read or experienced by an audience. Nornes' project focuses on language in film, more specifically, the conversation between dubbing v. sub-titling. On a more abstract level, such a conversation addresses the articulation between "ideological and aesthetic issues connected to translation practices." (Nornes, 17) As a form of analysis of the meanings constructed through the translation from one language to another (be it visual or verbal), this aspect of film translation constitutes a bridge between decoding and re-encoding.

<sup>154</sup> One of the most pregnant issue discussed in the field of translation is translatability. It centers around the idea that the meaning of signs does not have to be transferred literally. Walter Benjamin opened the door for questions of translatability as he saw it as the ability to reproduce a certain quality inherent in the original text, but not, as German Romantics before him argued, to create its mirror image. Roman Jakobson, for instance, is talking about 'intersemiotic transposition' to refer to the translatability of one form of artistic performance into another. Gayatri Spivak speaks of this elusive memory of the original text as 'traces.' She considers that: "A sign system promises meaning. A trace does not promise anything. It is something that seems to suggest, that there was something before." <http://translate.eipcp.net/transversal/0608/spivak/en>; Jacques Derrida, "What is a 'Relevant' Translation?" in Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, 442

confession of "impotence or failure of the translation,"<sup>155</sup> Derrida suggests that the relevant translation appropriates the words and chooses the most appropriate ones (what he calls the economy of translation). Within this framework, a translation is performative in the same way that ruins are alive: the translation, like the ruins, are commemorations, heavy with memories of previous versions and pregnant with future interpretations.

Like the translator, the transcultural intermediary is never seen: because of the nature of their jobs, the translator and the transcultural intermediary have always been disembodied. Furthermore, the transcultural intermediary's name, like that of the translator, never appears in the film credits. The invisibility of the translator has been critiqued by Lawrence Venuti, Gayatri Spivak and, in film translation specifically, by Amresh Sinha.<sup>156</sup> Hamid Naficy understands the need to place the producers of visuals for diasporic and exile communities in the spot light. He insists that

by putting the author back into authorship I counter a still-prevalent post-modernist (specifically poststructuralist) tendency, which either celebrates the death of the author or multiplies the authoring effect to the point of de-authoring the text. Accented filmmakers are not just textual structures or fictions within their films, but are also empirical subjects, situated in the interstices of cultures and film practices, existing outside and prior to their films. Their history matters.<sup>157</sup>

Like Soar and others who have argued for the importance of the focus on the cultural intermediary, Naficy, Spivak and Sinha argue for the usefulness of the visibility of the translator/transcultural intermediary.

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<sup>155</sup> *ibid.*, 429

<sup>156</sup> "Amresh Sinha, "The Use and Abuse of Subtitles"; *Subtitles*, 180

<sup>157</sup> Egoyan, 133

Bringing the middle-men/women in the spot-light allows for their position to be acknowledged and therefore, for a better understanding of the meanings they create. By analyzing the role of the transcultural intermediary within the large system of global visual exchanges, the articulation between cultural nodes becomes visible; therefore, the underlying power struggles that remained hidden so long as the agent was invisible, can now be contended with. This issue of invisibility is prominent in the field of translation studies because it allows for biases and power struggles to be acknowledged and therefore critiqued. Likewise, making the transcultural intermediary visible allows for a critique of the discourses reaffirmed in the process of translation.

Leading translation scholar Lawrence Venuti suggests that the assumption driving his book, *The Scandal of Translation*, "is perhaps the greatest scandal of translation: asymmetries, inequities, relations of domination and dependence exist in every act of translating, of putting the translated in the service of the translating culture."<sup>158</sup> Articulating the decoding of Hollywood teen-girl film promotional artifacts and their subsequent re-encoding for a French audience allows to point out the power struggles inherent in translation. From Sherry Simon's pioneer work in feminist translation<sup>159</sup> to Gayatri Spivak's contributions, feminists and post-colonial scholars unanimously agree that "translation is a matter of

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<sup>158</sup> Venuti, 4

<sup>159</sup> Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (London: Routledge, 1996)

power.”<sup>160</sup> Spivak suggests that the “task of the feminist translator is to consider language as a clue to the workings of gendered agency.”<sup>161</sup> The act of translation, therefore, needs to be done with an eye toward gender constructions while keeping in mind that cultures, like languages, evolve all the time, thereby changing the parameters between cultural poles.

In the case of the translation of promotional artifacts for Hollywood teen-girl films, little to no recognition of gendered agency seems to have been recognized. The objectives of the translator (whether they are conscious or not) are such that they reiterate the (obsolete) masculine domination in the process of resisting the hegemony of visual and verbal American-English cultural products. In fact, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, the transactions between the United States and France are unique as both are forces to be contended with in the film industry and both are colonial powers. Based on this basic recognition, Sinha asks:

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<sup>160</sup> Spivak on Translate (<http://translate.eipcp.net/transversal/0608/spivak/en>). I am drawing on an extensive conversation rooted in post-colonial scholarship. It specifically endeavors to illuminate the relationship between colonizer and colonized through translated texts. While some will point to the dominant nature of imposing a foreign language on the dominated, others will focus on the room left for colonized resistance (by generating false translations or culturally manipulative ones). "Implicitly or explicitly, ethnography always conceived of its project as one of translation. In his inaugural lecture at the College de France, Levi-Strauss emphasized the idea of translation and its links with signification: 'When we consider some system of belief... the question which we ask ourselves is indeed, 'what does all this mean or signify?', and to answer it, we force ourselves to translate into our language rules originally stated in a different code.'" (Niranjana, 68) In other words, it is in the construction of meaning that lies the power of the colonizer, according to Levi-Strauss, and Niranjana. The language of the invador / colonizer is then logically imposed on the colonized through translation.

<sup>161</sup> Spivak, 'The Politics of Translation', 1993, 179 Based on this 'clue' Spivak suggests that the only ethical translation is one acknowledging fluidity of the relationship between the text and its translator, a relationship she associates with love. That is to say, in Spivak's mind, there can be no ethical translation unless the translator is willing to give up a little bit of her rhetorical agency, all the while keeping in mind that she writes her agency in the process of translating.

does that mean that the asymmetrical relations of power between the colonial and the colonized is not applicable in this particular case? Or, should we interpret this situation in terms of the cultural imperialism of Hollywood, which is being essentially neutralized by another imperial power that claims the validity of its own cultural expression above all the rest?<sup>162</sup>

My analysis of posters, trailers and made-for-television advertising and shows for Hollywood films in France has shown that the second of these questions has the most validity. Informed by the antiamericanism discourse, the translations performed by transcultural intermediaries reaffirm the masculine domination through demeaning gender representations. Though I am not suggesting that the Franco-American relationship is post-colonial in nature, I am inclined to see translation like Naficy, as a form of resistance and as a site of transgression.<sup>163</sup> Merging Clifford Geertz' concept of culture as control mechanisms belonging to a network and Inderpal Grewal's concept of connectivities, it appears clearly that promotional artifacts for foreign films adapt to local control mechanisms (conventions, aesthetics, cinematic history) thereby appropriating the original encoding in the process of decoding and re-inventing the image, the title, the narrative, generally speaking, the appeal in a re-encoded form to local audiences.

The act of translation is not a site of resistance through and through. While it clearly allows for an antiamericanism discourse to be weaved into the translation of Hollywood cultural productions in France, this discourse relies on the reiteration of racial, gendered and sexual assumptions concerning the object of translation and reaffirming gender, racial and other norms in French

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<sup>162</sup> Sinha, 182

<sup>163</sup> Naficy, 240

society in the process. Inverting the process of translation as a performance of the colonized, the colonizer becomes the object of the translation in adaptations of American teen-girl films.<sup>164</sup> In the exact same way, though, racial, sexual and gendered minorities bear the brunt of the reaffirmation of “the social order through a combination of recognition and misrecognition (reconnaissance and meconnaissance)” of biases projected on an ‘other’ body and of the local status quo.<sup>165</sup> It is easy in these posters to recognize the teen-girls as American; it is not so easy on the other hand to see their white and heterosexual bodies as reiterations of racial and gendered norms of the French society, thereby leading to a misrecognition. Although Bourdieu assumed a colonial body to bear the brunt of this symbolic domination, I suggest that it is instead all national minorities that suffer from repeated symbolic violence through the use of these stereotypes.

While Inderpal Grewal sees consumer culture within transnational connectivities as producing nationalism through “discourses of race, gender, and class,” I consider these discourses as being reaffirmed within the

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<sup>164</sup> The performance of American within the French antiamericanism discourse, femininity highlighted by the frequent changes in outfits and parading with the different ball gowns and other dresses is an example of this. It demonstrates what Butler was suggesting in terms of gender performance: American teen-girls are playing princess because they can. At heart, they are still American teen-girl; but in the French imaginary, this performance is the only available truth. While American audiences are invited to believe that they too could become princesses, if only they could afford to (consumption). The French viewers’ relationship with these characters outside of the diegesis of the film would be a very interesting reception study. Based on my experience with these films as a teenager, I assume that the princess remains other and cannot be fully identified with. See Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993); McRobbie, op.cit.

<sup>165</sup> Niranjana, 32. Furthermore, the aspect of the pleasure dispensed by these films is part of the complex *connaissance / reconnaissance* relationship, that allows for French viewers to enjoy the look of the ridiculous American teen-girls, and being given the ability to identify with a form of liberated femininity (popular feminism), without realizing that these young women are ridiculed in more than one way, and made to look like objects ready for consumption.



national borders because of nationalism (as the flip-side of antiamericanism).<sup>166</sup> In the process of translating the American teen-girl from a cheerleader to a scantily clad young *American girl* (French title) dancing with young men in the poster for *Bring It On* for instance, the transcultural intermediary subjects the female characters to an automatic process of reduction to an understandable set of characteristics: a stereotype.<sup>167</sup> This reduction to the lowest common denominator is a form of symbolic violence, which, according to Bourdieu is only accomplished through the complexly woven recognition and misrecognition.<sup>168</sup> In effect, acts of symbolic violence belong to the masculine discourse and reaffirm the status quo. Like Judith Butler in *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Bourdieu insists that the masculine domination is not the product of coercion but instead of active participation of the dominated. Through symbolic violence, performed both by men and women, the status quo is reaffirmed. So when one considers promotional artifacts for Hollywood teen-girl films in France, the secondary effect of the stereotyping of the Hollywood teen-girl is that *de facto* all feminine bodies suffer from the symbolic violence, whether they are from the United States or not.<sup>169</sup>

### Closing statements

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<sup>166</sup> Grewal, 81

<sup>167</sup> "As Homi Bhabha puts it: The stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation that, in denying the play of difference (that the negation through the Other permits), constitutes a problem for the representation of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations'." Niranjana, 10

<sup>168</sup> Bourdieu (1998), 48

<sup>169</sup> Because all of the films selected to be released in theaters in France feature white, heterosexual girls, I would add that the symbolic violence touches racial and sexual minorities as well, to the degree that they are never included in any of these representations.

The comparative analysis of promotional artifacts made for Hollywood teen-girl films for markets in France and in the United States that the next three chapters are devoted to make the work of the transcultural intermediary visible. My close analysis of their visual translations allows for this concept not to "become ... a prosthetic [which it is when the term is used metaphorically] but an active work."<sup>170</sup> The unique nature of this work (translation) in the post-colonial leads to consider not only the meaning of translation but that of related concepts, such as equivalence, which, according to Spivak is a good idea, but one difficult to achieve.<sup>171</sup> Since equivalence is not to be achieved in translation, relevance might be the only option, as offered by Derrida. The remainder of my project is devoted to demonstrating that the relevant French translation of promotional artifacts for Hollywood teen-girl films is one informed by the French antiamericanism discourse, which leads to demeaning representations of teen-girl. The relevant translations, therefore, reaffirm the masculine domination.

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<sup>170</sup> Spivak referring to Michaela Wolf, (2008).

<sup>171</sup> "The idea that there is an equivalence among all languages, because each language as language can activate the circuits of the meta-psychological in terms of access into linguistic memory is also a useful and usable idea, a "socialized" idea of language." Spivak, (2008)

## CHAPTER THREE

### RE-ENCODING HOLLYWOOD PROMOTIONAL ARTIFACTS: POSITIONING TEEN-GIRL FILMS IN THE FRENCH MARKET THROUGH THE ANTIAMERICANISM DISCOURSE

Posters, as much as films, trailers or television-spots / shows, are products of the era of mechanical reproduction.<sup>172</sup> They have no history beyond the invention of the media that allows for their existence, be it the printing press (more specifically the lithograph, invented in the mid-nineteenth century for posters), the cinematographer or the television set. In the same way that some films are recognized as art, some posters are admired for their composition and their aesthetic qualities. In fact, the film advertisement industry in the United States has its own organization (the IMPAA: International Motion Pictures Advertising Association) and its own

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<sup>172</sup> Indeed, all these artistic expressions / commercial pursuits are contingent upon the medium that allows their production and / or consumption. The poster emerges as soon as the cinematographe does: there is no movie without posters. "Elément de communication marketing, l'affiche de cinéma, dont l'origine coïncide avec celle du spectacle cinématographique en atteste. Elle s'impose comme le tout premier outil de communication avec le public, destiné à informer et à séduire un spectateur potentiel dans une logique commerciale. La première affiche de cinéma représente une foule hétéroclite de tous âges et toutes classes sociales avec un message porteur d'ouverture: le cinématographe Lumière ouvre ses portes à tous." (Laurichesse, 2) While Susan Sontag would agree with Laurichesse that the poster's primary purpose is as a "communication tool... informing and seducing the public," she would argue against Laurichesse's assumption that this information is strictly aimed at commercial ends. Indeed, in her introduction to *The Art of Revolution* by Dugald Stermer, Sontag suggests that posters made for films and artistic productions such as ballet in Cuba are "a luxury item, something done in the end for its own sake." (xiv) This is the case in Cuba in particular partly because films are few and far between and will be well attended regardless of the poster, and for ideological reasons, the posters becoming a tool of the Cuban cultural revolution. See Dugald Stermer, *The Art of Revolution*, 1st ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970)

awards ceremony, the Key Art Awards, celebrating quality posters, trailers, websites, teasers and more in all film genres.<sup>173</sup> All posters have two primary purposes: attract attention and inform. The information it conveys is not normative like a public notice; instead the visuals within the posters purposefully leave room for interpretation. As I will show throughout this chapter, the film poster conventionally informs of the film's existence and is designed to address and construct a particular audience.

The rules and conventions followed to create the poster also ensure that even across cultural borders, audiences will not mistake a film poster for any other advertisement. Such conventions include the title, the names and photographs of stars framed within an establishing shot providing some information about the narrative. Different colors, compositions and fonts feed these conventions to allow culturally varied viewers to locate the film within genres.<sup>174</sup> Depending on a poster's country of origin, some of these elements will take precedence over others. It is well known for instance, that stars in the classic Hollywood era and celebrities today are the focal point in the US and have been since the 1910s.<sup>175</sup> In France, the director easily

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<sup>173</sup> The Key Art Awards is sponsored by the Hollywood Reporter. It was created in 1971 to allow members of the industry to acknowledge works of quality performed in the field of marketing of film. Members of the jury include producers, advertisers, graphic designers, marketing agents etc..

<sup>174</sup> Susan Sontag talks about poster makers, while Hutchisson discusses poster artists. It seems more straightforward for my purposes to follow Susan Sontag, mainly because in the following chapters I will proceed talking about trailer-makers, following Lisa Kernan. I am hereby not denying the artistry involved in the construction of posters or trailers.

<sup>175</sup> At the time when American companies started using stars as *branding* tools for films (Bakker, 491), the French companies were still using the production company as a selling point (Abel, 16-18). Yet, even after French poster-makers adopted for a while the American focus on stars, mainly between the two wars, distance was taken again from this way of creating posters, in order to create more unity with the vision

takes precedence over the star; in the instance that neither is known (which is frequently the case for teen-girl films, with the exception of Garry Marshall), no names are printed on the poster. Such is the case for *Save the Last Dance* (Thomas Carter, 2001) for instance.

Likewise, the conventional association of colors with genre is not the same in the US and in France and the design of promotional tools for US products in France is adapted accordingly. A research study conducted for the CNC (Centre National de la Cinématographie) conducted by QualiQuanti in 1998/2000 comparing promotional artifacts created for French and US films suggests that the posters differ primarily in their use of colors:<sup>176</sup> the American poster-makers use darker backgrounds especially for horror, adventure, science fiction or action movies (55% according to the study conducted for the CNC).<sup>177</sup> Except one, none of the teen-girl films fall in this

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of directors such as Jean Renoir. Capitaine claims that "Les comiques avec Raimu et Fernandel, les jeunes premiers comme Jean Gabin ou Pierre Richard Wilm et bien sur les vedettes féminines comme Danièle Darrieux ou Viviane Romance ouvrent les portes du rêve aux foules et les spectateurs s'identifient volontiers aux personnages de l'écran. L'affiche de cinéma s'affranchit des conventions du vedettariat à l'américaine pour retrouver plus de synthétisme avec auteurs du cinéma de l'immediat avant-guerre comme Jean Renoir ou Marcel Carné." 9 See Richard Abel, *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American, 1900-1910* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 1999), Jean-Louis Capitaine, *L'affiche De Cinema: Le Cinema Francais*, Collection Cine-images (Paris: Editions F. Birr, Ateliers H. Labat, 1983)

<sup>176</sup> The study includes an analysis of 350 posters and 180 trailers for both US and French films released in France between June 1998 and June 2000 (the so called American promotional artifacts are in fact only the French translated material). This analysis focused on the identification and description of the construction of these promotional material and the analysis of the rhetoric in use in them was complemented by three group interviews and 12 individual conversations with 'regular' film goers (people who go to the movie theater at least once a month but fewer than once a week) between the ages of 20 and 45, living in Paris and in the provinces.

<sup>177</sup> Daniel Bo et al., *Les affiches et les bandes-annonces des films*. (Study conducted for the CNC, Paris, December 2000.), 31 This research has not been published: it is an internal document only to be found at the CNC, where one can make copies of it.

category; the focus is therefore on bright colors rather than darkness. The translation of Hollywood teen-girl films for the French market highlights the American origin of the film: they are made to fit French tastes, values and ideas and in the process the French discourse of antiamericanism. A close comparison between French and US posters for the same films establishes that the circulation of Hollywood films in France is less synonymous of imperialism and homogenization than of a never-ending cultural negotiation: this negotiation occurs in the process of translation.

The evidence I have collected for this chapter confirms the CNC comparative study of Hollywood and French promotional artifacts. My comparative analysis of marketing campaigns for Hollywood teen-girl films constructed for both US and French audiences reveals that French audiences associate a number of traits specifically with posters for American films. My comparative analysis of the French versions of Hollywood posters with their counterpart produced for the US markets echoes the traits singled out in the study: a clear articulation between image, title and tagline; a sophisticated photograph; warm colors with darker backgrounds; a dynamic image, aggressive and explicit; and the constant presence of the extended credits at the bottom of the posters.<sup>178</sup> The French posters for French films, in comparison, appear to the interviewees more sober in lines and composition, perhaps even bland, with a minimalist aesthetic, a simple palette of lighter,

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<sup>178</sup> CNC, 114

more realistic colors that show a clear relationship to the film.<sup>179</sup> What this study does not focus on, because they only analyze posters and trailers available in France, is that there is a difference between the posters for a Hollywood film made for the French audience and one made for the American audience. There is therefore a third category missing from their comparative study: the 'original' American film poster. My comparative analysis of the Hollywood poster for the US market (this third category) and its revised version for the French market allows to identify the repetitive motifs at work in the US that do not necessarily carry over to their French versions, as these are translations of promotional artifacts made for the US market.

The marketing of films in France is unique in that posters still represent about seventy percent of the total marketing budget.<sup>180</sup> In the United States, however, the investment in so-called slow load media has been reduced since the 1970s when most of the advertising budget was concentrated on television.<sup>181</sup> For all this budget reduction, "Warner Bros. [still] was the seventh biggest outdoor billboard advertiser in 2003, Walt Disney 13th, and Sony Pictures 18th, according to the Outdoor Advertising Association of America."<sup>182</sup> Billboards are not only important where there is an automobile culture; college campuses and, like in France, mass transit

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<sup>179</sup> The characteristic all of the interviewees have in common, and the reason why they were selected, is an excellent memory of film posters and trailers (which they were tested on during the three group meetings).

<sup>180</sup> This focus on posters is a distant echo of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when "the street of Paris and London became an outdoor gallery with new posters appearing almost every day." (Sontag, viii) The posters Susan Sontag is talking about were either by artists such as Toulouse Lautrec, or were the work of advertisers like Cheret or Grasset, who often were recognized for their artistic qualities as well.

<sup>181</sup> This, however, does not mean the end of film posters in the US or elsewhere: it simply means the reduction of the number of prints. Wyatt, 176-7 and Marich, 77

<sup>182</sup> Marich, 77

systems in urban areas are still important 'showings' potential. Likewise, in France as well as in the United States, posters appearing in print publications such as newspapers or magazines are prized by film distributors because magazines, in particular, target a more precise demographic, therefore allowing for a much tighter construction of a film's audience.

Posters also hold a central place in the creation of the film's concept. The poster is meant to summarize the film visually: as such, it is a key talking point for the film and will sometimes be created before the film, in order to sell the project to a production company. Likewise, a poster may be created specifically for a festival (Cannes, Sundance, Venice) but have nothing to do with the posters created for the national or international releases.<sup>183</sup> Except in the instance of a festival or a prototype of poster made to seduce a producer, Susan Sontag's claim that posters are "a public art, which addresses an undifferentiated mass of people on behalf of something public (whether a political idea or a cultural spectacle)" holds true.<sup>184</sup> In fact, out of all the promotional artifacts available to the distributor, the poster is the widest net one can possibly cast because millions of individuals will walk or drive passed them, the majority of which will simply ignore it (because they were not the intended audience).

In the US there will always be posters at the entrance of theaters; there might also be some on the side of highways on the outskirts of urban areas

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<sup>183</sup> Liz Manne made clear during our interview that promotional artifacts were created specifically for distributors and to be used at festivals, in the instance where the film does not yet have a distributor. Interview with author (10.1.08)

<sup>184</sup> Sontag, xv. Her essay focuses on posters that are meant to appear in the streets of Havana in Cuba or most large urban areas. She does not address all forms of posters.



and on city buses.<sup>185</sup> In a country like France on the other hand, the public transportation systems such as the metro in Paris, Lyon and Marseille, or a sophisticated and very popular bus or train maps leads to a natural use of the environment for advertisement: the buses will be used as much as the shelters where people wait for them. The column Moris, the abris-bus, the gold-framed advertisement spots in the main Parisian metro stations all have their own, unique format and appeal, that lend themselves very well to advertisers' needs: the visibility of the product they are selling.<sup>186</sup>

Regardless of whether posters represent a large part of the marketing budget for their reproduction and the rental of posting locations around cities and transportation systems, posters are produced for every film. The poster is the artifact that has always already accompanied the release of films, however wide their circulation. Indeed, whether one looks at film poster historians like Jean-Louis Capitaine or contemporary film business and marketing scholars like H el ene Laurichesse, all agree to say that film posters were born with the medium. If broadcasting or the Internet have made other forms of communication about films readily available, no spectator can ever enter a movie theater without seeing posters. In the United States and

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<sup>185</sup> The buses in the United States, especially in large urban areas such as Los Angeles, are sometimes entirely covered with a significant image of the film; that never happens in France, where the poster is simply posted on the side of the bus.

<sup>186</sup> The standard format for posters in France is 120x160cm; about 4000 copies of this format were printed in average until the late 1980s. The most common format in metro stations or storefronts is 60x80cm, with the exception of the very large 4 x 3 m that is directly posted on the walls of the platforms of metro stations. The standard format in the USA on the other hand is 70x100 inches. This format is complemented by three others, adapted to different uses and locations: the window cards (35x55), the lobby cards (25x35) and the insert (35x90). For more information on poster formats see Stanislas Choko, *La cote de l'affiche de cinema*, 2nd ed. (Editions de l'amateur, 1991)

in France, whether the movie theater is a multiplex or whether it is a small art house theater, posters will be exhibited for the films they are showing.

Posters for most films are constituted of the same basic elements: a title, a picture of the lead character or characters, the names of the actresses and actors and, generally, the name of the director; a remnant of the *politique des auteurs*, the French posters for French films include the name of the director in all cases, which is not true for the US posters whether they are made for the US or the French market. One key difference is that posters for US productions have all the cast and crew listed at the bottom of the frame; this is rarely the case in France.<sup>187</sup> In the instance of teen-girl films, the presence of a teenage girl (as lead actress) in the center of the poster, that is, in the center of the narrative, is a good indication of the genre of the film.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> As I suggested before, the stars / celebrities have served as branding tool for films since the 1910s; therefore, stars' names are systematically included within the US poster. In fact, the marketing agency receive a very precise description of the size, thickness and placement of the actors's and director's names on the poster or in the trailer depending on the media that is considered. For instance, the description of the size of Meryl Streep's name in the trailer for *The Devil Wears Prada* reads: "Artists's name shall be displayed in the main titles (if main title credits are utilized, otherwise in the end titles), on a separate card, before the title of the Picture is the name of any other cast member or the director is displayed before the title of the Picture, in first position of the principal cast, in an average size of type which is not less than 100% of the average size of type used to display the regular title of the picture, but in no event smaller than the average size of type used to display largest credit to any other individual other than any financier" (US press book for *The Devil Wears Prada*). My research has shown that the names of directors or actors do not necessarily appear on the French versions of the posters. It is dependent on their fame and selling power of either or both of them.

<sup>188</sup> When that is not the case, some markers signal the differences: *Foxfire* (Annette Haywood-Carter, 1996), with Angelina Jolie, is one such example. Although it tells the story of a group of teenage girls, their narrative is one of rebellion made possible by an outsider, Angelina Jolie, whose black clothing, attitude and tattoo are indicative of rebellion within the film and on the poster. The rebellious element of *Foxfire* is not what distinguishes it most from the teen-girl films: the narrative arc is different. Indeed, *Foxfire* offers little information about the lead character and leads

Colors mark a film's genre thematically: in the teen-girl films for instance, the color scheme is consistently made of red, pink, and orange shades. The posters for *Legally Blonde* or *The Princess Diaries*, for instance, heavily insist on the color pink, which is draped in the background in the sequel to *Princess Diaries*, or adorning the lead character's body in both posters for *Legally Blonde*. These colors (whether they are present in the costumes, the title or background for this category of films) construct the audience's gender; because of the predominance of white lead actresses, I would add that the posters thereby construct the French audience racially as well.<sup>189</sup> The color themes are similar on both sides of the Atlantic with the exception of the lack of contrast and bright colors in the US versions. Yet, in the diverse horizon of film posters in France, the posters for Hollywood films look particularly colorful and bright, thus marking the films they are advertising as specifically

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to no resolution in the end, while teen-girl films follow the Cinderella story to include girl bonding, gathering their strengths in support of one another and of the lead female character in order for her to reach a goal, which is frequently simply a romantic resolution. That is not the all-encompassing rule, as *Stick It!* (Jessica Bendinger, 2006) involves no romantic interest, but follows a narrative arc that leads the protagonist (the rebel) to move from the position of outcast to successful gymnast, that is, from rags to princess. All of these narratives and the posters summarizing them focus on the same key points through the central character's evolution / narrative arc. The vast majority of teen-girl films have lead characters who are heterosexual, white, middle to upper-middle class successful young women. The cross-generation musical *Mamma Mia* (Phyllida Lloyd, 2008) released in August 2008 complicates the gender relationship in so much that the lead character (Meryl Streep) is an independent woman who brought up her daughter on her own, and has run a hotel by herself for her entire life. In the end however, the heterosexual bonds seem to prevail over the female friendships that were the source of strength of this lead character through most of her life, whether with friends or with her daughter. Yet her daughter refuses marriage at the last minute, thereby suggesting that she might follow in her mother's independent footsteps.

<sup>189</sup> Based on my analysis of the posters and on such sociology of France as Jean-Claude Kaufman's *La Femme Seule et le Prince Charmant*, the ideal audience for these films is feminine, but is unlikely to be segmented further, by age or class for instance. See Jean-Claude Kaufmann, *La femme seule et le Prince charmant* (Paris: Pocket, 2001)

American to French audiences. Based on the study conducted for the CNC (Centre National de la Cinématographie) mentioned above, the composition, facial expression of the actors, and choice of colors promise high sensations and a dynamic narrative, qualities, which are both associated with films produced in the United States. Further, the sophistication of the US posters in comparison to the relative sloppiness of the French ones (for French films) makes the US posters unique and easily recognizable.<sup>190</sup>

To market an American film in France requires re-encoding, a process which includes translating the visuals and language. In the process of re-encoding, the distributor devoted to the marketing of Hollywood teen-girl films will often keep images created for the same purpose for the US audience, but recast them in order to construct a French audience for that same film. Where in the US marketers are speaking to audiences that recognize the characters because they reflect a certain cultural norm, in France poster-makers brand the film as American so as to position the film. In the process, transcultural intermediaries draw from the antiamericanism iconography, thereby reiterating popular and demeaning representations of American girls as superficial, unsophisticated, vulgar and sexually available. While these changes are not always drastic, none of the posters used for the promotion of teen-girl films since the late 1980s remains untouched. The re-encoding performed on these posters coincides with a period of time when promotional artifacts and audiences were more carefully constructed than ever before. It becomes clear once one compares the US and French posters

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<sup>190</sup> Bo, 114

for teen-girl films that the negotiations leading to these compositions result from more than simple word for word and fame by frame translation. As the following examples will show, poster translation – or re-encoding – is informed by aesthetic and rhetoric conventions echoing the French discourse of antiamericanism.<sup>191</sup>

### **Re-encoding the Hollywood poster for the French Market**

#### Color-coding

What generally characterizes the Hollywood teen-girl film on both sides of the Atlantic is the selection of colors: the titles, background, taglines as well as the costumes worn by the lead characters present in the photographs are often very bright. The range of colors goes from reds, oranges and pinks to the occasional blues, but with a more pronounced tendency toward warm tones. According to the research conducted by QualiQuanti for the CNC, French audiences recognize posters for Hollywood films by the color-coded genres.<sup>192</sup> The poster for *Cruel Intentions* (Roger Kumble, 1999) can be

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<sup>191</sup> The teen-girl film has no French equivalent, where it is primarily sold as an American movie for teenagers. Since the genre is meaningless in France, because of the absence of a frame of reference, and most of the actresses and directors carrying these films are unknown (with the exception of *The Princess Diaries*, which was carried with equal power by Julie Andrews and director Garry Marshall), the focus will often be placed on the narrative, with the necessary adaptations that may imply (as we will see with *Bring it On*, for instance).

<sup>192</sup> "Chaque genre de film correspond à une stylisation spécifique, notamment sur les affiches américaines, alors que pour les affiches françaises on constate quelques écarts à ces codes:

- couleurs claires et vives pour les comédies avec un fond blanc ou monochrome et des personnages généralement en pied,
- couleurs sombres pour les films policiers,
- deux parties pour les films d'action et d'aventure: une partie sombre (en bas) et une partie flamboyante (rouge ou orange) en haut,

misleading in that case and represents a good exception to the rule. The general frame of the US version is reminiscent of the thriller or horror film genre, which is conventionally very dark with a predominance of black. In the US poster, the victim, Reese Witherspoon's character appears in the lower half of the poster, smaller than Sarah Michelle Gellar or Ryan Phillippe the perpetrators of the (sexual) crimes. Sitting between the two, both dressed in black, Witherspoon simply wears a skin-tone cardigan. The light v. dark color scheme, the size as well as the emphasized whiteness of her skin all work to make her look particularly vulnerable.<sup>193</sup> The predominance of whiteness in this film genre is undeniable. What is particularly troubling in this poster is the emphasis on the helplessness of the blonde and innocent looking white girl, with darkness once again associated with evil. The film's narrative ends up contradicting this message, but both the US and French posters give a preliminary impression of re-enforcement of the masculine domination and the necessity for white women to be protected. It is likely that what both marketing strategies were aiming at is a larger construction of the audience: inclusive of men.

The French version of the poster is dark as well; however, it is so in echo of the French poster for Stephen Frears' 1988 *Dangerous Liaisons*. Indeed, the French campaign for *Cruel Intentions* (titled *Sexe Intention* in France) focuses heavily on Pierre Choderlot de Laclos's novel on which both

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- pour les films fantastiques, de science-fiction et d'horreur, un fond souvent noir agrémenté par des éclairs lumineux avec l'accent mis sur les yeux des personnages." Laurichesse, 78-9 For more on color codes of posters, see also Bo

<sup>193</sup> Dyer, 140

films are based.<sup>194</sup> The reason for this might be that the novel is commonly taught in junior high and high school; it might also have been because the high-brow reference to an eighteenth century novel would be enticing to audiences beyond the teen crowds. Generally speaking, there is a tendency in France to adapt literary works, more than any other place; such a framing of *Sexe Intentions* further implies a construction of the audience as readers as well as film-goers. That is not the case in the US, if we trust what the posters tell us. The only other such construction is for *10 Things I Hate About you* (Gil Junger, 1999), an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*. A comparison between the US and French posters clearly indicates in these two cases a different construction of the audience; the vast majority of other teen-girl films constructs a feminine audience based on what is imagined as American romantic qualities of these Hollywood films.

The image for *Ever After* is a great case in point as the exact same image has been used in both promotional campaigns, but the colors in the US poster are washed down so much that they look pastel, where the French version highlights the contrasts, so as to make the colors look as saturated as possible. The direct consequence in that particular case is that Drew Barrimore's skin-tone looks different in the two images: in the US poster, her

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<sup>194</sup> If the adaptation of plays or novels was soon adopted by the movie industry as a lucrative business (the second most important way of branding films after stars), "Between 1936 and 1939, over half of the French films were adapted from a literary property, slightly more than in Britain [and more than in the US where out of a total of 515 American films released in 1940, 192 were literary adaptations.]" (Bakker, 494-6) Bakker goes on to suggest that "it is probable that both British and French film companies made more use of literary works than their American counterparts, possibly because of their countries' grand literary traditions, and because of the small scale of the industry, which probably could sustain few specialized screen-writers or story departments." (Bakker, 496)

skin is so white it has the quality of porcelaine. While in the French poster on the other hand, Barrimore's skin looks tanned. The saturation of the colors leads to a further distantiation from realism in the French translated version of the image: while in the US the softening of colors emphasizes the romance, in France, highlighted contrasts underline the fairy tale quality of all these films, a redundant fakeness that makes these posters a simulacrum. I would suggest that the choice of color scheme for all Hollywood teen-girl films in France is a commentary on their national origin: the bright colors connote American movie in the French eye.<sup>195</sup> Therefore Hollywood teen-girl film posters are re-encoded as American through bright colors when they cross the Atlantic.

A look at a larger selection of the teen-girl films confirms that the brightness is systematically increased: The *Princess Diaries 2* is significant in that while the US poster is composed of a formal portrait of the two lead actresses in front of a rich burgundy back ground, in the French poster, the exact same image of the two lead characters changes in texture and meaning as the back drop becomes bright pink. The presence of Disney's name in gold letters right about the level of the title in the French version further emphasizes the contrast between colors and makes the poster brighter. The emphasis on bright colors in the French versions of the teen-girl films' posters suggests a construction of the audience as young, which the highlighted Disney would seem to confirm. Replaced in the even larger context of Hollywood film-posters' reception, as described by researchers at

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<sup>195</sup> Bo, 89



the CNC, it becomes evident that the transcultural intermediary purposefully makes use of bright colors to locate the national origin of the film and thereby position the film: brighter colors mark films as American in the French imaginary. Not only do French viewers interviewed by the CNC characterize the translated Hollywood posters as generally more colorful and brighter, but the correlation of the bright colors with the name – Disney – bring back Jean Baudrillard and his idea that America is seen from France as a simulacra: an imitation of itself without referent. The American princess follows a similar spirit as she adorns herself with Barbie pink and plastic tiaras to cross the Atlantic and enter the French market. The consistent vulgarity of American teen-girl film posters created for French viewers therefore appears as an intrinsic quality of Hollywood teen-girls: their French imaginary is nourished by the French antiamericanism discourse, which it cultivates in turn.

### Re-Encoding the Narrative

Posters' primary function (whether they are promotional or political) is to attract attention by making a visual impact. Film posters are no different: they are constructed to catch the eye by focusing on a salient aspect of the film's narrative. Beyond the hook, film posters convey more information: they allow for the film to be located within the horizon of film genres, hinting at the film's narrative, presenting the lead character(s) and providing the name of the director (in a few cases, as when Garry Marshall directed *The Princess Diaries*). This information emerges from the articulation between a photograph or drawing, a title and a tagline. The emphasis is different in

different countries: while the star and the genre are key selling points in the US, the director and the narrative will have more weight on French potential audiences, as is revealed by the systematic presence of French directors' names on French posters for French productions. This is not the case for all teen-girl films, as the director might be less recognizable than the obscure actress. The body of the actress will therefore be located in a larger context in the French poster, so as to hint at the narrative and tease the spectator's curiosity.

As a rule, the composition of US and French posters is different even where similar elements are present. While the US poster presents the hero or heroine in the center, there is rarely any context offered in which to position this character. In the French versions of these posters, however, the character is located in narrative related contexts. In the US poster for *Legally Blonde 2* (Charles Herman-Wurmfeld, 2003), Reese Witherspoon stands in the middle of a large cloud. With no other information and context, the US poster clearly assumes that the audience for the sequel will have seen *Legally Blonde*. The French poster on the other hand uses the exact same image of Witherspoon, but places her in the middle of a crowd of businessmen and two women, dressed in political attire.<sup>196</sup> The position of Witherspoon on the steps of the Capitol in Washington D.C., precisely locates

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<sup>196</sup> While the members of the represented political crowd clearly stare at Reese Witherspoon, thereby objectifying her within the frame of the French poster, this objectification is only echoing that of the potential consumers of the film for whom the poster is made. There is a de facto objectification of all these teen-girls' bodies because they are located on the poster; I would therefore argue that the presence of individuals staring at Elle Woods on the French poster for *Legally Blonde 2* highlights the objectification and therefore comments on it critically, almost mocking the purpose of the poster.

where the core of the action of the film takes place: Witherspoon is placed in an American landmark as readily recognizable by the French as the Eiffel tower would signify France for Americans.

In the case of *Save the Last Dance* (Thomas Carter, 2001), the US poster focuses solely on Julia Stiles dancing in an inner-city backdrop, with the upper portion of the poster devoted to a close up of her face clearly in intimate contact with the African-American lead, the male love interest Derek. While these elusive elements might be enough for viewers in the United States to understand part of the narrative tensions, the French audience would not recognize the inner-city of Chicago where the action takes place, simply based on the elevated train tracks under which she dances in the poster created for the US market. Likewise, the French viewers would not have the cultural tools to associate inner-city with poverty, or with any other racial commentary that are inscribed in this image, and readily understandable from a US perspective.<sup>197</sup> Consequently, the French version of the poster focuses on the two love stories, one inter-racial, the other between two African-American characters: the four characters' portraits each have a separate frame, Sarah (Stiles' character) and Derek on top, the characters of the sub-plot in the lower half of the frame. Both couples are printed over a still of the final scenes, a scene of restoration

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<sup>197</sup> The equivalent of the American inner-city is called the banlieue in French, and is situated on the outskirts of large urban concentrations like Paris, Lyon or Marseille. The banlieues are the stage of racial violence on a regular basis; the most recent events occurred in October and November 2005, when many banlieues were metaphorically and literally on fire for nearly two months.

equivalent to Cinderella's wedding, implying happiness ever after.<sup>198</sup> The style of dress of the characters as well as the presence of people of color frame the narrative and the French audience at the same time; the content of the poster is less subtle than its US counter-part, but the ratio of three African-American characters to one white girl speaks to the French stereotype of the American *cit * fed by music videos on MTV and M6. The superficial stereotype predominates once again in order to brand the film as American while constructing an audience that watches music videos on television.

#### Encoding and Re-Encoding: Font /color / size / location

The title of the film, in posters created for US markets, frequently appears at the bottom of the frame; in France, the title is placed at the very top. That rule, however, is worth as much as its exception as illustrated by the posters that follow a single organization within the frame whether they are made for the US or for France: both *Legally Blonde* (Robert Luketic, 2001) and *Legally Blonde 2* (Charles Herman-Wurmfeld, 2003), *Princess Diaries 2* (Garry Marshall, 2004), *Ever After* (Andy Tennant, 1998), *Mean Girls* (Mark Waters, 2004) and *Crossroads* (Tamra Davis, 2002) mostly repeat in the US and in France. What is significant is less the occasional alteration of the position of the title, font, color or size but the consistency with which all of the teen-girl films earn in brightness, loudness, and richness in the translated composition. The general impression elicited by the

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<sup>198</sup> The focus on the happy ending and dancing together is misleading as there is no closure to the narrative: Stiles' character will move to New York to go to Julliard while her male counter part will go to medical school. There is no ever after any longer, but the implied happiness is still the highlight in the French poster.

translated posters is that of shallowness and vulgarity because of what might be called a consistent 'Disneyfication' of the image. This re-encoding of Hollywood posters serves two purposes: it constructs a white female audience (with a few exceptions) and cultivates the generally accepted view in France that Hollywood films are mere entertainment. The superficiality implied through these bright colors also reinforce the French discourse within which American culture is seen as materialistic, vulgar and young. All these characteristics are reifications of the age-old antiamericanism discourse prevalent in France.

When they undergo change, teen-girl film posters in general provide drastic changes in font, size, composition and color of the title, all of which are translated to the French expectations of what it means to be American. In the US poster for *Bring it On*, for example, the title is simply positioned at the top of the frame, in dark red capital letters. This is not the case in the French poster, as the entire aesthetic has been changed: the title is now in the lower part of the frame, within the central circle of a poorly drawn basketball court. All the characters are essentially standing on the title that reads '*American Girls*,' in bright red and blue lettering with a stroke of white framing all the letters. The association of the colors red, blue and white, complemented by the two red stars on either side of the title and the reference to the girls' nationality all lead to an over-emphasis on the american-ness of the film highlighting the stereotypical image of the French imaginary: Americans' very visual nationalism expressed through flags, red white and blue and stars.

The aesthetic of the title for *Save the Last Dance* in France has a clear street connotation: it echoes the style of graffiti lettering that one could find on walls in the French *sités*. This aesthetic connotes inner-city life, which the lead character experiences. The parallel between African-American characters and the white lead in the poster is stereotypical in the French version: the African-American characters look like rap video protagonists. In the US poster, the title is subdued: positioned at the very bottom of the frame, outside of the picture, in simple white letters. The eye is drawn toward the main figure in the center of the image, led by the brightness coming from the top right and left corners; the title is here almost as a matter of course. In the French poster, the effect is very different, as four characters are positioned on the four corners of the frame, with a white line containing them, and the title of white lettering is boxed in a blue square on the left of this middle divide.

The size of the title rarely changes from one country to the next; however, in keeping with the findings of the research conducted for the CNC, the color and font very frequently change, whether the location of the title within the frame changes or not. While *Mean Girls* is a perfect example of the absence of aesthetic change (other than the drastic change of the title itself, model of translation, which I will get to in the next section), *The Princess Diaries* offers an excellent illustration of visual translation. Indeed, while in the US version the title for *The Princess Diaries* and *The Princess Diaries 2* are both very sober, (black and in a rather elegant font) the French versions seem to voluntarily 'Disneyfy' these titles. The way to achieve this

'Disneyfication' seems to be staying as far as possible from sobriety: *Princess Diaries* then switches from the pretty black lettering to a bright red, big and messy capital letters 'Princesse' with the second part of the title (Malgré Elle) in black capital letters underneath. The title for *Princess Diaries 2* pushes this logic further yet: while the American title remains in keeping with the style of the first film with the portrait of the two lead protagonists elegantly posed in front of burgundy cloths, the French version altered a few but significant aspects of this poster. As mentioned earlier, the background cloths switched from burgundy to bright pink, which highlights the title: from the soft curvy white and gold lettering of the US poster, in France the title appears in white with a baby blue stroke. The brightness and contrasts created by the mix of extremely saturated colors emphasizes the fakeness of the narrative: nothing is made in this image to be taken seriously. The suspension of disbelief is inscribed on the French poster for the Hollywood film, like a highlighted simulacrum: Baudrillard's contribution to the antiamericanism discourse is cultivated through promotional artifacts for Hollywood teen-girl films in France.

### **Constructing the French American Teen-girl**

#### The American Teen-girl as a Brand

From the silent era forward, stars promptly became a prime investment in the film industry. Films started costing more as soon as larger sums were paid for 'creative inputs' – which includes stars, directors and literary texts - recognized as valuable investments. Gerben Bakker's essay

*Stars and Stories: How Films Became Branded Products* illustrates the 1910s stark influx in investment in stars when he writes: "In 1911 Mary Pickford earned \$175 a week, then considered the highest fee attainable, but five years later she secured fifty times that much, and one hundred times as much in 1918."<sup>199</sup> From this investment in a star's persona and image value, the studios logically moved on to systematically cast the stars in similar genres of film during the so-called "studio era", so as to allow audiences in turn to knowingly 'invest' in a movie ticket for a guaranteed experience.

The film industry in the United States was the first to start systematically type-casting and bringing their stars to the forefront. Rapidly, therefore, audiences recognized US films by their stars. French films, on the other hand, were recognized by the label of their production companies (a red rooster for Pathé, for instance).<sup>200</sup> As the relationship between film and marketing became more intimate, the production company proved to be no competition to the star. Then, the branding of a film based on the actor became more common, even in France. Until today, in the process of branding a film, the stars play a fundamental role, in so much that they are the one recognizable element. Furthermore, the stars of latter years and the celebrities of today have been trend-setters, and have been considered as such by the film industry since the silent era, and more so even in the post-WWII period. Thus there is a complex relationship between a film, its star and the audience. The star is the vehicle for the film, but it is as well for a style, designers, hair-styles, in short, product placement.

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<sup>199</sup> Bakker, 470

<sup>200</sup> Abel, 18-19



Although actors and actresses are not contractually tied to studios producing a single genre of films any longer, evidence shows that certain actors / actresses frequently play similar types of roles. Leading roles in teen-girl films are a prime example of this. Starting with Molly Ringwald in the 1980s, the lead character for teen-girl films recurrently appeared in films of the same genre. In fact, she is mostly remembered for her roles in Howard Hughes' films. Winona Rider picks up where Ringwald left off at the end of the 1980s; she holds a leading role in *Heathers* (Michael Lehmann, 1989) with Shannen Doherty, who both went on to make several films or television shows geared toward teenage girls. Since the mid-1990s, the trend is all the more consistent: the presence of similar actresses - ethnically and in terms of beauty - in all Hollywood teen-girl films creates a sense of normality through repetitiveness. The fact that actresses such as Kirsten Dunst [*Anastasia* (1997), *Drop Dead Gorgeous* (1998), *Bring It On* (2000), *Get Over It* (2001), *Crazy-Beautiful* (2001), *Mona Lisa Smiles* (2003), *Wimbledon* (2004)] or Julia Stiles [*10 Things I Hate About You* (2000), *Down to You* (2000), *Save the Last Dance* (2001), *Mona Lisa Smiles* (2003), *The Prince and Me* (2004)] repeatedly appear in teen-girl films further suggests that the film industry is systematically investing in a certain type of teen-girl for this specific genre of film.

Although the casting for a physical type is tempting to generalize, that of a name is often a greater motivation for marketing purposes. My interview with Donna Morong, executive casting director for Disney when *The Princess Diaries* was made revealed that while the casting of Anne Hathaway

was an open search for a new talent, Julie Andrews was imposed on the credits because the producers needed a name to sell the film. The lack of possible reliance on the fame of the lead in teen-girl films – with the exception of Britney Spears who was a star in the music industry prior to making films, none of these actresses are celebrities by the time they are cast in their first teen-girl film - is further emphasized in France where the television show that may have launched a few teen celebrities may not have been broadcast by the time of the release of the feature.<sup>201</sup> Such was the case for Hilary Duff, for instance, who became famous on US television first with her character as Lizzy McGuire, which led to full-fledged celebrity status by the time she starred in *A Cinderella Story* in 2004.<sup>202</sup>

#### Re-Encoding the Teen-girl: from Visible Constraints to Apparent Agency

Youth and a certain form of beauty are prerequisites for the lead character; all these roles have similar aesthetic criteria for the actresses, traits that will be seen as uniquely American from France. In the majority of posters, the lead character looks directly into the camera and stares at the audience in a typical fashion advertisement manner. This simple trick meant to catch the attention of the spectator highlights the fact that a poster for a

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<sup>201</sup> *10 Things I Hate About You* only included Julia Stiles's on its cast by chance. Indeed, the role was written for Kate Hudson, whose mother refused to see her daughter in that role. Had Morong not seen Stiles in an independent feature shortly before that, the chances for her to be cast in that role were really slim.

<sup>202</sup> People magazines and gossip websites are today an intrinsic part of the promotion of stars and their films. This is free advertising, that some of them make better use of than others. Lindsey Lohan and Britney Spears have been very present in the US tabloids as well as fan websites and people online blogs such as <http://gawker.com/>; <http://www.celebrity-gossip.net/>; <http://www.hollywoodgrind.com/> to name but a few.

film remains a poster for a product that needs to be sold: a film poster is an ad like any other. The teen-girls are an important part of the product, therefore, their bodies and faces – in the US posters, the bust is most frequently the focus of the photograph – are the focus of the teen-girl film posters. Contrary to what the films' narratives will offer by way of agency, the actresses' bodies framed in a still for the poster are to be inscribed in the waif like standard beauty critiqued by Jean Kilbourne in *Deadly Persuasion*. What they are really promoting, beyond the films is the dream inspired by their status (celebrity) and the wholesomeness of their public persona. This dream will be seen as American in France, where the bodies and faces will be rearranged to express this American-ness more specifically.

The position of the celebrity's body within most of the posters, especially those made for the US is particularly constraining. In most of the US posters, the lead actress is centered, and often, only her bust will appear in the lower middle part of the frame. She may then be further framed by co-stars (Witherspoon is framed by Philippe and Gellar in the US poster for *Cruel Intentions*), by (body) guards (Amanda Bynes in the poster for *What a Girl Wants*<sup>203</sup> or Katie Holmes in the DVD poster for *First Daughter*), by a crowd of fellow-students (in the case of Witherspoon again, in the poster for *Legally Blonde*), or the edges of an armchair on which she is sitting in the case of Julia Stiles in *10 Things I Hate About You*. Likewise, in the poster for *The*

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<sup>203</sup> *What a Girl Wants* offers another good example of framing, as in the American poster, the lead actress stands between two British guards: not only does she look very small in comparison to the two men who tower over her, filling the entire frame, but she has no place to go. The French poster is here quite different, as she is positioned sitting on a Rolls Royce speaking on her cell phone, while her father and the love interest look at her from the other side of the vehicle.

*Princess Diaries*, Anne Hathaway is sitting in a large armchair in the foreground, and Julie Andrews is standing behind her. Not only does Julie Andrews tower over Anne Hathaway in this poster, but the edges of the armchair Anne Hathaway sits in contain her entire body, thus suggesting containment.

Even in the few US posters focusing on action shots, the bodies of the teen-girls are framed: Julia Stiles is caught between two pillars of the elevated train in down-town Chicago, as she dances in the center of the poster for *Save the Last Dance*. Kirsten Dunst is cheering on the right side of the US poster for *Bring it On*, yet the line separating her picture from her rival's team on the left hand-side boxes each of the actress on her respective side, pitching them against one another but also limiting the range of their movement. The most elaborate case in point might be Lindsay Lohan's body on the poster for *Mean Girls*: she is shown standing on the left side of the composition, stuck between the title and the edge of the frame. These recurrent limitations are a form of visual metaphor for the limited identities available to teen-girls in the US: the commercial feminist discourse might tell them that they are free, but even the narrative they are inscribed in reproduces the idea of the United States as white-middle-class-hetero-normal. There are only a limited number of options to choose from. In the case of Lohan, the 'mean girl' label literally towers over her body, heavily imposing itself upon her. While the films' narratives may appear to challenge this constrained identity of teen-girls, the frames surrounding every teen-

girls' body in the US posters, may unwittingly reflect more truth than the feature will.

The French re-encoding challenges these tight frames to focus on action; although this may be seen as a positive move toward more agency for teen-girls, the type of actions teen-girls will engage in connote their national origin: from Hathaway slouching in an unprincess-like pause, to Dunst dancing in sexually suggestive ways in the poster for *Bring it On!*, the highlights are consistently on vulgarity, sexual promiscuity, and over all lack of elegance. The majority of French posters show the full body of the actress (instead of cropping the image at the waist). The representation of action is created by a more energetic pose in most cases. In the poster for *The Princess Diaries* for instance, instead of having a formal portrait of Hathaway and Andrews, Hathaway is shown slouching in a throne, tiara on her head, ball gown and white gloves on, but her feet dangling from the arm rest adorned with army boots; Andrews is leaning on the back of the throne, rolling her eyes, clearly expressing amused discontent. The key difference between the US and French posters is that in the French version Hathaway is spilling over the edges of the chair framing her in the US poster; more importantly, the two lead characters's faces are expressive and clearly engaged with one another and the world around them. The US poster, on the other hand, is a still that poses the characters and freezes them in time and space, with very little by way of active engagement.

The French poster for *What a Girl Wants* positions Andrea Bynes on the hood of a Rolls Royce, talking on her cell-phone. Although she is not

standing, as is the case in the US version of the poster, her pose is active, and the fact that she is speaking on the phone echoes her position as the agent driving the narrative. In the French trailer for the film, Amanda Bynes's character tells the story to the audience: it is a first person narrative. The action shot taken for the US poster for *Bring it On* is changed into a highly promiscuous scene in France, with all actors standing, seemingly dancing in the middle of a basketball court. This positioning of bodies in the middle of a basketball court increases the space and frees the bodies; yet bodies are sandwiched in dance poses that seem to constrain the girls in more gender specific ways that connote sexual promiscuity. In that scene, Kirsten Dunst is lost in the middle of all the other actors and actresses, with the emphasis only slightly put on her body because she is the only one facing right when everyone else in the image is facing left.

The French poster for *10 Things I Hate About You* pushes the focus on action to an extreme. An electrical halo surrounds Julia Stiles' character and underlines the energy exuding from her character. She is standing on the left side of the image, wearing red, which creates a very stark contrast against the bright yellow background. Her red shirt echoes the ten things that she hates about the film's love interest, written in red letters on the right side of the frame. Both the colors and the white electric halo highlight the exuberance and independence of Stiles's shrew whose destiny is to be tamed as Shakespeare taught us. These active bodies characterize American bodies, as in the French imaginary, American pragmatists are characterized by action while the French, steeped in rationalism are stereotypically believed

to do nothing but think (and never act). While the focus on action is not French but very American (as seen from France), this recurrent focus on uncontrolled action, therefore, belongs to the French antiamericanism discourse, in which action is looked down upon as impulsive and unsophisticated.

### **The tagline: the problem of translatability**

From a marketing perspective, the tagline's primary function is to intrigue. Therefore, the tagline is informative in terms as vague as can be, alluring only because one's curiosity has been piqued. The tagline for the US poster for *Cruel Intentions* illustrates this well, as it sounds like a line from a Chinese fortune cookie.<sup>204</sup> The tagline reads: "What you can't have you can't resist," which makes sense within the narrative framework of the film, but could be applied to numerous narratives equally as well. The viewer is likely to wonder: what is it that can't be resisted? Why can't it be reached? Who desires and who is struggling to obtain the object of their desire? The tagline has the exact same function regardless of the country in which posters are being made: being enticing – that is to say, the tagline talks to the encoding/re-encoding of the poster and to the construction of the audience in so much that the language it borrows from is already inscribed within the rhetoric of specific sub-cultures.

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<sup>204</sup> The French poster for *Cruel Intentions* does not include a tagline. Taglines are not systematic in French posters for French films. In fact, they are the exception rather than the rule. This may account for the absence of taglines in many of the poster adaptations of Hollywood films for French audiences. The few I focus on here are meaningful; they represent exceptions rather than rules, however.

In numerous cases, the tagline functions in tandem with the title: it will echo the title, either reinforcing the implied meaning or instead, challenging the meanings offered by the articulation of the title with the photograph. In the case of *She's All That* (titled *Elle est Trop Bien* in French, which translates literally to: she is too good) for instance, the US and French taglines emphasize different aspects of the narrative: clearly, both titles suggest that the leading female protagonist is unique in ways that the poster barely hints to, as Rachel Leigh Cook appears post-make-over, thus making her fit in the beauty canon in ways that are concealed at the beginning of the film. In the US poster, the tagline "These two opposites attract... but everybody is trying to keep them apart" focuses on their respective group of friends and the difficulty for both to integrate each other's public spheres. In the French poster, the tagline "Il ne l'avait pas remarquée... il ne pourra plus l'oublier" (the French tagline literally translates to: "he had not noticed her... he won't be able to forget her") centers rather on his inability to notice her before her make-over, but in turn, his inability to forget her now that her beauty is revealed.

Although the taglines deny the lead female character any agency in the campaigns run in the United States and in France (both of these taglines clearly suggest that the male lead and social pressure are the agents of her change; she is no more than the pawn), each focus on different aspects of the film. In the US even the tagline will participate to reinforcing the uniqueness of the narrative (in the perspective of other teen-girl films). Because the specifics of these narratives assume familiarity with high school



and college culture in the United States, in France the tagline concentrates on the most translatable element: love. By doing so, transcultural intermediaries are in effect circumventing the problem of translatability by reducing the meanings to the smallest common denominator.

Under cover of commercial feminism, the denial of teen-girls' agency is latent in all these films. It is reaffirmed in particular through French posters and taglines, as they all focus on a stereotype of American girls, defined narrowly as white, heterosexual and middle class. Equally reductive in their role and place in society are the French taglines for *The Princess Diaries* (1 & 2). Reversing the effect of the photograph, in which Mia is locked in the frame of the throne, the American tagline highlights her potential for agency by focusing on verbs suggesting agency and seeped in commercial feminist rhetoric: "She rocks. She rules. She reigns." The French version however focuses on the supposed universally shared dream that all teen-girls have: to be a princess. The tagline reads: "Toutes les filles en ont rêvé un jour... sauf elle!" (All girls have dreamt of it... except her!) which re-enforces the *Malgré Elle* of the title, as the tagline clearly suggests that although every girl may have dreamt of being a princess, she never has. In the case of the French version for this poster, the title, photograph and tagline all work hand in hand to suggest that the key narrative element driving the film is Mia's inability to "rock, rule and reign"! The French and US posters for the same film thus suggest opposite abilities for the same character in the very same film. Knowing that Disney is famous for a very controlling attitude in regards to narratives and materials in general, and how the alliteration in r could not

be reproduced in French, the tagline was transformed into a universalist statement about teen-girls' dreams across borders (every girl has dreamt of [being a princess]). Such a translation circumvents again the issue of translatability by relying on gendered stereotypes; in that case, the universal assumptions suggest that the stereotype might not be limited to the American girls, but constructs an audience of women who have all someday dreamt of being a princess.

The US and French taglines to the sequel, *Princess Diaries 2: A Royal Engagement* are equally problematic: in France, following up the first tagline, the second reads: "Quand le rêve de toutes les jeunes filles devient réalité..." (when every girls' dream becomes reality). The universal assumption underlying this tagline is challenged by the visuals: replaced in the French context of royalty representations of which France offers legion examples in the likes of *Gala*, *Point de Vue* and other magazines devoted to European royalties, the image of Hollywood's princesses is dissonant. Hollywood celebrities may pass as royalty in the United States; in France they are American celebrities. The focus here again is clearly on shallow and materialistic American teen-girlhood. In the US, the princess is stripped of the power she had been granted in the first film's tagline: now "she needs the rock to rule." The switch from the empowering tagline for the first US poster to the second leads me to wonder what may have happened to gender roles in the three-year span separating the two films. The most significant change within the US between 2001 and 2004 is that the first film was released in a time of relative world peace: it came out right before 9/11 (the

film was released in August). The second film, however, was released in a time of war the US army had by then been in Iraq and Afghanistan for over a year. However, difficult it might be to assess the impact of international events on the construction of gender, the shift from the claim that the teen-girl rocks and rules to the assertion of need of the rock to rule is problematic, and clearly did not translate in France.

The apparent fakeness and superficiality suggested in *The Princess Diaries* (1 and 2) posters and the implied promiscuity (the rock) are merged in the posters for *Legally Blonde*. While the articulation between title and tagline in the US poster invites the audience to “go blonde” because it is legal, the French version only emphasizes the blonde quality of the character, without any hint to her abilities, wit and possible power beyond. The French version of the tagline reads: “Blonde, Et alors?” (Blonde, so what?); it suggests that being blonde might be seen as a handicap, but the heroine will transcend the hurdles. The emphasis on the Barbie-like fakeness of this American girl is further emphasized in the sequel to *Legally Blonde*. Titled *La Blonde Contre-Attaque* in French, the tagline does not do any more but tie the two films together: “Après avoir pris sa revanche...” (after having had her revenge... the title finishes the sentence: the blonde counter-attacks). These two taglines and titles ridicule the blonde by referring to action films, such as *Star Wars* for instance, in which a physically powerful character will indeed literally counter-attack; with no reference to Elle Woods’ smarts on the poster, the Barbie looking blonde is presented as the butt of the joke. This reference to other Hollywood sequels further emphasizes the cynical aspect

of this poster. The US tagline to the sequel is not much better: reading “Bigger, Bolder, Blonder,” the qualifiers are vague, and although implying growth, none of them refer to a character endowed with power, unless one has seen the first film, in which case the superlatives might be read positively.<sup>205</sup>

The poster for *What a Girl Wants* suggests an other form of attempt at fitting in that is demeaning to the American teen-girl. This struggle is common to the teen-girl films in general, starting with *Pretty in Pink* and *16 Candles*, both of which show Molly Ringwald as a geek in love with a popular man. The same struggle recurs in *Heathers*, and later in *Mean Girls*, *Ice Princess* (Tim Fywell, 2005), *Never Been Kissed* (Raja Gosnell, 1999), *A Cinderella Story* (Mark Rosman, 2005), even *Legally Blonde* includes certain elements of this struggle, as part of Elle’s struggle is to be accepted for who she is, without having to fit in the Harvard look. The poster for *What a Girl Wants* highlights the tension between the American teen girl’s attempts at fitting in (“Trying to fit in...”) with the fact that she was “born to stand out.” In Europe however, this is not a positive trait, as the French tagline reads: “Elle n’a pas leurs bonnes manières... mais elle assure” (she doesn’t have their good manners, but she makes do). In keeping with this demeaning reading of the teen-girl, the suggestion that American girls are promiscuous is explicitly made in the French poster for *Bring It On*. When the French tagline for *Bring it On* says: “Va y avoir du sport!” even if a literal

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<sup>205</sup> Again, the two years distance between the two films position *Legally Blonde*’s release before 9/11 and its sequel in July of 03, the year the war started in Iraq. I am not quite sure what to make of these correlations, but they might be meaningful?

understanding of this expression suggests the sporting event, what the idiomatic expression actually implies is sex and violence.<sup>206</sup> In other words, a literal translation for “va y avoir du sport” would be there’s gonna be action, which is accurate only to the extent that cheerleaders are competing, but not at all because of literal fighting nor much explicit sexuality. The French tagline therefore is not only different but misleading in this case.

### Closing statements

Posters selling teen-girl films in France make genre specific elements disappear to the benefit of either a focus on nationality, on generally recognizable narrative traits such as love or more prosaically, on the stereotype of American teen-girls. What might appear to be lost in translation at first sight, must be recognized as a different version, richer in so much that there is an added layer in cultural translation – the French translation of the Hollywood teen-girl. The translation, whether verbal or visual, drastically affects the meaning conveyed by the film’s narrative and probably the audience’s expectations. Epitome of the French discourse of antiamericanism, the teen-girls take center stage in all these posters to brand the films: in the US the branding talks specifically to the genre, in France, to the nationality of the film. This focus on branding Hollywood teen-girl films rests on a vocabulary including such characteristics as vulgarity, shallowness, materialism and sexual availability of the lead character. The redundant focus on fairy tale ideals relying on Barbie pink, plastic tiaras and

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<sup>206</sup> While the expression had been in popular language before hand, the French funk band Silmarils led it to enter the mainstream with their very popular song ‘Y va y avoir du sport’ released in 2000. By the time *Bring it on* was released in France in May 2001, this expression would have been widely understood.

gigantic rocks is a simulacrum of socially constructed gendered ideals. The posters and taglines for teen-girl films cultivate a self-referential representation of ideal gendered norms assumed to be universal (every girls' dream is to be a princess).

This chapter, a close comparative analysis of teen-girl film posters from US to French, has made clear that much negotiating is necessary for Hollywood films to make sense abroad. Furthermore, my analysis has shown that crossing borders does not leave room to take anything for granted: the re-encoding of verbal and visual signs for a foreign audience implies the blurring of French ideas of American culture and French biases in terms of race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. The representation of American teen-girl as white, slender, athletic, promiscuous and heterosexual at the same time talks to French standards of beauty and racial biases, and feeds the French stereotype of American teen-girlhood.<sup>207</sup> In the feud between old and new colonial powers, the means for the old (France) to resist the new (the United States) is the awareness of the failure of universal ideals. In response to Hollywood's illusions of intrinsic global appeal, the transcultural intermediary makes a national other out of the American teen-girl. American cultural productions are not consumed blindly by the rest of the world. Instead, American teen-girl film posters - and as we will see in the next

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<sup>207</sup> It is interesting to note that the way that Edison and other American companies fought the presence of the French in the US in the early 1900s and 1910s is by pointing out that the French films were not moral, focused on sexuality and violence. (Abel, 97) Is there in the reinvention of the image of American teen-girls for film posters a reductive temptation fed by very common hyper-sexualization of an exotic other, all the more so when they are competing for audiences? Likewise, the French complained about their own representation in American films in the 1920s and 1930s as gigolos for men and légères for women. (Trumpbour, 228)

chapters, trailers and made for television ads and shows – are reinvented as epitomes of superficiality, materialism and sexual promiscuity.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### COMING ATTRACTIONS: A MARKETING TECHNIQUE UNIQUE TO FILM

Following a similar composition as the trailer for the 1987 re-release of Disney's *Cinderella*, US trailers for teen-girl films highlight the lead character's low beginnings, the makeover and the ball, that is, the moment of the coming-out of the princess as such. By choosing to refer to the highlights of the Cinderella narrative, US trailer-makers position teen-girl films squarely within the Cinderella genre; however, this focus on the genre to locate the film (while distinguishing it from others based on its leading actress and the specifics of the narrative) is unique to ad campaigns run in the US. In France, the construction of trailers is different: regardless of their narratives, all teen-girl films are pitched as American teenage romantic comedies. As such, the highlight is on the love story or heterosexual love interest rather than on the social climb from rags to riches, which takes various narrative shapes (cheerleading in *Bring it On!* or high-school cliques in *Mean Girls*). The sub-plots distinguishing teen-girl films from one another makes little sense in France; what does make sense, however, is the fact that in each film, a princess falls in love with her prince.

In this chapter, I will show how the absence of referential frame (genre, narrative, star are used in the US to brand the teen-girl films) allows for a translation of the teen-girl films in France as *American* teenage girl



romantic comedies. This French re-encoding of the key rhetorical elements of trailers challenges the assumption of a universal definition of trailers proposed by Lisa Kernan and Vinzenz Hediger and elaborates on the French perception of American teen-culture represented in teen-girl film posters. Furthermore, through this act of translation, transcultural intermediaries are in effect constructing a new audience: a French audience. In this chapter, I will also further define the constructed audience based on trailers re-encoded to this end.

Film scholar Lisa Kernan defines a trailer as "a brief film text that usually displays images from a specific feature film while asserting its excellence, and that is created for the purpose of projecting in theaters to promote a film's theatrical release."<sup>208</sup> Her definition is in keeping with the focus of her book, *Coming Attractions, Reading American Movie Trailers* (2004) in which she argues that film trailers are a genre whose rhetoric can be informative of Hollywood studios' idea of their ideal audience.<sup>209</sup> Kernan is not the only one reading trailers as something more than a promotional tool. Film and media studies specialist Vinzenz Hediger further suggests that "it is also the cinematic technique of the beginning par excellence."<sup>210</sup> Basing his analysis in Lacanian psychoanalysis, Hediger argues that trailers are "a

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<sup>208</sup> Kernan, *Coming Attractions*, 1

<sup>209</sup> Kernan is reading trailers as 'paratexts,' informative of "how the motion picture audience was imagined by the film industry." (Kernan, 3) The relative absence of focus on marketing from Kernan's work is puzzling considering that the kind of audience construction that she is addressing here echoes marketing studies' interests. However, where marketing scholars and professionals base their constructions of ideal audiences on scientific data (or what they see as such) and intuition, Kernan's study does not suggest any basis in audience research. Instead, she analyzes the imagined audience.

<sup>210</sup> Hediger, Vinzenz, "A Cinema of Memory in the Future Tense; Godard, Trailers and Godard Trailers," in *Forever Godard* (London: Black dog, 2004), 144-57., 155

technique of remembrance of things to come," that is to say, the trailer provides the audience with a selection of the most striking images that the audience would have kept in mind after seeing the entire movie, therefore creating desire for the "anticipated memory."<sup>211</sup>

Where the idea that a trailer is a promotional tool is relegated to the periphery of Kernan's analysis of trailer rhetoric, Hediger's idea that trailers are "a cinema of memory in the future tense" intrinsically implies a reading of the cinema of coming attractions as a means to create desire for an object, that is to say, a promotional tool. Viewers watching trailers in movie theaters, on television or browsing the Internet, are fully aware that trailers are sophisticated ads meant to whet their appetite for the full-length feature. It makes sense, therefore, for film marketers to invest a large part of their budget in trailers. Kristin Thompson put it succinctly in *The Frodo Franchise* (2007), when she suggests:

In trying to give a film a strong opening week-end, marketers have swelled ad budgets enormously. In 2002 ... a trailer for a big Hollywood release cost an average of \$500,000 to \$1.2 million. *Because of the fierce competition, these expenses cannot effectively be cut, so the problem is to find ways to offset them.*<sup>212</sup>

The primary message inscribed in trailers says: "You're going to want to see

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<sup>211</sup> Hediger, 156

<sup>212</sup> It is important to note, however, that the most important part of this budget is not devoted to the making of the trailer per se. Indeed, Hediger tells us that "the introduction of the MacIntosh-based AVID editing software in 1993 [reduced] the marginal costs of any given decision in film editing." (Hediger, 147) What is costly is the purchase of "media space or 'spots'." (Drake, 71) In France, this takes a unique shape as contrary to the US, where all trailers are shown with lights half dimmed, distributors have the choice between paying to have their trailer shown with lights completely off or not paying at all, and being part of the trailers screened with other advertisements. The purchase of 'spots' lights off has increased by 5% since 1999. (Laurichesse, 80) Kristin Thompson, *The Frodo Franchise: The Lord of the Rings and Modern Hollywood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 105

these films!"<sup>213</sup> This aspect of trailers carries over to different cultural locales while the genres, narratives and stars may need to be adapted, thereby altering the trailer's composition.

Trailers are a unique form of advertisement: they are at the same time a film genre and a marketing tool.<sup>214</sup> Indeed, very few other forms of advertisement offer the future consumer a possibility to sample a product the way a trailer does, and very few other visual media are characterized by the simultaneous use of written text and image. Hediger proceeds to argue that newsreels, instructional and propaganda films, and Jean-Luc Godard's films are the only media to make use of this unique form of editing.<sup>215</sup> This particular rhetoric is characterized by the separation of the sound and visual tracks (the soundtrack usually provides the narrative continuity), the inclusion of text over or between images, and the use of editing tools such as grids, wipes and other technologies rarely used in films.

While basic techniques of trailer-making cross borders, the sampling of scenes varies as does the composition of the trailers. Even if films, like operas, theater productions or concerts are cultural products, and "sell the desire for a unique cinematic experience rather than a specific physical object," the act of selling can only be achieved if the audiences' appetite has

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<sup>213</sup> Kernan, 43 Vinzenz Hediger's reformulation of the basic message inscribed in trailers would be: 'You're going to want these memories!'

<sup>214</sup> They are also a unique form of film-making, as argued by Kernan in her book, but also by Jean-Luc Godard. "It is interesting that the filmmaker famous for declaring the death of cinema also expressed a desire to make trailers instead of films. While the death of cinema conceit is misleading, in that all new media forms (and their 'content') are deeply embedded in the extensive wealth of cinematic traditions and conventions developed over the past century, the profound changes in cinema's institutional structures make now an ideal time to consider the place of trailers in its evolving (signifying and economic) systems." (Kiernan, 207)

<sup>215</sup> Hediger, 147

been whetted.<sup>216</sup> To this end, marketers construct campaigns to sell cultural objects, adapting their ads to what they imagine their audiences to be in specific cultural locales in the same ways as they would for any other product, as I suggested in chapter one. Although Kernan recognizes how unique trailers are because they need to be positioned both in the social and cinematic imaginary of future audiences, she fails to recognize that these can differ when one crosses cultural and national borders.<sup>217</sup> She claims that:

film as a product differs from most other advertised goods in that the referent systems that trailers use and audiences transform in the process of constructing meaning are more than a body of social knowledge. They are that, plus a body of specific cinematic conventions, a body of expectations about what films can offer narratively, and a set of desires. These desires are not to consume an object, but to engage in an experience, in a process of meaning-production through narrative film, a 'free sample' of which the trailer constructs.<sup>218</sup>

The trailer is the epitome of this difference as it is a perfect middle ground between marketing techniques and film (the key power of the trailer emerges from its editing, which is fundamentally a film technique). Kernan's lack of geographical positioning implies an assumed universal quality to trailers. Likewise, Hediger's reading of Godard's trailers suggests a universal language, without providing the evidence that the same trailers were used

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<sup>216</sup> David Gibson, "Coming Attractions: Reading American Movie Trailers (review)," *The Moving Image* 6, no. 1 (2006): 128-131, 128

<sup>217</sup> I have yet to find the French equivalent to the history of trailers provided by Lisa Kernan in her introduction and by film historian Vinzenz Hediger. Trailers are not a uniquely American promotional tool however, since Pathé created many for the American audiences in the period before WWI, when the company was doing well on the American continent. This is likely a place where more research is needed in order to provide a more complete history of the film industry.

<sup>218</sup> Kernan, 9

across borders with the same effect.<sup>219</sup>

The rest of this chapter will challenge this assumption through a transcultural comparison of trailers. Indeed, “the referent systems that trailers use and audiences transform in the process of constructing meaning”<sup>220</sup> go beyond social knowledge and cinematic conventions. Trailers, when relocated to a different national and cultural context, appeal to different audiences because the composition of the trailer borrows from local cinematic and cultural histories. In France, Hollywood trailers enter a different cinematic history with different conventions and a different visual language. Therefore, the adapted, translated and sometimes entirely reinvented trailer uses a different focus and aesthetic so as to make sense of the foreign narrative; in the process, the Hollywood teen-girl film is marked as American.

A trailer is first and foremost a means to foster desire and construct audiences; this appears to be the most important characteristic that all trailers share across borders. If the structure of the cinema of coming attractions is unique to film – and can be considered a film genre in the

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<sup>219</sup> Knowing that Godard only talks to a small and elite group of cosmopolitan cinephiles, it is likely that the evidence that could be collected would not say much in terms of cultural differences. It is more likely to reveal the off-putting nature of Godard trailers to the majority of film audiences (with the exception of film buffs) across the globe because of the very abstract nature that Hediger reads as particularly effective. We can then ask ourselves what an effective trailer might be, if it is not the trailer that brings crowds in the theater. Can a cosmopolitan crowd of art-house film goers be the measure of trailer effectiveness? Hediger’s analysis of Godard trailers focuses on aesthetic achievements, not box-office numbers: he may be able to assume universality of abilities to denote high-brow trailers by cosmopolitan crowds. Ruby Rich elaborated on means used by distributors in the US to lure audiences in her essay titled “To Read or not to Read: Subtitles, Trailers and Monolingualism.”

<sup>220</sup> Kernan, 9

United States, as Kernan has argued - its composition is not universal. The discreet, culturally informed differences in trailer construction, made obvious by a comparison between US and French trailers for the same movies, challenge Kernan's and other film scholars' assumptions concerning the universal nature of trailers. A close analysis of Hollywood trailers made for the French audience highlights the necessity to locate trailers geographically and historically. The necessity to re-encode Hollywood trailers for them to make sense to French ideal audiences exemplifies the lack of universal value of the content and composition of trailers: the act of translating affects the structure of the short promotional films and in turn the basic definition provided by film scholars in the United States.

The process of creating a trailer, however, far from being a simple cut of the feature, is today a sophisticated exercise meant to convey densely packaged information (most are less than two minutes, and the average shot used in trailers does not last more than two seconds) while remaining entertaining. Like posters, once the trailer crosses the US borders, constructed audiences change; the strategies elaborated in order to best seduce culturally different audiences therefore need to be adapted. This chapter focuses on the cultural differences between the 'original' Hollywood trailers produced to sell teen-girl films in the US domestic market and their French adaptations. Once again, beyond the simple word-for-word translation of sentences, these films go through a sophisticated process of adaptation. My analysis of cultural translations highlights on the one hand the different constructions of audiences in France and in the United States; more

pertinently though, it shows the recurrent aesthetic and narrative choices of a handful of transcultural intermediaries (film distributors) who have at the same time a certain idea of the audience they are addressing and of the American girls they are reframing.<sup>221</sup>

#### What scholars tell us about trailers

The most important job of the trailer is to inform the potential audiences of the existence of the film; however, this process is more complex than it first may seem because the trailer positions the film within the cinematographic horizon as it constructs its audiences. What this means is that trailers are made today so as to attract selectively: constructing a specific audience by presenting the narrative in a specific way is called *positioning*. Positioning a film is meant to benefit the film as happy moviegoers coming out of the theater and talking up the film, is more productive than the opposite.<sup>222</sup> To reach this goal, the trailer-makers

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<sup>221</sup> Since trailers are not tested on audiences in France, their composition is partly the result of assumed cultural tastes and desires, partly the result of a set of rules and conventions that are the focus of this chapter.

<sup>222</sup> According to Kernan, this has not always been the case, however. "There is usually only one final theatrical trailer made per film, and it has generally been designed to draw as large an audience as possible to see the film. (This has begun to change, in conjunction with the increased importance of the Internet) ... The single trailer's job has been to lay out all the advertising campaign's major elements (which in other media may be broken down to appeal to specific audiences). Thus, unlike television advertising for films (which market studies suggest currently ranks first, above trailers, second, and newspaper advertising, third, among sources for audience awareness of upcoming films), most theatrical trailers through the end of the twentieth century have not placed great emphasis on the targeting of particular demographic groups. Indeed, according to one trailer producer, the job of the trailer is not so much to appeal to a specific audience as to avoid alienating any potential audience. Trailers are thus a unique site where the film production industry 'talks' to its audience in the broadest possible terms, in the process displaying - through its rhetoric of address - its own notion of who that audience is." (Kernan, 26)

purposefully focus on some aspects of the narrative more than others.<sup>223</sup> In the case of teen-girl films, mainly targeted to teenage girls in the US, the emphasis is on the key *Cinderella* narrative points: the hard working, poor beginnings; the makeover; the coming-out ball. Following the 1987 re-release trailer of *Cinderella, A Cinderella Story* (Mark Rosman, 2004) for instance shows Hilary Duff's character (Sam) at work in a restaurant and preparing food for her stepmother at home, before being transformed into a princess and ending at the ball, dancing with prince charming. In France, on the other hand, the emphasis is put on the romance, minimizing the American teen-experience (the job, the formal ball), thereby constructing broadly a female audience

If the copywriters are important for the creation of trailers, scholars agree that the star of the trailer-making world are editors. Indeed, the pace at which images will be shown creates a rhythm that informs the audience about the general atmosphere of the film. In other words, it is through the job done by the editors, who focus on a few talking points created by copywriters, that the key message of the trailer is constructed. Accordingly,

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<sup>223</sup> Based on my viewing of several electronic press kits at the film and television archive at UCLA (*Never Been Kissed, Save the Last Dance, Legally Blonde 2, Ten Things I Hate About You*; I saw the jackets for *Legally Blonde* and *The Princess Diaries* at the Margaret Herrick library, but the CD roms were not accessible because, as one of the librarian explained to me, they have not yet figured out a way for patrons to consult the EPKs without stealing their contents. This struggle with technology is a pity, as it appears that the collection at the Margaret Herrick library is rich in EPKs for the films that I am interested in and CD roms sadly are probably not going to be a long lasting device.) it appears that the trailers are built off of a number of clips. I cannot tell what comes first, and according to Hediger, trailer-makers watch the entire film, which would suggest that the clips selected for the EPK are simply the context for the quotes chosen for the trailer. It provides the journalists with a consistent view of the film, almost a single track reading, echoed by the interviews and photographs, commenting on and highlighting the exact same scenes.



trailers all have similar features: a beginning and an end, they all address their constructed audience directly (in the US, often through voiceover), they include a selection of scenes edited quickly and they all identify the main characters.<sup>224</sup> Kernan also suggests that:

Contemporary trailers offer new formulas for promoting generic space, echoing and referencing, yet transforming the classical forms. They assume that the newly globalized audience desires, for example, to 'Return!' to the simpler, yet increasingly quotational and intertextual generic spaces of popular film franchises. Generic space in the contemporary film industry thus appears to have complex and entrenched parameters and impermeable boundaries even as it seems to provide the global audience with a simple, direct, accessible land of fun. The complexity of the social space of multinational capitalism in the millennial era (e.g., the information superhighway, global economic and environmental interdependencies) is likewise at times glossed within public discourse through a rhetorical fantasy land populated by good guys and evildoers.<sup>225</sup>

Considering that her analysis does not include a comparison of Hollywood trailers with foreign ones for foreign films or Hollywood films, it is hard to know what allows Kernan to assume that all trailers could talk to all audiences. In the second half of this chapter, I will show that constructing a global audience for film (even Hollywood ones) is an illusion: instead, films need to be located in time and space as their ideal audiences are culturally constructed. Cultural specificity is overlooked by American scholars as they assess trailer-making, assuming that the American trailer is the blue print for all trailers in the same way that American taste would be the blue print for all tastes.

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<sup>224</sup> Kernan, 9

<sup>225</sup> Kernan, 213-4

## **A Brief History of the Trailer**

### Silent to Studio Era: Laying the Groundwork for Decades of Trailer-making

Positioned in the context of the history of film, the United States', French and other nations' film industries have found creative ways to inform viewers about coming attractions (the trailer being just one of them). These promotional strategies find their roots in the vaudeville and circus traditions, and have only gradually been pulled toward more specialized advertising techniques, more adapted to film, starting in the 1950s. Film historian Douglas Gomery's analysis of the advertising strategies put in place by Sam Katz and Barney Balaban to promote their chain of movie theaters in the 1920s is quite telling in this regard. Not only were they drawing crowds thanks to the films they showed, but also because of the vaudeville shows staged prior to the screenings and because of the comfort of the theaters themselves.<sup>226</sup> When, for the first time in 1912, a few edited images were projected on the screen at the end of the movie (these were trailing the film) to introduce future attractions, the tone used was in keeping with the other attractions shown in the theaters, mainly vaudeville performances. The tone of US trailers has since remained in keeping with that of the performer introducing different parts of vaudeville shows: drawing on the fame of

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<sup>226</sup> Sam Katz's cross-country national chain of movie theaters in the US will make trailer-making and trailer showing more consistent in the 1920s. Indeed, "Publix experts loved to herald forthcoming films using the theater's own movie screen and a 'captured' audience. While on occasion, trailers had been used by other exhibitors, Sam Katz made this particular means of promotion a cornerstone of the theatrical exhibition business. Sam Katz deemed trailers so important that he was willing to have Publix make its own - even for non-Paramount films. He did not trust what the other Hollywood studios sent him." (Gomery, 132) Outside of the trailers that were the only promotional item that Katz and his teams produced for the film, most of the rest of his advertisement strategy was focused on the movie theaters and the standard experience he could promise his patrons.

locally recognized artists such as Paul Ash and on the unique nature of the spectacle to come, trailers remind the film audience that a film is to be experienced in the movie theater.<sup>227</sup>

The focus on segmentation and on constructing audiences was not characteristic of film advertising and trailer-making in the 1910s and 1920s. When the first trailers appeared in 1912, they were no more than a set of frames taken from the feature film being advertised and aimed to appeal to an elusive film audience. More was not necessary in the 1910s as the cinema still was an attraction in and of itself, because of the technological innovation it represented and the novelty of the experience it provided the spectators. In the US, very little effort was put in making trailers at the time: "beginning in 1919, a company called National Screen Service (NSS) made crude 35 mm film ads from transferred film stills (without the studio's permission) and sold them to exhibitors to run following feature films."<sup>228</sup> The trailers produced by NSS focused on providing film audiences with basic information about coming attractions: narrative highlights, stars, production company, and genre. Inadvertently, NSS editors laid the groundwork for decades of trailer-makers who are to this day still focusing on genre, narrative and star.

Trailers may have become more sophisticated, but their content is still similar in tone: the Hollywood trailer for the US market always tells the audience that the film it presents is the best, most memorable and unique.

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<sup>227</sup> Gomery, 127

<sup>228</sup> Kernan, 25

This focus on positive highlights is called hyperbole.<sup>229</sup> While hyperbole is one of the characteristics of the contemporary US trailers, it is not an aspect that is given much attention in French trailers. Trailers made for the US markets, to this day, cite highlights of the reviewers' praise including short press-reviews of the best commentaries. The trailer made for the US market for the original *Cinderella* (Clyde Geronimi and Wilfred Jackson, 1950) is also a good illustration of hyperbolic trailer-making, as throughout the trailer, text is superimposed on clips from the film describing it as: "The picture the entire world has been waiting to see!"<sup>230</sup>

The circus-inspired visual and hyperbolic mode of advertising that was common in the first decades of trailer-making was complemented with more sophisticated verbal acts borrowed from vaudeville with the advent of sound in 1927. Trailer-makers of the early talking era filled their trailers with

literal vaudeville echoes, such as stars standing in front of stage curtains and directly addressing audiences (as in the trailer for *The Jazz Singer*, Alan Crosland, 1927), introductory titles that set up subsequent film scenes like vaudeville placards (and like silent cinema intertitles), or smorgasbord samplings of a variety of the film's features.<sup>231</sup>

In the same way that inter-titles highlighted the stars, narrative and genre, the talkies would very much emphasize the role of the film as an attraction

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<sup>229</sup> It might have been present in early French trailers as well, but I have no other evidence to assess the nature of French trailer-making, than the nature of poster-making, which purposefully took distance from what was considered American, such as the focus on stars for instance. (Berthome, 9)

<sup>230</sup> The 1950 Disney *Cinderella* is the earliest trailer I could find for *Cinderella* films. However, I imagine that the 1914 version with Mary Pickford certainly had a trailer. I am simply unsure at this point where to find these silent era trailers, or if they even have been preserved.

<sup>231</sup> Kernan, 18

and its specific narrative and other qualities.<sup>232</sup> Hediger argues that “you easily recognize a classical trailer by the superimposed titles. Roughly nine tenths of all American trailers from the pre-1960 period used superimposed titles to convey their message: to list the stars, to describe the qualities of the films, to give some hints about the story and situate the excerpts shown in terms of genre.”<sup>233</sup>

By the 1940s, the studio era publicity machine took over and systematized the focus on the stars as well as on the narrative. Both of these focuses reveal an attempt at branding film, that is to say, an attempt at expanding the shelf life of films by creating an easily recognizable link across films to hook a systematically constructed audiences’ desire to return to the theater. The work of editors within the studios (instead of NSS) made the trailers more sophisticated simply because they had access to larger samples of cuts to work from. As time went by, the structure of address utilized in trailers became more visually sophisticated, while still retaining a focus on the greatness of the star and the uniqueness of the narrative within a recognizable genre. Trailers became the primary locus of trial for new technology both for film and for marketing.

The confluence of the end of the studio system with the birth of television at the end of the 1940s led to a latent period in the film industry as well as in the marketing of film. On the one hand, the competition with

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<sup>232</sup> The trailer for *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941) illustrates these characteristics perfectly, as Orson Welles, lead actor and director of the film used his radio personality to sell *Citizen Kane*: he does not stand in front of a curtain, but since his voice is the most recognizable aspect of his public persona, he is heard commenting on the actors and on the narrative to the very same effect.

<sup>233</sup> Hediger, 147-8

television for audiences would have required a prompt response from the studios in advertising terms. But the anti-trust laws required a change in the so far vertically integrated studios. For these reasons, "Both Hollywood filmmaking as a whole and movie marketing underwent an 'identity crisis' during these years that in many ways paralleled broader problems facing American cultural identity/ies."<sup>234</sup> The reconfiguration of the studios and their relationship to marketing lasted for about a decade. In the early 1960s, a point of stabilization was reached, at which norms, although new, prevailed again. Among other things, what would change in the second important wave of trailer-making is marked by international exchanges in film aesthetics and perhaps more importantly by the move of trailer-makers from the studios to private companies: this is the boutique era.

The 1960s were the period marked by the most aesthetic changes in trailer-making notwithstanding the original wave of creation. On one hand, film studios started contracting out their trailers and other advertisement projects to men who used to work within the studio system before it was dismantled. Men like Saul Bass or Andrew J. Kean established themselves independently in their own *boutiques*. The competition across boutiques was fed by the common practice of double vending (studios hire different trailer-makers and eventually either choose between products or in the worst case merge the results to construct the best possible trailer based on the work of different teams) and the desire to produce the best trailers that would be recognized for their quality at the film advertisement awards: the Key Art

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<sup>234</sup> Kernan, 28

awards, created in 1970 by the Hollywood Reporter.<sup>235</sup> The new technologies of filmmaking emerging from the transcultural exchanges of the 1950s and 1960s French and Italian New Waves were progressively integrated in trailer-making techniques.<sup>236</sup> Such trailer-makers as Pablo Ferro (*Dr. Strangelove*, Stanley Kubrick, 1964) or Andrew J. Kean (*The Night of the Iguana*, John Huston, 1964) became key players in the film industry in the early 1960s.

The next important shift in the marketing of film occurred in 1975, with the release of *Jaws*.<sup>237</sup> Both film scholars Thomas Schatz and Justin Wyatt agree that the strategy put in place to sell *Jaws* changed the face of film marketing and that of filmmaking as well. Indeed,

the rise of mall movie exhibition and of a post-baby boom mall-wandering and repeat-viewing audience; the waning of the 'Hollywood renaissance' of the art cinema movement; the growth of the 'star director' phenomenon and increased influence of the Hollywood talent agency; and three major changes in the relationship between cinema and television: greater emphasis on television advertising for motion

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<sup>235</sup> "For major studio films that use several outside boutiques, the studio typically lets each boutique see the trailers of their competitors once trailers are submitted. This creates what is called a trailer derby. After evaluating the work of rivals, each boutique refines its version in another round of creative work. The studio typically chooses just one or two trailers as its main trailers. Major studios evaluate the first round of trailers, seeing rough versions of several trailers from each shop. The studios can ask for revisions after further consultations or deem them ready to be tested by research outfits once the trailers are technically more polished. With feedback from studio brass and test audiences, trailer shops may revise their trailers again. In some cases, one creative shop may be dropped from the trailer derby to simplify the next round of evaluation if the shop's initial work is deemed to be far off the mark. When all submitted trailers are deemed ineffective, the film distributor may to to splice them together bits from different shops out of desperation." (Marich, 18)

<sup>236</sup> Schwartz, 159

<sup>237</sup> "Along with the famous *Jaws* promotional campaign, the trailer for *Rocky* (John Avildsen, 1976) is often cited as influential in the emergence of New Hollywood trailer conventions, and strikingly demonstrates an early incarnation of contemporary trailers' mission to avoid alienating any potential audience segment. Although this trailer draws on the rhetoric of story as well as that of genre, it is exemplary in its combination of the two for the purpose of expanding the audience beyond the expected male 'fight film' crowd." Kernan, 167

pictures, the emergence of pay cable channels, and the home video revolution.<sup>238</sup>

While Schatz considers the shift in blockbusters advertising as event films, which coincided with the emergence of new Hollywood, Justin Wyatt's project is to dismantle this move and analyze the function of so-called high concept films. In both analyses, Schatz and Wyatt demonstrate the use of the competitive trailer-makers by studios and distribution companies. The two scholars agree that the changes in filmmaking and film-marketing fed one another. My conversation with Donna Morong, casting director for Disney until 2005, confirms this aspect of the film industry. Her experience working on the casting of *The Princess Diaries* is indicative of this state of creation in the Studios: while she had free reign in casting the future princess, the studio producers required a star: Julie Andrews would be the queen because the film needed a name to be sold.<sup>239</sup>

The phase of film marketing and, more specifically trailer-making that we are in today started in the mid-1970s; however, the technology has changed. While trailers have not changed drastically aesthetically, the production prices have gone up steadily: "Contemporary trailers are now big business, their production costing anywhere from \$40,000 to \$100,000 and up. With the increased importance of television advertising for films, market research has proliferated for film promotion and is utilized from the earliest

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<sup>238</sup> Kernan, 31

<sup>239</sup> See Morong interview with author 10/06/08



preproduction stages of most film productions."<sup>240</sup> Again, the theatrical trailer is but a single facet of a larger promotional network. But, as Vinzenz Hediger notes, in the contemporary market, "trailers are very cost-effective since they utilize approximately 4.5 percent of the advertising budget of a given film, while generating at least 20 percent of the film's box-office revenue. They are also increasingly available for sustained study, as one of the most frequent components of ancillary 'value-added' features that are included in DVD versions of films."<sup>241</sup> The trailer's importance has increased with their prices: the accessibility of the Internet has made it a prime vehicle to inform audiences of the existence of films. What better tool than the trailer to inform rapidly and comfortably about a film? Trailers are thus watched with more frequency and consumed in a variety of different private settings: on television either through broadcast (as will be seen in the next chapter) or DVDs or on home computers.

#### From Cinderella to Teen-girl: Selling a Classic Narrative as a Romance

The 1950s trailer for Walt Disney's *Cinderella* is an excellent example of the standard characteristics carried over from the silent era and the adaptations to sound that occurred in the late 1920s and 1930s. From the very first frame of the 1950 *Cinderella* trailer made for the US market, the focus is on the lead character: Cinderella. Indeed, over the now classic image

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<sup>240</sup> Kernan, 33. This goes only for Hollywood films: independent films do not have quite as much money to spend on advertising and audience catering, as Liz Manne explained to me. Interview with author 10/01/08

<sup>241</sup> Kernan, 32 That is questionable however when it comes to analyzing French trailers for Hollywood films: the trailer included in the extras of the DVD, even in France, always is the American version. That might be a question of rights, or the fact that the DVDs are made for the entire world in the same place at the same time, therefore their content is the exact same, and only the languages options and the zone codes change?

of Cinderella's white horses-pulled carriage, the first card reads: "1950 is the Cinderella year!" It is directly followed by a second card reading: "Coming closer by the Minute!" as we still see the carriage increasing in size on the screen, therefore getting closer to the audience. Cinderella appears next in full ball attire, eleven seconds into the short trailer; the text superimposed on the image of Cinderella smoothing her skirt reads: "The picture the entire world has been waiting to see!"<sup>242</sup> This is the moment when the male voiceover starts saying: "with all the magic at his command, Walt Disney, after six years in the making, brings you his Cinderella, an all cartoon feature." Meanwhile, the visuals focus on the moments right before and right after the ball, that is to say, on the climax of the film. Assuming that the US viewers are familiar with the narrative itself, the trailer only focuses on the highlights of the tale, placing clear emphasis on the heroine and more so on the magic of Disney's version, as the brand of Disney cartoon is the author.

From a literary perspective, the transformation of Cinderella's narrative in the 1950s by the Disney company is in keeping with centuries of changes. All fairy tales originated in folk culture and were thus only frozen by Charles Perrault and the brothers Grimm in the eighteenth century. Jack Zipes for instance, suggests that fairy tales are fundamentally characterized by change and that the written version that we read as authentic are really only the first instances of formal preservation. These first versions are not

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<sup>242</sup> The exclamation marks only reaffirm the vaudeville hyperbolic tone, underlining the quality of the film and feeding the audiences' anticipation by highlighting what they might recall of the narrative: the classic rags to riches epic embodied by the lead character and by her name, Cinderella.

without their own problems, as explained by Jane Darcy in her "The Disneyfication of the European Fairy Tale" when she writes:

The ideology that has underpinned the main literary and visual fairy tales since Perrault's collection of tales *Histoires pour Contes du temps passé* is essentially that of the middle class, which has been the dominant social and political group since the eighteenth century and was in an emergent state earlier than this. Their values and attitudes are represented in the important and influential collections of tales and films and they, rather than the 'folk' or peasantry, become the primary audience for the tales. So the kinds of tales that tend to be selected in the Perrault and Grimm collections and whose tradition Disney has followed have heroes whose resourcefulness and cunning are rewarded and whose direction is definitely upwardly mobile.<sup>243</sup>

What is important though, in terms of translation is the emphasis placed on romantic love by the Disney industry: indeed, while the European fairy tale heroine was certainly beautiful, passive, silent and pleasant, she would win the day but not necessarily the domesticated life of a loving wife. Starting with the 1950s *Cinderella* trailer, all Cinderella stories place heavy emphasis on the romance; this aspect of Cinderella narratives is the one retained by French film distributors. The storyline that dresses basic Cinderella skeletons in contemporary Hollywood teen-girl films is minimized in the trailer campaigns in the US to the benefit of what makes each narrative different from the others.

The 1950 *Cinderella* trailer does not dazzle the audience with its technology. In fact, it is rather subdued and clearly still infused by classic trailer-making aesthetics. It does, however, clearly highlight the movie theater as the only place to experience the new Disney creation, thus

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<sup>243</sup> Darcy, 186

positioning itself against the television; TV may provide other forms of entertainment, but not at the quality of what Disney has to offer. Among other characteristics, the reference to the "technicolor" technology on a written card, is illustrated by the focus on contrasts between the brightness of Cinderella's dress and carriage and the black and rich burgundy backgrounds (the stair case, the very dark night that covers her escape at midnight).

When Disney's *Cinderella* was re-released in theaters in 1965, the youth market had been created. The construction of the audience for this film, therefore, appeals to the everlasting qualities of the film indicated by the semantic focus on "unforgettable," "ageless" and "lasting." The gradually predominant presence of television sets in the home led filmmakers to realize that their audience's average age had dropped. This realization influenced the marketing of film.<sup>244</sup> In keeping with these changes, the 1965 trailer for the re-release of *Cinderella* is longer, focused on the same theme of magic as the 1950 trailer but now, the trailer is a little film in its own right, a film highlighting the greatness of the world of *Cinderella*. In fact, the addition of different songs and the focus on her castle in silhouette, makes it as much an advertisement for the soundtrack and Disneyland (magic kingdom!) as for the film.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Indeed, "with the discovery of the potential impact of youth-oriented films like *Bonnie and Clyde* ([Arthur Penn], 1967), *The Graduate* ([Mike Nichols,] 1967) and *Easy Rider* ([Dennis Hopper,] 1969), different 'buttons' start to be pushed in trailers, with appeals to audience interest in story elements increasing in importance (to rival genres and stars)." Kernan, 30

<sup>245</sup> Furthermore, seeing how the trailer for the 1965 release opens with a distant view of the castle, which is brought back in sharper view less than a minute later, thus reminding the audience of the silhouette of Disneyland, opened just ten years

The male voiceover introduces the film just like it was done in the 1950 trailer, saying "using all the magic at his command, Walt Disney brings you his wondrous all cartoon feature *Cinderella*," moving on, sticking to the same theme, saying "sparkling with pure enchantment, filled with lasting enjoyment and overflowing with unforgettable entertainment." After describing the "fun, fascinating and humorous Disney characters," the male voiceover proceeds to single out the music for its magic and "some of the happiest melodies ever heard" followed by a sample of four different tunes jumping from one to another with no other transition but the visuals changing from one narrative key to another (one image of Cinderella in rags, one of the fairy godmother doing magic, one of the animals making the dress, one of Cinderella and the prince dancing...). The textual inserts, meanwhile, reaffirm the quality of the film, just as in the 1950 trailer. The audience can read a first card with the words: "the ever wonderful ageless love story" immediately followed by: "To put stardust in your eyes... A warm glow in your heart!" While retaining a few aspects (theme and some wording) of the 1950 trailer, the 1965 trailer sells more than just the lead character and the narrative: it sells the experience at large, through the

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earlier in Anaheim, California, I can't help but think that it is advertising the amusement park at the same time. Moreover, the ambivalence of the statements made by the male voiceover apply very well to a movie going experience, but could as well describe an amusement park experience. As Thompson illustrates when she says: "One forerunner was Walt Disney. Ever on the leading edge of film franchises, he started the Mickey Mouse Club series in 1955, and ABC paid for it as it would for any ordinary program. Yet the series promoted Disney's characters and products. Beyond the popularity of the show, ABC had another reason for supporting Disney. In 1954 ABC helped finance the building of Disneyland, or which it owned a one-third stake, and late that year it started running a television series of the same name, which advertised the theme park as well as the character and products." (Thompson, 111)

music, the basic narrative highlights and the magic provided only in theaters (and at the amusement park, that celebrated its tenth anniversary in 1965).

While the film itself did not change, the 1987 re-release trailer for *Cinderella* clearly illustrates what Wyatt calls high concept; that trailer, points to the basics that became the skeleton for the teen-girl film. Indeed, as it opens, the images echoed by the male voiceover describe the basic ingredients for *Cinderella*: “take one wicked stepmother, two jealous stepsisters, one snobby housecat, one fairy godmother and a bunch of mischievous mice, then put them together and what have you got? It’s Walt Disney’s classic Cinderella. It’s the love story to end all love stories.” The focus on the key elements composing the narrative are not enough however; the new Hollywood trailer also emphasizes the film’s genre more heavily than it ever had before. After first clearly highlighting the romance and ending on images of Cinderella and the prince getting married, the male voiceover carries on: “But that’s just the beginning of the fun, the music, the magic and excitement!” Clearly here, the composition of a successful high concept film is detailed: fun, music, magic and excitement are the equivalent of Justin Wyatt’s definition of the high concept basic tenets, which he describes as “the look, the hook, and the book. The look of the images, the marketing hooks, and the reduced narratives form the cornerstone of high concept.”<sup>246</sup> Past the reference to the excitement that the film will procure, the images focus on chase scenes that make Cinderella look like an action movie, thereby perhaps hoping to enlarge the constructed audience?

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<sup>246</sup> Wyatt, 22

In France, however, the experience is much different: not only is there no voiceover to the 1987 re-release trailer but there is only one continuous song, a waltz. Images, likewise, only provide an impressionistic view of the narrative, as the highlight is primarily centered on the magic performed by the fairy godmother, Cinderella's arrival at the ball, her rush away from the castle at midnight and only thereafter allows for glimpses of her nemesis: her step-sisters and step-mother. The trailer ends with Cinderella's foot being fitted to the glass slipper. This quick edit of highlights of Disney's *Cinderella* can only be understood in the perspective of the opening frame reading: "Souvenez-vous!" (Remember!) Following this injunction then, the French version of Cinderella's 1987 re-release trailer is a literal echo to Hediger's definition of trailers as "a cinema of memory in the future tense." Teen-girl films will consistently focus on memories of Cinderella's romance, albeit inadvertently, thereby primarily constructing their audience as former Cinderella fans.

### **Selling Hollywood teen-girl films... the French way**

The first part of this chapter established that French and American film distributors conceive of trailers as a key promotional tool that both constructs audiences and translates the foreign cultural product into a palatable one, giving it symbolic value. While the French trailer suggests a mood and invites the audience for a sample ride, the trailer made for the US market sells the film by promoting its qualities and giving the audience the highlights of the film. In the comparative study of promotional artifacts for US and French

movies in France financed by the CNC, trailers were analyzed in terms of modes of communication: the French trailer shows while the US trailer tends to tell.<sup>247</sup> The French is closer to an edited selection of scenes that gives a general idea of what the film is about; the trailer made for US markets is a short film presenting the feature film by offering glimpses in fast edited sequences tied together in sophisticated graphics that are rarely used in France. A form of hybrid between the American trailer made for the US domestic market to sell Hollywood films, and the French trailer made for the French market to sell a French film, the trailers made in France to advertise Hollywood films in France follow a unique format.<sup>248</sup>

The trailers for Hollywood films made in France do not embrace the French way, but differ from the US original in so much that the selection of scenes vary, as does their length, the editing is slower and the focus on the celebrity is considerably lessened in France.<sup>249</sup> To be more specific, the three

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<sup>247</sup> Bo, 60-1

<sup>248</sup> As well as the American trailers made to advertise a French film in the US, but these are few and far between, and do not belong to the mainstream distribution in the US. In fact, foreign films in the US are de facto art house material, whether or not they were mainstream in their home country. This simple change in market and scope implies that the French film sold in the US sees much less money invested in its promotion than most US films in France. This, in turns, translates to a minimum change policy when it comes time to working on trailers. The trailer is rarely re-cut: it remains visually the same as its original, with an added male voiceover narrating the story in ways that make sense to the American audience; sometimes distributors have elected to exclude all dialogue, thereby tricking the audience into believing that it was an English speaking film; this trick is explored by Ruby Rich, who never interrogates the construction of the American audience as monolingual (she mainly blames her fellow Americans for being monolingual). See Rich and Nornes. There is much more to say on this topic, as both of my interviews with Ira Deutchman were focused on his experience distributing *Diva* (Jean-Jacques Beineix, 1981) and *The Last Metro* (Francois Truffault, 1980) in the 1980s in the US. But this is not the object of this study.

<sup>249</sup> For this reason, I will focus on the star as a branding tool in chapter five instead of this chapter: the focus on the star is much more elaborate in the press-kits and on television on both sides of the Atlantic than it is in the trailers.



key rhetorical focal points of the US trailers - the genre, the narrative and the celebrity - are translated almost to the point of disappearing when the trailers are re-cut for the French promotion.<sup>250</sup> The difference in tone of a French trailer for a French film leads audiences to recognize the trailer for a Hollywood film as American right away. The switch from the showing to the telling mode of communication not only signifies American to French viewers, but further points to the purely entertaining quality of the film as the trailer readily lays out its qualities. The rest of the chapter will focus on the shifts within trailers from the US to France of the teen-girl films and what aspects of the key rhetorical tools are systematically altered. This will in turn allow us to pinpoint the cultural biases that lead French trailer-makers and film marketers to define Hollywood teen-girls within a narrow range of feminine identities and, in a dialectical relationship, construct a white, French feminine

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<sup>250</sup> "Contemporary production practices, which, as a recent Daily Variety article noted, are increasingly driven by marketing departments, result in high concept-oriented trailers that frequently synthesize appeals to genre, story and stardom in broad strokes, delivering finely crafted yet apparently simple trailers. Graphics are streamlined, narration is punchy and there is an increased reliance on sound effects and music to heighten the sensory assault of the images. Trailers moreover participate in a synergistic commercial marketplace shared by a number of other pervasively commercialized media texts, including music television, infotainment, and children's television, as well as an increase in commercial product placement within films themselves.

In art influenced by the 'movie brat' or film school generation, genre formation in New Hollywood is characterized by a redoubling of the referentiality of films to other films, both through increased use of intertextual jokes and references and through a more holistic referencing of earlier Hollywood genres and genre films, in specific as well as amorphously nostalgic ways. In trailers this feature of the contemporary film market combines with the impact of the high concept-driven promotional milieu of the blockbuster era, encompassing such elements as 'the reliance on strong, reproducible images, the saturation campaign, and widespread product tie-ins' along with an emphasis on making the most of pre-sold elements such as 'stars, familiar stories or situations, remakes sequels, and series films.' The rhetoric of genre gains particular strength from the high concept era's integration of preproduction (packaging), production, and promotion, which engender a coherent generic identity for most films from the start." Kernan, 164-5

audience as its ideal audience.

### The Genre: reinventing the teen-girl film

The teen-girl film is an offshoot of the makeover film, which is an easily recognizable film genre in the US. Elizabeth Ford and Deborah Mitchell define the makeover genre as resting

on this premise: the central female character makes the journey from blah to beautiful. Her *physical* self must be transformed before she can become an effective person. From the forties to the present, through years of change in Hollywood, changes in the standards of female beauty, and changes in American women's cultural status, the makeover film has remained a viable commercial product.<sup>251</sup>

While I agree that the makeover film has remained a viable commercial product, the teen-girl films distinguish themselves from this definition of the makeover film because the physical change is a metaphor for other changes, not a function of other changes the lead teen character undergoes. Elle Woods in *Legally Blonde* is the best illustration of this: beautiful from the start, her physical change simply takes the form of her clothing adapting to the East Coast standards: from bright pink, she switches to blacks and navy blues. What this superficial switch reveals is her self-realization as an attorney and her love of the law. While teen-girl films are rooted in the makeover film tradition, they are best described by the three high points of the Cinderella narrative included in every teen-girl film and focused on in every US trailer: mean girls in place of the step-sisters, nice girls in place of the fairy godmother and the ascendance – social, intellectual, financial, etc. – of the lead character epitomized in the 'ball' scene.

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<sup>251</sup> Ford and Mitchell, 3 (my emphasis)

In the US trailers therefore, a few scenes are always devoted to the low beginnings and the pestering of the mean girls, the makeover made possible thanks to the nice girls, and the ball, epitome of the success of the now recognized princess. The low beginnings, the makeover scene, together with the ball are the three instances that ground any narrative in the teen-girl film genre; the rest of the US trailers for teen-girl films can therefore depart from the usual other aspects of the story to focus on what distinguishes this narrative from all the others. In France, the emphasis is not placed on the makeover, as much as it is on the heterosexual love story – the romance – which engages the white lead actress. Echoing the 1987 *Cinderella* trailer, the vast majority of teen-girl film trailers for France highlight the princess's relationship to the love interest. In fact, with the exception of *The Princess Diaries*, teen-girl film trailers in France do not put any emphasis on the makeover scene, if they even include it.

In the trailer for *The Princess Diaries*, however, the makeover scene is exaggerated in ridiculous ways: it is exceptionally highlighted so as to show a fast pace edit of stills of Anne Hathaway getting ready for the posters-shoot. This selection of images is not part of the film, but instead, an edit taken from the extra material produced specifically for the promotion of the film. The entire French trailer is about making over Mia, whose first line at the beginning of the trailer, looking at herself in the mirror, is: "On fait ce qu'on peut avec ce qu'on a, et rien n'y changera rien." (Doing what we can with what we're given is all we can do, nothing can be done about it.) The remainder of the trailer, of course, is devoted to proving this original

statement wrong as her European grandmother (in place of the fairy godmother), British star Julie Andrews, steps in not only to change her physical appearance but to teach her how to walk, sit, dance, speak etc... The French trailer places the emphasis on the makeover of a normal American teenage girl only better to highlight her dismal beginnings. The absence of elegance, her clumsiness and vulgar way to walk, dance, sit and speak are all reiterations of the antiamericanism discourse. The made for television new-release show described in the next chapter further emphasizes this very aspect.

The trailer for *The Princess Diaries* is the exception, however. A more exemplary trailer is the French version of *What a Girl Wants*, in which Daphne is shown going on a quest for herself and in the process changing superficially and more importantly, falling in love. In that trailer, as in *American Girls* (the French title of *Bring It On!*), the lead character is primarily presented as a beautiful, white girl who is romantically involved with one or more men. The emphasis takes the French versions of these trailers away from the teen-girl film genre and positions the film squarely in the American romantic comedy. On a recurrent basis, therefore, Daphne is shown with Wallace, not only for the expected kiss but mainly to position the teen-girl as heterosexual. The prince is interesting because he is one of the narrative artifacts that travels particularly well. In the instance that a plot does not make much sense for the French audience, as is the case for *Bring it On's* cheerleading competition, the French trailer-makers simply shift the center of interest away from the cheer leading and toward a few love

interests that are not all that prominent in the film itself. The US trailer precisely sketches the parameters of the intrigue, and only shows the love interest briefly in a couple of shots at the end (including the kiss). While the prince is indeed there in trailers made for US markets, his role is blown up in the French trailer so as to translate a culturally opaque narrative by reducing it to the smallest common denominator: love. In the process however, the narrative was re-encoded and the teen-girl recast as a lover (instead of a cheerleader).

Furthermore, in many narratives the prince is paradoxically presented as an outsider himself and, therefore, not the typical prince one might expect in a Cinderella narrative. When Daphne (in *What a Girl Wants*) talks about adapting to the requirements of her dad's family (British royalty), Wallace makes fun of her asking: "Tu vas tu tenir comment?" (how will you behave?) and later more seriously asking her to reconsider this makeover to fit it because Daphne was "née pour être différente" (born to be different). The trailer, therefore, presents Daphne as changing outfits regularly, but she is not in the dressing room to come out transformed and adapt, instead, she is trying on 1970s outfits! When a few scenes show her instead adorned in a Chanel suit and two different ball gowns, the dialogues clearly establish that she is not comfortable with that move: she wants to be herself, and indeed, the last shot of the trailer shows her back to her jeans and tee shirt. Taking distance from the Cinderella story, the French trailers for teen-girl films focus on the recurrent romantic aspects of these narratives and highlight the distance between the teen-girl and princesshood. This new positioning of the

film also leads to a new audience construction: the French audience is constructed as primarily feminine (if we assume that romantic narratives of the Cinderella sort appeals mostly to women).

### The Ball: Coming-out Straight

Whether in France or in the US, the vast majority of the teen-girl films' trailers include an ever so short glimpse of the restoration and happily ever-after scene: the ball. Of course, the ever-after of the contemporary versions of Cinderella really are not ever-after any longer, but rather find permanence in their reproduction of a heterosexual, white, upper-middle class status quo. The glimpse of this ending is ever so short as the trailer only allows for a few seconds of ever-after. Whether highlighting sports or academic or artistic performances, the ball is the moment of the film that viewers of teen-girl films can the most obviously expect, as it offers a form of resolution. This scene brings closure and is what the narrative is working toward. However, what differs in the US and the French versions of these trailers is how much is revealed about this final scene. The structure of the US trailer confirms the fact that the ball is the ending to be looking forward to, while at the same time highlighting the narrative differences making the film being advertised unique in the horizon of teen-girl films. From a promotional perspective, the aim of US trailers clearly is to be as precise in terms of film genre yet underlining originality of the narrative. The French trailer will simply include glimpses of it, without providing the narrative build up that is the focus of its US counterpart. In France then, the glimpses of the ending scene are edited in such a way that it is at times impossible to identify the shots as such: the

ball is just another part of the diegesis.

The narrative purpose of the ball scene within the trailer is to justify for the lead character to be the princess: a public acknowledgement for her authentic identity. In the US trailer this specifically refers to the moment when the teen girl is revealed to herself. In the French trailers, this is never the case, except in the trailer for *Save the Last Dance*. In *Save the Last Dance*, the ball reveals that Sarah is indeed in the right place in inner-city Chicago: she has moves. In both the US and French trailers for *Save the Last Dance*, the prince serves as a catalyst for the action to move forward, even directly providing the princess with the confidence she may lack to achieve her goal. Julia Stiles' character, Sarah needs her boy friend Derrick, to tell her "You can do this Sarah; you were born to do it," as she gets off stage after a poor start of her audition for Julliard (the exact same lines are used in the French trailer, literally translated). Her audition is only the first step toward the true coming-out, when Sarah and Derek dance together at an African American club of the South side of Chicago. In *Mean Girls*, *Legally Blonde*, *Cruel Intentions* or *10 Things I Hate About You* the focus is less specifically on a ball (there is no dancing involved), than it is an affirmation of these leading characters as leaders.

While the trailers for *Legally Blonde* and *10 Things I Hate About You* focus on the smarts of their respective lead characters, *Mean Girls* and *Cruel Intentions* simply focus on the lead having the upper hand in the resolution of the film. At the end of the US trailer for *Mean Girls* Lindsay Lohan's character gets the boy and her revenge over her nemesis, Regina George.

That is not the case in the trailer made for French markets: while the basic intrigue is established (Cady, Lohan's character, has a crush on Regina's former boy friend, whom Regina promptly seduces again, which leads Cady to plan her revenge), no resolution is provided: the trailer ends with Regina screaming as she discovers Cady's devious plan to make her gain weight ("this is girl world" says Cady in the French trailer, "the fighting had to be sneaky").<sup>252</sup> The trailer for *Mean Girls* in France therefore once again focuses on the love intrigue as the central narrative feature, but this time it is a fight between two girls over a boy. The trailer remains open ended: no clues for the resolution are offered. Instead, the atmosphere of the film has been conveyed and an experience of the diegesis offered.

For a sports centered film, set in a high school or college, the US trailer consistently gives out the ending: the trailer for *Bring it On!* shows glimpses of the national cheerleading competition and *Stick It* suggests that Hailey Graham gets to the finals of the gymnastics nationals without quitting the second time around. The trailer for *Cruel Intentions* shows Reese Witherspoon's character driving Sebastian's car, the object of the wager between him and his stepsister, therefore showing that she ended up having the upper hand over the two mean characters, even if they saw her as no more than a victim. These resolution scenes represent the more significant amount of the US trailer, in terms of seconds of screen time and meaningfulness within the diegesis of the trailer itself. Indeed, the structure

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<sup>252</sup> This is one of the few trailers that I could not find dubbed. The subtitling raises further issues in terms of translation, especially since much has not been written on subtitles in trailers. For scholarship on subtitles in film see: Nornes, *Cinema Babel*, Egoyan and Balfour, *Subtitles*



of the US trailer logically builds up to this final scene, since it is a little film about the film. In France, however, the final scene is glimpsed at, but with no more emphasis placed on it than any of the other scenes shown in the trailer. The French trailer is an experience of the film's diegesis. The required suspension of disbelief comes to a close with the last shot of the trailer, usually abrupt so as to remain clearly unfinished. This consistent difference in content between trailers made for the US and French markets indicates the transcultural intermediary's purposeful translation by ellipsis (omitting the scenes providing the answers).

Beyond the amount of information about the resolution of the intrigue, the trailers for teen-girl films may also include hints at the journey traveled by the teen-girl. *Bring it On!* offers an ideal example as the US trailer will hint to the changes undergone by the lead character, while the core of the trailer focuses on the cheerleading competition and its ending. The first half of the trailer tells the story of "the mighty Toros" and their ascent to national champions best summarized in the words of the lead character: "We're the best. We have fun, we work hard and we win national championships." Images of the white girls' team are edited to the fast pace of the song selling the film, Toni Basil's "Hey Mickey!"<sup>253</sup> At the fifty-third second however, the soundtrack scratches and comes to a halt to reveal the key narrative drive: the mighty Toros are not so morally mighty after all as they have been stealing their cheers from a team of African-American girls, the Clovers. The

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<sup>253</sup> "Hey Mickey!" was a popular hit in the US in 1982 (first recorded in 1979 by the UK group Racey as "Kitty"). The music video for the song shows Basil in cheerleading outfit, performing with a cheerleading squad.

basis for the inter-racial cheerleading competition is set: the struggle will be across racial boundaries as well as for the white girls to overcome the blow of having been accused of cheating and proving themselves as the superior team. Like all other teen-girl films, the US trailer for *Bring It On!* is a successful journey for girls to find themselves.

The trailer for *American Girls* in France uses a similar set of images as its US parallel *Bring It On!* but the differences in editing alter the narrative focus. In the French trailer, the cheerleading competition is in the background; what is brought to the forefront are the heterosexual love interests and the girls' sex appeal. This translation process operates in two major ways: the captain of the cheerleading squad becomes someone's girlfriend, and the girls become objects of the male gaze. The male voiceover predominates in the French version, and supplants the lead character, whose voice is not heard in the French trailer (contrary to the US version) and whose story is told in the third person, focusing on her love interests. Not only is her voice not heard, but she is muted by the dance teacher (in the American version he only appears once saying: "cheerleaders are dancers who have gone retarded."); after commenting on the physical characteristics of part of the cheerleading squad at regular intervals throughout the trailer, he tells the lead character not to speak, "ne parles pas," and is shown again, after the title card has been inserted, putting his hand in front of her face, shushing her. The whole trailer in the French version than has men telling

the story of American college<sup>254</sup> girls filling their days with activities considered in France as American (cheerleading), but providing little by way of clues toward the resolution of the narrative or any transformation the girls may undergo.

The ending of the French trailer clearly establishes the basic construct of the so-called American girl: not only is she denied a voice, but she is sexy (the word appears on a black card between images of scantily clad girls) and sexually available. The dance teacher's demeaning attitude, coupled with the male voiceover, reinvent the narrative for *Bring It On!* as a sexist film reducing teen-girls to appealing objects. The narrative itself remains loose, as what counts is the general impression that this trailer will provide. The French audience for teen-girl films is constructed as a heterosexual audience, made up of women for the most part.

#### Closing statements:

When comparing US trailers (made for French audiences) and French trailers (for French films), it becomes obvious that the description of trailers by American professionals and scholars only tells part of the story. Trailers for American films translated for French markets are recurrently characterized by: the studio logo that always opens, the male voiceover, the speedy editing of scenes, the music that gives the tempo and the feeling of a

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<sup>254</sup> The film is set in high school; the French trailer, however, is using the term college. Knowing that in France college refers to junior high school, it is unclear what may have been meant by the use of this noun. I voluntarily reproduced the French trailer's term since I am discussing the French trailer's rhetoric.

unified whole because of the music.<sup>255</sup> Trailers for any of the teen-girl films exemplify this perfectly: they all include all these characteristics without exception, as was seen throughout the chapter. *10 Things I Hate About You* (Gil Junger, 1999), for instance, opens with the Touch Stone logo on black, and directly moves into the narrative told by a disembodied male voiceover presenting the main characters. Halfway through the trailer, an upbeat song is diegetically introduced, as the band playing at the end of the film on the school's rooftop appears. The rest of the trailer unravels the narrative following the upbeat pace of the song, until the voiceover introduces the film's title and wraps up the trailer.<sup>256</sup>

Seen from France, some of the characteristics of trailers identified by Kernan and Hediger as universal appear uniquely American as they are not present in the French trailers. With the exception of the names of the actors and the title of the film, French trailers do not use the classic male voiceover

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<sup>255</sup> Bo, 116 Based on these general characteristics, it is interesting to make a note of what Robert Marich said about the trailers for foreign films in the US: "The key marketing material is the trailer, where again foreign language films represent a challenge because of language. Film distributors for domestic releases tend not to present dialog or subtitling; instead, they emphasize music and mood, and they usually include narration in trailers. One reason for this practice is the lack of time needed to insert subtitles, so dialog isn't presented. Another reason put forth by film marketers is that some filmgoers who have no experience with foreign films might find the trailer intriguing, so there is no need to call attention to the language barrier." 259/260 This description indicates a form of *Americanization* of the foreign trailer, by adding the voiceover that is so present in most of the American trailers. For more on distributors of foreign films in the US see Ruby Rich

<sup>256</sup> *Save the Last Dance* (Thomas Carter, 2001), *Stick It!* (Jessica Bendinger, 2006), *Mean Girls* (Mark Waters, 2004), and *Bring it On!* (Peyton Reed, 2000) differ here, as they are the only trailers not to include any voiceover, but imparting with the basics of its narrative through pieces of dialogue. Something seems related to the distribution company: none of these films are Disney films, and all of these narratives highlight women's agency more than most of the other films.

to narrate the film;<sup>257</sup> neither is there a focus on the star nor on the hyperbole (which the French do not tend to do either). In fact, French film scholar, and specialist of the marketing of film in France H el ene Laurichesse qualifies American style of trailer making as "old fashioned advertisement."<sup>258</sup> In the American trailer, the audio is usually quite sophisticated, commonly using a four-layered soundtrack with the male voiceover, pieces of dialogue, the sound effects appropriate to the images and the music. There is a core focus on the music that both sells the film and is sold by it, usually performed by someone famous, and that is an integral part of the promotional machine.<sup>259</sup> In France on the other hand, there is a pretty lean soundtrack for most trailers for French films, with mostly a focus on a selected dialogue throughout.<sup>260</sup>

The composition and purpose of film trailers in France and in the US are therefore different: in the French trailer made for a French film the imagined spectator is invited in the trailer with the same suspension of disbelief as in the film, that is the French trailer is *in medias res*. In the US on the other hand, the trailer is a film about the film that will openly promote its qualities in the same way an enthusiastic viewer of the film might. These

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<sup>257</sup> In the French trailer for *What a Girl Wants* for instance, it is Amanda Bynes's voice that comes on first and tells her story. This narration is the only addition: all the rest of the sound-track is composed of pieces of the dialogue and music, with the occasional sound effect.

<sup>258</sup> Laurichesse, 79

<sup>259</sup> Wyatt, 75 The music video serves as an indirect mode of advertising for the film, as we will see in chapter 5, devoted to the various aspects of film promotion on television.

<sup>260</sup> There are some exceptions to this, one of the most famous ones being the trailer for *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Am lie Poulain (Am lie)* (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2001), which follows straightforwardly the American format for trailers. This was the case presumably because the producers had international ambitions from the get go.

modes of address (used in French and US trailers) differ because transcultural intermediaries adapt their products to the habitus of their imagined audiences. It is the content of these trailers that construct the French and US audiences: while the latter constructs an audience of teenage girls (to whom these narratives are meant to appeal because they are about them), in France the audience is constructed as primarily feminine, though without further narrowing down the demographics in terms of age as the focus of trailers recurrently is on romantic narratives. In parallel, these constructs reiterate age-old ideas of antiamericanism by highlighting the Hollywood teen-girls' clumsiness, absence of elegance and even straight-out vulgarity.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**CIRCUMVENTING THE LAW:**  
**PROMOTING THE BIG SCREEN ON THE SMALL ONE**

While posters and trailers are produced for all films in any country in the world, the made-for-television advertisement is the privilege of Hollywood films in the United States.<sup>261</sup> This is so mainly because of the highly prohibitive cost of television commercials: “a thirty-second commercial during peak audience viewing times” can cost up to \$600,000.<sup>262</sup> The advertisements during such high audience events as the Super Bowl or the Oscars are all the more prohibitive because the size and breadth of the audience drive spot prices up.<sup>263</sup> All this information allows for a better grasp of the reasons why marketing budgets for Hollywood films sky-rocketed in the 1990s: the purchase of media space represents at least 90% of a film’s

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<sup>261</sup> Made-for-television advertisements for Hollywood films are broadcast in most Western European countries, South American and Asian countries as well. I do not have data in this regard however, nor can I tell whether these countries all produce their own made-for-television ads. As far as the film market in the USA, independent film distributor Ira Deutchman explained to me that this is precisely what makes his job difficult: niche art films do not have that kind of money to spend on promoting a film, and neither would television be a good use of dollars in his mind, as it is really difficult to target audiences specifically enough through television. This position seems unique to the independent film distributors, since studio marketers in general faithfully adhere to the TV advertisement campaign until today. That said, it may not last, what with the studios holding on for dear life to models of film ownership and territoriality that are being challenged by new technologies. Interview with author, 01/22/09

<sup>262</sup> Drake, 71

<sup>263</sup> Such events are so popular that it drives the price of thirty-second television spots up to three million dollars for the Super Bowl and up to \$1.5 million for the Oscars, nicknamed ‘the Super Bowl for women’ by marketers. It is interesting to note that staples of the Super Bowl commercial breaks such as Fedex or Cadillac did not participate in the Super Bowl as a response to the financial crisis.

budget (no more than 5% is spent on the creation of marketing materials).<sup>264</sup> Of course, the purchasing of commercial spots is not the only form of advertising of film on television networks in the United States: distributors also count on talk shows and other infotainment programs. In fact, distributors are usually "eager to supply clips, canned interviews and stars to promote upcoming movies" on such shows because they do not represent further expenses.<sup>265</sup>

Across the Atlantic, however, the parameters are fundamentally different: advertising films on television is illegal in France. This does not mean that no space is created on television to inform audiences of new releases and upcoming films,<sup>266</sup> simply that no trailer will be specifically cut for television. Instead, cultural news shows, or film-centered shows, are made to inform viewers of new releases and educate them. The information these shows convey is based, for the most part, on the material available in the electronic press kit (canned interviews, a limited selection of scenes, behind-the-camera glimpses).<sup>267</sup> Their content, however, varies greatly from

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<sup>264</sup> Drake, 72

<sup>265</sup> Thompson, 110. Media conglomerates often gather several studios, television networks and celebrity-oriented press such as *People* magazine and the like. These are other instances in which although there might be a line on the marketing budget, the money really remains in house, all things considered.

<sup>266</sup> "La publicité pour le cinéma à la télévision est interdite en France, pourtant l'actualité des sorties n'a jamais été aussi présente sur le petit écran à travers la 'promotion' qui permet de relayer l'information à la façon d'une publicité, mais gratuitement, sans acquisition d'espace, avec une nette orientation vers une logique de divertissement." (the purchase of television spots to advertise film on television is illegal in France; however, the promotion of new releases has never been as present on the small screen, through shows that informs audiences in the same way an advertisement would, but without the necessary purchase of ad-spots, and following a logic of entertainment.) Laurichesse, 92 (my translation)

<sup>267</sup> Only a couple of the shows I have seen suggest that their own journalist or host conducted the interview. While I doubt that these short shows have much of a



what is encountered in the United States: images often repeat, the editing is really quick and choppy and interviews or glimpses of the set are included between selected scenes from the film. The short coverage of the film thus edited gives a more impressionistic idea of what the film is about than trailers made in France for Hollywood films do. These TV shows are hosted by film critics who occasionally express their opinions on the films themselves (sometimes in discreetly critical ways).<sup>268</sup>

Because of the legal difference between the two countries, the media themselves are not comparable: the French version of the made-for-television advertisement for film is not prepared by the distribution companies. However, the concise nature of both the American thirty-second trailer and the French short news shows (averaging seven minutes in length for about five new releases) will lead to the same end, a common focus on one aspect of the film that is recognizable and *brandable*: its celebrity. Lead actresses of Hollywood teen-girl films are often recognizable in the US but not in France; the hosts of the French film-centered shows therefore fill in the blanks and position the young actresses as American celebrities. Most of

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budget, if a star happens to be in France for the promotion of the film, the expenses would be minimized for the television show, and the distributor would most certainly want the TV coverage, thereby making sure that the celebrity is available, even for a very short interview.

<sup>268</sup> Among the film-centered shows I will be discussing at length in the second part of this chapter are *Projection Privée*, *Exclusif ce soir*, *Grand Ecran*, ect... In one episode of *Projection Privée*, Laurent Weil shrugged when summarizing the premise to *She's All That*, subtly implying that the narrative is hard to believe and a little silly. That was emphasized by his reiteration of the idea that this movie is made for ('réservé' is the term he used) teenagers. Likewise, in *Exclusif ce Soir*, the exchange between the two hosts highlights the lightness of *The Princess Diaries'* narrative. For reasons that I will elaborate upon later, the critics are never harsher than what I just described: promoting these films is the open and primary objective of these television shows.

the information about the young actresses is available to the press through press kits, which always include a sort bio of the actors involved. This standardized information allows for a degree of uniformity in the press coverage not otherwise controllable by the distributor.<sup>269</sup>

Whether in France or in the United States, the film distributor and marketing team control at least the selection of images broadcast on television, even if they are not in charge of editing the short new release segments that are the focus of film-centered shows. Contrary to the differences between posters or trailers made for markets in the United States and in France, the promotion of films on television is different for legal reasons. Circumventing the law, therefore, is at the heart of the construction of promotional artifacts for film on television in France, where the technique for television trailer-making in the United States brings us as close as we can get to the epitome of high concept ads. Because it is easy to assume that these opposite traditions are the result of overbearing governmental intervention in France and a complete lack thereof in a more liberal USA, the first part of this chapter will demonstrate the intimate relationship between government and industry from the inception of television in the mid-1940s. Although the media cannot be compared, in so much that a thirty-second trailer differs from an edited new release information show, the focus of the short trailers or the film news shows remains the same for the teen-girl film: the lead actress. The second part of the chapter will therefore focus on a

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<sup>269</sup> Based on the press kits I collected or consulted, it appears that the French ones are translations of the US press kits. There are numerous issues, however, in terms of quality of translation (they are loose); this in turn, leads to the translated press kit to be a dubious source of information for the press.

close comparison of the construction of teen-girl celebrities in the United States and in France. This comparison will cast another light on the necessary set of adaptations and translation of the images of American teen-girls as they move from domestic US screens to French ones.

### **Historical Background**

#### From commonly owned airwaves to competition over market shares

The television-broadcasting network in the United States, as most other countries in the world, developed in the shadow of radio-broadcasting networks created a mere twenty years before.<sup>270</sup> In the ten-year span following WWII (1945-1955), television became the American medium. In the United States, the airwaves are assumed to be the common property of the American people under the supervision of the government. As such, the airwaves have been handled by an independent governmental office devoted to this end: the Federal Communications Commission, commonly referred to as FCC.<sup>271</sup> The role of the FCC is threefold: it is first and foremost responsible for the periodic renewal of licenses to networks. Its second responsibility concerns the content of programs, which are under FCC

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<sup>270</sup> Francis Balle, *Medias Et Societe*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Editions Montchrestien, 1984), 317

<sup>271</sup> On their website, the FCC defines itself the following way: "The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is an independent United States government agency. The FCC was established by the Communications Act of 1934 and is charged with regulating interstate and international communications by radio, television, wire, satellite and cable. The FCC's jurisdiction covers the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and US possessions." See <http://www.fcc.gov/aboutus.html>.

surveillance.<sup>272</sup> Finally, the FCC watches over the compliance of networks with five key rules spanning from the equal-time rule for political debates to limitations as to the content and airtime of advertisements. This last rule is of primary importance for our concerns as it is the only governmental attempt at regulating advertisement on television in the United States.<sup>273</sup>

Television in the United States was slow to take off at the end of WWII because of tensions between two large networks, NBC and CBS over the type of spectrum that was to be used and the nature of the allocation of airwaves. Both networks lobbied the FCC to have their way, and ultimately, NBC prevailed, imposing the VHF standards in 1947, which "marked the real starting-point of US commercial television; within two months, sixty new station applicants had petitioned the FCC, and TV set sales finally moved upward."<sup>274</sup> At this point, a mere 60,000 sets had been sold in the US, the majority of which were located in the New York area, and belonged to wealthy people as well as the owners of bars. While the number of sets located in bars (3,000) was inferior to those of wealthy households (the remaining 57,000 sets), the number of patrons going to bars to watch television meant that viewers of private and public networks were about equal in numbers.<sup>275</sup> The question of content thereafter became central, as the same programs did not please bar customers and families sitting in the comfort of their home, yet audiences need to be pleased in order for

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<sup>272</sup> This is the most controversial aspect of the FCC, as it appears in clear contradiction with the First Amendment. Such arguments have been made in front of the Supreme Court at least on two occasions.

<sup>273</sup> Balle, 318-20

<sup>274</sup> Boddy, 39-40

<sup>275</sup> Boddy, 41

television to keep its appeal and advertisers to be enticed into purchasing air time. In addition to the competition over market shares concerns, networks also had to contend with the ambitions of the FCC for television to be primarily educational.<sup>276</sup> The stage is set for decades of tension regarding the content of television.

The conversation over the proper content of television mainly involved pressure groups interested in preserving innocent viewers and making good (educational) use of the medium. This took several shapes. First,

Following complaints about New York-originated network programmes containing comic routines, actress necklines, and suspense and horror material thought unsuitable to domestic audiences in the nation's hinterlands, the TV industry quickly moved to establish industry-wide programme censorship. With prodding by Catholic pressure groups, FCC commissioners, and Congressional investigators, the networks in 1951 enacted a Television Code closely modeled in the Hollywood Production Code.<sup>277</sup>

The second set of issues regarding the content of the television concerned the quantity of advertisements broadcast on network television (a phenomenon that will be developed in the next section). The last issue concerning content was related to the smallest common denominator factor that rules over US television. Indeed, if content became an issue in 1947 when television programmers realized that half of their audience was interested in sports and politics and the other half in home entertainment,

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<sup>276</sup> The official goal of the FCC is to watch over television contents to ensure that programs foster public interest. The educational purpose is therefore only a by-product of this official focus. The actions of the FCC are more telling however in regards to this educational focus: starting in 1952, any application for a network for educational purposes received one without question. Gradually, this interest in the educational possibility of the televisual medium will lead to the creation of the PBS in 1969. See Balle, 319, 323 and 328

<sup>277</sup> Boddy, 45

once the number of TV sets sales increased and reached millions across the US, the question of content was raised again. As media historian William

Boddy notes:

More than 3 million television sets were sold in the first six months of 1950, 60 per cent of them on credit, with the poor crowding the rich away from the counters', according to *Business Week*. An economist's study of 1950 TV set owners showed ownership declined with incomes and educational levels beyond moderate levels, while suburban and smaller city households were much more likely to buy sets than big-city households, even though such viewers had more TV channels available.<sup>278</sup>

The plurality of audiences within the US domestic market led television content to program shows that would be crowd pleasers, "systematic, impersonal, reliable ways to predict success and failure."<sup>279</sup> Set recipes for situation comedies, entertainment variety shows or games became standard. This in turn raised the concerns of the FCC because of the absence of educational content; meanwhile, TV critics lamented the lack of quality programming and religious lobbyists lamented the moral well-being of the nation.

These concerns became even more prevalent when Hollywood started investing quite heavily in television in response to two factors: the loss of the 1948 Paramount vs. United States anti-trust law suit and the drop in domestic box office numbers. This led the companies, especially Paramount studios, to look for alternative sources of income. The production of films for television quickly became an important investment and source of income as

The growing syndication revenues for network reruns in

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<sup>278</sup> Boddy, 43

<sup>279</sup> Gitlin, 31

the USA and abroad in the mid-1950s led to the near extinction of live drama in network prime time by 1957. Furthermore, the rising programme license fees by the mid-1950s attracted the major Hollywood studios into telefilm production, forming the industry relationships between programme producers and TV networks which largely endure today in American television.<sup>280</sup>

The export of these television shows and films became an even greater source of income for Hollywood studios in the 1950s. However, the common denominator becomes even smaller when the same show has to seduce not only Americans, but Western Europeans, Central and South Americans as well as Japanese or Korean people.<sup>281</sup> In fact, starting in the 1950s, TV critics such as Robert Lewis Shayon started suggesting that it might be because of this focus on pleasing large and diverse crowds that no good television was ever made in the US.<sup>282</sup>

#### Advertising Film on TV in the United States

As mentioned above, the FCC is also in charge of supervising the airtime and content of advertising on television. Per FCC regulations, advertising should not exceed eighteen minutes per hour and ought not to include any content contrary to public interest (cigarettes have notoriously fallen in this category). Beyond these broad parameters, networks are free to advertise as they see fit. As a consequence, the FCC has frequently been lobbied by pressure groups to limit advertisement further.<sup>283</sup> These attempts to limit advertisement were not only fueled by morally motivated factions

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<sup>280</sup> Boddy, 49

<sup>281</sup> "Only the UK, France, and the USSR had initiated regularly scheduled television services by 1950, and the new TV markets in Western Europe, Japan, and Latin America faced the common impediment of high set prices relative to national incomes." Boddy, 57

<sup>282</sup> Boddy, 60

<sup>283</sup> Boddy, 52

concerned with “the implications of an advertising-driven mass culture,” but also by supporters of TV as an educational medium. Boddy notes in this regard that:

The first major content analysis of TV programming in three US cities between 1949 and 1951 [was] in support of educational channel reservations; the study found that advertising constituted 20 percent of TV time, while educational programmes amounted to less than 1 per cent.<sup>284</sup>

The following decade saw little improvement, except occasionally under the impulse (and financing) of the Ford foundation, also at the origin of these first content analyses. The most important step in the direction of educational content occurred in 1967, when the Public Broadcasting Act instituted the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS, only to be effective two years later), an office bridging over two hundred channels in terms of content, and keeping them advertising free.<sup>285</sup>

While television was only seldom used to advertise film since its inception, in the 1970s, thirty-second film trailers aired during prime-time became a cornerstone of the Hollywood marketing machine. On the one hand “soft show business news (infotainment) permeated serious news outlets, the mainstream general press and a host of entertainment centered TV programs” in the 1970s, when cable TV started spreading and new channels were only too happy to fill their airtime with competitive and free material.<sup>286</sup> According to film marketing historian Justin Wyatt as well as media specialist and *New Yorker* contributor Tad Friend, “the business began to change in

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<sup>284</sup> Boddy, 55

<sup>285</sup> Balle, 328

<sup>286</sup> Thompson, 110



1973, when *Billy Jack* was reissued by its writer and star, Tom Laughlin's company, Taylor-Laughlin Distribution, saturated the airwaves with television spots aimed at twelve different demographics."<sup>287</sup> After *Billy Jack* (Laughlin, 1971), argues Wyatt, advertising methods adopted by Hollywood were to change for good. As he describes Hollywood's turn toward high concept film, he notes its coincidence with merchandizing campaigns, the adoption of marketing research, the utilization of sound-tracks and "the movement toward saturation releases utilizing television commercials."<sup>288</sup>

As said in the previous chapters, it is with *Jaws* (Spielberg, 1975) that television became an indispensable marketing device, as distribution companies invested more money in advertising this film over a very short period of time: spots were heavily broadcast and more theaters made the film readily available to viewers. This technique, called saturation, functions based on a high concentration of information provided through both airwaves and theaters. Saturation is now a given in Hollywood, where according to film scholar Justin Wyatt,

huge television-based advertising campaigns have become increasingly important in securing audience interest for shorter, more concentrated release periods. Simultaneously, there has been a notable shift towards films containing elements that lend themselves to the quick sell demanded by television.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Friend, 43 "The marketing methods utilized for *Billy Jack* quickly were appropriated by the majors: the reallocation of media spending away from print and heavily toward television; customizing the advertising campaign to appeal to the particular demographics of a region; saturation release throughout a well-defined region; and the leasing of theaters, the majors responded positively to these methods. The traditional release schedule for a film had been a print-intensive campaign and an exclusive first run in a small number of theaters, finally opening up to a wider release in the suburban and sub-run theaters." Wyatt, 111

<sup>288</sup> Wyatt, 19-20

<sup>289</sup> Austin, 46

In the 1980s and 1990s the saturation marketing technique spread to Western Europe as well, where “the practices of multiplexing, saturation release patterns, 'front loading' the audience, and fast burn at the box office were gradually established in Britain and elsewhere.”<sup>290</sup> As we will see in the second half of this chapter, televised promotion of film is adapted to local laws and media cultures. But it has now become a global phenomenon under the impulse of Hollywood and its high dollar marketing machine.

#### France: how advertisement for film on TV became illegal

In France, during the post WWII period, and until the 1970s, broadcasting was done under strong governmental control primarily because the government was the only institution with enough funds to develop television networks.<sup>291</sup> Where French and American television scholars disagree superficially is the degree of governmental intervention in France. Francis Balle suggests that although the government closely surveilled the development of television networks in France, it was by no means more stifling than in the United States where the FCC has been the arbiter of decision-making since television’s inception. Anthony Smith, television historian, begs to differ as he suggests that:

[TV channel 1’s] director reported to the Information Minister and was chosen by the cabinet. The Ministry of Finance ran its internal operations under civil service rules. Parliament voted its budgets. Constant consultations took place between RTF (Radiodiffusion-Television Française) officials and senior politicians.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Austin, 46

<sup>291</sup> Cortade, 9; Balle, 314

<sup>292</sup> Smith, 68

According to Smith then, the spread of broadcasting was slow for a time because of the governmental monopoly, especially under the IVth Republic and its quick succession of governments. Starting in 1958, arguably in part because of General de Gaulle's enthusiasm for the medium, television took off, not only as a consequence of governmental enthusiasm and investments, but also because of the creation of programs that were attractive to an increasing audience. Media historians Jost and LeBlanc cite for instance the creation of Eurovision in 1954, the 1956 wedding of Grace Kelly to Prince Rainier of Monaco or the introduction of game shows, news and talk shows as factors for audience increase.<sup>293</sup> Indeed, the sale of TV sets soared from 23,000 in 1953 to 1,350,000 sets in 1963. In 1962, while de Gaulle was in power, RTF turned into ORTF (Office de Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française), a shift, which increased the Office's institutional autonomy. Full demonopolisation (deregulation) would only happen in the 1980s, however.

In fact, Smith further develops his argument by highlighting some of the murky events marking the history of television in France: he suggests that French television was not independent of political influence, as he describes the events of the 1962 and 1968 elections (because de Gaulle had more airtime); Smith further argues that it became all the more evident in May 1968, when the "Information Minister ordered cuts" to the coverage of

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<sup>293</sup> Francois Jost, *La Télévision Française Au Jour Le Jour*, Les télévisions dans le monde (Paris: Anthropos, 1994), 7 When asked when my grandparents bought their first television set, my father based his guess on the 1958 World Cup, which he had vivid recollections of seeing at his parents' friends' home and in a café. Although Jost and LeBlanc do not mention sporting events, I would assume that like in the US, it must have had an impact on the desire for a television set within the home. My grandparents probably bought their first set in 1960.

the student barricades in Paris.<sup>294</sup> Although these facts are accurate, replaced in the context of international television, it does not appear that the French government had a murkier relationship with television than any other country, including the US. Indeed, French media historians Jost, LeBlanc and Balle suggest instead that the relationship between TV and government was equally complex in France and in the United States.<sup>295</sup> While there certainly was a degree of governmental supervision of television content, most of it originated from pressure groups concerned with the preservation of French moral values, just like in the United States, where religious and other groups lobbied the FCC to guarantee moral content.<sup>296</sup>

Drastic changes in regards to TV and its content supervision were achieved during Valery Giscard d'Estaing's presidency (1974-1981); they coincide with the time when most changes occurred on American television.

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<sup>294</sup> Smith, 69

<sup>295</sup> The scandal of *The Sorrow and the Pity* is another excellent example demonstrating the biases of Anthony Smith's agenda: although the political background of the appointed ORTF PDG (President Directeur General), Arthur Conte was Socialist, he is made to be a puppet figure by Anthony Smith, who describes him as making decisions that cultivated the primacy of governmental intervention on French broadcasting. However, looking further into the primary instance he provides to illustrate Conte's attitude, namely the fact that he ordered for Marcel Ophuls's *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1970) to be withdrawn from programming because it explicitly made reference to French collaboration during WWII, I discovered that in fact television executives decided not to view the film so as not to have to make any decision about it, rather than having actively censored it. Furthermore, Ophuls, a good friend of Francois Truffault, did not have a hard time finding other means of distribution for his film because of his relations; in fact, it was screened on German and Swiss television a decade before the French broadcasting system would air it. The example does not discredit Smith's overall view of French television: it makes clear, however, that Smith is taking shortcuts, and that the history of French television is more complex than he makes it to be. This chapter is not, however, the place to elaborate on this issue. For more on *The Sorrow and the Pity*, see Elliot Wilhelm, 22; for more on the history of French broadcasting see Jean-Emmanuel Cortade, *La Television Francaise: 1986-1992*, 1st ed. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1993)

<sup>296</sup> Jost, 11

The first important reform undertaken by the Giscard d'Estaing government led to the elimination of the ORTF, and the creation in its place of seven autonomous organizations, three of which would be public television networks.<sup>297</sup> What became key within the changes affecting French broadcasting was competition. Not only were the two leading channels competing against one another, but France was competing against Japan and other countries in terms of technological advances;<sup>298</sup> this made for an increase in creativity. One important factor in this evolution was the Moinot Report of September 1981, which "made proposals for bringing about a greater separation between government and the broadcasting bodies."<sup>299</sup> As a consequence of the law voted on July 29, 1982, guaranteeing the freedom of media communication, under the impulse of the Moinot Report important changes occurred: the privatization of radio; the possibility for pay-TV channels to be created (Canal + was created in 1984, followed by La Cinq in 1986 and later the privatization of the first public channel TF1 in 1987); satellite broadcasting and cable television.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Jost, 13

<sup>298</sup> Data shows, however, that although audiences had access to two channels as early as 1966, they would not switch from the first to the second, unless the program on channel 1 really displeased them.

<sup>299</sup> Smith, 71

<sup>300</sup> Cortade, 5 ; Balles, 351. Cortade later cites president Francois Mitterand's 1985 annual good wishes to the nation in which he declared: "Je suis pour la liberté d'informer. La question ne se pose pas d'être pour ou contre. On ne peut pas être contre. Les moyens de diffuser les images vont se multiplier: le problème est de savoir comment organiser cette liberté." (I am in favor of the freedom of information. The question is not whether one is for or against this freedom. It is impossible to be against it. The means to broadcast images will multiply: the real problem is to find a way to organize this freedom. My translation) See Cortade, 7. What is important in this statement, which encouraged the privatization of the French audiovisual landscape, is the pronounced desire to distance the state from television. The paradox of seeing the only French socialist president express a desire

The 1986 legislative elections gave the conservatives the majority in parliament, which led to the first cohabitation;<sup>301</sup> Jacques Chirac, as Prime Minister further pushed for the liberalization of France's television. A law enacted on September 30, 1986, further emphasized the free-market profile of the broadcasting landscape of France.<sup>302</sup> However, that law would be declared unconstitutional, and several addenda made, leading eventually to a partial recovery of the state's power over public and private television under the guise of the preservation of a cultural focus, free information, education, diversity of programs and the respect for minorities.<sup>303</sup> Regardless of the numerous steps taken in the direction of liberalization by various governments, television in France has always been, and remains, an experiment straddling governmental influence (through an office called Haute Autorité and renamed Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel in 1989) and the laws of the market. Following this logic, by 1992, the competitive market led La Cinq to bankruptcy, which made room for Arte, the cultural channel born of a governmental agreement between France and Germany.

Through the 1980s and 1990s, *le défi américain* became a focal point of all political parties: the threat that American TV shows and program materials were thought to represent was at the heart of this conversation. It

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to see television privatized is that private investment, at that time, appeared as the only option to guarantee this freedom.

<sup>301</sup> A cohabitation is the exceptional event in the constitution of the Vth Republic when the President is of one party and the Prime Minister belongs to the opposition. That occurs when the legislative elections (usually two years after the presidential elections) overturn parliament (Assemblée Nationale) and give the opposition the majority.

<sup>302</sup> Cortade, 12

<sup>303</sup> The list of objectives proposed by the state is longer. For more information on the January 17, 1989 law, see Cortade, 15

became the role of public television in particular to preserve French cultures and identities through television programming. That task proved difficult however, as they were competing against a private sector that was less inclined to follow cultural priorities. Furthermore, the longer history of public service television led to the association of its identity with archaism, where the newly created private television networks presented themselves as the path to modernity. It would take a renaming of the two public channels in 1992 (from A2 to France 2 and from FR3 to France 3) to open the road for a new identity and a new conception of public television in France, one ready to compete with the private channels.

#### Advertising film on French television

Although advertising on the radio had been legal since the 1930s, these rights were not automatically transferred to television. Instead, television went through a gradual process, beginning with the introduction of advertising that started in 1951 exclusively with collective publicity for the national interest: advertising advocating the consumption of French agricultural products was the first to make it on the air. From there, the first step toward industrial (or private) advertising occurred in 1959, when the status of the Radio Télévision Française (RTF) was changed to an industrial and commercial public office (with the name change to ORTF: l'Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision Française). Paid advertising on television, in the first years following the 1959 law, were limited to two minutes per day.<sup>304</sup> That limitation was gradually relaxed through increasing percentages of

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<sup>304</sup> Note that at the same time, advertisement was limited to eighteen minutes *per hour* in the United States.

network budgets that could come from private origin. Starting in 1974 advertising was limited to 25% of the networks' budgets, and then uncapped in 1982.<sup>305</sup> It has since increased to 50%; the remaining half of the budget is the product of taxes (half redevance and half péage).<sup>306</sup> Until 1986, advertising on television was regulated by la Régie Française de Publicité (RFP); however, the problems created by the caps put on television advertising led to lobbying in favor of the complete liberalization of the airwaves.<sup>307</sup> This was achieved in the September 30, 1986 law that guaranteed the freedom to advertise to private networks and lifted the cap slightly for public television. Today, because the income based on the sale of television spots represents about fifty percent of all French television networks, outside of cable, the RFP has been disbanded and replaced by an advertisement office within every channel.<sup>308</sup>

The parallel between the gradual increase of advertising broadcast in French television and the steps taken to make the networks more competitive is striking. It really starts in 1969, when the French government pushed for both TF1 and A2 to freely construct news shows that would differ,

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<sup>305</sup> Balle, 362-3

<sup>306</sup> Jost, 14. The so-called 'redevance' is a tax on television sets that all owners (and presumably consumers) of television sets must pay annually (since it is by set, one will have to pay regardless of whether the television set is used or not). 'Péage' is a different tax paid by encrypted networks like Canal +, who only broadcast to subscribers; it essentially charges for the use of national spectrum for private (and exclusive) exploitation that cannot be enjoyed by all owners of a television set.

<sup>307</sup> Cortade, 9

<sup>308</sup> That is, at least, until the current government imposed a law on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009 making it impossible for advertisement to be broadcast on public television between 6 am and 8:50 pm, with the ultimate purpose to remove all advertisement from public networks. This raises numerous issues, including the lack of autonomy of journalists working on the news shows on these networks, as well as the now more limited budget devoted to the funding of the film industry.



and therefore compete. This experiment was extended to the programs of the two national channels. It is with the 1974 law that French television truly entered the world of competition;<sup>309</sup> by 1986, therefore, structures were in place for the law to formalize competition across channels. While the question of the freedom of television networks from governmental influence is a pertinent one, the evolution toward more competition further raises the question of networks' freedom from audiences (with the real and tangible yard stick being advertisement).<sup>310</sup> Although public television sees part of its budget come from the state, half of it emerges from the sale of advertising spots. In order to compete with private networks whose budgets rely solely on the sale of advertising, the public networks must create content that is as attractive, so as to have the audience necessary for companies to choose to advertise there. Such a focus on audiences is in direct contradiction to some of the lofty governmental objectives related to education and culture. However, thanks to the increase in legal advertising time on television and the reevaluation of its cost, all channels saw an increase in their income from 1987 until 1992.<sup>311</sup> According to the Syndicat National de la Publicité Télévisée, there has been a 30% increase of advertisers' investments in televised advertising between 1998 and 2008.<sup>312</sup> While most of the advertisers' investments have remained in the same two sectors, namely the

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<sup>309</sup> Balles, 371-2

<sup>310</sup> Francis Balle raises the question, and proposes that it is central to the debate. While it may have been in 1984, when his canonical *Média et Société* was published, the power of advertisers in later years leads me to elaborate on his question, as the source of constraints seems to have shifted. Similar questions have been raised by Jost, Blanchet and Cortade.

<sup>311</sup> Cortade, 80-1

<sup>312</sup> [http://snptv.org/actualites/actualites\\_tab.php?id=940](http://snptv.org/actualites/actualites_tab.php?id=940)

press and television, there has been an increase in spending for advertisement on the Internet in the last few years.<sup>313</sup> So much so that the horizon of advertising on French television may be drastically affected by both the Internet (attracting now an increasing amount of the advertisers' investment) and the Copé law, enforced on January 1, 2009, as it imposes for public networks not to advertise between 8 pm and 6 am.<sup>314</sup>

Until the early 1990s, television in France primarily attempted to please a general, non-descript audience.<sup>315</sup> The best and short-lived example of such policies is the creation and disappearance of La Cinq: between 1987 and 1992, this private channel's programming tried to seduce all audiences by selecting non-specific shows. The failure of La Cinq led to an opposite policy on most channels: audience specific shows were more common. Such a turn is exemplified by the French (and German) government's choice to replace La Cinq on channel five by Arte, the first resolutely cultural channel

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<sup>313</sup> [http://www.digimedia.be/fr/article.php?type=32&id\\_act=4607](http://www.digimedia.be/fr/article.php?type=32&id_act=4607)

<sup>314</sup> According to *Liberation*, this law will lead to an increase by at least 60% of advertisement on TF1 and M6. (<http://www.ecrans.fr/La-tele-publique-en-chiffres-et,3352.html>) It is unclear, however, how this law will affect the content of public television: the official rationale justifies this move by a desire to free public television from the constraints of competition (thereby driving down the quality of the content). Will this imply an increase in governmental control? The only answer available so far is based on the budget: the government has offered to compensate the reduction of advertising income by a blanket 450 million euros; this amount has already been questioned by the ACP (Association des Chaines Privées – association of private channels) who argue that public television networks were not earning more than 200 million from advertisement. (AFP, 10.02.2008)

<sup>315</sup> Ien Ang focused just on this lack of precise definition of television's assumed audiences; he argues that "the social world of actual audiences consists of such a multifarious and intractable, ever expanding myriad of elements that their conversion into moments of a coherent discursive entity can never be complete. In other words, the fixing of meaning of 'television audience' is always by definition unfinished, because the world of actual audiences is too polysemic and polymorphic to be completely articulated in a closed discursive structure." 13-4

aiming to please an educated audience.<sup>316</sup> The key difference between the two channels is that Arte constructs a very narrow and specific audience of educated and cosmopolitan viewers. Younger audiences were more often chosen as an ideal set of viewers, starting in the early 1990s: this shift crystallized with reality television introduced to French audiences in 1999 with Big Brother.<sup>317</sup>

The acknowledgement that a precise audience construct leads to more targeted advertisement, which in turn brings more returns has influenced the content of television programming: through a specific selection of shows, a teen audience is constructed during prime time (7:30 – 9 pm) when advertising costs are the highest.<sup>318</sup> The switch to audience construction was accompanied by a relaxation of the rules of booking; while until 1992 advertising spots were booked at the beginning of the season (September), it is now possible to book an advertising spot as late as two weeks prior to broadcasting. Television professionals agree that the entrance into the era of marketing research changed television: from pedagogy to seduction. Today's television professionals are less constructing programs than they are programming entertainment and information based on a demand that they have recognized through socio-demographic analyses of viewers leading to better construct their audiences. To a degree then, the mode of functioning of French television, as well as part of the content aired daily, clearly follows

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<sup>316</sup> Jost, 18

<sup>317</sup> Mediametrie published in April 2008 the results of Jacques Braun's research on world audiences in the past decade: EuroData TV Worldwide indicates a sharp turn of young audiences away from fiction (even if *Sex and the City* or *Ally McBeal* still attract a third of audiences) and toward reality television.

<http://www.audiencelemag.com/?article=21>

<sup>318</sup> Cortade, 28

suit with their American counterparts.

In addition to the limits on the amount of advertising, since its inception, advertising on television in France has also been limited in terms of content. Indeed, the advertising of tobacco, alcohol and weapons has always been illegal for health and safety reasons.<sup>319</sup> The advertising for large supermarkets has been illegal to guarantee the survival of small commerce. More importantly, advertising books and film has been illegal in order to preserve cultural diversity and regulate competition (in accordance with the Rome treaty).<sup>320</sup> As with most rules imposing limitations or outright interdictions, creative ways will be found to go around the rules. This has led to an increase in sponsoring of specific shows (games or movies for instance) by businesses who can thereby advertise without necessarily being considered advertisement. This limitation also led to the creation of shows focused on new releases, the major way film distributors are able to advertise on television.<sup>321</sup> These shows will be the focus of the second half of this chapter.

Under the pretense of preserving diversity, the French government

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<sup>319</sup> Laurichesse, 92

<sup>320</sup> The treaties of Rome are the two foundational treaties of the European Union signed on March 25, 1957. This original EU was primarily an economic agreement, as its name clearly indicates: it was originally called EEC: European Economic Community. The law of March 27, 1992 attempts to address France's lack of alignment in this regard with other European nations, who all agreed to preserve the complete freedom of information on television. October 7, 2003 saw a new law being drafted that liberalizes the access of the press to television. However, literary publications can only advertise on cable television or satellite TV. Advertisement for film on television, however, remains illegal so as to preserve cultural diversity. This law is very openly anti-American in nature, as it stipulates that its existence is meant to prevent the American monopoly to further its influence on French minds by advertising on television. See Laurichesse, 92-3

<sup>321</sup> Bonnell, 97

imposed quotas of airtime for programs based on their national origin. Television networks are required to spend a percentage of their budget (ranging from 15 to 20%) on the production of French films, or the creation of original oeuvres within the EU, which will in turn be broadcast on television and satisfy further quotas (at least 60% of airtime must be covered by cultural productions created within the EU or 40% of French films).<sup>322</sup> In President Nicolas Sarkozy's administration, minister of culture Christine Lagarde has requested a report on competition in film distribution that involves television. However, it is unlikely to result in alterations in television content or rules regarding advertisement on television as the unofficial reason for these quotas is the limitation of French airwaves' colonization by advertising for Hollywood productions.

### **Key Focus of Television Promotion: Celebrities**

As has been demonstrated in the previous two chapters, when promotional artifacts cross the Atlantic, they are translated so as to construct a French audience for this product. Since advertising film on television is not legal in France for reasons addressed above, the same promotional artifacts used in the United States cannot be used in France. Because the content of advertising has been more closely monitored in France than it has been in the US, and because of the close ties of the film and television industries in

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<sup>322</sup> Considering that the common way for television to meet these quotas has been to broadcast French and European productions at night and during the summer, when viewers are in smaller numbers, it is likely that rules may be imposed that leads to a more fair application of the laws. The 2002 report written by Catherine Clément for the minister of culture and acutely titled *La nuit et l'été* is one of the latest formal critiques of the content on French television. That might have been a factor in the decision of the current administration to forbid advertisement on public channels.

the US, the presence of advertisement for film on television has never been raised as a problem; in France, on the other hand, a complex network meant to protect the French audiovisual patrimony from American colonization has led to the prohibition of advertisement for film on television under the pretense that it would lead to unfair competition.<sup>323</sup> Thus, instead of reproducing US made-for-television ads, French television requires a form of translation of the American promotional artifact, adapted to French laws and to the size of the screen.<sup>324</sup>

In the US, distributors simply purchase airtime for thirty second spots, not unlike any other company advertising soap, cereal or cars. Because of its clear difference in length and because of the medium itself, the content of the made-for-television trailer is more focused on highlighting key points faster than the made-for-theaters trailer (which is on average two minutes long). In France, the set of images is drawn from the same selection of clips

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<sup>323</sup> Laurichesse, 93

<sup>324</sup> Not only is the size of the screen different, but in comparison to the film theater screens, its location within the home and position in relationship to the viewer is different (the television is usually positioned at eye level of the sitting audience, or lower than eye level, rarely will the television set lead individuals to look up, like they would in movie theaters). All of these details have a direct impact on the choice of images selected for trailers and film clips to be shown on television. Television scholars since Marshall McLuhan have been making this clear: the medium affects the content and the consumption of the images. This is no different for film advertisement. However, perhaps the lack of care in the selection of scenes promoting Hollywood films has led Catherine Clément to harshly critique the nature of the images invading the French television screens. Furthermore, while a film seen in the theater may have an atemporal feel, the commercial breaks punctuate the film as it is transferred to television and interrupt the suspension of disbelief. Likewise, the advertisement made-for-television is not only short because of the price of airtime; the medium itself dictates the pace and format of the television trailer. Everything from the "now in theaters" or the date of release of the film being advertised, to the very day when these spots are aired (Distributors have a preference for Thursday nights in the US because films are released on Fridays; in France, short cultural news shows will be aired Sunday through Tuesday, as national releases are on Wednesday.).

as the US trailer.<sup>325</sup> The short scenes will be edited at a fast pace, alternating with taped interviews with the lead actress and director, and behind-the-scenes shots as well as the occasional commentary by the host of these short new release shows.<sup>326</sup> Contrary to American talk shows like *The Daily Show* or *Oprah*, the French film news shows never include a live actor or actress on set. Instead, hosts introduce short sets of fast-edited images mostly drawn from the canned images to be found on the EPK prepared by the distribution company.

The primacy of a few images is common to all high concept films, whose campaigns are "structured by the choice of an image which is reducible, concise, and transferable into other media. These campaigns emphasize strong, singular images, which make an immediate impression on the potential viewer. The high concept films usually are accompanied by campaigns featuring just such potent images."<sup>327</sup> Following this logic, the

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<sup>325</sup> Looking at the electronic press kits (EPK) while I was at the UCLA Film and Television Archives I realized that journalists were given a selection of scenes together with interviews, behind the scene material, as well as television and theater trailers. The scenes always echo the trailers: therefore, similar images will make it on the US and French television screens, but the editing of the images will be different.

<sup>326</sup> I am aware that to provide a complete coverage of film publicity on television I would also need to take into consideration all the appearances of stars on Oprah, Jay Leno or David Letterman's shows among other forms of infotainment quite popular these days. These are paralleled by the appearance of American stars in French talk shows of a variety of sorts, as well as the end of the evening news when filmmakers or actors and actresses often appear to present a new release. There are of course also the product tie-ins sold via the actor (brand) that may be tied to the film because of the timing of the release of these parallel ads. All these venues however raise different questions in terms of the construction of celebrity status because these shows do not take much distance from the film, therefore bringing out the celebrity only in light of the teen-girl character, by opening up the conversation to the career and persona in general within that limited frame. I decided, therefore, to keep as close as possible to material that presents the actress within the frame offered by the film and the American-teen-girl character.

<sup>327</sup> Wyatt, 122

teen-girl film is boiled down to a few narrative characteristics. As I have highlighted in previous chapters, the teen-girl films, offshoots of *Cinderella*, always involve a heroine's low beginning, a prince charming and a coming-out ball. The omnipresent focus of these films is on the princesses; this is all the more true in the selected scenes shown in French new-release shows, meant to entice the audience into going to the movie theater to see the film. Therefore, although the form might be different, the content remains interestingly similar: in France, the time allotted per film (one to two minutes) and the format of the short shows make the lead actress the key vehicle to sell the film. Similarly, in the United States the TV trailer sells the lead actress. The focus on the one aspect of the film that is recognizable by audiences across films and borders, is the lead actress; in the marketing world, this focus is called branding, as was described earlier.

In the film industry, branding means shifting the focus from a short shelf-life product (the film) to a recognizable element that will carry across films: the celebrity. The branding will be slightly different in the US and in France in so much that the US generally will focus on both the film genre and on its celebrity, branding both at the same time. In France, however, the focus on the star is complemented by an emphasis on the film's and the celebrity's nationality (as the genre *per se* is not recognizable by audiences).<sup>328</sup> The mere fact that the nationality of the character, film and

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<sup>328</sup> Furthermore, the transfer to French television is made smoother thanks to the paper press kits and the Electronic Press Kit (EPK), both of which are put together by the distribution company and aimed at the press. The primary purpose of the press kit is to entice the journalists into seeing the film it promotes; in other words, the press kit sells the film to the press. A secondary aspect of the press kit however is



actress's nationality is highlighted in France and not in the United States clearly establishes that even for celebrities, there is no global-branding.<sup>329</sup> As Lisa Kernan acknowledged in her analysis of trailers in the United States, "Stars still sell movies."<sup>330</sup> In fact, since "Hollywood wisdom considers casting as the most crucial feature in packaging a film," actresses and actors are the valued commodities that television trailers and television shows will

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that it allows for all communications about the film to be controlled and uniform, at least on a superficial level. Studio-related distribution companies, that is to say, the ones with money, have techniques to control as much of the communications about the film they are trying to sell, at least in the US. The press kit is only one of them. A much more powerful one is the so-called junket, which "brings the reporter to a central site - the studio, a location, a rented hotel meeting room in a city where a premiere is occurring - for intense but orchestrated exposure to the film and its stars. The company provides transportation, lodging, and a per diem (in the \$150 to \$200 range). Junketers receive goodie bags, known cynically as swag bags, full of licensed products, some promotional items for the film, and perhaps a costly gift or two. The reporters get brief access to the stars and key behind-the-camera talent, and in some cases they visit the set. Such junkets have been widely criticized as pressuring reporters and reviewers to create favorable stories so that they will be invited on future junkets" (Thompson, 124).

<sup>329</sup> Branding specialist Jean Noel Kapferer suggests that luxury goods follow two very distinct branding models: the European 'classic' model, which market staple luxury products recognizable by their names (Chanel, Moët & Chandon, Tag Heuer) and feed off their history as they perpetuate it through limited sales and a handful of new creations by the artist / designer; and the US-type model (which does not only include American brands such as Ralph Lauren or Calvin Klein, but should also include Armani or Boss), which is aimed at a larger consumer base, and therefore will be more readily available in department stores. The latter model resembles the strategy of branding of celebrities in so much that it is the presence of their image that will self-perpetuate their standing. What I find particularly interesting to consider here is the cross between luxury items and celebrities, as the likes of Nicole Kidman have given their image to advertise perfumes (No 5 by Chanel), for instance. While in France these ads seem to be promoting the celebrity through the vehicle of a long established branded object, in the US, it seems that the opposite is true: the celebrity is making the luxury visible. It is, in a way, the meeting of the two branding strategies that Kapferer is describing, and very telling of the European focus on history v. the American focus on story. In the realm of film, independent films tend to be sold following the European luxury goods model, whereas Hollywood films seem to follow what Kapferer calls the US-type model as visibility is the key word.

See Kapferer, 73/4

<sup>330</sup> Kernan, 205

primarily try to sell.<sup>331</sup>

### **Thirty seconds to say it all**

#### What you hear: voiceover narrative

In the United States, the TV trailer is short and always focuses on the lead character.<sup>332</sup> The voiceover can exceptionally be that of the lead character who tells her own story; more generally, it is a deep masculine voice such as that of late Don LaFontaine, Danny Dark or Marc Elliott. Whether it is that of the lead character or that of a disembodied man, the voiceover has a predominant role in the short trailer that will be used to advertise films on television. The concepts that Justin Wyatt discusses at length in his 1994 film marketing classic *High concept* are precisely what the television trailer is made of. That is to say, in the television trailer, the male voiceover guides the audience through the highlights or themes that the distributor wants to emphasize. The omnipresence of the male voiceover's guidance is all the more important since the dialogue in the trailer is very choppy. Because the dialogue comes across in impressionistic exchanges fundamentally based on visuals, it is difficult to make sense of the trailer without the voiceover.

The trailer dialogue is typically composed of funny lines that might become party favorites once they enter popular culture; however, they

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<sup>331</sup> Kernan, 215. Such take on casting was confirmed by Donna Morong, casting director for *The Princess Diaries*. Interview with author, 10.02.2008

<sup>332</sup> In some instances, the absence of the lead character from the small trailer is even more telling than her presence. This is the case for one of the made-for-television trailers for *Mean Girls*, showing the three mean girls (the 'plastics') arguing over the nature of girls' relationships in high-school, more particularly what a 'frenemy' is.

cannot stand on their own meaningfully. In that way, the soundtrack for television trailer breaks with a long-standing convention in US television advertisement, in which the focus has always been equally placed on visuals and audio in case the viewer “takes a notion to get up and go out to the bathroom while the commercial is running on the screen.”<sup>333</sup> In television trailer, the voiceover ties together the short pieces of dialogue and the visuals, as the TV trailer for *Pretty in Pink* exemplifies, Dookie’s “You know this is a very volcanic ensemble you’re wearing” makes more sense with the visuals of the opening frame of the television trailer in which Molly Ringwald and her suitor walk side by side down a high school hallway, the camera in a traveling backward motion, at their pace.

What provides meaning overall then is the male voiceover, which punctuates every exchange with a key qualifier pointing out key qualities of the film: “chemical, physical, emotional, sensational.” All this hyperbole refers at the same time to the film and the audience’s reaction to the film and to the characters and situations within the film. This list of adjectives is a little sarcastic, and thereby mirrors the sense of humor running through the film, which provides the audience with a more refined idea of the genre of the film. To close the trailer, the male voiceover gives the title of the film and the rating, thus making clear that this advertisement is for a film, if the rest of the trailer was too elusive. Other key information is provided via the soundtrack, since throughout the voiceover’s setting of the tone of the film and pointing out highlights, The Psychedelic Fur’s title song “Pretty in Pink”

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<sup>333</sup> Boddy, 47

gives the film its cool.<sup>334</sup>

The made-for-television ad for *A Cinderella Story* straddles the focus on the narrative and that on key adjectives qualifying the atmosphere of the film. The voiceover (male again) interjects the following narrative to short pieces of dialogue: "L.A. is not a kingdom. He is not a real prince. But she is wicked. This summer, high school is no fairy tale! Hilary Duff. Chad Michael Murray. *A Cinderella Story*." An alternative made-for-television ad for the same film proceeds focusing on the same key idea that this film is loosely based on a fairy tale: the trailer takes the shape of a very short story. The voiceover this time reads: "If a Cinderella story happened today, she would be the evil stepmother; they would be the evil stepsisters and this would be the fairy godmother. Once upon a time can happen any time. Hilary Duff. Chad Michael Murray. *A Cinderella Story*."<sup>335</sup>

Following suit, the television trailer for *The Princess Diaries 2* tells a much abbreviated fairy tale. The male voiceover for *The Princess Diaries 2* made-for-television ad reads as the enticing beginning for a fairy tale teen-girls will want to see. It highlights key narrative points and brings the princess to the foreground: "Princess Mia has 30 days to learn how to be a

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<sup>334</sup> To be even more complete, one would need to consider the music videos showing images from the film the song was bought for. Justin Wyatt addresses the importance of the song in high concept films, as the film sells the soundtrack and the Psychedelic Furs' albums as much as their music video advertises *Pretty in Pink* the movie, by showing plenty of clips from the film throughout the video. See Wyatt, 19-20

<sup>335</sup> While I was at the Film and Television Archives I reviewed tapes from the Key Arts Awards (the film advertisement Oscars), which included several versions of the trailers for the films I am interested in. I do not have the data telling me which of these were selected to be broadcast, but the focus on particular themes across versions of the same trailer made for the same medium is indicative of the marketing team's idea of what is important in the film, and what they primarily want to convey based on the film and the audience they believe will be interested.

queen. Now she'll have to choose wisely, and behave knowingly, or she'll have to kiss her kingdom goodbye. *The Princess Diaries 2, Royal Engagement.*" This version, although much more focused on the fairy tale than the theater trailer, provides enough information to be enticing and to construct an audience of teen girls. It further highlights the humorous tone of the film and casts the princess as the central character. This latter aspect is the most predominant: it runs across all made-for-television ads for teen-girl films in the United States. This focus is made all the more obvious when we look at the images accompanying these soundtracks.

#### Branding the Celebrity in US made-for-television ads: highlighting visibility

Between the film and the photographic still that can easily be taken out of context, the trailer, and more so the made-for-television trailer, tells us about the movie and reminds us of the celebrity. The celebrity's visibility is what confers her (or him) this status in a self-reinforcing pattern: the more the audience sees the image of the celebrity within the trailer the more that actress's status is reaffirmed in the audience's mind. Not only does the lead teen-actress have the primacy of appearance, in the made-for-television ads, she appears in most every frame. The variety of activities in which she engages allows for a visual sampling of the film that echoes the short list of high points provided by the voiceover. The number and range of outfits further emphasize the Cinderella nature of the narrative: the princess moves from rags to riches (either in a literal way for Anne Hathaway in *The Princess Diaries* or metaphorically for Hilary Duff in *A Cinderella Story*) or sometimes from Los Angeles to Cambridge (Reese Witherspoon in *Legally Blonde*). The

narrative itself sets up the ideal of celebrity status.

Similarly, the omnipresence of the lead character is reinforced by the names of the lead actresses or actors, either by it being read on the soundtrack, as the selection of trailers used above exemplified, or by printing the names on their own individual frame, the so-called card, usually in fonts similar to those used for the title.<sup>336</sup> The lead actress is emphasized heavily in the television trailer so as to ensure recognition and of her name by the audience and the clear tie between her and the specific film that is being advertised: the celebrity functions as a brand that provides recognition regardless of the quality of the film she stars in. Indeed, "[celebrities] 'become' genres, as these formerly unified textual categories of trailer rhetoric become increasingly synergistically interwoven within the high concept promotional environment."<sup>337</sup> That is to say, beyond the simple reiteration of the celebrity's presence in the film (through the dropping of her name and her omni-presence on screen), it is her presence in magazines, television talk shows and other infotainments that provides the making of a celebrity.

This celebrity status differs from the stars Edgar Morin or Richard Dyer analyzed in their respective ground breaking studies of film stars' social meaning. Indeed, the paparazzi culture we live in is not comparable with the

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<sup>336</sup> This is most common for big stars, who have information as detailed as the order of cards and the size of lettering in their contracts. In the previous chapter, I gave the example of Meryl Streep and Anne Hathaway in *The Devil Wears Prada* (David Frankel, 2006). The same goes for all the others. In some cases, the director will have a card of his own; that is the case for Garry Marshall, who directed *The Princess Diaries* (1 and 2 respectively released in 2001 and 2004), and is recognizable to the romantic comedy crowd for having also directed *Pretty Woman* with Julia Roberts in 1990.

<sup>337</sup> Kernan, 216

time when studios were in control of scripting their stars' lives for the press. Lindsey Lohan's experience is a perfect case in point: when her substance-abuse problems made the news, Disney broke her contract, as she departed from the wholesome image they try to promote. *People* briefly describes her as having "ditched her PG-persona, partying with Hollywood "It" girls. The actress' high-quality turns in Bobby and Garry Marshall's *Georgia Rule* were overshadowed by her fast-track lifestyle."<sup>338</sup> The narratives might sell dreams, but the stars / celebrities are turned into a commodity; "[h]ow much of a determining role the person has in the manufacture of her or his image and films varies enormously from case to case and this is part of the interest. Stars are examples of the way people live their relation to production in capitalist society."<sup>339</sup> Seeing how popular infotainment shows are, it seems that contemporary viewers' relationship to consumption in capitalist society might also be tightly related to celebrities: their interest in gossip, fed by the paparazzi is the context in which Lohan's mean girl needs to be understood.

To a degree, narratives and real life are colliding in so much that the celebrities are presented as human and so are the princesses. In fact, the Cinderella narrative easily lends itself to an open process of identification between constructed audiences and celebrities: this is the idea conveyed by the voiceover for *A Cinderella Story* stating: "Once upon a time can happen any time". The plain looking (by Hollywood standards!) lead teen-actress will be transformed by the end of the film; in the process, an audience of teen-

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<sup>338</sup> [http://www.people.com/people/lindsay\\_lohan](http://www.people.com/people/lindsay_lohan)

<sup>339</sup> Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), 6

girl consumers has been constructed. This move from rags to riches (or normal looks to beautiful) is only characteristic of the US teen-culture in so much that such images are contextualized within the rich tradition of make-over films and television shows in the United States. The first appearance of the princess in the television trailers repeatedly highlights the low (read normal) beginnings: this is the case for Anne Hathaway in *The Princess Diaries*, Julia Stiles in *Save the Last Dance* or *10 Things I Hate About You* and more so even in *A Cinderella Story* (Mark Rosman, 2004) since Hilary Duff appears scrubbing the floors in one trailer and waiting tables in the other. The narrative of the short trailer, focuses on the Cinderella narrative precisely: in Hollywood, any and all girls could be a princess (provided she has money) as easily as any celebrity could get a DUI. Narrative and real life conspire to put the celebrity in the limelight.

The murkiness of the values celebrities embody does not take anything away from their status, however. The focus on the lead actress to sell the film is an age-old recipe (it started in the silent era, as discussed in chapter one). It may not have been called branding, but a studio signing on an actress for a number of film was exploiting that actress's name in the same way that contemporary studios sell their actresses's image. In terms of the television ad, branding allows the audience to make the association "not only with the corpus of their prior films and the typologies of all the characters they've played, but also with all of the extra-textual knowledge that Hollywood promotional and publicity mechanisms have imparted about



them."<sup>340</sup> In other words, the real value of the television ad emerges from the entire campaign, allowing for a more targeted audience to be reminded of the information they already have gathered through the movie theater trailers and teasers, coverage in the press, posters or postcards, or infotainment shows on television or on the Internet.

### **Promoting film on TV in France: Branding the *American Princess***

Since the very beginning of French television, there have been shows devoted to film. From their inception, the primary focus of these shows has been the education of the masses and the enticing of crowds to return to the movies.<sup>341</sup> Such a dual objective implies that French television has been juggling critique, information and promotion while walking the tight rope between film and television.<sup>342</sup> Quickly, the critique was dispensed with as it was seen to go against the promotional responsibility of television, and seldom pleased the film industry. To this day, journalists such as Elisabeth Quin maintain that the only networks allowing for real critique on television are private ones, on cable.<sup>343</sup> Looking at the evolution of television shows focused only on film reveals a growing focus on promotion at the expense of

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<sup>340</sup> Kernan, 63

<sup>341</sup> Baronnet, 5

<sup>342</sup> In France and in the US (and most everywhere in the world), television has been charged as responsible for box office numbers reductions. That is a simplistic view of the situation, as television was only one of numerous factors contributing to the disinterest of audiences in cinema. In the United States, for instance, the development of suburbs made movie theater less accessible, and therefore less attended than they may have been in the direct aftermath of WWII.

<sup>343</sup> Quin, a film journalist with her own show on Paris Premiere, one of the cable television channels, is cited in Baronnet's masters thesis stating that "Pour l'instant, la liberté de ton en matière de critique de cinéma à la télé n'est pas envisageable ailleurs que sur une chaîne câblée!" (So far, the only channels where one can be really free to critique films are cable channels.) (Baronnet, 8)

information as well as critique: these film shows' primary function is to enhance celebrity visibility.

The contemporary, short new-release shows that are to be found on most every channel must be located in the history of shows discussing cinema on television that goes back to the early 1960s. Shows such as *Les Dossiers de l'Écran*, *Cinéma Cinémas*, *Cinéastes de Notre Temps* or *La Séquence du Spectateur* never had a large audience.<sup>344</sup> However, they lent themselves to bridging the gap between cinema and television. Such critical use of the television medium as *Cinéastes de Notre Temps* (which became *Cinéma de Notre Temps* in 1980) led contemporary film directors to direct hour long documentaries on more established filmmakers. For instance, Jacques Rivette directed one on Renoir and one on Pasolini. On the popular end of the spectrum was *Monsieur Cinéma*, a game show created in 1966, opposing two candidates on film-focused questions. It aired until 1987.

The following decades saw the emergence of shows attempting to be more focused on critique of contemporary film than their predecessors were. *Le Divan*, *M6 Aime*, or *Absolument Cinéma* all addressed new-releases, and as *M6 Aime* indicates, focused more on what the anchor liked and disliked, flirting with real critique but without ever crossing the line firmly. *Le Masque et la Plume*, an established radio show that still airs on France Inter, is a different story entirely. When in January 1976 it was turned into a television

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<sup>344</sup> They were respectively anchored by Pierre Tchernia; Michel Boujut, Claude Ventura and Anne Andreu; Janine Bazin and Andre S. Labarthe; Claude Mionnet. *Monsieur Cinema* was also anchored by Pierre Tchernia who was by far the most recognizable television figure specializing in film. He went on to anchor such shows as *Cine Parade* (looking back to the history of film) or *C'est Dimanche* (more focused on contemporary releases) up into the twenty-first century.

show, the film industry promptly asked for its removal because of its critical content. The television version of the show lasted three months, and returned to its original medium: radio. French media specialist René Bonnell explains that doing “anti-publicity” on television was counter the self defined objectives of television: from the first television shows until today, the responsibility of television has always been to entice audiences to return to the theater.<sup>345</sup>

Learning from these lessons then, the contemporary TV shows focus on material that is safe and that leads them to concentrate on information and promotion, with a preference for the latter. Popular anchors such as Isabelle Giordano or Laurent Weil simply embrace the idea that TV as a medium is not conducive to critique: the pace and location in the home make it a fundamentally visual medium that does not lend itself well to long arguments, even about images.<sup>346</sup> Although such position against critique does not mean that information need to be foregone to the benefit of promotion only, this is mostly what contemporary shows are about: a focus on why new releases are good and deserve to be seen in the theaters. The anchors and the edited material informing crowds about new releases highlight the positive aspects of the film in hyperbolic ways not altogether different from the spirit of trailers. In fact, in her 2002 report to the minister of Culture and Communication (Jean-Jacques Aillagon), French scholar Catherine Clément qualified short film shows as a “promotional circus,” thereby unwittingly perhaps pointing back to the roots of trailer making

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<sup>345</sup> Bonnell, 124

<sup>346</sup> Baronnet, 9

history.

As such, it is not surprising to see the majority of the French new-release shows adopting a hyperbolic tone when promoting teen-girl films. Not only are the celebrities described by positive qualifiers (they are often described as pretty or sexy), but their performances are commented upon in equally positive terms: Anne Hathaway is described as having the “qualities of a great star”<sup>347</sup> and Reese Witherspoon “is wonderful and in the process of taking over Hollywood.”<sup>348</sup> The films themselves, although at times promoted with some reservation (*Just Like Heaven* is “fleur bleu, un peu trop fleur bleu”<sup>349</sup> and *Legally Blonde* is “une comédie sympathique”<sup>350</sup>), are most of the time described in the same hyperbolic tone that US made-for-television trailers would adopt. *The Princess Diaries* is qualified as “un film qui fait rêver” and as gathering all the “ingrédients pour être un succès.”<sup>351</sup> Likewise, *The Devil Wears Prada* is sold as a film “taillé dans l’étoffe des meilleures comédies Hollywoodiennes.”<sup>352</sup>

The contemporary spectrum of French television shows focusing on cinema is composed mainly of shows shorter than 26 minutes. The only two shows 26 minutes or longer are *Grand Ecran* (26 minutes, M6) and *Comme au Cinéma* (120 minutes, F2).<sup>353</sup> All the other shows are in average seven

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<sup>347</sup> *Exclusif ce Soir*, 10.17.2001

<sup>348</sup> *Grand Ecran*, 12.09.2001

<sup>349</sup> *Grand Ecran*, 11.25.2005

<sup>350</sup> *Grand Ecran*, 12.09.2001

<sup>351</sup> *Exclusif ce Soir*, 10.17.2001

<sup>352</sup> *CineSix*, 09.30.2006

<sup>353</sup> I have never seen *Comme au Cinéma* as the show was put on the air the year I left for the United States (2000); I know that one of the shows was fully devoted to teen-movies, so I will make a point in watching it on my next trip to the Parisian archives. Seeing how it was broadcast on France 2, it must be part of the INA

minutes long and only cover new releases. Their titles are indicative of their content: *Le Journal de Sortie* (Canal +), *Les Films dans les Salles* (TF1), *CineSix* (M6), *Bouche a Oreille* (F2).<sup>354</sup> What all these shows have in common regardless of their length is their focus on celebrities. Even the more ambitious *Comme au Cinéma* was accused of "starisation" for its first five years.<sup>355</sup> The celebrity-centered shows therefore focus on mainstream, rather than independent, productions in their selection of films. While the more substantial *Comme au Cinéma* will then select both French and American films, with more emphasis on the French since the celebrities are easier to get and talk to, the short shows will have a tendency to promote more American films. Laurichesse suggests that a television channel like M6, for instance, whose audience is primarily composed of teenagers, will promote 86% of American films and only 38% of the French new releases.<sup>356</sup> Since the shorter shows are closer to prime time, and the longer ones are either on Sunday mornings or air during the second half of the evening (after 10 pm), American releases have more visibility on French television.<sup>357</sup>

The rest of this chapter will analyze the coverage of teen-girl films on

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archive. The fact that it did not come up when I did searches for teen-girl films tells me that this show, although having had one episode focusing on teen films, probably did not address teen-girl movies.

<sup>354</sup> *Le Journal des Sortie* translates to new-releases show; *Les films dans les salles* = films at the theater; *Bouche a Oreille* = word of mouth. *Le Journal des Sortie* was *Le Journal du Cinema* until 2003. It was hosted by Isabelle Giordano, who can be said to be the grandmother of these new release promotional shows.

<sup>355</sup> Clement, 70

<sup>356</sup> Laurichesse, 93

<sup>357</sup> The only exception to this are the official news shows ('Vingt heure') which frequently ends with a selection of scenes from a new release, especially on Tuesday evening. In the case of French films, the director or one of the actors may even have been invited on-set to answer a few questions about the film. Unless it is during the Cannes film festival, rarely will the on set interviews be conducted with American filmmakers or actors.

short new-releases shows airing on TF1 and M6, two of France's private television networks. Based on description of the evolution of television in France, these shows must be understood within a logic of audience pleasing content (because of advertising markets). The focus is now clearly on promotion, to the detriment of thinning information and disappearing critique.

### American-Girl-Celebrities

As the hosts for French new-releases shows are introducing the next film, without fail either they or the first clip establish the film as an American one. Countless times, hosts are heard qualifying the actresses as American (*She's All That*),<sup>358</sup> the film as a Hollywood production (*The Devil Wears Prada*,<sup>359</sup> *Never Been Kissed*<sup>360</sup>) or providing the precise location of the film (*Cruel Intentions*,<sup>361</sup> *Mean Girls*<sup>362</sup>). More often, however, it is the film itself that clearly established its location: *The Princess Diaries*<sup>363</sup> or *Just Like Heaven*<sup>364</sup> include a postcard view of San Francisco, or the selection of scenes from *Legally Blonde*<sup>365</sup> promptly utilize her arrival at Harvard. Not one of them is left without at least a recognizable landmark (the Capitol in *Legally Blonde 2*). Such a construction of the French audience assumes basic knowledge about the USA, which for the most part would have been acquired in high school geography classes.

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<sup>358</sup> *Projection Privée*, 06.27.2000

<sup>359</sup> *CineSix*, 09.30.2006

<sup>360</sup> *Projection Privée*, 07.11.1999

<sup>361</sup> *Exclusif ce Soir*, 06.23.1999

<sup>362</sup> *CineSix*, 11.06.2004

<sup>363</sup> *Exclusif ce Soir*, 10.17.2001

<sup>364</sup> *Grand Ecran*, 11.25.2005

<sup>365</sup> *Grand Ecran*, 12.09.2001

Because the lead actress for teen-girl films may not be well known in France, her celebrity status needs to be affirmed by the hosts of the show. This is done systematically by an efficient location of the teen lead actress in the spectrum of American shows aired on French television and of films released in the recent past. Sarah Michelle Gellar is thereby described as “famous for her role in horror films such as *Remember Last Summer* or *Scream 2*, but can also be spotted in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.”<sup>366</sup> When the lead actresses cannot be contextualized because the television show in which they have had success in the United States may not have crossed the Atlantic yet or because this might be their first feature film, such as with Rachel Lee Cook in *She’s All That*<sup>367</sup> or Anne Hathaway in *The Princess Diaries*,<sup>368</sup> the host will simply highlight the “discovery of an American actress,” or that “she has the qualities of a great star [according to Gary Marshall].”<sup>369</sup> Once her pedigree has been established, the American teen celebrity becomes the focal point of the rest of the collection of images.

The main way in which the lead actress obviously becomes the center of attention is that the shows select interview clips from the EPK in which she is often asked her opinion about different aspects of the film’s content that reveals something about both the actress or her character’s personality, it does not matter, as both are American. This is how Rachel Lee Cook will be

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<sup>366</sup> *Exclusif ce soir*, 06.26.1999, my translation.

<sup>367</sup> *Projection Privée*, 06.27.2000

<sup>368</sup> *Exclusif ce Soir*, 10.17.2001

<sup>369</sup> The first comment was made about Rachel Lee Cook, the second about Anne Hathaway.

asked who her ideal man would be,<sup>370</sup> or whether Reese Witherspoon believes in ghosts as she is promoting *Just Like Heaven*. The interview section may also lend itself to further affirming the celebrity status of the young actress, as was the case in the coverage of *The Princess Diaries*, in which Gary Marshall describes Anne Hathaway as “special” and as having something of Julia Roberts. Anne Hathaway herself comments on how exciting it is to be acting her first feature role with Julie Andrews, whom she describes as her favorite actress and a great person.<sup>371</sup> Another aspect that the interview section may be covering allows us a glimpse in the future of the actress’s career, thereby attesting to her rising celebrity status: Witherspoon is thereby asked whether she would be on board for a television version of *Legally Blonde* if there were one (to which she replies with a negative answer).<sup>372</sup>

More importantly, occasionally, the actress will be asked to comment on the nature of her character. What these comments amount to within the French new-release shows is a characterization of the American teen-girl: Witherspoon thereby comments at length on the blonde stereotype in the United States and concludes by suggesting that the moral of *Legally Blonde* is that one cannot judge a book by its cover.<sup>373</sup> However, seeing how a

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<sup>370</sup> *Projection Privée*, 06.27.2000

<sup>371</sup> *Exclusif ce Soir*, 10.17.2001

<sup>372</sup> *Grand Ecran*, 12.09.2001

<sup>373</sup> *Grand Ecran*, 12.09.2001. The interviews are all dubbed over: at times, I can therefore make out a few of the English words uttered by the actress, but the voiceover in French completely covers the original. It would be interesting to get a hold of the original interview, and see whether the questions and answers match, or if they are having the actress say something completely different in French. I am only suspicious because the translations of dialogue in some scenes for *Mean Girls*, for instance, not only do not match semantically the American (which is common, as



lengthy section of the coverage preceding that comment focused precisely on demonstrating that the “bimbo” Witherspoon is interpreting in the film actually exists, and that she tracked them down in Beverly Hills to better observe them, one is led to think about American blondes as different from the French, regardless of whether they are smart or not. Such commentaries on the American teen-girl characters authenticate representations reproduced in posters, trailers and made-for-television shows.

Likewise, Rachel Lee Cook qualifies her character in *She’s All That* as a princess, especially when she dresses up. She then proceeds to elaborate in the numerous ways in which the male protagonist changed, but somehow never returns to the princess who therefore is presented as having only changed superficially (physically). The most reductive comment might have been Sarah Michelle Gellar’s who simply qualified her character as ‘salope’ (bitch). There is much more, of course, to these characters than a princess or a bitch, and perhaps the actress commented on these roles well beyond the limited statements broadcast on French television. The effect, however, is one of a caricature of the American teen girl: sexually available, shallow and focused on her appearance. The comments made by the actresses give more weight to the hosts’ comments, however demeaning these might be. It is her national origin that endows her statements about the character she embodies with elements of authenticity that could not otherwise be gained.

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dubbing is a particularly difficult exercise in translation) but do not even refer to the correct characters, and thereby alter the meaning of the story (the qualities of Regina George, the lead mean girl, are attributed to Gretchen Vinnars, one of her two side kicks; as a consequence, Gretchen seems much more mean and manipulative than Regina in the French version.).

Such reduction is further at work in the visuals accompanying these statements.

### Othering the teen-girl

Throughout teen-girl film coverage on French television, colorful and sexy outfits predominate, just like in the trailers. Not only are many of the outfits bright, but the hosts comment on the nature of some of these films' costumes. *Legally Blonde*, for instance, leads the host to comment on the redundant pink extensively, comparing Elle to Barbie on three occasions. After pointing out that Witherspoon's character wore no fewer than sixty outfits for *Legally Blonde*, the coverage of her character is especially harsh: the verbal and visual comparison with Barbie (the parallel editing of a Barbie doll), and Aqua's song "Barbie Girl" on the soundtrack, reduces Witherspoon's character to the same superficial and tasteless American girl as other, much less fleshed out teen-girl films' characters. The producers of the French new-release shows reduced Elle Woods to the stereotype of the American teenage girl. Therefore, she has been endowed with no more in terms of sophistication and no less in terms of sex-appeal. By framing Elle Woods (*Legally Blonde*) as such, the television producers as transcultural intermediaries are constructing audiences as consumers.

Likewise, the brief summary of *The Princess Diaries* leads the hosts to suggest that being a princess implies a few changes in the life of a teenager, especially when that teenager is American. As they proceed, they insist on the necessity for a princess to leave her jeans behind: considering that Mia does not wear jeans once in the film, and less so, consequently, in the

selected scenes, this comment reveals the hosts' assumption as to what stereotypical American teen-girls wear on a day to day basis. The tastelessness of the teen-girl films' characters' outfits is highlighted by the redundant dialogue of the hosts' comments (Elle is 'flashy', Andrea in *The Devil Wears Prada* has 'no style', the plastics in *Mean Girls* are 'pseudo stylish'...) and the selected, quickly edited images of the characters they echo. These descriptions and visual illustrations contribute to the cultivation of the American teen-girl's stereotype in France as having no fashion sense and no taste.

The lack of style is reinforced by a systematic focus on ridiculing the lead character. Although many of these films are comedies relying partly on slapstick, the US trailers are less heavy handed when it comes to highlighting these scenes in particular. In *The Princess Diaries*, for instance, the scene showing Hathaway's experience at her first diplomatic dinner (she sets her neighbor's jacket on fire, unwittingly sends fruits flying, breaks a glass...) clearly highlight the slapstick aspect of this film's humor (as do the scenes showing her falling off a chair, or tripping). In the French new-release show, however, the dinner scene is repeated twice, and the emphasis is clearly placed on the accidental falls by parallel editing several of them, instead of including them in the diegesis, as it is done in the US trailers (television and theater). Likewise, in *The Devil Wears Prada*, the largest number of clips in the short coverage use parts of scenes showing Hathaway walk down crowded Manhattan streets with a large dog pulling her to and fro, knocking people over with a body-board or tripping while juggling a carry-out tray of

coffees. While this is certainly partly a function of the genre of the teen-girl film, in abstraction of the genre (since there is no such thing as a teen-girl film in France), this repeated clumsiness talks more to the stereotype of the American teen-girl's inability to behave rather than the nature of the films themselves. Resorting to the stereotype in that regard is a function of the absence of available parallels between American and French teenage girls' lives: the events represented in these films are far enough from the French experience that the only way audiences might be able to relate is by reducing the characters to clumsy bimbos.

Furthermore, resorting to slapstick is a safe way to characterize these films as comedies, but without the necessary translations of jokes that will indeed not translate. Not only does humor not cross borders easily linguistically, when the jokes focus on a life experience that is foreign, the only available shortcuts seem to be slapstick to convey the humor and romance that reduces the narrative. Projected on the body of the American teen-girl, this means that she will be presented as sexually available and clumsy in most of the scenes selected in the new-release shows broadcast on French television. Indeed, by narratively taking the American teen-girl out of her element (Beverly Hills for Elle Woods, high-school in San Francisco for Mia, artistic outcast in high school for Rachel Lee Cook's character...) the princess is confronted to situations that she is not used to. The growth narrative (from rags to riches) reiterated in the US made-for-TV trailers is in France replaced with the dire prospect of necessary life changes going well beyond the superficial outfits. Mia's experience in *The Princess Diaries* is the

epitome of this transition shown to be very difficult in the French new-release shows: the consequences of the switch from a normal life to that of a princess includes mainly learning how to dance, sit, walk and behave like a princess. The verbal reaffirmation of what the images suggest (through the clumsiness of Hathaway's repeated falls) indicates that being a princess is not within the range of the normal American girl, at least not at the beginning of the film. She can be taught, but it will have to be by a European (Genovia is a fictional land that seems to be located across the ocean and Julie Andrews is British).

#### Closing statements

The democratic nature of television in most Western countries has a direct impact on the content of the images that will be created for it: they are reduced in size, focused in content and all together made as approachable as possible. Talk shows and infotainment shows, popular genres of shows created specifically for television lend themselves to the cultivation of celebrities and the focus on informal, gossipy talk. Whether or not the celebrity is present in one of these shows, in a trailer, or in new-release shows, a common goal is always reached: increase their visibility, however human they may have become in the process. The visibility of the celebrity constructs the French audience for teen-girl films as consumers (of stories). The US-type branding functions on both sides of the Atlantic: it promotes stories (whether gossip or the film's narrative) over histories (sometimes absent, as in the case of young actresses whose first feature this is).

In the process of crossing the Atlantic though, the stories become further branded as other, that is to say, as American. This leads the teen-girl character to be reinscribed in the French antiamerican discourse through reiterated images of absence of manners, style and tastes, as well as vulgarity and promiscuity. This is all the more so since made for television new-release shows will highlight the clumsiness and ridiculous circumstances in which American teen-girl characters might find themselves in. This further implies a reduction of the American celebrity and of her character to a few stereotypical characteristics focusing especially on the tastelessness, lack of sophistication and social skills. The branding of the new world celebrity reduces her to a young and shallow creature that may learn from the contact of old world, and historied stars such as Julie Andrews.

## **CLOSING STATEMENTS**

### **LOOKING BACK BETTER TO LOOK FORWARD**

This study chronicles a liminal period: Hollywood's teen-girl took her first steps with the Internet (first registered domain name was in 1985) at a time when more established media such as print and broadcast were still favored by film advertising companies. The relationship between old and new technologies has become more contentious as the Internet became more popular over the last two decades, leading film distribution companies to reinvent themselves to fit the demands of digital technologies. In parallel with these technological changes, exchanges across borders accelerated and concepts such as globalization and transculturalism appeared in languages. As Gayatri Spivak suggests, this "is a moment in a taxonomy of the normality of what is called culture."<sup>374</sup> And it is as such that I have analyzed promotional artifacts for Hollywood teen-girl films as they have been produced in France and in the United States over the two decades separating 1986 and 2006; yet, it seems that the Internet and digital technologies of other sorts may prove to be a more fundamental moment of rupture for the "normality of what is called culture:" this will be the focus of my future research.

Through my comparative analysis of promotional artifacts made for Hollywood teen-girl films - a product that has no equivalent on the French market and is therefore considered uniquely American - to be sold in US and

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<sup>374</sup> Spivak, <http://translate.eipcp.net/transversal/0608/spivak/en>

French markets, I have shown that translations are performed by agents who usually remain invisible: transcultural intermediaries. The transcultural intermediary's primary function is to find a market for the Hollywood products in France; to do so, he/she translates promotional artifacts created for the US markets in order to construct a French audience for the same cultural objects. In the process, the age-old discourse of antiamericanism is invoked, expressing resistance to the cultural colonization that the US represents. Inscribed within this French discourse, the Hollywood teen-girl's image is distorted in demeaning ways that cultivate France's masculine domination.

I close this narrative with reflections on the significance of my research, the nature of the contributions I am thereby making and an overview of the research I am interested in conducting beyond posters, trailers and made-for-television ads and shows.

### Significance

The distribution of Hollywood teen-girl films in France relies heavily on the creative input of film distributors and marketing teams, whom I have called transcultural intermediaries. Their primary responsibility is to make foreign films palatable to French audiences through the translation of posters, trailers and made-for-television promotional artifacts. The comparison of French and American promotional artifacts has revealed that in the process of translating the marketing tools for these Hollywood films, teen-girls are inscribed within the French discourse of antiamericanism, thereby expressing resistance to the US's cultural colonization. This process



of translation is one of construction of the Hollywood teen-girl as an other and of construction of French audiences whom these films are to appeal to. As these promotional artifacts reaffirm the image of American teen-girls as white, heterosexual consumers, so is the French audience for teen-girl films defined on similar bases. While transcultural intermediaries select the films they may assume will more easily find an audience, they exclude the handful of movies focusing on cross-racial, African-American or lesbian stories following the same narrative arc.<sup>375</sup> In the process, they (inadvertently?) confirm long lasting assumptions inscribed within the antiamericanism discourse, and self-reflexively, affirm France's racial biases.

The three case studies on posters, trailers and made-for-television promotional messages all demonstrate that the American teen-girl is reinvented as a vapid bimbo in France. Posters selling teen-girl films in France make genre-specific elements disappear to the benefit of a focus either on nationality or on recognizable traits of the lead character – demeaning stereotypes of *American* teen-girls.<sup>376</sup> Although it is tempting to assume loss in the process of translation, quite the opposite is true: the translation of Hollywood teen-girls as American teen-girls is achieved through a constant reference to rampant negative connotations such as: sexual availability, lack of sophistication, absence of manners and vulgarity. My comparative analysis of American and French trailers produced to promote

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<sup>375</sup> Most of these are independent productions and will make it to the French equivalent of the US art house theater scene, or directly in video.

<sup>376</sup> For example, *Mean Girls*, which has no equivalent in the French high school system becomes *Lolita Malgre Moi*, with promises (tied to the mention of the 'lolita') that the film doesn't actually fulfill. From a monolith of silly blondes to Lolitas, sexuality, consumerism, tackiness and superficiality are repeated characteristics of these characters in French advertising for Hollywood teen-girl films.

the same films in France and in the United States suggests that trailers are viewed differently in different countries. Not only are the conventions different across borders, trailers are conceived differently in France and in the US. Indeed, while US theaters trailers are conceived as short films, autonomous entities to the extent that they have a beginning, a middle and an end like the feature film, in France, the structure is vastly different because the purpose of the trailers is merely to provide audiences with an idea of the atmosphere of the film, without giving too much information about the narrative itself. This impressionistic aspect of the trailer reflects deep-seated cultural assumptions and responds to local habitus in ways that the trailer created for the US market could not.

In the process of translating Hollywood promotional artifact, then, the characters become further branded as American. While the primary purpose of translation is to construct a French audience for these uniquely American products, the secondary effect is for the teen-girls to be inscribed in the French antiamericanism discourse and thereby reiterate sexist messages. This is all the more true since made-for-television new-release shows will highlight the clumsiness and ridiculous circumstances in which American teen-girl characters might find themselves. Reframed as an unsophisticated and clumsy bimbo, the American teenage girl celebrities and their characters are further reduced to a few stereotypical characteristics focusing especially on their lack of elegance and social skills and on their sexual availability. The branding of the new-world celebrity reduces her to a young and shallow

creature that may learn from the contact with old-world stars such as Julie Andrews but remain otherwise mostly hopeless.

These translations - inventing an American teen-girl tailored after the French imagination - are telling of the cultural protectionist tendencies of the French and of the strategies implemented to protect the French cultural patrimony from a US cultural colonization. In France, governmental help to the French film industry, taxes or quotas are the responses to American equally as protectionist strategies such as monolingualism and cost-prohibitive marketing.<sup>377</sup> These acts of translation further suggest that cultural products, such as Hollywood teen-girl films, are not as easy to market in all countries and cultures. While it might be true that advertising campaigns barely need to be adapted for the British or other markets, in France, Hollywood products have always been reframed. The amount of energy and money spent by the majors each year to advertise their films in France indicates that the business of transcultural intermediaries is not as superfluous as Pierre Bourdieu may have suggested. Making the transcultural intermediary visible highlights the need to rethink such ideas as homogenization of cultures: the appropriation of Hollywood's images is such that a French filter is firmly imposed on the teen-girl.

A close analysis of the mid-level corporate work of international film distributors under study in my study demonstrates the intricate negotiations involved in the creation of a form of hybridity that is still very much rooted in

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<sup>377</sup> Toby Miller has suggested that "marketing has become one of the most expensive of Hollywood's protectionist barriers to outsiders." (Miller, 261/2) Ruby Rich is the one focusing on American monolingualism as a form of protectionism.

the local cultures and tastes. My comparative analysis of promotional artifacts produced in the US and France for the same large-scale cultural productions in effect provides a precise illustration of the activity that Marieke de Mooij describes in general terms: "In global marketing communications, we use the systems of culture to develop advertising for other cultures. We use categorizations of one culture to describe others."<sup>378</sup> I have identified one of the agents of the global marketing communication de Mooij remains vague about thereby contributing to a better understanding of the conversation between France and the United States.

### Ruptures and repetitions

The notions of rupture and repetition are borrowed from an essay by Gayatri Spivak. Speaking about the notion of the global, she suggests: "every self declared rupture is an actively forgotten repetition."<sup>379</sup> She was specifically speaking about the hasty claims of some scholars that their work represents a break through from what has been done before when often, they merely repeat theoretical frameworks proposed by the likes of Karl Marx. In this second part, I try to distinguish between the repetitions inscribed within my project and the points of rupture from previous analyzes and theories. My analysis is to be located at a point of rupture in the history of film distribution; this rupture, however, is a repetition in so much that other technological advances have equally affected the medium without leading it to disappear. The invention of the Internet and of digital

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<sup>378</sup> Marieke K. de Mooij, *Global Marketing and Advertising: Understanding Cultural Paradoxes* (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 1998), 11

<sup>379</sup> Spivak, (2008)

technologies is today's equivalent to the 1950s television. In the same way that the histories of film and television have been intimately connected, I assume that the three media's future (film, television and the Internet) will be tied.

The comparison of French and US promotional artifacts created to sell Hollywood films in France has led me to approach the topic of film distribution and marketing from a transnational perspective. My focus on the alterations of meaning production related to the crossing of borders has led me to challenge assumptions of universality so far held as truth by scholars analyzing various aspects of the film industry. A transcultural comparative analysis of promotional artifacts demonstrates that Hollywood filmmakers, distributors and the scholars who study them were misguided in assuming that teenagers may have uniform tastes and experiences. Scholars such as Thomas Doherty, Sarah Hentges or Jon Lewis wrote about youth culture and film at different periods of time, based on the same premise: teenagers do not need to be located in space.<sup>380</sup> The absence of geographical location in the face of statements about teenagers in general shows the limitations of their arguments: can teenagers of the world be assumed to face the same problems, have the same experiences and the same tastes? It is only in

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<sup>380</sup> Jon Lewis, *The Road to Romance & Ruin: Teen Films and Youth Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Thomas Patrick Doherty, *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s*, Rev. and expanded ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002); Sarah Hentges, *Pictures of Girlhood: Modern Female Adolescence on Film* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland, 2006).

more recent years that scholarship on teens and film has become more critical.<sup>381</sup>

The translation of the American teen-girl into l'adolescente Américaine is the process through which American teen-girls are reduced to sexually available and vapid bimbos. This stereotype is both informed by and nourishes the French antiamericanism discourse. It is a form of symbolic violence, that speaks not only to the way French transcultural intermediaries imagine American teen-girls, but more so perhaps to the way the French masculine domination is reaffirmed. In the same way that the colonized may not be recognizing the latent domination of the colonizer through the translation and construction of meaning in the colonized's language, French young women looking at representations of American teen-girls as others may not consciously identify themselves with these images.

The popular feminist message inscribed within the narrative and teen-girls' performance of femininity (even to the degree of being considered promiscuous) is a familiar message in France, and therefore encourages teen-girls to relate to the characters in ways that appear positive but really do no more than reaffirm masculine domination. My analysis, therefore, elaborates upon Angela McRobbie's work on the consumption of teenage girls, and their identity construction in that the representation of a foreign teen-femininity might easily serve as a foil for the reaffirmation of patriarchal values under cover of a popular feminist message. My study contributes

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<sup>381</sup> Robert C. Bulman, *Hollywood Goes to High School: Cinema, Schools, and American Culture* (Worth Publishers, 2004); *Youth Culture in Global Cinema*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007).

both to the field of feminist media studies and to cultural studies as a transcultural comparison of cultural productions centered on gendered representations challenges established theoretical frameworks based on a single culture or nation.

On one hand then, the transformation of Pierre Bourdieu's new cultural intermediary to the transcultural intermediary, a better representative of the international film distributor, establishes the diversity of this agent's responsibilities within the field of transcultural productions. While Bourdieu could (perhaps) dismiss the new cultural intermediary as subjugated to the field of power, and make the cultural intermediary to be a mere bridge between product and consumer within the sub-field of large-scale cultural productions (inherently mirroring popular tastes), the transcultural intermediary is a necessary agent of the transcultural exchanges of large-scale cultural productions that speak to a complex network of sub-cultures within one larger cultural entity. The transcultural intermediary's role is that of a translator of tastes, creator of the cultural filters necessary for the recognition of a cultural product as not only palatable but meaningful.

Indeed, the transcultural intermediary marks a point of rupture with larger conversations in cultural and transnational studies. My research is best located in conversation with Matthew Soar's argument in favor of an inclusive approach to the field of cultural productions: although the dominant tradition in cultural studies focuses either on texts or on their consumption, I have argued that at least in the unique case of the distribution and advertisement of Hollywood films in France, the necessary process of translation and

adaptation calls for the explanatory framework to include the agents' bridging the American products and the French audiences. While Soar opened the door for further work to be done on the site of advertising production, as is most notably illustrated by Elisabeth Rose McFall or Anne Cronin, none of them focused in particular on the cross-cultural negotiations involved in the creation of advertisement in a different country than where it was produced. The work of the transcultural intermediary is therefore particularly important to take into consideration as the prime site of articulation of the local and the global. As such, my research is not only contributing to conversations regarding advertisement within cultural studies (advertisement as text and its consumption), but it is expanding the theoretical framework by adding a transcultural component.

#### What lies ahead

As I started writing, promotional artifacts for Hollywood teen-girl films on the Internet was going to be the last chapter. I quickly realized however that it was a vastly different and rich area of study, one that could be a dissertation in and of itself. I chose to analyze print and broadcast media like the poster, or the trailers and made-for-television shows first, keeping in mind that the Internet would have to be next. While the three other media are constructed by advertisers based in part on their knowledge of consumers' habitus (either intuitively or because of marketing research data, CNC publications in France), the Internet is more interactive and its use still tentative, even for the promotion of teen-gearred films. Within the virtual space of the Internet, cultural boundaries (such as borders) are primarily



marked by language, which represents the only actual border between web pages and consumer (except in dictatorships or countries such as China, where the Internet is censored).

Considering the Internet will then imply a reassessment of the role of the transcultural intermediary. In a space where consumer creations (sweeding, recut of trailers, different voiceover on trailers, fan websites etc...) hold more symbolic capital than the official website created to promote a particular film, what role does the transcultural intermediary hold? Who are these intermediaries? Such shifts are further complicated by the fact that fans are now sometimes invited to attend junkets as well, and are leaked images and gossip by the PR members of the distribution companies, and become therefore vehicles for the promotion of the film that may be seen as more trustworthy than the official website, and yet provide information that comes from the same source! The study of the Internet, in other words, is an analysis of a world in and of itself, that functions autonomously from the classic advertising campaigns.

An analysis of Internet advertising practices and their interactive relationships with their consumers raises specific challenges. For instance, the official web pages are often taken down after some time, and the interactive games that are always part of the official website no longer work. Collecting all the web pages will require a number of different strategies: if archive.org fails to produce all the material that I am looking for, then I will be in search of the French governmental office in charge of taking snapshots of the Internet and building a virtual archive. I am not sure that this is

happening, but I would be surprised if a country as concerned with its national memory and future would not have started such a project (after all, the INA was created practically at the same time as television was with the sole purpose to archive the material produced for broadcast.).

An examination of Internet advertising practices will lead me to consider portable phones and other devices allowing consumers to watch films and generally informing audiences about new releases permanently. H el ene Laurichesse mentions one example of how the wireless world is already being used by film distributors to their advantage: she describes the agreement between Universal Studios and Nokia, which allows for Nokia customers to download film related ringtones, images and more for free provided Nokia agrees to be the vehicle for text message advertising to be sent to their customers.<sup>382</sup> With the possibilities provided by the iPhone and other touch-screen mobile phones, agreements will continue to be made as film companies try to invade consumers' lives in more direct and unabashed ways.

In close relation with the gradual sophistication of wireless and digital technologies, I am also interested in recording the ways in which these technologies affect the lives and jobs of transcultural intermediaries. From the few conversations that I was able to have with individuals working in the independent film distribution in New York City, I was given to understand that digital and other technologies would not affect majors and independents in the same ways. Indeed, while Ira Deutchman speaks with great

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<sup>382</sup> Laurichesse, 95

enthusiasm about the savings brought about by digital projection in movie theaters and the efficiency with which distributors are now able to answer demands all over the world, major studios make the press almost daily as they fight yet another battle against the ease with which copyrighted material makes its way on the Internet these days. The discrepancy of these two discourses is fascinating to me: how can the independent film distributor be really enthusiastic about the new technologies when major studios are holding on to obsolete ways (or ways in the process of becoming so) in the hopes of making a few more millions out of another large production? How can dependent film distributors be confident that their audiences are there to stay when large-scale product distributors already fear for their lives? I would venture to suggest that it might be because of the size of profit margins, and more importantly, because they do not work in the same way as they do not speak to the same audience, and neither do they sell a similar product. How will the democratization of digital media (in movie theaters, homes, or in public transportation and spaces) and the Internet affect the roles and responsibilities of the transcultural intermediary?

The epigraph by Gayatri Spivak, placed at the onset of this study, highlights foci of import throughout (gender and globalization) and warn against some of the pitfalls scholars can lapse to (lack of critical inquiry and idealization of the object of study, be it translation, globalization or gender representations):

If we do indeed keep trying to establish those grounding conditions, so that we can undo the harm being done on the gender level through the international civil society and treating gendering with the respect it deserves, because it is

the first semiosis of culture itself, then I believe, we will have revised our tasks and not thought too soon, that we share a globalized world, which is our home, where a mother tongue is a translation.

These words, a conclusion to "More Thoughts on Cultural Translation," are Spivak's injunction not to be too hasty in pulling down borders and idealizing abstract cosmopolitanisms that see identities as in perpetual translation. Instead, Spivak reminds her audience and readers that in translation, power struggles are exacerbated. My analysis of promotional artifacts for teen-girl films in France has demonstrated that gender struggles - through demeaning representations - are still to be contended with. I share Spivak's skepticism as to the possibilities for sharing a globalized world as our home and a mother tongue as translation; yet, while she sees inequality across nations as the most stifling factor in such a utopian perspective, I cannot envision a homogenized, borderless world as anything but dystopian. If the nation-state is truly on its last legs, discourses such as the French anti-american one, as seeped in nationalism as it might be, are nourished by age-old, proud, bigoted, local cultural practices. As a consequence, I will venture to say that transcultural intermediaries still have a few good years of translating ahead of them.

## Appendix: Filmography

Bendinger, Jessica. *Stick It*. Buena Vista Pictures, 2006.

Carter, Thomas. *Save the Last Dance*. Paramount Pictures, 2001.

Coolidge, Martha. *The Prince & Me*. Paramount Pictures, 2004.

Davis, Tamra. *Crossroads*. Paramount Pictures, 2002.

Deutch, Howard. *Pretty in Pink*. Paramount Pictures, 1986.

Frankel, David. *The Devil Wears Prada*. Fox 2000 Pictures, 2006.

Fywell, Tim. *Ice Princess*. Buena Vista Pictures, 2005.

Geronimi, Clyde. *Cinderella*. Walt Disney, 1950.

Gordon, Dennie. *What a Girl Wants*, 2003.

Gosnell, Roja. *Never Been Kissed*. Fox 2000 Pictures, 1999.

Herman-Wurmfeld, Charles. *Legally Blonde 2: Red, White & Blonde*. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Distributing Corporation, 2003.

Iscove, Robert. *She's All That*. Miramax Films, 1999.

Junger, Gil. *10 Things I Hate About You*. Buena Vista Pictures, 1999.

Kumble, Roger. *Cruel Intentions*. Columbia Pictures, 1999.

Luketic, Robert. *Legally Blonde*. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Distributing Corporation, 2001.

Maggenti, Maria. *The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love*. Fine Line Features, 1995.

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