Et l’homme...créa le film

Using film to gauge
French and American cultural exchange.

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Abstract

Film can be an insightful means through which one can try to understand the dynamic of a nation or culture. By observing and analyzing the films that are made in any country, one can attempt to see why the themes and topics treated are important to that people, and what that in turn tells us about the culture in general. Also, the specific films that each country chooses to export to other countries and how they advertise them abroad can show the biases, stereotypes, and conceptions of the one nation in regards to the other. In this paper, I use the idea that film can reveal much about a nation in order to examine the relationship between the United States of America and France, two countries in which the film industry is a vital part of the country’s culture, economy, and politics. The French film industry is by far the largest and most active in Europe, and the United States of America is the second largest film-producing nation in the world. Therefore, by exploring the cultural, economic, and political importance and implications of film in France and the United States, I will seek to illuminate the similarities and differences of the American and French film industries and what these similarities and differences may tell us about the cultures themselves and how the French and American people view each other’s cultures.
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Introduction

Many consider the art and music of a people to be a sort of window into its soul. Film, too, can be a great way to try to understand the dynamic of a nation or culture. This is not to say, of course, that by watching the films of a country one can understand everything about that country—certainly the plethora of superhero movies and post-apocalyptic thrillers coming out of Hollywood over the past several years cannot be said to reflect the actual state of the United States of America. Rather, the incredible popularity of such movies can be analyzed in order to delve into the psyche of the American public.

In the same way, by observing and analyzing the films that are made in a country, one can try to see why the themes and topics treated are important to its people, more specifically those who make and enjoy art. Then, by looking at which films are popular and successful (this can be measured in various ways; I will concentrate on box office data), one can try to see what that tells us about the culture in general, or more specifically about those who “consume” film. Finally, by scrutinizing the specific films that each country chooses to export to other countries and how they advertise them abroad, one can try to detect the way that each country’s people view one another and any biases or stereotypes that underline those views. While this may not reflect the culture as a whole, it at least reflects the viewpoints of those advertisers and executives whose job it is to try to understand the collective psyche of another culture.

In this paper, I will be using the idea that film can reveal much about a nation in order to examine the relationship between the United States of America and France. Film is an effective method to do this because it is such an important medium in both nations. In both France and America, filmmakers and film stars are some of the most famous and
respected people, frequently more famous than politicians or athletes, for example. The French film industry is by far the largest and most active in Europe and one of the largest in the world, and the American film industry, specifically Hollywood, is the second largest in the world.¹ Both nations are large film exporters and importers, as well as heavy film consuming nations, and film festivals and awards ceremonies are time-honored traditions in both countries. Though independent film does exist and to some degree thrives in both nations, I will be focusing on large commercial and studio film, as this sector controls the majority of the industry and has the most political and economic power.

Because of all this, the governments of both nations have gotten involved in the film industry through taxation, laws, regulation, and protective measures. Therefore, by exploring the cultural, economic, and political importance and implications of film in France and the United States, I will seek to illuminate the similarities and differences of the American and French film industries and what these similarities and differences may tell us about the cultures themselves and how the French and American people view one another’s cultures. A good place to start in this investigation is the history and background of film and the relationship between the American and French film industries.

A Brief History of French Cinema and its Relation to American Cinema

Cinema started with the French. Though moving pictures in various forms (zoetropes, magic lanterns, and the like) had been used for hundreds of years, the first film projection in a form similar to what we know today had its humble beginnings in Paris, France with the two brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière. Using their new invention, which they named the cinématographe, they wandered around France filming people performing different activities—fishing for goldfish or exiting a factory, for example—then edited them down into clips that were approximately fifty seconds long each. The cinématographe was an invention that built on many years of other scientists' work, including that of Thomas A. Edison and his Kinetoscope. The concept of putting together many images quickly in order to make a moving picture was not new; it had been tried since the invention of photography in 1830, but the Lumière brothers were the first who were able to put it all together and make it work. Not only did their invention record moving pictures and print them but it was also portable and reversible in order to project the images for an audience as well.

On the 28th of December, 1895, the Lumière set up the first public showing of ten of these short films. About thirty people attended the event, publicized as follows: “This

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2 Several are even staged comedic shorts. All ten films can be watched for free at www.institut-lumiere.org.

3 The Kinetoscope recorded at 46 frames per second whereas the Lumières slowed that down to 16 frames a second, a rate still used today. Encyclopedia Britannica 2009, s.v. “cinematographe.” http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/118046/Cinematographe.

machine, invented by Messrs. Auguste and Louis Lumière, allows one to gather, by series of instantaneous prints, all the movements that, during a given time, have succeeded one another before the lens, and then to reproduce those movements, by projecting, life-size, before an entire hall, their images on a screen. Entrance ticket one franc. Ten animated views will be presented.\(^5\) This event is widely considered to be the birth date of cinema.

Not only was cinema born in France, but it also took its first steps there. French cinema was the most popular and prominent in the world until World War I. Joining the Lumière brothers in the ranks of famous and influential Frenchmen was Georges Méliès, who, with his background in theater and magic, is credited with bringing the narrative and special effects to film (\textit{A Trip to the Moon}, 1902, is a wonderful early example of his work with special effects; see its movie poster in Appendix A). Max Linder, another founding father of film, was famous for his physical comedy, which influenced numerous American silent film stars such as Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton. In addition, Charles Pathé and Léon Gaumont were savvy French businessmen who rapidly and effectively expanded the commercial growth of cinema into an international sensation.\(^6\)

During this early period of cinema, though the American industry was starting and growing as well, it was not nearly as big of an industry yet as in France. France had the early financial backing, shrewd businessmen to get it going, innovators, visionaries, and the advantage of silence. Because “talkies,” or film with sound, had not yet been invented,\(^7\) all

\(^5\) Temple and Witt, \textit{The French Cinema Book}, 9.; also see Appendix A (original poster).

\(^6\) Ibid., 9-10.

\(^7\) \textit{The Jazz Singer}, the first talking picture, was released in 1927. (Temple and Witt, \textit{The French Cinema Book}, 162).
films were silent and utilized pantomime and broad movements, with the occasional intertitles to better explain what was going on. This made films more universal and easier to export to places where different languages were spoken. The intertitles were all that betrayed the linguistic origin of the film, and those could easily be cut out and replaced with translations when the film was sent to other countries. France was still widely seen as a world center for culture and entertainment, and though it was no longer as prominent as during the Renaissance, French was still a major language spoken throughout the world.8

Between 1906 and 1913, the French "dominated world cinema as no single country has since,"9 so much so that some American filmmakers during this time asked the US government to step in and offer financial assistance to prop them up in the film market. The French market also "dominated most cinematic forms"10 so that even Charlie Chaplin's work, which is seen today as truly American and iconic of the time, was inspired by and drew heavily from the French slapstick comedian Max Linder.

The American cinema industry was not able to get the foothold that it desired until World War I, when France's economy and filmmakers were crippled. The war affected the French film industry both financially and creatively as virtually all filmmakers in France began to tailor their films to war-weary Parisian audiences. It was at this point that Hollywood was able to catch up to the French film industry.

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10 Ibid.
After World War I, the French industry began to regain its former glory, coming into its “golden age” during which it was second in the world only to the newly prominent United States film industry.\textsuperscript{11} During this period, in 1936, “[o]f the 75 most popular films [in France], 56 were French; only 15 were American. In 1935, 70 percent of all film receipts in France went to French-produced movies.”\textsuperscript{12} French film had very little censorship, especially compared to the extremely tough Motion Picture Production Code governing American cinema that began to be strictly enforced in 1934 (though actually adopted in 1930), and no rigid studio system as the United States had. This allowed the French film industry to be open to all sorts of independent and innovative artists, such as Jean Renoir (La Règle du Jeu, 1939), Marcel Carné (Drôle de drame, 1936), and René Clair (À nous la liberté, 1931), who all made films during this time that are still famous today.

Beyond the relative simplicity of sending film worldwide and the popularity of French cinema internationally, there were also major financial reasons for not staying domestic. It was very difficult for a film to break even let alone to make a profit solely in the domestic market. Viewership was not yet high enough and production was too costly. (The problem remains in large part today because of soaring production costs for huge “blockbusters,” regardless of how high viewership is). The Albatross film company, a small French film company in the early 1900s, had only one film ever turn a profit on the domestic market alone, for example. Because of this, even from the early days of cinema, films were often produced with an international market in mind. In many cases, total foreign revenue was higher than domestic, even when cultural and linguistic barriers were

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item Cowen, “French Kiss-Off.”
\item Ibid.
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taken into consideration. During this period, French film did very well internationally. However, it was also common practice at that time, when a film was sent to a theater abroad, for the theater to cut the film however it wished. This, of course, made it so that films often changed significantly by the time they hit foreign screens. A theater owner in a country might cut out any scenes that he did not think would be palatable to his average audience. For example, a scene of snow might be cut in a tropical country because the distributor did not think that his audience would identify with the presence of snow.13

During World War II, the cinematic world stage changed dramatically. When the Vichy government took over in France, it instituted a system of quotas, subsidies, and protective laws in order to help spur the growth of the film industry. These laws virtually assured the success of French films by banning all American films and heavily subsidizing French productions. However, they also closely regulated what subjects could be addressed and how to treat them. Filmmakers no longer had freedom, and quality suffered in the face of these propaganda-filled films. The Nazi-occupied part of France, interestingly enough, afforded a higher level of freedom to filmmakers. The Nazi government was able to stimulate French film production during this time without artificially crippling outside filmmakers in any way. It was surprisingly laissez-faire, allowing almost any subject matter to be broached as long as the government was not blatantly criticized. The Nazis saw film as an opiate of the masses: a way to entertain the populace and keep them happy enough not to question authority. They also rightly viewed film as a tool of imperialism and wanted to stimulate greatness in the French film industry as much as possible in order

to push the Americans out. The Nazi and Vichy governments had a fundamental difference in how they viewed the market, similar to the difference today between the American and French film industries: the Vichy government, like the French government today, saw heavy regulation and restrictive laws as the way to gain worldwide power through cinema. The Nazi government, like the US government today, saw regulation as something that choked the industry, and instead opted for a hands-off approach, seeing incentives, rather than protectionism, as the best way to promote domestic cinema.14

After the war ended, the new French government of the Fourth Republic decided to keep the Vichy system of quotas and subsidies intact, with minimal changes. They saw this as crucial in order to rebuild their film industry, particularly considering that in 1949 (for instance) 72% of all films in Europe were of American origin.15 The Blum-Byrnes Agreement, signed in 1946 and amended in 1948, was part of a negotiation between the US and France that cancelled France's debts to the US after the war in order to help insure that incumbent French president Léon Blum would keep power and not succumb to the "Communist threat." The Agreement guaranteed that French films would get 30% of all screen time in France (re-negotiated later to 38%) and was a major step in the French quota system.16 Also in 1946, the Cannes Film Festival was held for the first time in southern France as a way to further promote film in France, stimulate the French film industry, and promote French cinema worldwide.

14 Cowen, "French Kiss-Off."


16 Germany and France both put similar restrictions into effect in the 1920s, but the French lost theirs during the war. (Schwartz. It's So French! 11.)
In 1953 the government instituted the “Prime à la qualité” (quality subsidy), which was intended to support films that were of artistic “quality” and that would “serve the cause of French cinema or...open up new perspectives in the art of cinema.” Later, in 1959, it began the “avances sur recettes” program (advances against earnings), which allowed producers to partially finance feature films by borrowing from the “fonds de soutien” (support fund) against eventual profit. All these programs, especially the Blum-Byrnes Agreement, caused the French people to see the protection of film as patriotic.

While many directors enjoyed the subsidies and quotas, some did not agree with the strict rules that went with them. Unions often were not allowed to exist, all films had to be pre-approved by the government in order to receive funding, and French cinema owners perceived that they were losing possible income from not being allowed to show as much American cinema. One of France’s famous prewar directors, René Clair, explained why he so disliked the new restrictions:

“Nazism has left its mark on [France]. Yes, a country cannot live through fascist rule for so long without suffering in some way. For instance, I’m struck by the artificial barriers placed in the way of any activity. I can’t accept that someone wanting to make a film should have to submit requests to so many authorities, who will refuse if he can’t prove he’s conformed to various arbitrary regulations.”

Another major event in French film history occurred in 1951, when Les Cahiers du Cinéma, the first film criticism magazine, was launched. This publication, co-founded by

18 Ibid.
19 Cowen, “French Kiss-Off.”
20 Jackie Dent, “Be an Expert in French Cinema,” *CNN*, December 5, 2006, Entertainment Section, International Edition; see also the original *Cahiers* cover in Appendix A.
Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, Joseph-Marie Lo Duca, and the famous film theorist André Bazin, basically gave birth to the discipline of film theory. Film critics for the magazine who later went on to create important and famous films in the French New Wave include Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut and Éric Rohmer (who edited the *Cahiers*).\(^{21}\) The writers for the *Cahiers* commented on film worldwide, not only on French cinema, and wrote numerous times about American film, the US studio system, and the production code.

One of the most famous movements in French film history, the French New Wave (or *La Nouvelle Vague*), began in the late 1950s and continued into the early 1960s. The New Wave started as a backlash among critics who worked at the *Cahiers du Cinéma* against the prevalence of high budget French films that had recently sprung up to combat Hollywood.\(^{22}\) They believed these films were of low quality and that they catered to the masses without any artistic integrity. Because of this, the New Wave directors experimented with low budgets, new directing and editing styles, and radical new visual forms, rejecting the old forms that directors had long used, but also taking much inspiration from the innovators in American cinema at the time.\(^{23}\) Some of the most famous works from this group of New Wave directors include Truffaut's famed *Les Quatre Cent Coups* (1959), Godard's *A Bout de Souffle* (1960), Claude Chabrol's *Le Beau Serge* (1959), and Éric Rohmer's *Le Signe du lion* (1962). Not part of this group from the *Cahiers* but also considered to be part of the *Nouvelle Vague* are the members of the "Left Bank"

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\(^{22}\) Nelmes, *Introduction to Film Studies*, 432.

\(^{23}\) Cowen, "French Kiss-Off."
group, who were documentary, left-wing, and experimental directors and who included Chris Marker (*La Jetée*, 1962), Alain Resnais (*Hiroshima mon amour*, 1959), and Agnès Varda (*Cléo de 5 à 7*, 1962). Jacques Demy (*Les parapluies de Cherbourg*, 1964), Louis Malle (*Ascenseur pour l'échafaud*, 1958), and Jacques Rozier (*Adieu Philippine*, 1963) were others from this period who made New Wave films but who are not grouped with either of the top two groups because they were neither involved with the *Cahiers* nor were they left-wing experimentalists and documentarians. By the 1970s the wave was over, though many of the famous directors from the movement continued to produce great films long afterward.

Though the New Wave directors saw themselves as protesting against the “tradition of quality” in French cinema (which they saw as stale—they used the term derogatorily), they ironically were often the recipients of the *prime à la qualité*. The directors of the New Wave were never organized together formally and they almost universally repudiated the designation “New Wave,” though they were grouped together by critics and scholars because of their similar backgrounds and experimentation with new ideas and techniques. In addition, French film during this time gained popularity in America almost exclusively because of the New Wave, which offered a new type of film that wasn’t yet being produced in America.

Another boon for French film’s popularity in America during this time was a single woman: Brigitte Bardot. Bardot, an exquisitely beautiful international sex symbol and

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movie megastar, played a large role in the popularity of French film in America and elsewhere. From 1956 with the release of the film *And God Created Woman (Et Dieu...créa la femme)* until about 1965, Bardot was a household name in America and a quickly established a good rapport with Hollywood. Her success characterized the “culture of cooperation between France and America,”26 and through Hollywood she became a worldwide megastar. Several other performers had done this before, some have done so since, but few to the extent that she was able to achieve. Her popularity also helped to make French film, and to some extent “Frenchness” in general, popular and marketable in America.27

The 1960s and 1970s in French cinema saw an increase in political and feminist cinema, as well as a boom in the production of pornography in the mid-1970s with the decrease in censorship during the administration of president Giscard.28 Film studies in academic settings increased dramatically in the late 1960s, as well. In 1976 the French kicked off their own mainstream awards ceremony similar to the American Academy Awards, the Césars.29

Some see the death of François Truffaut in 1984 as the symbolic death of artistic French cinema. Certainly, many people continued to make artistic films, but in the late 1980s and 1990s, big budget, flashy (and widely seen as vacuous or non artistic) films known as the “cinema du look” reigned. Luc Besson and Jean-Jacques Beineix are two

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26 Schwartz. *It’s So French!*, 103.

27 Ibid., 6.


29 Discover France, “French Movies and Cinemas.”
famous directors who fit in this category, and Beineix's *Diva* (1981) is often considered the quintessential example of the *cinema du look*. Costume dramas, or *films historiques*, were also very popular throughout the 1990s.30

Then, in 1993, arguably the most important event in the history of French-American film relations took place. During the Uruguay round (1986-1994) of the negotiations for the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT—today known as the World Trade Organization), France received a significant windfall. Prior to the talks, the French had become increasingly suspicious and fearful of what they saw as the threat of American cultural imperialism, or the idea that through trade, the United States was going to use its great worldwide economic leverage and cultural popularity to dominate the rest of the world's cultures. Because of this pervasive fear, mixed with the United States' negotiators' intense belief in free trade, a heated dispute arose between the American negotiators and a coalition of countries led by the French who called for media to be treated as a "cultural exception" (*exception culturelle*). According to them, media such as film and television constituted a precious cultural commodity that was tightly bound to national identity and should be protected. In the American mindset, however, media was an economic product that should be treated the same as any other economic product, like furniture, oil, and electronics. When the talks nearly broke down over this, the American negotiators finally agreed to confer special status on film and television in the name of *exception culturelle*. This was hailed in France as a major diplomatic victory and denounced in America as a

violation of free trade. Regardless, it allowed the French (and the rest of Europe) to institute tariffs and to keep their numerous quotas and protective laws on cinema.\footnote{Cowen, "French Kiss-Off," and Temple and Witt, \textit{The French Cinema Book}, 190.}
Film Today in France and America

Since those negotiations, French film has done well worldwide. Currently France is first in Europe (holding approximately 22% of the European film market) and third in the world as far as film production and exportation go.\(^\text{32}\) In screen density,\(^\text{33}\) another good indicator of the level of popularity of film in a country, the US ranked 1\(^{\text{st}}\) and France 4\(^{\text{th}}\) in the world in 2007 (the US had a ratio of 12.9 and France had 8.8).\(^\text{34}\) Also in 2007, the United States had an average of 4.6 film admissions per person per year while France saw an average of 2.9, putting them both in the top three in the world.

France is also a popular location to shoot films because of lenient government restrictions and incentives for filmmakers, as well as the fact that France is a popular film setting. This results in more than 700 films per year being filmed on location in Paris alone.\(^\text{35}\) Notwithstanding French cinema’s prominence in the world, French films consistently take only 1% of American box office receipts, with the rest of Europe accounting for only another 1%. On the other hand, American films take over half of the French box office and approximately 80% of the European box office.\(^\text{36}\)

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\(^\text{32}\) Approximately 160 films per year are produced in France, compared to 800 in India and 500 in the United States. (Rochefort. “French Movies.”)

\(^\text{33}\) The ratio of cinema screens per 100,000 people.


\(^\text{35}\) Rochefort. “French Movies.”

call this evidence of Hollywood's desire for world domination despite the GATT agreements, and it's true that few French films can compete with Hollywood films in America. Regardless, since the year 2000, French film has been relatively popular in America (compared with other foreign films), with films such as the 2001 *Brotherhood of the Wolf* and the 2004 *A Very Long Engagement* grossing $11 million and $6 million in America respectively, and the smash 2001 hit *Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain* (Eng: *Amélie*) grossing over $33 million in America alone. Though these numbers are very high compared to other foreign films, they are low when compared to most Hollywood blockbusters. One must keep in mind when comparing these box office receipts to those of American films, though, that not only do all foreign films consistently gross less than Hollywood films, but also that French films tend to cost less to produce than Hollywood films. This is partly because French films on the whole use fewer big special effects and partly because French actors and actresses are paid much less than their American peers. For the sake of comparison, Audrey Tautou, the star of *Amélie* and the highest paid French star today, makes on average one million euros per movie\(^{37}\). Angelina Jolie, currently the highest paid actress in America, earns about 15 million dollars per film,\(^{38}\) and the highest

\(^{37}\) About $1.35 million according to May 2009 exchange rates; Mick LaSalle, “French movies America has missed,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 6, 2008, Entertainment Section, http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/04/06/PKJ5VQRVV.DTL

paid actors, such as Leonardo DiCaprio and Will Smith, typically earn 20-25 million per film.39

The popularity of French films in the United States has also been shown through awards shows, where French films and performers consistently do well. France holds 34 total nominations for Oscars (far more than any other country) and nine Oscar wins (second only to Italy with ten) for best foreign language film.40 Also, at the 2008 Academy Awards, French actress Marion Cotillard became the second person to ever win the Academy Award for Best Actress for a film not in English, La Môme (Eng: La Vie en Rose). This award was especially historic for France in that it was also the first acting Oscar ever to be awarded to a French language film.41

Since 2000 the world has also seen a sharp increase in co-America-France film productions as the film industry becomes more and more global. The definition of a "French film" or an "American film" has become difficult to define, as French actors will act in Hollywood productions, American companies will fund French films, or an American director will shoot a film in France with a mixed nationality cast and a French crew, to name but a few complicating factors. This trend has caused some anger and controversy in France, for reasons I will later explain.


41 The first acting Oscar to ever be given to a foreign language film was given to Sophia Loren in 1961 for her Italian language film Two Women; Ibid.
Government Involvement

Because of the worldwide power that film holds both economically and culturally, many governments have stepped in to help regulate and protect this vital industry. Though both France and America have government restrictions and taxation on their respective film industries, the French film industry is much more highly regulated than the US film industry. Not only is there a government rating system and taxation of the film industry, but there is also a complicated and extensive system in France of quotas and subsidies. Paradoxically, though, the French tend to be much more lenient as far as what they will allow on their screens. I will now examine the various government restrictions in each country and their impact on French-American relations.

Quotas

The current quota system in France, stemming from the Blum-Byrnes agreement in 1946, governs not only what can be shown on film screens in France but also what can be aired on television and radio stations. The European Community today requires at least 50% of all television programming to be of European origin, and France has raised that to 60% within France: 40% must be native French programming and the remaining 20% from the rest of Europe. This leaves only 40% that can come from elsewhere in the world, and generally the majority of this remaining 40% is American. The French even have a separate quota system in place for prime time television as opposed to the rest of the day to make sure that French programming cannot be relegated to the least desirable times.

In the realm of film, American movies hold almost 80% of European box office receipts, whereas European movies only account for 5% of the American market. In 1997
in Europe, 88 of the top 100 highest grossing films were American, and another 7 were American-European co-productions, leaving only 5 that were fully European films. That contrast is staggering, and when one considers that these numbers take quotas into account, it is easy to imagine that without the quotas, the European film industry would be almost non-existent, as the French government claims. By contrast in France, American films only hold 60% of the box office, which some argue proves the effectiveness of the stringent French quota system. 42

The "Television Without Frontiers" directive, passed by the European Union in October 1989, was the result of hard lobbying by French delegates. This directive limited the number of American films that were allowed to be shown in France each year, and required that all European Union nations institute film and television quotas of their own. By the end of 1993 every European Union country had done so, with France’s domestic quotas being the most stringent in all of Europe. The directive was passed as a reaction against “American cultural imperialism,” or a belief that the United States was attempting to dominate the world’s media and by doing so, inundate and overtake the world’s diverse cultures with American culture. France’s quota system dictated that no more than 40% of all films shown in France be of non-European origin, mirroring their quotas on television. The French government saw the EU’s institution of mandatory quotas as a huge victory against American cultural imperialism. Jacques Chirac, president of France from 1995 to 2007, later commented that he was proud of the directive and that it was an effective way

42 Cowen, “French Kiss-Off.”
to avoid seeing “European culture sterilized or obliterated by American culture for economic reasons that have nothing to do with real culture.”

The American reaction to this directive was very different from the European reaction, as one would imagine, and many Hollywood executives, directors, producers, critics and journalists alike were enraged when the directive passed. They claimed that it was put in place specifically to keep Hollywood films out, that restricting professional and artistic freedom would do nothing but harm the European film industry, saying that “barriers and protectionism...are out of place in a world of creative competition and expanding visual choice.” This directive understandably bothered the American film industry because Hollywood had by far the most to lose from it. At the time of the directive, American films and television shows earned $3.5 billion per year from exports to Europe, and US media was the highest rated in Europe, often surpassing domestic media.

The quotas in France also apply to how many French films must be produced. In general, there are around 120-130 films made in France every year, but because of minimum requirements, there is sometimes a phenomenon in France (as in Canada, Great Britain, Brazil, and other countries where similar quota systems are in effect) known as the “quota quickie.” This term refers to when a low quality film is rapidly produced as an opportunistic way to help meet a yearly quota. Typically these films “employ formulaic, low-budget treatments of sex and violence, and encourage the domestic industry to adopt


44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.
the worst tendencies of American moviemaking." Though often of low quality and formulaic, these films do help French actors, actresses, and film crews get jobs, thereby stimulating the economy. They can also help new directors get work or get noticed. Some, nonetheless, question whether or not these sorts of films should be made at all, and if a quota system should really govern such things.

Subsidies

Not as offensive to foreign filmmakers but more far-reaching is the system of subsidies in France. Started originally by the Vichy government during World War II, state funding for French filmmakers was continued after Vichy fell, though it was altered. In the 1950s when the "prime à la qualité" and the "avances sur recettes" went into effect, the French government saw the subsidies as a way to preserve and to encourage domestic production in the wake of huge worldwide competition. Indeed, financial assistance for short films from the "prime à la qualité" allowed such celebrated directors as Chris Marker, Alain Resnais, and Agnès Varda to get their start when they may not otherwise have been able to break into the industry.

Today, the French government spends hundreds of millions of dollars subsidizing film production and offering interest-free loans to qualified filmmakers. The subsidy and loan system, which accounts for approximately half of all money invested in film in

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46 Cowen, "French Kiss-Off."

47 Nelmes, Introduction to Film Studies, 431.
France, 48 is set up so that all the money stays within the sector of film in a sort of reallocation program. The CNC (Centre national du cinema) fund, as it is called, is financed in three parts. The largest part, comprising 72% of the fund, comes from a tax on television broadcasters that is based on a percentage of revenues from their station. Next, 24% comes from an 11% tax on all movie tickets for films released in France (whether from France or from abroad), which is called the TSA or “Taxe spéciale additive” (Special Additive Tax). The final 4% comes from a tax on all video and DVD sales. In this way, every film shown on French television, projected in French theaters, or bought in a French store contributes to the fund. To put this into perspective, the 1998 worldwide hit Titanic sold 20 million tickets in France and therefore contributed 12 million euros to the fund that year. 49 However, the money was coming directly from taxes on the French people, not from the American filmmakers or backers. Ironically, though, these taxes raise the prices of DVD/ VHS and cinema tickets, which may decrease film consumption in France, the exact opposite of the desired effect. There is, however, no sure way to test this theory.

The CNC, which employs 600 people and has a 20 million euro annual operating budget, delegates the money from its fund (449 million euros in 2003, for example) as follows: the “fonds de soutien automatique” (automatic subsidy), which was 146 million euros in 2003, goes to producers from large feature film production companies based on the TSA collected from the box office receipts of their last several films combined with how


well their last films did on the major television stations. If the producer has a record of making movies that are popular and generate a lot of money, it will be easy for him or her to receive money from the fonds de soutien automatique (any money received must go directly into the financing of subsequent films). Movie theater and distribution companies can sometimes also receive money from the fonds de soutien automatique.\textsuperscript{50}

The Aides sélectives, which was 83 million euros in 2003, goes to the “avance sur recettes” (advance on future revenues) fund that grants funds on a case-by-case basis. This special fund employs well-known professionals in the field who review each film proposal and grant funds if the committee thinks the film has the potential to be great. This is a loan, not a grant, but it must only be repaid if the film generates a good profit. Also, in a bizarre sort of reallocation of funds, this can be repaid using money from the fonds de soutien. The main purpose of this fund is to contribute to non mass-marketed films that are considered “art et essai” films, or what we might refer to as “arthouse” films. The rest of the funds are granted also on a case-by-case basis through special committees, but for a wide variety of reasons.\textsuperscript{51}

An interesting implication of these funds is that independent producers are the main beneficiaries of the funds, and only French productions (and in some cases French co-productions with other nations, excluding the United States and Japan), may be granted the funds. So while a Hollywood film like Titanic will “contribute” to the fund (though again the filmmakers themselves do not contribute, but rather the viewers), an American film or

\textsuperscript{50} Ile de France Film Commission, “Aides CNC.”

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
even a French-American co-production would not be able to benefit from the subsidy program. 52

Television stations that show movies (comparable to America’s HBO or Showtime) also have interesting restrictions put on them that are designed to keep money flowing through the industry. For example, at least 3.2% of the turnover from major French television channels such as TF1, M6, France 2, and France 3 must be used to fund new film projects. This is equivalent to approximately 20 or 30 films or 30-50 million euros per major station. Another rule dictates that Canal+, a popular French pay-per-view channel, must use 20% of its revenues to buy the rights for new films; at least nine of the twenty percent must be for French films and another three percent must be for films from other European nations. 53

Subsidy money works very well in some ways and not so well in others. In a study of film subsidies done by the Copenhagen Think Tank of the years 2002-2005, French filmmakers received significantly more government subsidy money than filmmakers from any other of the 22 European countries studied: 2.4 billion euros versus 1.2 billion euros from the next highest country, Great Britain. In keeping with this, France also produced considerably more films than any other country—830 films over the duration of the study, which is approximately 300 films more than the next highest country, Italy (with 524 films). Also, when dividing production subsidies by worldwide box office receipts, France had one of the lowest ratios of the 22 countries, at 3.95 (though anything above 1 technically means the country lost money). However, France has the highest ratio of any of

52 Ile de France Film Commission, “Aides CNC.”

53 Rochefort. “French Movies.”
the nations in the study when dividing production subsidies by domestic box office receipts: at 2.66, this means that for every 266 million euros that the government puts into the film industry, it only receives 100 million back in domestic box office receipts. Despite these statistics, France is still one of the largest film producing and exporting nations in the world, with some of the highest box office receipts in the world as well.\(^{54}\)

Regardless of the huge American outcry that continues to go on against the quota and subsidy system in France, the US has a system in place that allows for similar government film financing. Instead of subsidies, though, it is in the form of tax breaks. Many US cities and states have extremely large tax breaks for film crews in order to entice filmmakers to use a particular city as a filming location, thereby granting the city and state both publicity and the quick boost in the local economy that occurs when a large film crew moves in temporarily. Since filming has become increasingly mobile and special effects cheaper and easier to produce, moving an entire film set and crew to the cheapest location (and then if necessary superimposing whatever background setting is needed) has become more and more popular. According the Motion Picture Association of America (the MPAA—the group that regulates the American film industry as well as the group that gives out ratings to films in America), forty of the fifty US states have large tax cuts and cash rebates in place to lure filmmakers to their state. A cash rebate can even be given to a film production if the state tax credit exceeds their tax liabilities. So, according to the Wall Street Journal, “in many states today, movie producers actually pay a negative tax.”\(^{55}\)

\(^{54}\) Copenhagen Think Tank, “Think Tank on European Film and Film Policy,” June 20, 2006, PDF accessed through http://www.marginalrevolution.com/marginalrevolution/2007/05/austria_fact_of.html.

Unfortunately for taxpayers though, many Hollywood studios have become experts at playing states against one another. For example, in California earlier this year, several film producers threatened to leave the state and go elsewhere for their filming if the government didn’t offer them more money. The state legislature ended up paying the producers $250 million to stay in California, an amount that the state’s government saw as worth the revenue that the film producers would bring to their state. This event prompted the Wall Street Journal to exclaim, “the movie industry’s tax machinations are irrefutable evidence that low tax rates do affect business decisions.” This system, though not subsidies, is still a way for the government to give incentives to filmmakers.\textsuperscript{56}

\textit{Ratings}

The difference in government involvement can also be seen clearly though the way that films are rated in the two countries. In the United States, the government has never had much power over censorship of the motion picture industry, with some exceptions. An early example of this is the 1915 United States Supreme Court decision Mutual Film Corporation v. Industrial Commission of Ohio. The decision on this case stated that films were merely a business, not a form of art, and therefore that the First Amendment did not protect the film industry. However in the 1952 case of Joseph Burstyn, Inc. v. Wilson, the US Supreme court unanimously overruled the 1915 decision. Since then, of course, the government has enacted some laws governing film, mostly in the form of obscenity and child pornography laws, but rarely do they meddle in anything that pertains to the mainstream media.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
Historically, the American film industry has self-regulated. The 1930 United States Motion Picture Production Code (also known as the Hays Code) dictated for the first time what was allowed and what was not allowed to be included in films released in the United States by any studio that was a member of the Motion Picture Association of America. The enactment of the code was in large part due to a Catholic outcry about and boycott of what many Catholics considered to be immoral films, causing Will Hays, then-president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA), to create the Hays Code. All the major studio heads agreed to abide by the code, but it was a "gentleman’s agreement," not an actual law. This code literally listed subjects and thematic elements that were prohibited from being broached in any film.

The original code not only prohibited certain “immoral” behavior such as sex and violence from being shown on screen, but it also dictated that “No picture shall be produced that will lower the moral standards of those who see it. Hence the sympathy of the audience should never be thrown to the side of crime, wrongdoing, evil or sin.” It also stated that references to God, Lord, Jesus, etc. were only to be used reverently, never as obscenity, and that faith and religion must never be ridiculed. The code also included a long list of “repellent subjects” that were to be “treated within the careful limits of good taste.” The code, despite already being so prohibitive, was revised in 1951, adding to the list of forbidden and “repellent” subjects to make the code even more restrictive.


59 Ibid.
Many had hoped that the changes to be made to the code in 1951 would loosen the code, not rigidify it, and this created an uproar in the film community. A number of box office hits were released in subsequent years without the certificate in order to break the code. This weakened the power and authority of the code to the point that even MPAA member companies were flouting it and distributing films without the required certificates. Many saw this as a valid rebellion against an unjust system of censorship, and interestingly there was nothing the MPAA could do about the violation of its rules. Finally, in 1968, the MPAA decided to get rid of the code completely and began instead to construct a rating system. In this new system, there would be virtually no restrictions on content, but the ratings given to each film would inform the viewing public as to what sort of potentially objectionable content a film would contain.

Instituted November 1, 1968, the MPAA rating system created four rating categories: G (General—all ages admitted), M (Mature—parental discretion advised), R (Restricted—under 16 not admitted unless accompanied by an adult guardian), and X (no one under age 18 admitted). While the rating system did not affect non-MPAA members, it suddenly opened the floodgates for MPAA member studios to have the freedom to do whatever they wanted, resulting in an outpouring of films in the next few years that would previously have been prohibited. This theoretically got rid of the censorship system that was seen as grossly out of place in the free society of America.

Throughout the years, the evolving sensibilities and a number of controversies have caused the rating system to be changed numerous times. The current rating system used in the United States since 1990 has the following five categories: G (General—all ages admitted), PG (Parental Guidance—some material may not be suitable for children), PG-13
(Parents strongly cautioned—some material may not be suitable for children under 13), R
(Restricted—under 17 not admitted unless accompanied by an adult guardian), and NC-17
(No one under 17 admitted). The MPAA rating system is protected in that any film that
wishes to post an MPAA rating must submit the film to the board and acquiesce to its
declared rating (or make changes until they get the desired rating). Also, any non-MPAA
rating put in any sort of advertising that is similar enough to be confused with an MPAA
rating is not permitted.

No film is technically required to submit a film to the board to be rated, but the
rating system has become so prominent today that filmmakers, especially Hollywood
filmmakers, rarely choose not to have their films rated. (The technically voluntary nature
of the board has protected it from legal liability or censorship charges.) In fact, not only
will most studios refuse to advertise or even to release an unrated film, but they also
almost universally refuse to release any film with an NC-17 rating, effectively censoring
films with that classification. Most directors in this predicament are forced to cut their
films in order to have any hope of anyone seeing it, because not only are studios unwilling
to release NC-17, but most stores (including WalMart and Blockbuster, two of the stores
that sell the most films in the United States) will not carry them either. In addition, PG-13
films statistically gross significantly higher at the box office than R films, which encourages
filmmakers to cut their films in order to get that desirable rating. Some claim that this is
because R rated films are not as popular, while others claim that this is a result of
advertising bias against potentially offensive films for fear of religious groups’ protest
power.60

60 This Film is Not Yet Rated, DVD. Directed by Kirby Dick, Independent Film Channel, 2006.
Another point of contention in regards to the American rating system is that the MPAA works in strict secrecy: it has never published a list of criteria explaining how it rates films, and the nine members of the ratings board are strictly confidential (the MPAA is the only ratings organization in the world that operates in secrecy and doesn't divulge its members). Many claim that the standards are so subjective and undefined that they have become virtually useless, and that the board originally designed to get rid of censorship has done nothing of the kind. The 2006 independent documentary *This Film is Not Yet Rated* is one of the most scathing critiques of the current rating system, and one that raised awareness about this system, which is now largely seen as faulty. The filmmakers even hired a private investigator to find out the names of the members of the board, then revealed their names, ages, and marital statuses. The film addresses the extreme secrecy shrouding a system that should be transparent, the double standard of violence being much more permissible to the MPAA than sexual content, and the standards changing drastically from film to film. In addition, the board's impartiality is questioned because its members work for the studio system and are paid by the six major studios in America. As Matt Stone, producer of the *South Park* series was quoted, "Jack Valenti [long-time president of the MPAA] has been very good publicly about, 'We serve the public, we serve the parents...' Crap. They serve the studios, that's who pays their bills, that's who they are." While some believe that the MPAA will radically alter the ratings system in light of

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61 Four times as many films receive an NC-17 rating for sex as for violence. Interestingly, this is the exact opposite of the majority of Europe, which allows much more sexual content and less violent content than the MPAA does. (*This Film is Not Yet Rated*, Kirby Dick.)

62 *This Film is Not Yet Rated*, Kirby Dick.
the recent controversy, it is doubtful that any major change will come from such a powerful and deeply rooted institution.

In France, however, the Centre National de la Cinématographie (or CNC—the National Center of Cinema), a division of the Ministry of Culture, has required every film to be registered with the government since 1944. Since 1986, the CNC has allowed any film that does not wish to have a cinema release to forgo the registration process. The CNC does not make judgments about which films may and may not be released, however—if a film submits the proper paperwork, it will be registered in the CNC database (which is similar to a "mortgage registry," so the CNC official website claims). The registration gives each film a "visa d'exploitation" number designed to ensure "the public nature of acts, agreements and rulings relating to the production, distribution, representation and screening of audiovisual works" and facilitate "access to credit for professionals."

After a film is registered, the "Commission plénière," a group of 28 regular members and 55 supplementary members from different backgrounds, age groups, and vocations (in order to "assure[r] la confrontation de points de vue différents") will watch the film. The group then awards each film one of the following ratings: U (Tous publics—all ages admitted), -12 (Interdit aux moins de 12 ans—no one under 12 admitted), -16 (Interdit aux moins de 16 ans—no one under 16 admitted), -18 (Interdit aux moins de 18 ans—no one under 18 admitted), and E (exempt). Sometimes the rating is then accompanied by "un avertissement destiné à l'information du spectateur sur le contenu de l'œuvre ou certaines

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de ses particularités."`64 The goal of the Commission is not to exert sway over the films themselves, but to “exercer[r] cette mission [the rating of films] dans le respect de la liberté de création et de l'intégrité de l'œuvre. Elle [la Commission] ne peut pas proposer de modification du film ni exercer de coupe."`65

Contrary to the American system, this system is based completely on restricted viewing ages rather than suggested viewing ages. In the American system, the only completely restricted rating is NC-17, which means that absolutely no one under the age of 17 is permitted to see the film. The rest of the ratings are suggestions, advising that parents exercise good judgment before deciding whether to take their children to a certain film. Even the R rating allows children into the film if an adult accompanies them. In the French system, a -12 rating means that no one under 12 is admitted, a -16 rating means that no one under 16 is admitted, and a -18 rating means that no one under 18 is admitted.

On the surface it seems that the French system is more restrictive, but one must also consider that the vast majority of French films receive a U rating and that the CNC ratings board tends to be much more lenient than the MPAA is. (The French film Amélie, for example, was awarded a U rating in France whereas it received an R in the United States. Director Jean-Pierre Jeunet thought this was hilariously outrageous, causing him to scoff at

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`64 “a warning intended to inform the spectator of the content or certain particulars of the work.” (Centre Nationale de la Cinématographie, “Commission de classification—mission de la commission de classification,” http://www.cnc.fr/Site/Template/T11B.aspx?SELECTID=1146&ID=616&t=2).

`65 “exercise that mission [the rating of films] in the respect of the creative freedom and the integrity of the work. [The Commission] can neither propose modifications of the film nor carry out cuts of the film.” (Ibid.)
the prudishness of Americans in various interviews he did for Amélie.) Also, the rarely
given -18 rating in France is limited to films that are considered especially pornographic
and violent, and anything receiving a rating of -18 is subject to extra fees and can only be
released in certain theaters. In this way, the -18 rating is similar to the MPAA’s NC-17
rating. (Recently, the American film Saw 3 was released in France under a -18 rating,
though it had garnered an R in America, and was subsequently edited down to a -16 rating
for the DVD release in order to appeal to a broader audience.)

Debates on Government Involvement in the Film Industry

The reasons why the French in general think that extensive protective measures
such as quotas and subsidies are not only good but necessary can be summed up by the
"exception culturelle." As previously explained, the exception culturelle is the belief that
film is not, as America tends to see it, business, but rather art, and as such it is an important
element of French culture. The French highly value their culture, and therefore believe that
anything culturally significant is entitled to protection. At the Uruguay round of the GATT
talks, the American negotiators “promised to remove many trade barriers against
European goods, but they asked in return that the Europeans—especially the French—
extend impartial treatment to American movies and remove the special taxes and
quotas.”66 The French vehemently denied this request based on the belief that agreeing to
this would completely destroy their culture. Famous French director Claude Berri
explained this sentiment by saying, “if the GATT deal goes through as proposed, European

66 Cowen, "French Kiss-Off."
Since the US backed down and agreed to let Europe keep its restrictive policies, there have been numerous debates on whether this was the correct decision. Indeed, if the American negotiators had not backed down on this point, a number of European nations had threatened to leave the talks and doubtless would have done so. This action could have had extremely negative consequences, so in this case it was best that the United States acquiesced.

Protective policies towards French cultural institutions are not limited to film. The French government is also very protective of French popular music, with similar quotas and subsidies given to pop singers as to filmmakers, and of the French language. The Académie française is the ruling body over the French language, and it has worked hard to ban English words and phrases that have come into common usage in France, such as “email,” “superstar,” and “takeaway.” The French government believes that the French language is in danger of no longer existing if this “Anglo invasion” continues. French Minister of Culture Jacques Toubon said in 1994 that the United States entertainment industry wished to “impose domination by any means,” and more recently government advisor and linguist Hervé Bourges voiced his fear, saying, “We must ensure French is being spoken during international trade or diplomatic meetings, because this is a battle in which the real stakes are measured in terms of both political influence and economic growth.” The view of French film closely mirrors this in that the French government and

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67 Ibid.

68 Cohen, “Aux Armes!”
many French people believe the cultural power in film can and does translate directly into political and economic power.  

The ability to closely regulate "French culture" in film today is an ideal that is becoming less and less feasible. Though the desire to protect one's nation and culture is understandable and laudable, as technology rapidly advances and as trade and communication quickly become more and more global, the dividing line between cultures is beginning to disappear. Even the relatively simple question of what is a French film is no longer answerable as more and more films are co-productions between two, three, or more countries. A tangible example of this cultural ambiguity came in 2003 with Jean Pierre Jeunet's film *Un Long Dimanche de Fiançailles (A Very Long Engagement)*. The film was shot in France with an entirely French cast and crew (starring Audrey Tautou) and completely in the French language, but because part of the financial backing for the film came from the American company Warner Brothers, the administrative tribunal of Paris ruled that the film was "not French enough" to receive CNC "avances sur recettes" funds. In 2003 the CNC approved the paperwork that Jeunet submitted, but the French court, responding to complaints that were filed because of a previous law stating that American-backed films were not allowed to receive French government funds, immediately cancelled the CNC approval and revoked the funds. This ruling indirectly caused *Un Long Dimanche de*  

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70 "tribunal administratif de Paris." (Francis Boespflug and Jean-Pierre Jeunet, "Film français ou production américaine?" *Le Monde*, December 2, 2004.)
Fiançailles to be disqualified from participating in various French film festivals, including Cannes. 71

Jeunet, who has directed the worldwide hit Amélie and a number of other films with wide acclaim, was incensed by this decision. “It’s just a question of commercial competition,” Jeunet complained, “The producers [who filed the complaints] are obsessed because there’s a new studio and they don’t want to share the cake. It’s very cynical, very hypocritical.” Jeunet cited Oliver Stone’s 2004 film Alexander starring Colin Farrell and Angelina Jolie as proof of the French government’s hypocrisy in awarding funds. The film, a co-Germany-USA-France-Netherlands-UK production, had received French government funds though it was neither filmed in France nor in the French language. 72

At 45 million euros, the budget for Un Long Dimanche de Fiançailles was one of the highest in French film history, and the backing by Warner Brothers was necessary to be able to afford such a lofty budget. After the French court’s ruling, effectively snubbing Warner Brothers, many feared that American companies would be more hesitant in the future to co-produce films with French directors or casts. Because of this embarrassment, the French Minister of Culture, Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres, announced in April of 2005 that films made with American backing would qualify for French state subsidies, so long as they were made in French and at least partially in France. 73 Indeed, shouldn’t the French


72 Ibid.

government be thrilled and proud when American film companies voluntarily give money to French filmmakers and producers? Does that not prove the value of the French film industry and justify the governmental protective policies?

Under these new restrictions, American companies and directors are only permitted to produce government-subsidized films in French, whereas French companies and directors can produce subsidized movies in English. This new system has already seen some success with films such as the 2008 thriller *Taken*, which was filmed mainly in Paris by a French director and writers, but starred mostly American actors and was in English. Many more such films are in the works as French and American industry professionals are learning to work profitably together, creating a "beautiful friendship."

Is French protectionism the correct way to respond to global pressures on their media? The recent *Reason Magazine* article "The French Kiss-Off" presented a compelling argument against "protectionistic policies," saying that France's film industry dominated the world for years without protective policies, so they clearly have the ability to do so. The author also argues, "cultural protectionism does not further cultural diversity...Real cultural diversity results from the interchange of ideas, products, and influences, not from the insular development of a single national style."74 Certainly competition is beneficial in stimulating creativity, but there is some validity to the argument that he who has the most money and power (the United States) has the ability to dominate the rest. It is true, moreover, that film in today's society has become a very effective way of transmitting ideas and culture because of the medium's popular and prevalent status in our society. Daniel Toscan du Plantier, president of the French government-funded marketing and publicity

74 Cowen, "French Kiss-Off."
association Unifrance, explained the political importance of cinema by saying, “cinema used to be the side salad in world commerce. Now, it’s the beef.” He also explained that since America and France are “two countries obsessed by movies...we should be able to find an accommodation, provided we accept that cinema is politics, and one image for the world is politically unacceptable.”

The stereotypically American ideal of the “free market” has been invoked many times here, with some French support. French director Eric Rohmer is one of the few directors in France who does not agree with French protective policies. “I am a commercial film maker,” he said, “I am not supported by the state; I am for free competition.” In his opinion, as in the opinion of many powerful American filmmakers who wish to defend their economic interests, the film industry should be ruled by the survival of the fittest—the best films, wherever they are from, should be able to rule. And it is very possible that subsidies and loans that only have to be paid back if the film does well will only create lazy and non-innovative filmmakers.

Some also argue that since subsidies and governmental protection have never been used to protect other forms of art, such as symphonic music, painting, or sculpture, then popular culture (film, television, pop music) ought not to receive such government protections. While this could be evidence of film’s special place in society, it could also be a handicap based on the “envy and insecurity” of the French film industry.

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75 Cohen, “Aux Armes!”

76 Cowen, “French Kiss-Off.”

77 Ibid.
It seems that there is an inherent cultural bias, however, that severely handicaps foreign films in American markets. Statistically, American filmgoers shy away from foreign films, seeing anything from another country as an "art house" picture or something snobby or exclusive. French films gross more in America than almost any other country's films (although Chinese/Taiwanese "kung fu" films and Japanese anime have also done very well in recent years), yet their earnings are still far below those of the majority of Hollywood films.78

In many ways, this preconception of foreign films as solely "art house" fare has been reinforced over and over by foreign film distributors. Fearful that they will not be recognized any other way, foreign distributors advertise mainly to the art house scene and tend to publicize their films by emphasizing awards their films have won such as Golden Globes or Palmes d'Or. On the other hand, Mick LaSalle, reporter for the San Francisco Chronicle, contends that French film distributors in the United States overly emphasize the universality of their films, whereas in his opinion they should instead be emphasizing "what makes them different, to point out what they have that American movies can't hope to have, to demonstrate how they are the only true source for a specific kind of cinema we don't make and maybe don't know how to make."79 Because of this, they end up getting swept under the rug and ignored by American pop culture.

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78 The only foreign film to ever gross an amount comparable to a large Hollywood film was the 2000 Taiwanese film Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon which grossed $128 million. (Box Office Mojo, “Foreign Language: 1980-Present,” IMDB.com, Inc., http://www.boxofficemojo.com/genres/chart/?id=foreign.htm.)

What is it about the culture in America that causes foreign films to do so badly at the box office, whereas foreign films are more than palatable to almost every other country’s popular market? Certainly Americans are not unable to read subtitles or comprehend dubbing, they’re merely not used to it (though widespread poor language skills could account for some of the bias against subtitles). It is possible that foreign film is out of touch with American culture, but claims that American film is significantly better than other country’s films are falsified by the relatively equal treatment of American films and other nation’s films at worldwide awards ceremonies. Claims that foreign films are not marketable in America aren’t true, either, in the wake of several recent smash hits from other countries, including Italy’s 1998 *Life is Beautiful*, China’s 2004 *Hero*, and most notably the 2000 Taiwanese film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon.* Others have posited that foreign films aren’t advertised enough, which could be true, but which also assumes that the viewing public will passively watch whatever is fed to them through advertising. Another interesting theory is that European (and worldwide) protectionism has created a mental and emotional barrier that fosters a feeling of insecurity when one is outside of that barrier. In other words, “If Europeans treat their films as weak, those films will become permanently weak.”

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80 These films grossed $57 million, $53 million, and $128 million in the United States, respectively. (Box Office Mojo, “Foreign Language: 1980-Present.”)

81 Cowen, “French Kiss-Off.”
Global Marketing—What it Can and Cannot Reveal About Culture

Why Market Globally?

Ever since the beginning of cinema films have been exported worldwide. In the early days, when one wanted to send a film to other countries, it was easy to cut out the intertitles and replace them with translated ones because films were silent. With the advent of sound, sending films abroad became more difficult as distributors suddenly had to figure out how to deal with the linguistic barrier. They of course invented subtitles and dubbing, but in the early days of sound, and until fairly recently, subtitles were a difficult endeavor, where every frame had to be etched with the words by a machine. Also, as copyright laws became more sophisticated and directors became more obsessed with protecting the integrity of their work, the random cutting that each cinema could previously do was halted. If a director, producer, or studio wanted to send a film to a global audience, they had to think about how to make the films more palatable to different cultures, whether that involved changing the film itself, releasing a re-cut version of the film later, or merely changing the way the film was advertised.

Keeping a global audience in mind has always been important to film because of the relative difficulty, and in some cases impossibility, of making a profit on domestic markets alone. As previously stated, the ratio of potential audience to cost of production is often too low, causing film studios to keep in mind how to attract a global audience. In many cases, only the Indian film industry ("Bollywood") and the American film industry (Hollywood) can afford to keep films domestic. Though they can afford to do so, the majority of the time the thought of more revenues, worldwide fame, and millions more viewers are much more appealing. In fact, it is in large part the ability of American films to make it on the US
market alone that has allowed Hollywood to virtually take over the international film industry. Because Hollywood is so well developed and networked, it is able to produce huge “blockbusters” that other countries without its infrastructure cannot make. Also, because of all the previously stated reasons, Hollywood has a virtual monopoly over the huge American market. This makes it very difficult for other countries to get into the American market and sell their films, yet at the same time Hollywood, because of its power, has virtually unlimited access to the rest of the world market. This merely gives Hollywood more power, and in an ever-continuing cycle, continues to strengthen Hollywood while weakening other worldwide cinema industries. Europe, though a very modern area with the potential to have a huge system like Hollywood, is fragmented by language, culture, and different views of film as an industry, all of which have prevented Europeans from banding together into a Hollywood-style megaindustry.\textsuperscript{82}

In recent years the need to market films globally has become more important with the advent of the Internet. Piracy of films, though long an issue, has of late become easier and more prevalent to the point that preventing a film from going abroad is nearly impossible. Since films are going to find their way around the world somehow, whether by DVD piracy, through illegal internet downloads, or legitimately, film studios have had to come to terms with creating a real strategy for curbing the ill effects of the internet age. One way to do this is by aggressively marketing to various parts of the world in order to reduce piracy and recuperate losses due to piracy.

Because of the dramatic increase in world trade as well as the economic and cultural importance of film, it makes sense that people would be afraid of its possible subversive

\textsuperscript{82} Rinaman, "French film quotas."
influence and that governments would seek to better control it. This is especially important to many nations because film has always been a powerful propaganda tool, whether explicitly or implicitly. The highly contentious nature of the GATT talks and the resulting treaty is a great example of opposing governments' desire to control this very powerful medium. Similarly, all of the protective laws in France are designed to prop up the French film industry to give it as much of a chance in the world as possible. None of this would matter if film were not powerful and important to cultures and economies.

*Catering to a Global Audience*

Though filmmakers rarely make a film for a specific global audience, it is not at all uncommon for a producer or director to purposefully include certain icons or themes in a film in order to attract an overseas demographic. The things that are added generally appeal to stereotypes of the nation the film comes from. French studios are aware that French film is not especially popular worldwide, so they will often use stereotypes of French culture and history to attract foreign viewers. This perception has been reinforced over and over recently. Of the top ten grossing French films in America in the past ten years, for example, three prominently feature the stereotypical romantic lives of colorful, exciting Parisians (*Amélie*, *La Vie en Rose*, and *The Spanish Apartment*), three are historical fiction/fantasy costume dramas in the style of *films historiques* (*A Very Long Engagement*, *The Brotherhood of the Wolf*, and *The Chorus*), and of the remaining four, three are part of a new trend in French cinema that is especially marketable to Americans—psychological thrillers. So, though French filmmakers do not often make a film specifically or only for the American market, they do carefully choose what films to send abroad out of the most
popular films in France, keeping in mind the American views of France as well as the types of films that typically do well on the American market. They also use stereotypes of French film to more effectively market films to a foreign audience.

The same is true of the American films that are popular in France. In general, the most popular American films in France were also extremely popular in America. *Titanic*, one of the highest grossing films in US history (the highest if left unadjusted for inflation), is also one of the highest grossing in French history. Up to the year 2005, over half of the top 100 grossing films in French history were Hollywood films, and almost all of them were either animated children's films or huge blockbuster adventure movies. All of the *Harry Potter* series, the *Lord of the Rings* series, and the recent three *Star Wars* films were in the top 50 in France, and *Finding Nemo, Shrek 2, Tarzan, The Incredibles, Mulan,* and *101 Dalmations* were also all in the top 50. This could indicate that adventure films and children's films are the two genres most often sent to France and most heavily publicized or it could be because these are two types of film that the French film industry does not have the infrastructure and technology to produce itself. It could also indicate that these two genres are the most universal in that they appeal to a wide variety of cultures and transcend stereotypes. In addition, the fact that the majority of the American films in the top 100 in France were also films that were successful in America shows either that distributors sent only the most popular American films to France or that American and French film tastes are similar. I believe that the truth is a mixture of all these factors.

Though American filmmakers have historically made films with only the domestic market in mind because of their ability to make money on the domestic market alone, Hollywood has recently turned more to the foreign market, specifically to Asia. For
example, a New York Times article from 2008 explains the marked trend in the past several years toward apocalyptic dramas (such as *I Am Legend* and *Cloverfield*) and superhero dramas that raze iconic New York City, which is instantly recognizable worldwide. Because dramas and comedies with complicated plots or dialogue that is difficult to translate usually do poorly overseas, studios are turning more and more to films with a “simple message, preferably one that is nonverbal and can be communicated with a single dominant image.” Movies like *The Day After Tomorrow*, *The Dark Knight*, and *Iron Man* are such films, and a recognizable comic book superhero or a destroyed New York City is just such a dominant image. *The Day After Tomorrow* and *Cloverfield* both feature the Statue of Liberty (mostly submerged in the former and partially destroyed in the latter) as the main image on their movie posters, for example, and both of these films were huge hits worldwide, grossing more overseas than domestically.

Hollywood advertisers are not the only ones who make use of iconic images when it comes to selling their films on the foreign market. Many French movie posters destined for foreign sale prominently feature the Eiffel Tower, even if the film itself never (or rarely) includes the landmark. A particularly good recent example of this is the film *La Vie en Rose* which, though set mainly in Paris, did not include the Eiffel Tower. The French movie poster shows singer Edith Piaf (the film is a biopic of her life) from the back with a monochromatic background of a rapt audience. The American movie poster also shows a

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rapt audience, but the Eiffel Tower has been artificially added into the background and a much younger and prettier Piaf is shown from the front. This caters to the idea that the American aesthetic favors beautiful women on movie posters (especially when the woman, though instantly recognizable in France, is not very well known in America) and that Americans associate the Eiffel Tower with all things French, expecting to see it in any movie about French people.

French marketers tend to do things like this, however, because it is very difficult to get French films into America. US distributors are often hesitant to buy French films unless they fit into a certain widespread American preconception about the French, and even then any foreign film, especially a European film, is viewed in America as an “art house” film. Because Americans are not typically used to dealing with subtitles and dubbing, they are very slow to accept films in other languages, unless they are specifically watching it for the artistry. Non-artsy films made for the general public (i.e. romantic comedies, thrillers, romances) tend not to be exported from France to America (though, ironically, they are exported from America to France). These films often also rely on cultural norms and “inside jokes” that may not be understood by other cultures.

Awards programs also factor prominently into marketing schemes. Most French films will never be viewed as pop culture in America but rather as upper lever “Oscar fodder;” as a result they tend to get recognized at awards ceremonies like the Academy Awards and the Golden Globes. However, because of the rules of these awards ceremonies, often only one film per country is allowed to be considered for certain awards, so each country must pick which one film it wants to submit to be considered for an award. This is meant to help diversify the awards, but it often allows only one or two films from France to
be recognized in America each year, whether there were more films worthy of recognition or not. 85

All of these factors have combined to form the American view that all French films are the same. A certain type of film tends to do well in America, so France will send more of that type to the US and market other films to look similar. Then if those do well, the cycle will continue. This, combined with the bias against foreign films, dubbing, and subtitles in America, has caused a vicious circle that has worked for many years to keep French films, and most other foreign films, relegated to the art house realm and out of mainstream culture completely.

In many ways the quotas and protective laws in France have worked to help level the playing field for Hollywood in view of the hurdles the French must overcome when trying to break into the US market. In an interesting turn of events, though, the quota system has actually served to lower the amount of higher quality “art” films that enter France from America. When only a small number of US films per year are allowed into France, Hollywood is going to have the upper hand and send only their biggest moneymakers. In the same way, French cinemas are going to only want the films that are sure to make the most money and are not willing to take the American independent or artistic films that are not guaranteed to make as much money. This can prevent independent studios and directors from getting their films seen in France and elsewhere in Europe. It can also lead the French to view American films as big blockbusters with lots of

explosions, and not allow them to see some of the great artistry that also emerges from the United States.

The decreased number of films that can get from America to France and likewise from France to America has only served to reinforce stereotypes of each culture. Though France usually sends only its biggest hits (that are viewed as palatable to American culture) to America, French films are seen in America as artsy because of the inherent bias mixed with the different French aesthetic. On the other hand, because America usually sends only its biggest hits to France, American films are viewed in France as expensive, gaudy, and shallow. In both countries, the systems in place only help reinforce the stereotypes, and yet in both cases the systems are also useful in many ways and have been in place for so long that there seems to be no end to these trends in sight.

Changing Marketing for Different Cultures

When marketing a film to a different culture, it is self-evident that some changes in tactics and form must be used, taking a different culture’s norms and preferences into consideration. The whole point of advertising, after all, is to try to figure out what will make a certain group of people interested in a product and then to tailor the advertising to those demographics. Therefore, it is not only unsurprising that changes like the previously mentioned *La Vie en Rose* movie poster example would happen, but it is actually good marketing practice.

For the most part, though, when comparing movie posters, the posters for each country (unlike the *La Vie en Rose* example) are virtually identical aesthetically. The main differences generally appear in what is written on them. Within each culture, it is common
to list names of famous actors or actresses as “top billing,” or prominently on the poster, in order to attract people who respect and enjoy that particular performer’s work. In France, it is much more common to see a director’s name featured prominently on a poster than it is in America, as French culture tends to emphasize directors more than American culture does, which typically emphasizes performers. In posters for French films that are sent to America, the names of performers and director are usually either much smaller or omitted completely because they do not have the name recognition in America that they have in France. Therefore their names on the poster would not be a draw. In its place is often a list of awards that the film has won (to appeal to the “art house” crowd that stereotypically values prestigious awards), or an ebullient quote from a famous film critic. The same is sometimes true for American films in France, though fewer changes are generally made because there is considerably more name recognition in France of American performers than vice versa. (see also Appendix D for side-by-side examples)

*Film Title Translation*

Similar to the aesthetic changes on a movie poster is the translation of a title. Clearly language barriers require that translations be made for any film and advertising campaign, and the way that a film’s title is or is not translated can reveal a lot about how the American and French publics view one another. Because the title is the first thing that most people see or know about a film, it is extremely important in creating a first impression. There are many different reasons why a title would remain untranslated, why

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86 Anecdotally, the common way to alphabetize films in America is by the title of the film, whereas it is common in France to alphabetize by the last name of the director.
it would be translated literally, or why it would be radically changed, and I will briefly explore those reasons.

When a film title is left completely untranslated, it is often because the title is either a proper noun or an easily recognizable name. This happens in both France and America, and some famous examples are films like *Iron Man, Juno, King Kong, Batman,* or *Persepolis.* Another case where a distributor would leave the title untranslated is if the title is a common term or phrase, such as *Blood Diamond, Match Point,* or *Bon Voyage,* or if the title comes from a famous quote, such as *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, Walk the Line,* or *Good Night and Good Luck.* This is almost exclusively used in the case of American films that are sent to France, not vice versa. Another common case of titles being left in the original English is if the title was very well known or the English is similar enough to the French that the average French person would understand what it meant. In many of these cases, the distributors decide not to translate the title. Some recent examples of this are *Da Vinci Code,* *American History X,* and *Million Dollar Baby.* Again, this technique is almost never used in French films that come to America, possibly because of the prevalence of English worldwide as compared to French and because of Americans' poor foreign language skills as a whole. There are some cases, though, where the title would be easily translated but the distributor decides instead to leave the title in its original language. The reason for keeping English words that are not in common usage in French could be that the title seems "cooler" in English, but other than that I am not sure why a distributor would

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87 If translated, these would be, respectively, "Le Code de Da Vinci," "L'Histoire Americaine X," and "Le bébé [or "l'enfant] d'un million de dollars." As you can see, all these words are extremely similar in French and English, which is probably the reason they were kept in the original language.
choose to do so. Examples of this are the film *Hostel, Shaun of the dead, The Island, No Country for Old Men, The Fast and the Furious,* and the *Saw* series.

Another common occurrence in film title translation is when a title is translated directly from one language to the other, without any alterations being made. Examples from English to French include *Signes (Signs), A la recherche du bonheur (Pursuit of Happyness),* and *La Vie aquatique (The Life Aquatic).* Examples from French to English are *The Closet (Le Placard) and The Chorus (Les Choristes).* Sometimes a distributor will take the original title and add a little extra to it for clarity, such as *Hitch, expert en séduction (Hitch), Le Secret de Brokeback Mountain (Brokeback Mountain), Rocky Balboa (Rocky),* and *The Dark Knight: Le Chevalier noir (The Dark Knight).* This seeming penchant for short titles in America versus longer titles in French (as some have postulated) is reinforced with the recent *Amelie (Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amélie Poulain),* but this correlation is not consistent, as there are also numerous examples of the reverse being true.

The final group, which is much less common, is when a title is significantly altered when translated. Typically this happens when the original title is very difficult to translate because it contains colloquialisms or inherent cultural meanings or puns that defy direct translation. In these cases, the translation of the title attempts to conserve the meaning behind the title as opposed to the words of the title. Titles such as these are fascinating to analyze, but they are also very subjective and vulnerable to criticism. It is more common for this to occur when sending French films to America than the other way around, and some recent examples include *La Vie en Rose (La Môme), The Class (Entre les murs), With a Friend like Harry (Harry, un ami qui vous veut du bien), He Loves Me, He Loves Me Not (A la
Overall, looking at film title translation reveals several trends that reinforce the ways that French and American cinema are viewed in France and the United States. French film titles are more heavily edited when sent to America whereas US film titles tend to remain very similar, often exactly the same, when sent abroad. This is evidence of the prominence of the English language worldwide, which allows film titles to remain intact and still be understood by a large number of filmgoers overseas. This also shows either a bias from the American foreign distributors, believing that English is superior and therefore keeping the title intact, or a belief of the French distributors that the French public would prefer a title in the original English and that the American public also prefers titles in English. Either way, it underlines the French fear of American cinema’s impending takeover of the French film industry, because whether Hollywood has a superiority complex or the French film industry has an inferiority complex, film translation definitely has a bias towards the English language.
Conclusion: The Crossroads of Two Cultures

How much can film truly reveal about a culture? Though film is only produced by a very small percentage of any population, it is enjoyed by a much larger percentage. The American and French film industries are both very large and have far reaching influences, so claiming that either is a “pure” reflection of French or American culture is misdirected. America and France both are incredibly diverse places, with many different cultures and viewpoints mixing together and affecting other cultures and viewpoints. Looking at the film produced by a country can, however, illuminate three major facets of that country’s culture.

First, the film industry shows the fundamental nature how politics and art coincide and influence one another. In France, a somewhat socialist nation with farther-reaching governmental regulation than in America, it makes sense that the government would also have control of film registration and ratings. In America, where many people are adamant about keeping the government out of their lives, it makes sense that the ratings system would not be government-controlled. Though both countries have financial systems in place to aid the film industry, the French system is much more rigid and controlling than the American one. Again, this shows that France in general has much more government control of the culture while America prefers less government control.

The economic power of film is also closely tied to the politics of film. The historically popular and deeply held American belief in the importance of an open market and free trade can also be clearly seen in the film industry. A number of powerful companies have taken over the film studio system over time, creating a virtual monopoly of film in America that would be possible only in a free market system. Smaller film studios
still make films and get them distributed, but the sheer fact that 90% of all media in the United States is controlled by only six major corporations is evidence of the power of money in America. In France, on the other hand, the film industry is seen much more artistically and less commercially. This is evidenced by the belief in the exception culturelle, by the comparative lack of a rigid studio system, and by the much less commercial nature of films in France, where “art house” is not a separate industry and where films have a smaller economic impact than in America.

Also, the difference in what content in considered objectionable reveals an inherent difference in cultural values. Sexual content is more accepted in French film than American film, whereas violence can be considerably more graphic in American film than in French film. The sexual contrast between the two nations is evidence of the more sexually liberated and open culture of France, as compared to the more private and repressed view of sexuality in America. The contrast of violence permitted in films shows the more bellicose nature of American culture and history and mirrors the fact that violent crimes are exponentially more common in America than in France.

Based on all of this, which is more powerful in France and which is more powerful in America: money, culture, or government? A recent article in the New York Times compared French commercials to American ones and claimed that French commercials “aim at [the] heart” while American commercials aim “[at the] wallet.” The stereotype of France as a nation that values the heart is far reaching—Americans view Paris as the city of love, French as the language of love, and French people as experts in love. The contrasts between the American and French film industries in some ways back up this claim that the French respect the heart more than the wallet: art is valued over industry and sexual
content is more acceptable to the ratings board than violent content, for example. Certainly the move by President Sarkozy this year to ban commercials from the most popular stations during prime time evidences a completely different view of art as it relates to commerce from the American view. However, to claim that the cultural importance of film in France negates its economic and political importance is not correct, either. The French film industry is a very significant commercial industry, and the government has fiercely fought to keep it strong. Also, to claim that the economic aspect of film in America trumps all else is also to claim that there are few true artists in Hollywood, and that the government has no stake in the film industry. Both of these are false: art and culture are highly valued in America as well, and the very reason that the government fought so hard against the exception culturelle at the GATT treaty talks shows the importance of the huge film industry to the government.

In fact, all three facets of the film industry—the soul, the wallet, and the politics—are inextricably linked. Without any one, both of nations’ film industries would no longer exist. The government protects the film industry because of both its artistic and economic value. The economic value helps the government’s economic interests the same as it legitimizes the artistic content. Also, the artistic and cultural value of film allows it to do well economically and often also spurs the government to pay attention. Recently, first lady Michelle Obama was quoted in the New York Times defending the arts in America: “The

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arts are not just a nice thing to have...[they] define who we are as a people."\textsuperscript{89} This stands in stark contrast to the common view that America doesn't value art as highly as other nations do. Art does define a people, which is why it would be beneficial for both France and America to be more open to one another's culture. Truly, though art and politics are more powerful in France's culture and money is more influential in American culture, all three are vital in different ways to both. With ever-increasing globalization, countries are more linked to each other than ever, and the lingering biases and stereotypes that America and France have for one another are more and more antiquated. Arts reveal some of the soul of a people, and as such they should be protected and encouraged. However, because of their cultural importance they should also be more open and accessible to the rest of the world, so that every nation can better understand and appreciate different cultures.

Appendix A: Photos

The projection part of the cinématoscope (top left) of the Lumière brothers, (bottom left). There were separate areas to record, print, and then project the films. (Images accessed via http://www.institut-lumiere.org)

Below, a copy of the program for the first film showing by the Lumière brothers.

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**LE CINÉMATOGRAFIE**  
**SALON INDIES**  
6. Boulevard des Capucines, 14  
PARIS

Cet appareil, inventé par MM. Auguste et Louis Lumière, permet de recueillir, par des séries d'épreuves instantanées, tous les mouvements qui, pendant un temps donné, se sont succédé devant l'objectif, et de reproduire ensuite ces mouvements en projetant, grandeur naturelle, devant une salle entière, leurs images sur un écran.

**SUJETS ACTUELS**

1. La Sortie de l'Usine LUMIÈRE à Lyon  
2. Le Voyage  
3. Le Piste aux Petits Voisins  
4. Le Balancement du Crime de Photographes à Lyon  
5. Les Forgerons  
6. Le Jardinier  
7. Le Bégue  
8. Le Sort à la Cuvettière  
9. Le Place des Carabiniers à Lyon  
10. Le Bar
Poster for *A Trip to the Moon* by Georges Méliès, 1902.

Image accessed via http://www.classicscifi.com/images

The cover of the first publication of the *Cahiers du Cinéma*, 1951.

Image accessed via http://www.theepochtimes.com/

Brigitte Bardot, International megastar of the 1950s-1960s.

Image accessed via www.brigittebardot.com
Appendix B: Top Ten Grossing French Films in America from 2000 to 2009

(data accessed on boxofficemojo.com)


*All numbers in millions of US $*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Film Title</th>
<th>Release Year</th>
<th>US Gross</th>
<th>Total Worldwide Gross</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Amelie (<em>Le Fabuleux Destin d'Amelie Poulain</em>)</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>33.225</td>
<td>173.921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Brotherhood of the Wolf (<em>Le Pacte des loups</em>)</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>11.260</td>
<td>70.752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>La Vie en Rose (<em>La Môme</em>)</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>10.301</td>
<td>86.274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Closet (<em>Le Placard</em>)</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>6.678</td>
<td>50.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A Very Long Engagement (<em>Un Long Dimanche de fiançailles</em>)</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>6.524</td>
<td>70.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tell No One (<em>Ne te dis à personne</em>)</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>6.117</td>
<td>33.385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Spanish Apartment (also called “Euro Pudding”) (<em>L'Auberge Espagnole</em>)</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>3.895</td>
<td>numbers unavailable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>With a Friend Like Harry (<em>Harry un ami qui vous veut du bien</em>)</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>3.830</td>
<td>15.472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Hidden (<em>Caché</em>)</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>3.647</td>
<td>16.197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The Chorus (<em>Les Choristes</em>)</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>3.635</td>
<td>83.580</td>
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### Appendix C: Top Ten Grossing American Films in France from 1998 to 2005


*All numbers in millions of US $*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Film Title</th>
<th>Release Year</th>
<th>French Gross</th>
<th>US Gross</th>
<th>Total Worldwide Gross</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Titanic</em></td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>138,928</td>
<td>600,788</td>
<td>1,842,879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>Finding Nemo</em></td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>64,781</td>
<td>339,714</td>
<td>864,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace</em> <em>(La menace fantôme)</em></td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>55,830</td>
<td>431,088</td>
<td>924,317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets</em> <em>(Harry Potter et la chambre des secrets)</em></td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>53,309</td>
<td>261,988</td>
<td>878,643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>The Sixth Sense</em> <em>(Sixième sens)</em></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>48,562</td>
<td>293,506</td>
<td>672,806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone</em> <em>(Harry Potter à l’école des sorciers)</em></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>48,138</td>
<td>317,575</td>
<td>974,733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><em>Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King</em> <em>(Le Seigneur des Anneaux: Le Retour du Roi)</em></td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>48,125</td>
<td>377,027</td>
<td>1,119,110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><em>Tarzan</em></td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>47,971</td>
<td>171,091</td>
<td>448,191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><em>Shrek 2</em></td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>47,871</td>
<td>441,226</td>
<td>919,838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td><em>Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban</em> <em>(Harry Potter et le prisonnier d’Azkaban)</em></td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>46,969</td>
<td>249,541</td>
<td>795,634</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: Movie Poster Comparisons of Popular French Films

(French posters accessed via affichescinema.com and American posters accessed through movieposter.com)

American poster above left and French poster above right. (see page 51 for discussion)

French movie poster, left, compared to original American poster, center. The French poster has the two stars’ names on the top, and the American poster replaced those with the English tag line, “She’ll change your life.” On the right is the altered movie poster from several weeks later once reviews had come out and Oscar nominations had been announced. The tag line has been moved down, the director’s name made less prominent, a quote from Premiere magazine added, and the Academy Award nomination number is given the most prominent position (and size) on the poster.
Movie posters for the 2007 film *Persepolis*. The French poster, left, displays the *Prix du Jury* from the Cannes Film Festival. This prize is considered the third most prestigious at the festival and is a very big achievement. Also, the directors’ names are in blue below the picture. On the English version, right, the directors’ names are directly below the title, the Cannes prize has been moved down, and typical of many American posters, an effusive quote about the film has replaced top billing on the poster.

Side by side comparisons of the posters for the 2008 French film, *Un Conte de Noël*. The French poster, left, features their Cannes Film Festival *selection officielle* status prominently at the very top, and the rest of the poster largely displays the performers in this star-studded picture. The American poster, on the right, again features effervescent quotes along the top, the Cannes symbol a little less obviously at the top, and the performers names written much smaller above the title because the names are not as well known in America.
French poster, left, and American poster, right, of the 2009 French-American thriller *Taken*. Interestingly, the title was conserved for the French release. Both posters feature the title on a black and white background with star Liam Neeson’s name prominently on the top. The French version has a tag line in place of the famous quote from the film which takes up the majority of the American poster. Also, the director, Pierre Morel, is featured on the French poster but not the American one, as he would have name recognition in France but not in America.

French poster, left, and American poster, right, for *The Closet*, a 2001 French comedy. As is typical, the French version features both the performer’s names and the director’s name prominently and the American version has them less obvious. The American poster also has the characteristic tag line along the top of the poster, and less characteristically, the French title in parentheses underneath the English title.
Side-by-side comparisons of the French films *A Very Long Engagement* (2004), *Tell No One* (2006), and *The Chorus* (2004). These posters all follow the trends where the French version features the performers' and the directors' names prominently, whereas the American versions replace top billing with an enthusiastic quote from a critic or a tag line. The performers' and directors' names then appear much smaller and generally at the bottom. Other than that, the aesthetics of the posters are generally very similar.
Bibliography


*This Film is Not Yet Rated*. DVD. Directed by Kirby Dick, Independent Film Channel, 2006.
