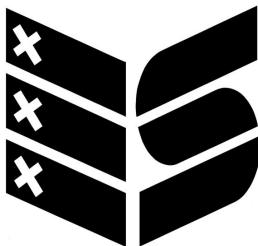


WORKING PAPERS  
EUROPEAN STUDIES  
AMSTERDAM

9



Eva Navarro Martínez

*Images of Europe  
in American films  
1921 - 1962*

Opleiding Europese Studies, Universiteit van Amsterdam  
2009

Dr. Eva Navarro Martínez teaches Spanish literature and culture in the department of European Studies at the University of Amsterdam.

© the author, 2009

ISSN 1871-1693

*Working Papers European Studies Amsterdam* is a series of incidental publications by staff members, associates and collaborators of the Department of European Studies at the University of Amsterdam.

Printed texts in brochure format can be obtained (free of charge for individuals) from the Secretariat, European Studies, Universiteit van Amsterdam, Spuistraat 134, 1012 VB Amsterdam, Netherlands; e-mail [secr.es-fgw@uva.nl](mailto:secr.es-fgw@uva.nl)

# IMAGES OF EUROPE IN AMERICAN FILMS 1921-1962

Eva Navarro Martínez

Film has become the world's biggest image factory. These images have taken root in the minds of millions of spectators during more than a century. 'Movies are like the dreams we might have when we are awake' (Lloyd 1976). Movies transform the basic raw materials of our world into an exiting and intense experience. These materials come from fields as diverse as empirical reality, history, literature, and indeed actual dreams. Films have constructed their imaginary in a great part by projecting images of other cultures. Of all international film industries, Hollywood has been the most powerful in creating and providing the visual messages and material that we process as mere entertainment, but which also constitute an important source of critical study.

Scholars have approached cinema from different disciplines and with different purposes. One of the most popular approaches is the study of film as an historical and ideological document, by focusing, on the one hand, on the period or event that a concrete film portrays, and, on the other hand, on how movies reflect the culture, the political circumstances and society in which they are made and distributed. (Among studies in this vein are Vasey 1997, O'Connor 1988, Gabler 1988 and Caparrós 2004.) Another frequently used approach to film is to study the effects that specific movies have on their spectators. Furthermore, film is a very valuable source for studying how different nations, groups or individuals are seen or represented at a given moment and from a certain perspective. In this sense, cinema is a wide and attractive field for Imagology: the study of the representation of others (Beller & Leerssen 2007; also the entry on 'Cinema' in that collection, by Frank Degler).

This article follows the imagological approach in analysing cinematic representations of Europe in American films from the 1920s until the end of the 1950s. The aim of this essay is to explore how films from those decades reflect

Europe or European affairs, and to identify the preferred themes regarding Europe. How did Americans in those decades see their Old World cousins on their cinema screens?

### *Towards an imagology of cinema*

Inagology is the study of ‘representations as textual strategies and as discourse’ (Leerssen 2007: 27). Following this cue, we can attempt to understand why and under which circumstances an audiovisual discourse produces its images. Ever since the work of Hugo Duserinck, imagologists have pointed out that our sources are subjective. The nationality or subjects represented (the *speeted*) are ‘silhouetted in the perspectival context of the representing text (the *spectant*)’ (Leerssen 2007: 27). Imagology, therefore, deals with the three elements implicated in the dynamic of texts: those representing, those represented, and those interpreting that representation (the spectator).

Scholars agree that by making images of others we implicitly or explicitly define an image of ourselves. Images of the other (hetero-images) depend of the context in which they have been created but also of the context in which will be later received and interpreted. How a nation represents other cultures says much about its own, or at least, about its own ideological or aesthetic trends. Similarly, recurrent cinematic imagery reflects the mass culture that produced and sustained it by its patronage (Woll 1987). Normally, a film will represent an ethnic group according to the image that the group has within the society producing the film.

When we deal with representations of others, in any kind of written or visual text, the subjectivity of that material can be of a twofold nature. On the one hand, there are those images of others which were created with a concrete purpose: social, political, ideological, etc., as seen, for example, in propaganda films; and, on the other hand, there are those representations which invoke and re-create unquestioned and non-salient images of national characters that they are already rooted and current in the collective imagination. This last kind of representations disseminates stereotypes: ‘images that simply reproduce commonplaces’ (Leerssen 2007: 26). In both cases, film normally will represent others as the public expects it.

Hollywood is an excellent example of this. Throughout its history, a large part of its productions have been based in a self-other relationship; and political attitudes towards foreigners have always influenced production decisions, while market considerations outweigh all other factors in determining if and how if, a group appears in a film (Woll 1987, Kracauer 1949).

Hence the difficulty of drawing a sharp dividing line between the film industry and popular taste. Do movies determine social values or political opinions, or are they just a mirror of public feelings and habits? Probably both questions have a double answer. As Siegfried Kracauer put it in 1949:

Hollywood, and any national film industry for that matter, is both a leader and follower of public opinion. By portraying foreign characters it reflects what it believes to be the popular attitudes of the time, but it also turns these often vague attitudes into concrete images.

Those are the inseparable sides of textual and audiovisual representations: they propose models and, at the same time, they reflect them. How this dialectic is resolved in a film will determine its reception and, of course, its box-office success.

An imagology of film, finally, has to deal not only with these subjective aspects, which are a feature of all types of texts, but also with those formal audio-visual elements which constitute a film's 'interface'. These elements transform the subjective material in objective representations, since film records from physical reality (Degler 2007). Important elements to be taken in account in an imagological film analysis are spaces and time (both as physical and as symbolic elements) (Thomas 2001); as regards the characters, we deal with factors such as social class, job, clothing, hairstyle, make-up, posture; what the characters say and how they act, how they speak and which language (and with which accent). Finally, we cannot forget the very important roll of music in representing cultures, specially, when used as a symbolical and imagological element. The classic *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942) is, as we shall see, a great example of that symbolic use of music.

### *Europe goes to Hollywood: Preliminaries*

How, then, did Hollywood see Europe in the decades 1920-1960, and how did these hetero-images interact with the auto-images helping to form an American identity in opposition to an European alterity? That question is all the more complex since ‘Europe’ is such a large and uneasily-defined concept. What we do mean when we talk of Europe, containing, as it does, different countries, cultures and a multitude of characters? Should we include American movies about the Spanish Civil War as an example of representation of (a part of) European people; or also films where Germans or French are represented? Should we start from the idea that the representation of those concrete nationalities or ethnic groups, which for Europeans themselves are so self-evidently distinct, for the American public are just Europeans? In both cases the European corpus includes representations both of a generic image of Europe-at-large and of specific European nationalities and types.

A second important question concerns the decades covered here. The years from the World War I until the Fifties are of outstanding in the formation of western culture, involving also a fundamental change in the relations between Europe and United States. After the Second World War, the United States took over a political economical and cultural hegemony which for centuries had belonged to Europe; moreover, the US became the hegemonic cultural exporter of popular culture; and even in ‘high art’, New York replaced Paris as the west capital of modern art (Quart 1984: 10-37). Those changes first become visible in the 1920s and they influence, and are reflected in, cinema. As the film critic David Robinson (1968) writes:

American culture as a whole acquired a new self-confidence as the Twenties progressed. For centuries, Americans had imported their culture from the old world. Now they began to be a consciousness of the worth not only of American writing, but also of American music and painting and above all architecture, in which the New World now took the lead. (Robinson 1968: 32)

Secondly, these decades witnessed an important development in film art and industry in both continents. We should remember, of course, that a large part of the American film industry was created by Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe (Zukor, Mayer, the Warner brothers, Cohn; cf. Gabler 1988). In their rejection of a European past and their integration into American culture, the newly-emerging art form constituted (according to Gabler) an ideal point of access into American business, society and social status.

Within the studios and on the screen, the Jews could simply create a new country – an empire of their own, so to speak – one where they would not only be admitted, but would govern as well. They would fabricate their empire in the image of America as they would fabricate themselves in the image of prosperous Americans. They would create their values and myths, its traditions and archetypes. It would be an America where fathers were strong, families stable, people attractive, resilient, resourceful, and decent. This was their America, and its invention may be their most enduring legacy.  
 (Gabler 1988: 6)

This assertion may prove helpful in locating the ideological origin of some of the cinematic representations of European people and affairs.

Another intriguing question regarding the American film industry in these decades is that not only the studio entrepreneurs, but also some of Hollywood's most eminent film makers were Europeans (Lubitsch, Murnau, Michael Curtiz, Alexander Korda, W. Dieterli, Sternberg). This point is crucial. Hollywood has built part of its imaginary world by creating images of Europe through the eyes of European artists. This would mean that Hollywood's recreated images of Europe would have been frowned upon by European traditions of imagining nations (through literature, legends, art, etcetera). In fact, most of the first Hollywood movies dealing with Europe (i.e. based on European narratives or showing European people and places) were movies directed, and often written and played, by European-born artists. Those European artists exported not only their artistic talent but also themes and topics of ancient culture, (Robinson 1968; Petrie 1985). The stereotypes and commonplaces were likewise deeply rooted in European imagi-

nations. Thus, a stereotyped or romantic view of Europe is clearly manifest in fantastic cinema as it flourished in the 1930s and 1940s. Most of the fantasy and horror films of these years (*The Man in the Iron Mask*, *Nosferatu*, *The Werewolf*, *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*) are based on European legends and myths, using as scenario and background a romantic and stereotyped image of Europe clearly derived from Romantic art and literature and in the gothic tradition; often they show the formal-artistic influence of German expressionism.

In this sense, we confront a two-way fact: First, that Hollywood imported European-derived stereotypes and re-contextualized them in an Americanized form; second, that Europe exported, through European artists, some images, and even stereotypes, of its own cultural archive, and remade them for Hollywood. Europeans buying into the American dream were essential creators of, and contributors to, the Hollywood imaginary, in which their created and recreated images of Europe occupy an important place.

Finally, we have to distinguish two categories: the first one, films where Europeans are subsidiaries to Americans who play the central part; and the second one, films where the central parts are exclusively European. In the first case, the American public would watch the represented images through the main characters' focalization; in the second case, such representations would directly reflect the perspective of the film's producers.

Having laid out these preliminary distinctions, I will analyse how Hollywood represents European people and nationalities according to their relationship with America. I will address briefly some of aspects and themes developed by Hollywood in its first decades. Some of those are still in use today and they could be the basis for a further and deeper study:

1. The forming of the American hero: Europe, often unspecified as a locale, is represented as a space for the development of the American hero.
2. Portraits of European national types: the French, the Spaniards, the Italians, the Germans...
3. Images of European women (frequent in those decades is the representation of the European femme fatale, versus the feminine-gendered American virtue of domesticity).
4. Romantic views of Europe: the exoticism and glamour of the Old World, traditions as opposed to American urban modernity.

5. ‘Remaking’ European histories, myths and legends, American style.
6. Contrasting American and European mores by depicting Americans in Europe and/or Europeans in the United States.
7. Use of social and political themes to celebrate American patterns.
8. Xenophobic fears of attack and anti-American plots and conspiracies. This theme is played out in habits and morals and in the stock characters of Italian or Irish gangsters, Russian terrorists and communist enemies.

In all these themes and trends, we can observe how hetero-images and auto-images interact, and an American identity is being demarcated vis-à-vis a European alterity.

### *Old World — New World*

It is significant how often the term ‘Old World’ is used in the films of those decades in referring to Europe. The concept has both a negative and a positive sense. Negatively, it stands for war, lack of liberty, poverty, corruption; also suggesting desuetude and decrepitude. This usage is fairly common, especially in war films, and stands against a concept of ‘New World’ connoting freedom, democracy, peace, economical and social opportunities, money and vitality – the ‘American Dream’, in short. At the same time, the term ‘Old World’ has a positive meaning, implying Europe’s rich and ancient culture, a glorious heritage and an artistic, historical and cultural tradition which America lacks. In this usage, Europe as a cultural and historical model becomes a place for nostalgia: an ancestral dream. Thus, in *Patton* (1961), the title hero invokes past empires, Roman and Napoleonic, as a romanticized model of (male, military) virtues, of power and glory, both in a personal and social sense.

This ambiguous opposition between Old World and New World is manifested in a large number of Hollywood films, whenever Europe is thematized as a single whole, and in contradistinction to the Americas. The oldest example chosen here, *The Four Horsemen of Apocalypse* (Rex Ingram, 1921, after the novel by Vicente Blasco Ibáñez), is a case in point: the Old World refers to a devastated and dying place, both physically and metaphorically, devastated by the apocalyptic scourges of famine, pestilence, war and finally death. This work, like

most films about World War I, has a pacifist intent and criticizes the absurdity and sadness of war. In *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* war, and specially the opposition between good and bad, is given a metaphorical representation by biblical allusions and references to supernatural evil forces driving the humanity to the catastrophe. From this perspective, people are obliged to fight the good cause and the cause of peace; this is how the allied cause is justified.

In the 1962 remake of *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, directed by Vincente Minelli, the old Desnoyers complains from Argentina, where the film begins, about the catastrophe of the Old World, by using the metaphor of the four horsemen. In this version, war and catastrophe (set, again, in Europe, and symbolized by the Four Horsemen), are given a more humanized representation. The biblical Beast alludes clearly to the human egoism, wickedness and lust for power, which are justified by a misunderstood and hypocrite patriotism. In Minelli's work, the period setting is World War II, and has a clear opposition of us (good) vs them (bad). On the bad side are the Germans – there is no distinction here between Nazis and Germans, while the Resistance represents the good. In Minelli's film, fighting and dying are justified in terms of withstanding Nazi evil. Nevertheless, there is also a pacifist message represented by some of the characters criticizing war as such, its absurdity and unavoidably catastrophic consequences. This position is metaphorically illustrated by the fatal ending: almost all members of the Desnoyers family, on both sides of the conflict, die.

Some negative (albeit obliquely so) allusions to Europe also appear in *Sergeant York* (Howard Hawks, 1941). Made just after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, it was based on the biography of a real World War I hero. When some characters (at the beginning of the film) talk about the Great War, they refer to Europe as a very distant place, whose conflicts do not affect America. The conversation (stating a case for American neutrality which the film, which is clearly part of the war effort, subsequently will overturn) contrasts bellicose Europe and peaceful America. The reluctance of America to go to war is stressed, by making clear that the United States participated in the Great War only in order to help to reestablish peace in Europe; since Europeans can not resolve the conflict by in their own. That consideration is enhanced by the role played by the hero, sergeant York, in Europe. There a continuous reminders that he (the American citizen) participates in that war only to prevent enemy from killing innocent people

and only in order to help to bring peace back. The same opposition between good and evil obtains here as in *The Four Horsemen of Apocalypse*; but in this case, these concepts are less abstractly metaphysical and wholly propagandistic. Sergeant York is an instrument of the Good and incorporates all virtues of a good American: religion, family, hard work, simple life, moral integrity... and all this concentrated in the figure of a ‘peace-loving war hero’. This film is an interesting document how Hollywood looked at World War I at that time (1941) and influenced the way America saw the moral continuity between the two World Wars (Caparrós: 2004) Sergeant York is also one of the first Hollywood movies celebrating American heroism and ‘can-do’-bravery as the proper way to get things done.

This attitude also informs the classic *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942), undoubtedly one of the richest metaphors of the relationships among countries and interests involved in World War II. *Casablanca* begins with a general map of Europe and a voice-over introducing the where and when: 1942 (just after the entrance of the United States in World War II) in an Old World French colony in Morocco. After a short panoramic view of refugee trails from Western Europe, the narrator and the camera bring us to Casablanca, where Europeans of all countries gather trying to get a visa to the New World, the peaceful and free ‘Americas’. But in Casablanca, to get a visa depends on luck, money and influence. So opens a narrator the movie:

With the coming of the Second World War, many eyes in imprisoned Europe turned hopefully, or desperately, toward the freedom of the Americas. Lisbon became the main embarkation point. Only that not everybody could get to Lisbon directly, and so, a tortuous, roundabout refugee trail sprang up: from Paris to Marseille, across the Mediterranean to Oran, where by train, by car or by foot, across the rim of Africa, to Casablanca in French Morocco. Here, the fortunate ones, through money, or influence, or luck, might obtain exit visas and scurry to Lisbon, and from Lisbon to the New World. The rest wait in Casablanca – and wait... and wait... and wait.

This leads to the theme of corrupt European (in this case French) institutions, culminating in the alliance of Vichy France with Nazi Germany. After this general introduction of the European situation follows a brief presentation of different European characters: from Italian to British, all clearly differentiated in the script. Finally, an airplane flying to the free America (over the ‘upturned gaze of refugees waiting in the line of Palais de Justice’) introduces Rick’s Café Americain, as it flies over the café’s neon sign. Thus, after this panoramic gaze across Europe, the spectator is brought and installed in American territory: the Café Americain, which constitutes almost the only setting in the film, and where most of the things happen in an American way. So the spectator is brought, within the exotic setting, to an American perspective of the conflict and the relations between countries.

As title of the original theatre play behind *Casablanca* puts it: Everybody Comes To Rick’s. Almost all European nationalities come to Rick’s and they all carry their corresponding stereotype: an exotic Spanish female singer, a suave Italian thief or a poor East-European couple. The nationalities most in evidence are, of course, the French and the Germans, with whom the US had its the most complex political relation at that moment. The image of Germans is clearly defined: within the obviously negative register of Nazi enemies they are shown, interestingly, as ridiculous, disagreeable and even a little bit stupid rather than wicked or cruel. While in the Parisian flashback they are foregrounded as hostile combatants, in Rick’s glamorous and elegant café – a purportedly neutral area, where people go for amusement or intrigue – they are mostly represented as rude and insensible boors. Their manners with women are off-putting, they are ill-behaved, noisy and unmusical. This last element constitutes an important shortcoming, since music plays a very significant role in *Casablanca*. Music helps to define the different nationalities meeting at Rick’s and at the same time symbolizes the relations between them. Thus, in one of the film’s celebrated scenes, the Germans at Rick’s sing the German nationalist evergreen *Die Wacht am Rhein*, which is quickly drowned by the Marseillaise, sung, not only by French exiles but by almost all other European nationalities. The German song was chosen by the film producers as a substitute for the first option (the Horst-Wessel-Lied) and harks back to historical French-German enmity regarding the Rhine frontier (Friend 1991; Henig 1995). This scene, it has been said, ‘no one but a Hollywood scriptwriters could have conceived, but its passion and intensity – perfect

reflection of the Zeitgeist – can still strike sparks today'. *Casablanca* here endorsed the allied cause and rejects Germany and all that stands for it, while capturing 'something of the fervor and exhilaration of an experience central to the lives of all who lived through it' (Higham 1968: 86).

As with the music, almost all details in the film have a symbolic meaning concerning to representations of national characters and international relations. Anti-German feeling is conveyed not only through the *Wacht am Rhein* incident, but also, for example, through the fight between a German and a Frenchman, both wooing the same woman at Rick's; of course, the French man, who is a gentleman, gains her favour, since the German is rude and has no sense how to treat a lady.

More complex is the symbolic representation of the relation between America and France. The chemistry between both nations is indicated, again, through music. The sensual notes of Sam's playing combine with fragments of the *Marseillaise*, which is sometimes played with an American, brassy flavour. The Parisian interlude balances and foreshadows the ending, when Rick – already transformed from a cynical loner into a socially conscious team player, from anti-hero into an American hero, sacrifices his woman for a fight at the French-Allied side, and the memory of Paris ('We'll always have Paris). As Rick explains to Ilsa, 'Inside of us we both know you belong with Victor. You're part of his work, the thing that keeps him going. If that plane leaves the ground and you're not with him, you'll regret it.' Finally, the last line of the film, spoken by Rick to the French police officer Renault (who has likewise been cured of his egotism) 'I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship' signifies a wider American-French anti-Nazi alliance. That much is symbolized also by Renault's gesture of trashing a bottle of 'Vichy water'. All these gestures seem to have no other function than to signal a moral resolution, both in a political-public sense and in a personal-private one, despite the sacrifice of the fulfillment of the love affair.

Significantly, however, it is the American hero who 'does the thinking for both of us', and decides how all affairs and relations will end. Is Rick who decides what turn the various events will take in his café: he allows the French client to whisk off the girl who was being importuned by a Nazi soldier; he permits the *Marseillaise* to stand against the German song; he makes it possible for a Bulgarian refugee couple to win much-needed sum of money at the roulette table. And also and the closing scenes, he steers the other characters' destinies.

Another film thematizing the Old World (both as decadent and dying, and as refined with a glorious past) is *The Third Man* (Carol Reed, 1949). This British-American co-production allegorizes the European situation after the Second World War through Vienna.

This film shows Allied attempts to regulate a destroyed Europe at the beginning of the Cold War. Vienna's glorious past (palaces, emperors and empresses, high culture, classical music) is now in ruins. Even Mozart and Strauss have been replaced by the repetitive sound of a zither, which adds to the storyline's considerable sarcasm. The images of destroyed Vienna are given a central-European and Mediterranean, melancholic-carnivalesque accompaniment. Vienna, is not just a setting but an important character, almost the main role (Mariás 1970). It represents both sides of a manichean world: heaven and hell; the good and the evil within each human; Europe's glory and corruption; the palaces and the sewers; the luxury and the misery; money and sickness; art and corruption. Significantly, almost all scenes take place at night, with the cinematography's chiaroscuro betraying the influence of German expressionism. The big Ferris wheel at the Prater obviously is a Wheel of Fortune, revolving around the ups and downs of world, life, people, relations. This is even reflected in the structure of the film, which ends almost at the same place and situation of the beginning – the cemetery and Harry's funeral.

Alongside this view of old Europe as a decadent place, there exists also a romantic-exoticist view of the continent. Europe can be represented as the space where extraordinary things can happen; adventures that couldn't occur at home: exotics trips, unexpected turns of events, intrigues, love affairs. The amount of attraction shown to Europe is commensurate with the moral valorization attached to such exotic adventures. Europe is often represented as the place where one can escape from a boring or stressful life (*Dodsworth*, William Wyler, 1936; *Party Girl*, Nicholas Ray, 1958); or a place for intrigue and bohemianism (*The Man Who Knew too Much*, Alfred Hitchcock, 1956; *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, Henry King, 1952). Of course, all these movies show stereotyped or travelogue images of different European people and places. I shall address these under the heading 'The European way', meaning both Europe as a destination and as a life-style.

### *The European way*

‘Don’t do with my wife in the European way’, says one of the characters in Wyler’s *Dodsworth* (1936) to a friend who kisses his wife too lovingly. The joke alludes to supposedly European libertinism in man-woman relations, as exemplified by the numerous love affairs that his friend’s wife is going through in the old continent. The protagonist’s wife travels through Europe in hope of finding a more exciting life than the one she leads in America with her wealthy, upright and boring businessman husband. She convinces him to travel to Paris, London, and Italy, where she finds a freer and more exciting lifestyle. In this exotic Old World setting she is fascinated by what she perceives as the European ways; she decides to stay there without her husband and live a second youth. In the event, things are not as easy and care-free as she imagined; but when she discover this, it is too late to repair her marriage; she comes to grief in that she loses her husband and her lovers and ends up alone. The moral message is give through an American-European opposition. This distinction between homegrown American values and the ‘European way’ obtains both in the private and the public sphere.

European habits of doing things and Europe as a trajectory for going through new experiences both constitute the ‘European way’. One refers to images of Europe current among Americans, relayed through culture, travel stories, legends, etc.; the other sees Europe as a setting or destination for realizing dreams and desires. Moral and spatial dimension are conflated, and European places and experiences are both an instrument and a path for the self-realization and personal development American characters. Films in this mode thus partake of the register of the *Bildungsroman*, and may therefore be described as *Bildungs-movies*. Europe is important in this genre in that its local colour has an actantial function.

We could think that by representing European stereotypes and "supposed" manners, American film producers pretends to "educate" their public or just to critique some vices in a more abstract and general way, by sending the message that those things only happen outside the United States; or by suggesting the convenience of learning from the Old World’s errors. In other hand, we can consider most of these films more as an entertainment for American public (although later exported to Europe), which mainly expect to satisfy in the cinema screen their expectations and previous ideas of other cultures (Kracauer 1948). In

this sense, therefore, European spaces and people only would form a background for the development of the (American) character and the plot.

European ways (manners, habits, lifestyle) are sometimes adopted by Americans themselves; at other times, they are displayed by European characters, either in Europe (where they are observed by outsiders) or in the United States (where they themselves are outsiders). Usually, European ways have negative connotations and often involve depravity, intrigue, immorality, sexuality, sensuality, adultery (normally related to women), superstition, etc.; but there is also the strong attraction of connotations such as holidays, pleasure, elegance and glamour, exoticism, adventure, bohemianism, freedom. In all these widely varying registers they are invariably opposed to the American ways.

A recurrent aspect of the ‘European way’ concerns European women’s attitude to sex. After the First World War, extra-marital affairs became a recurrent subject in Hollywood films as American society experienced sifting standards in public morals and sexual relations (Robinson 1968; Cameron 1997; Budd 2002); the theme was often played out by involving European characters (the action set either in Europe or in America). Some examples: *The Marriage Circle* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1924), *So This is Paris* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1926), *A Woman of Paris* (Charles Chaplin, 1930) and *The Devil is a Woman* (Josef von Sternberg, 1935). *The Devil is a Woman* is clearly inspired by the myth of Carmen (Mérimeé and later Bizet) with all the ingredients of a nineteenth-century romantic Spanish regionalist tale, replete with the stereotyped local colour of gypsies, flamenco, fiesta, superstition, exoticism, machismo, etc. with an Andalusian *femme fatale* (played, ironically, by the German Marlene Dietrich) luring the well-educated, French protagonist to his doom.

Similarly, the later *Wild is the Wind* (George Cukor, 1957) also uses the subject of extra-marital affairs, played out by two Europeans, an Italian woman and a Basque man, living in America. *Wild is the Wind* might also be called another *Lost in Translation*, since communication seems to be impossible between the Italian woman and her American environment, the American family she has married into. There are stereotyped images of the different nationalities represented involved: the outgoing, spontaneous, sentimental and passionate Italian woman; a silent, introverted, distant and hard-working Basque man, who, nonetheless seduces a married woman. The American husband (played by Anthony

Quinn) has imported everything from Europe: the Basque man whom he employs and whom he considers almost as an adopted son, his Italian first and second wives (remarrying, as a widower, the sister of his dead first wife). His motivations for drawing on Europe in order to extend his family are not made clear, but they drive the desires and the storyline's tragic development while the Europeaness of it all stands in marked opposition to the moral landscape of rural America.

Another film showing even a more stereotyped image of several European places – especially Spain and Paris – is *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* (Henry King, 1952), where Europe (and, later, Africa) is represented as the place for the protagonist's development. It is rooted in the themes and characters of the so-called 'Lost Generation', the young men of the post-World War I years including some expatriate American writers such as Ernest Hemingway (who popularized the concept). It was a common complaint among writers of this generation (also including John Dos Passos and Ezra Pound) to complain that American art and culture lacked the sophistication of Europe, leading many of them to spend large amounts of time in the Old World, and to participate actively in its cultural movements and even political conflicts. Like several 'lost generation' men, the main character of *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* is a writer (indeed the title of his first novel is *Lost Generation*), living and working in several places in Europe, mainly Paris, and participating actively in European affairs such as the Spanish Civil War. The character is modelled, obviously, on Hemingway.

This film setting relies on current stereotypes. It features a romanticized Paris (sun, children playing on street, women selling flowers, bohemian life-style, music cafés, emancipated women...); a passionate and torrid Hemingwayesque Spain (even more sun, flamenco, bullfights, fiesta, passion, exoticism, machos, indolence, gypsies, etc). All this is overlaid by a very clear male-western perspective, in which women (European, in this case), together with other cultures (in Europe and Africa), are represented as derivative of primary reality.

The concept of the European way, in both of its meanings: manner of doing things and path and instrument of learning, can be applied not only to a private sphere, but to a public and a political one. While it would be misleading to make generalizations on 'the American' images of 'Europe', several examples indicate that the cinematic representations do tend into a specific register and bespeak a generalized attitude.

The European way of dealing with war-related conflict, for instance, is foregrounded, not only in *Casablanca* and *The Third Man*, but also in other films where European authorities are represented as placing private benefit before public interest. Witness *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Lewis Milestone, 1930, after the novel of de German writer Erich Maria Remarque, a writer associated with the Lost Generation), *Blockade* (William Dieterle, 1938, which narrates the miseries occasioned by a food blockade by Franco authorities during the Spanish Civil War), and *Paths of Glory* (by the British-born director Stanley Kubrick, 1957, and set in France). These three films had a controversial public and critical reception and were particularly controversial within Europe. All three were censored and/or banned in Germany, Spain and France, respectively.

### *The path and the (lost) hero*

The idea of Europe as a path and place of development connects with an important subject in Hollywood film: the all-American hero. Like the *femme fatale*, film heroes are rooted in a long-standing (also European) tradition. However, the American hero is deeply devoted to a public cause and a social purpose. In later years, Hollywood's American heroes are destined to save almost the entire world.

We have already seen some examples of the transformation of the main (male) character into heroism. In early Hollywood films, this metamorphosis was caused, not just by the character's inherent nature, but by (public or national) necessity or because he is driven by moral convictions. The critic R. Shain (1976) classifies the development of the American (war) hero into different period-categories. In films from the 1930s until 1947 the heroes were a varied lot, but as group they shared two important characteristics. First, they were generally civilians, or civilians-turned-soldiers, each of whom had something to contribute to the war effort. Second, they felt some sense of responsibility for their fellow-man and for their country, which motivated their war contributions. Next, the heroes of war films produced between 1948 and 1962, are career warriors, with faith in a disciplined, sometimes a technological approach to war.

As Shain also points out, the allies and enemies of Hollywood's war films have been characterized as such by their differences and similarities to American

heroes. From 1939 to 1947, ‘good’ soldiers on the Allied side displayed some of the political traditions characteristic of film Americans, while enemies (Nazis and Japanese) were rendered obnoxious by their violation of traditional American morals. By representing the allies according American standards – actually, by sketching an alterity as determined American ideals and preconceptions – these war films advocated an American internationalism or polynationalism. (Shain 1976: 282)

The development of the hero is, from my point of view, more interesting when he is not a career soldier, but a civilian participating in a politic conflict or other public affair; and even more, when the protagonist oscillates between being hero and antihero. This ambiguous figure is what I would like to call here the ‘lost hero’, relating him to the types of the ‘lost generation’ types. Later manifestations of this heroic ambiguity, from the film noir onwards, often show their troubled connections with pop culture and pulp fiction (e.g., Holly Martins in *The Third Man*).

In discussing *Casablanca* I already alluded to the transformation of Rick from a cynic loner, disillusioned in love and in politics, into an all-American hero. Rick would fit into Shain’s category of civilians or civilians-turned-soldiers, who find they have something to contribute to the war effort. These circumstance-driven heroes evince some sense of social and national responsibility, which motivates their war contributions. This happens in Casablanca, when Rick is redeemed from his Lost Generation character. He had, after all come to Europe in the 1930 and participated in the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War. His subsequent self-imposed exile in Casablanca mirrors the African trajectory of the protagonist of *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*. In Africa Rick wants to forget his recent European past; but he will return to a heroic sense of public responsibility. Rick thus stands between the registers of the Lost Generation or film noir anti-hero, and war propaganda all-American war hero.

Very different from Rick, there is the American Holly Martins in *The Third Man*, who drifts into playing the hero in Vienna. His heroic track record (mercilessly ironized in the film) goes through two phases: first, to discover what happened exactly on the day his friend Harry Lime died; and second, to help the British police to capture Lime – who turns out not to have died at all, and to have been deeply involved in corruption and black marketeering. Holly does not come

to Europe in order to fight in any conflict or to look for adventure, but is moved by personal friendship and need. His boyhood friend Harry Lime has offered him a job. Unlike *Casablanca*'s Rick and other all-American heroes – and even Harry Lime himself – Holly does not have any glamorous or mysterious touch. Although his background in Western fiction-writing has habituated him to a heroes-and-villains view of the world, he drinks too much, he is a little clumsy and he is naive. He is also, in contrast with real heroes, spectacularly unsuccessful with women. Indeed, he is belated in almost every respect: the war is finished, the city and its citizens destroyed, Harry is dead; even the hope and the illusions for the social causes are gone. What he finds in Vienna, in Europe, is merely an aftermath: just people trying to survive and save themselves. It is at this point we should recall that this is in akrgewe part a European (British) production: the American character is represented as a mediocrity, without prospects, who knows nothing of the land he is visiting, nothing of Europe, nothing of literature (pulp writer that is is, he is wholly ignorant, for instance, of James Joyce). Actually, he seems to have emerged from one of his own cheap tales.

Another aspect adding irony to *The Third Man* is the contrast between the European disillusion, its conscience of catastrophe' and Holly's moral naivety. The long-standing loss of innocence as a concomitant of Europe's worldly-wise refinement has its counterpart in the naïveté of uncultured America (Leerssen 2008). The opposition between naive moralism and the awareness of a darkness within people corresponds to the idea of a civil society that arranges everything for its citizens as opposed to a corrupt or chaotic world where individuals have to rely on their wits and courage to survive. In *The Third Man*, this contrast is personified in the relation between naïve, well-meaning Holly and smart, wicked, mefistophelian Harry Lime. This polarity is fundamental, notwithstanding the film's dark reflections on the impossibility of drawing neat division between good and evil in the modern world: The ambiguity between good and evil relation, and especially between beauty and corruption, it is visible from small concrete details (like the ambiguous placement of heaven (down) and hell (up) as pointed by the janitor; the contrast between de city and the sewers...) to the famous discourse pronounced by Harry at the Ferris wheel:

‘Don’t be so gloomy! After all, it’s not that awful. What the fellow said, in Italy for thirty years under the Borgias they had warfare, terror, murder and bloodshed; but they produced Michaelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and the Renaissance. In Switzerland they had brotherly love and five hundred years of democracy and peace, and what did that produce? The cuckoo clock! So long, Holly.’ (Quoted Leerssen 2008)

According to cynic Harry, civil societies (the Switzerland of the cuckoo clock, and, by implication, the ideal of Hollywood’s domestic America) are complacent ad aesthetically sterile, as opposed to corrupt honour-and-shame societies which will allow individual genius to flourish (the Italy of the Borgias or the Vienna of Harry Lime). The opposition between morality and art draws a long-standing contrasting images, already activated by Henry James, about America and (especially) Italy.

Who is the hero in *The Third Man*? From a human, social and legal perspective the hero is, naturally, Holly Martins; but from the survivors’ point of view – from the poetical perspective of the individual against the system – the hero would be Harry Lime; as indeed he was considered by his devoted friend Holly, and as he remains for his (Europeans) friends and his girlfriend. There is, therefore, an interesting and ambiguous play of hero-antihero position in Greene’s script and Reed’s film, which symbolizes at the same time the difficult relations between the allied forces governing destroyed Vienna; and it announces as well the beginning of the Cold War. All these elements make the treatment of the idea of a hero very complex; even if, finally, American naivety holds out against European corruption.

The character of Harry Lime is of course much more interesting than Holly’s, precisely because of its ambiguity. His friends consider him a kind of hero, but we discover his duplicity with women, with friends, with the political and economical system, which he criticizes and exploits at the same time, because, actually, he represents the dark side of that system. As with Tirso de Molina’s character of Don Juan, the antihero represents the vicious aspect of society and his attitude and actions are possible because, actually, there is a system supporting it

and making its existence possible. Like Don Juan, Harry goes down to hell – the sewers of Vienna. His death – being shot, at his own request, by Holly – befits his life: he eludes the forces of law enforcement to the last.

Holly, on the other hand, gains little from the entire affair. Although he is not cast in the all-American heroic mode, he does evoke a Hollywood hero model, since, like Rick in *Casablanca*, he wins through to social and human causes by sacrificing his private sympathies (love and friendship). This position carries with it both an award and a punishment. He gains good standing with the law enforcement institutions, but loses much in the personal field. With respect to the first point, Holly and the British officer Calloway represent a US-British relationship – much as Rick and Renault in *Casablanca* represent America and France. Initially, there are tensions between the two people/countries. Calloway is very patronizing and tries to send Holly back to America in order to prevent him from interfering. But finally, he asks Holly's help, since this is the only way to capture Harry.

In his personal life, Holly is a failure: he loses his best friend and fails to get the girl he loves. She rejects him during the entire film (although at the outset she seems to feel some sympathy toward him) and she scorns him clearly in the last scene, when she walks passing him by without looking at him. Star-crossed lovers part ways on the Vienna cemetery as they did on *Casablanca* airfield; but here the man is rejected by the woman rather than sending her off to America. In her eyes, he remains a mediocrity, the traitor of her erstwhile lover Harry, to whom he cannot measure up. This reaction is in denial of Harry's obvious villainy and Holly's efforts to get her a British passport.

Do women (at least the unsmiling, disenchanted, European type) prefer harder men, even if they abandon or betray them? The director himself, Carol Reed, gave the following explanation: 'the whole point with Valli character in that film is that she'd experienced a fatal love – and then along comes this silly American!' (Samuels 1974; cf. also Raskin n.d.). Indeed, an ending uniting Anna with Holly (as the producers and Greene originally envisaged) would have flattened the only female role in the film into a mere instrument for both the antihero and then the hero. This ending, even if the final shoot is very surprising, gives Anna personal dignity and pride, and of course make her character richer and deeper. Such a quick change of lover – from Harry to Holly – would have cheapened the Anna character and have been unconvincing. But the denial of a

'Hollywood'-style wrap-it-all-up happy ending seems to go with the Old-World character of the setting – here as in Casablanca.

### *Conclusions*

Hollywood cinema made between the 1920s and the 1950s shows how in those decades, especially after the Second World War, Eurocentrism is giving way to an increasing American hegemony. *Casablanca* exemplifies the opposition between the old European colonialist viewpoint and the new Americanism, which is not imposed by force but sold through culture (music and film, for instance), economical and military assistance, promises of freedom and a better life, and the ideological discourses which permeate these productions. American participation in European affairs between the First World War and the first years of the post-Second World War, as reflected in film, broadcasts a propagandistic message of American lifestyles, values and attitudes both in private and public life (from politics to moral or economy). Films reflect this development by using European themes and adapting them to American (or Americanized) taste or political and ideological interests.

In any case, Europe, as shown in Hollywood films, is neither a superior cousin, nor the old colonizer, but rather the ancestor who needs and asks its descendants for help. Europe has become an old grandmother, whose central role in world affairs has been taken over by North America – of all former colonies the "smarter child". Even so, the United States, including its film industry and cultural outlook, had taken over, as an important part of its baggage, the European cultural heritage, adapted to new tastes, interests, situations and spaces. Both the criticism and the rejection of some European habits and vices and the admiration and respect for Europe and its ancient history and glamorous culture are clearly present in American cinema. This idea of decadent but cultured Europe appears as opposed to a morally upright, naïve and somewhat ingenuous America. In that context, it is only logical that American characters go to Europe looking for adventures and come back to America more experienced and worldly-wise than before.

This opposition between European old age, amorality and lack of innocence combined with cultural refinement and glamour, and American youth and uncultured naivety carries over into character types. The European femme fatale and the American hero are the most salient ones, both with their counterparts, the American virtuous and domestic woman and the European anti-hero. These figures, although rooted in an older, European tradition have flourished in their American film version, from Hollywood's origin (e.g., Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, 1915) until today. The American hero is marked by his deep devotion to US political or ideological interests of the moment, and is often used in national propaganda. Additionally, it is important to remark that all films here scrutinized partake of the perspective of white-western (American) males for whom the rest of humanity (non-American parts of the world, women from America and from other parts of the world) form only incidental elements in the protagonist's development. Europe is a place and reservoir for gathering experiences.

*Filmography*

- The Man in the Iron Mask* (Douglas Fairbanks, 1920)  
*The Four Horsemen of Apocalypse* (Rex Ingram, 1921)  
*Nosferatu* (F.W. Murnau, 1922)  
*All Quiet on the Western Front* (Lewis Milestone, 1930)  
*A Woman of Paris* (Charles Chaplin, 1930)  
*Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1931)  
*Blockade* (William Dieterle, 1938)  
*The Devil is a Woman* (Josef von Sternberg, 1935)  
*Sergeant York* (Howard Hawks, 1941)  
*The Werewolf* (George Wagner, 1941)  
*Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942)  
*The Best Years of Our Lives* (William Wyler, 1946)  
*The Third Man* (Carol Reed, 1949)  
*Paths of Glory* (Stanley Kubrick, 1951)  
*An American in Paris* (Vicente Minnelli, 1951)  
*The Snows of Kilimanjaro* (Henry King, 1952)  
*The Man Who Knew too Much* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1956, orig. 1938)  
*Party Girl* (Nicholas Ray, 1958)  
*Wild is the Wind* (George Cukor, 1958)  
*Judgment at Nuremberg* (Stanley Kramer, 1961)  
*The Four Horsemen of Apocalypse* (Vicente Minnelli, 1962)  
*The Phantom of the Opera* (Rupert Julian, 1925)

### *Bibliography*

- AITKEN, I. 2001. *European film theory and cinema: a critical introduction*. Indiana University Press.
- BELLER, M. 2007. 'Italians'. *Imagology*, eds. M. Beller & J. Leerssen, 194-200. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- BELLER, M. & LEERSSEN, J., 2007, *Imagology*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- BENSCHOFF, H. 2004. *America on film: representing race, class, gender and sexuality at the movies*. Blackwell Publishing.
- BUDD, D. 2002. *Culture meets culture in the movies*. Jefferson & London: McFarland.
- CAMERON, K. 1997. *America on film: Hollywood and American history*. Continuum.
- CAPARRÓN LERA, J.M. 2004. *100 películas sobre Historia Contemporánea*. Madrid: Alianza.
- CORBEY, R. & LEERSSEN, J.Th. 1991. *Alterity, Identity, Image*. Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi.
- DALE, M. 1997. *The movie game: the film business in Britain, Europe and America*. Cassell.
- DEGLER, F. 2007. 'Cinema'. In *Imagology*, eds. M. Beller, M. & Leerssen, J., 295-297. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- ENGELEN, L., 2007. *Perspectives on European film and history*. Academia Press.
- FORBES, J. & STREET, S., 2000. *European Cinema. An introduction*. London: Palgrave.
- FRIEND, J.W. 1991. *The linchpin: French-German relations, 1950-1990*. Abingdon: Greenwood Publishing Group,
- GABLES, N. 1988. *An empire of their own (How the Jews invented Hollywood)*. New York: Crown Publishers.
- GUBACK, T. 1969. *The international film industry: Western Europe and America since 1945*. Indiana University Press.
- HEATH, S. 1983. *Cinema and language*. University Publications of America.
- HENIG, R. 1991. *Versailles and after, 1919-1933*. London: Routledge.
- HIGHMAN, Charles and GREENBERG, Joel 1968. *Hollywood in the Forties*. New York: A.S. Barnes & Co, London: A. Zwemmer Limited.
- HOCHMAN, S. 1972. *American film directors*. New York: F.U. publishing Co.
- HOLMES, D., & Smith, A., 2000. *100 years of European cinema. Entertainment or ideology?* Manchester University Press.
- IORDANOVA, D. 2003. *Cinema of the other Europa: the industry and artistry of East Central European film*. London: Wallflower.
- JÄCKEL, A. 2003. *European film industries*. BFI.

- KINDEM, G. 1982. *The American movie industry: the business of motion pictures*. Southern Illinois University Press.
- KRACAUER, S. 1948. 'National types as Hollywood presents them'. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 13: 53-72. Oxford University Press.
- LEERSSEN, J. 2007. 'Imagology: History and method'. In *Imagology*. Eds. Beller, M. & LEERSSEN, J., 17-32. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- LEERSSEN, J., 2007 'Moral Labyrinths: On an emerging image of Europe'. *Kommunikáció, Média, Gazdaság*, V. évfolyam 2. szám: 33-51.
- LIEHM, M. 1980. The most important art: Soviet and Eastern European film after 1945. University of California Press.
- LLOYD, R. 1976. *American film directors: The world as they see it*. New York: Watts.
- LOPATE, P. 2006. *American movie critics: an anthology from the silents until now*. The library of America.
- MANVELL, R., & HUNTLEY, J. 1980. *The technique of film music*. London, Focal Press.
- MARÍAS, J. 1970. 'Viena sin Danubio'. *Visto y no visto* 1. Madrid, Guadarrama: 461-464.
- MARIESKA, E. & RASCAROLI, L. 2006. *Crossing new Europe: postmodern travel and the European road movie*. London: Wallflower.
- MELLECAMP, P. 1984. *Cinema histories, cinema practices*. University Publications of America.
- MERA, M. 2006. *European film music*. Ashgate.
- PETRIE, G. 1985. *Hollywood Destinies. European directors in América, 1922-1931*. London, Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- PICK, Z., 1993. *The new Latin American cinema: a continental project*. University of Texas Press.
- QUART, L. & AUSTER, A., 1984. *American film and society since 1945*. London: Macmillan.
- RASKIN, R., n.d. 'Closure in *The Third Man*: On the Dynamics of an Unhappy Ending'. In *How Films End*, [http://pow.imv.au.dk/Issue\\_02/section\\_3/artc3C.html](http://pow.imv.au.dk/Issue_02/section_3/artc3C.html) (Downloaded 7 April 2008).
- SAMUELS, C. 1974. *Encountering Directors*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons: 169-170.
- SHAIN, R.E., 1976. An analysis of motion pictures about war released by the American film industry, 1930-1970. New York, Arno Press.
- SINOWITZ, M., 2007. 'Graham Greene's and Carol Reed's *The Third Man*: When a Cowboy comes to Vienna', *Modern Fiction Studies* 53.2.: 405-433.
- SOBCHACK, V.C. 1980. *The limits of infinity. The American science fiction film, 1950-1975*. Cranbury, New Jersey: Barnes & Co.

- SPICER, A. 2007. *European film noir*. Manchester University Press.
- THOMAS, D. 2001. *Reading Hollywood*. London: Wallflowers.
- VASEY, R. 1997. *The world according Hollywood (1918-1939)*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- WALKER, L. 1977. *Selling dreams: British and American film posters, 1890-1976*. Welsh Arts Council.
- WEBER, C., 2006. *Imagining America at war: morality, politics and film*. London: Routledge.
- WOLL, A.L., & MILLER, R.M. 1987. *Ethnic and racial images in American film and television*. New York & London: Garland Publishing.





published titles:

1. P.J.G. Kapteijn, *Over de Europese Grondwet* (May 2005)
2. Joep Leerssen, *The Cultivation of Culture* (September 2005)
3. Peter Hoppenbrouwers, *Medieval Peoples Imagined* (November 2005)
4. Iraklis (Hercules) Millas, *Tourkokratia* (April 2006)
5. Annie Jourdan, *Amsterdam en révolution, 1795-1798* (November 2006)
6. Annemarie van Heerikhuizen, *Een Haagse salon* (January 2007)
7. Max Bader, *Making Parties Fit for Democracy* (September 2007)
8. Lia Versteegh, *Enforceability of Human Rights under the EU Reform Treaty* (December 2008)
9. Eva Navarro Martínez, *Images of Europe in American Film* (May 2009)

