Nolwenn Mingant, *Hollywood à la conquête du monde. Marchés, stratégies, influences*

Paris : CNRS éditions, 2010, 316 pages

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/inmedia/574>

DOI: 10.4000/inmedia.574

ISSN: 2259-4728

Publisher

Center for Research on the English-Speaking World (CREW)

Electronic reference

Delphine Robic-Diaz, « Nolwenn Mingant, *Hollywood à la conquête du monde. Marchés, stratégies, influences* », *InMedia* [Online], 3 | 2013, Online since 15 April 2013, connection on 24 September 2020.

URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/inmedia/574> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/inmedia.574>

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- 1 Nolwenn Mingant is assistant professor in American civilization at the Sorbonne Nouvelle University in Paris and the co-founder of the CinEcoSa (Cinema, Economy and English-Speaking Countries) research group. Her book *Hollywood à la conquête du monde. Marchés, stratégies, influences* which was published in 2010 by CNRS Publishing (316 pages), is derived from her PhD thesis. Situated at the crossroads of the economic analysis of cinema, of American studies, of geopolitics and of film analysis, the book provides a well-documented inventory of American cultural expansionism as orchestrated by Hollywood. Indeed, while cinema is quite obviously an international type of mass entertainment, it has not always been clearly identified with the economic mechanism of globalization.

- 2 This is the approach Nolwenn Mingant has chosen “to study the economic exportation of a national product with a cultural value” (p. 13), in order to “suggest a redefinition of Hollywood cinema at the beginning of the 21st century” (p. 16). She has therefore elected to focus on the strategies of development into foreign markets (outside of North America, meaning here the US and Canada) of the seven original major studios : Columbia, Disney, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), Paramount, Twentieth Century-Fox, Universal and Warner Bros.
- 3 At a time when French stars seem to become ever more popular and more numerous exports (2012 saw Jean Dujardin and Omar Sy triumph, both having started out on national television before being snatched up by Hollywood in the wake of their successful transitions to the big screen), this essay sheds light on the paradoxical dynamics of an industry which maintains a never-ending cultural and economic domination worldwide, all the while having become dependent on its foreign markets and on talents imported from foreign cinema markets.
- 4 The book is divided into two parts and made up of eight chapters. It offers a geopolitical reading of the world economy of cinema, using a dataset of hundreds of so-called big-budget productions (a budget exceeding by 30 % that of the average budget of the films released during the same year) between 1966 and 2004, though leaving out animated feature films. Rather than approach films as mere products, Nolwenn Mingant turns them into the objects of a multidisciplinary analysis by borrowing her concepts from the economics of film when dealing with data or marketing strategies ; from contemporary history and film history when contextualizing and making developments of a genetic kind ; from sociology, because of the mirror-effect cinema creates between screen and audience, which is particularly relevant in a globalized cultural context where films are exported towards other nationalities ; in addition, she does not forget the specifically American angle of this demonstration, for example when dealing with the representation of the figure of the Other in American cinema.

- 5 This fascinating essay on geostrategy applied to cinema takes us through a cultural, political and economic history of the world by looking at the evolution of the distribution of Hollywood films abroad. Certain events, such as Franco's Spain, the collapse of the communist bloc, the emergence of the Dragons of South-East Asia, the GATT agreements, or the conflict in the Middle-East, take on an unexpected edge when seen through the scope of the distribution system of the major studios, of the Motion Picture Export Association of America (MPEAA or MPEA, renamed MPA, Motion Picture Association, in 1994), and of the MPAA (Motion Picture Association of America), all orchestrated by the parallel diplomacy of these twin associations' president, Jack Valenti. It should in addition be noted that the timeframe of the study espouses that of Valenti's stint at the head of both organizations (1966-2004).
- 6 The annexes, although few, provide crucial and enlightening information, whether detailing Jack Valenti's biography, listing all mergers among major studios from 1962 to 2004, or drawing maps reviewing the evolution of major studios' access to world markets, not forgetting the tables extracted from *Variety* summarizing the ranking of countries which have been the main importers of Hollywood cinema since the 1960s.
- 7 "Exportation", "Globalization", and "Glocalization" are the three keywords providing the framework for Nolwenn Mingant's reflection. They also coincide with three signposts in the changing positions adopted by major studios towards their foreign market : the desire to sell abroad, then to create a harmonized demand, and finally, the wish to provide for cultural particularisms by supplying structurally suitable products (scenarios, actors, directors, to quote from the author's very detailed chapter entitled "Stratégies culturelles / Cultural Strategies"), but also by devising suitable marketing strategies. Indeed, Nolwenn Mingant insists on the fact that the development of delayed programming thanks to secondary markets (Television, video, and today new media) has consistently updated the concept of "glocalism" since the 1980s. Indeed, this contraction of the global and the local conveys the contradictory dynamics which have left major studios torn over what strategy to adopt when faced with a foreign audience, when they need to provide for a culturally diverse global demand by offering a product both unique and adjustable to the specific requirements and possibilities of the different market opportunities.
- 8 Another great quality of this rich essay is the type of examples used. Indeed, too often, film studies favour a certain kind of cinema, critically-approved highbrow films, at the risk of cutting themselves off from mainstream audiences. In the present case those partial to blockbusters will find a referencing of the films they grew up watching and arguments to understand products which might not all have been aesthetically convincing, but which have contributed to the escalating budgets of major studios embarked on this world tour of seduction which Nolwenn Mingant tries to decipher. At long last, we are presented with an academic study unencumbered with value judgements and which is not afraid to quote *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Pearl Harbour*, *The Last Samurai*, *Rush Hour*, or *Harry Potter*. By using the production budgets of these movies as a criterion of selection, the author imposes a different logic from that of the hallowed *auteur* film, and legitimizes the "object-film", the polymorphous and many-sided product which, when beginning her essay, she had presented as central to her demonstration.

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