

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN CINEMA

Session Six

Global Hollywood

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Agenda

16:20–17:45

Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted
(2012)

17:45: 18:00

Break

18:00–19:15

The Re-internationalization of the
Hollywood Blockbuster



Focus

Historical conditions driving the recent re-internationalization of high-end Hollywood Output

The governing Principles of the re-internationalized Blockbuster

Textual and thematic tendencies, and specific articulations

(Using Hollywood films to promote Hollywood)



“In many ways the work of the critic is easy. We risk very little; yet enjoy a position over those who offer up their work and their selves to our judgment. We thrive on negative criticism, which is fun to write and to read. But the bitter truth we critics must face is that in the grand scheme of things the average piece of junk is probably more meaningful than our criticism designating it so. But there are times when a critic truly risks something: that is in the discovery and the defense of the new. The world is often unkind to new talent, and new creations. The new needs friends ... Not everyone can become a great artist, but a great artist can come from anywhere”.

French critic Anton Ego considers “a rat’s contribution to Paris haute cuisine” in Disney-Pixar’s *Ratatouille* – France’s top film of 2007.



The “New” “New” Hollywood

Digitization, Conglomeration, and Globalization

Stress on digitization and conglomeration posits evolution – linear development – within the Contemporary Period

Fantasy of high concept is reality: Hollywood is a machine licensing and supplying superficial audiovisual content

However, “globalization” (Hollywood’s increased attention to non-US markets) signals a return to the classical period

In terms of movie content, this is the biggest paradigm shift

Questions

1. What content and themes were used to make *Madagascar 3* attractive to a non-US audience?
2. What specific non-US moviegoers are being courted?
3. Why would this material be seen to help attract those audiences?
4. How does *Madagascar 3* use allegory to promote Hollywood and its products?



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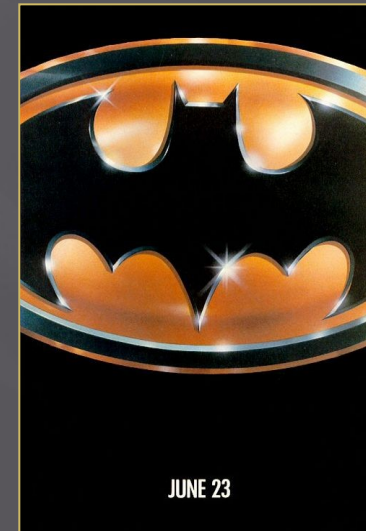
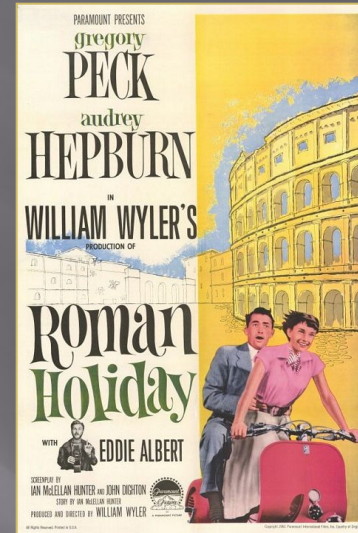
Hollywood's Recent Re-turn to an International Accent

Pre-1970s: big-budget films were tailored specifically for international as well as North American audiences

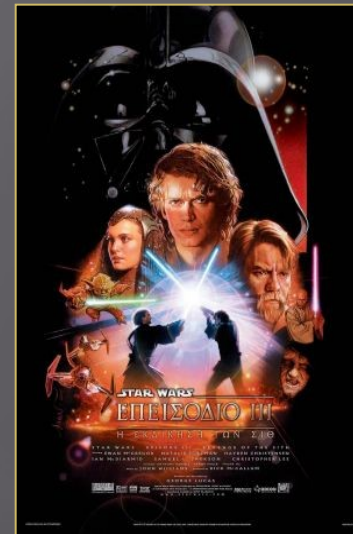
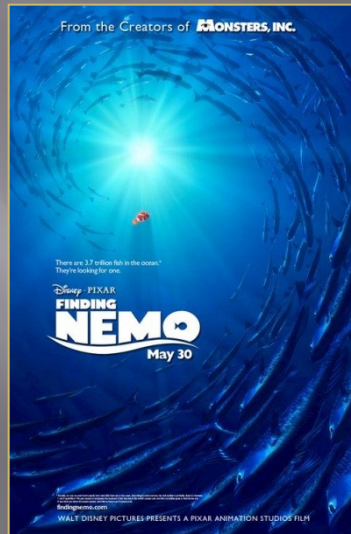
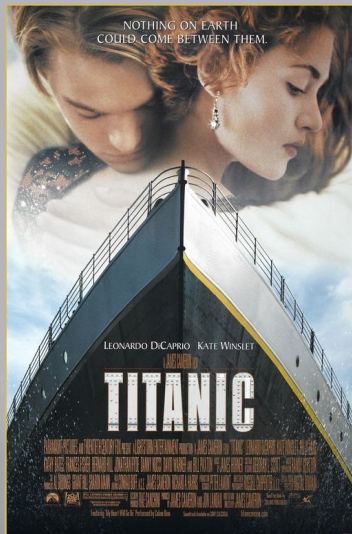
70s -90s: American cinema is mainly inward looking: think *Top Gun!*

Maximize domestic market (new US audiences and home delivery)

High end fare is mainly set in the US, and feature US characters and actors



The Re-internationalization of High End Hollywood Output (1997 –)



What are some of the factors that led Hollywood to place great emphasis on certain international markets?

The World's big Seven

Why might Hollywood have started once again to place emphasis on certain overseas markets?

What are those markets likely to be?

What distinguishes those markets from the rest of the world?

Gradual Re-institutionalization of High-End Hollywood fare

1990s: Major overseas markets grow

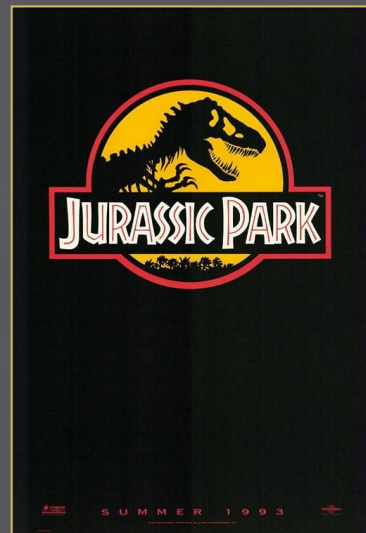
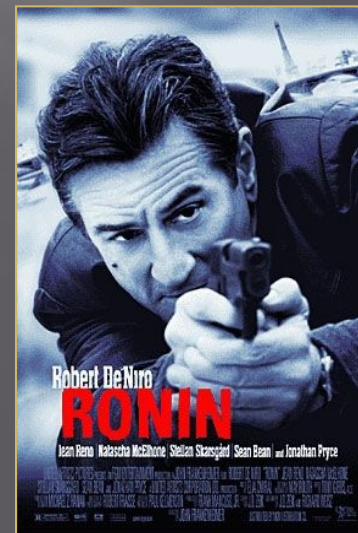
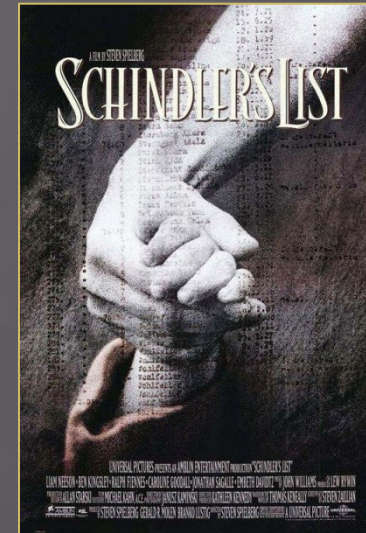
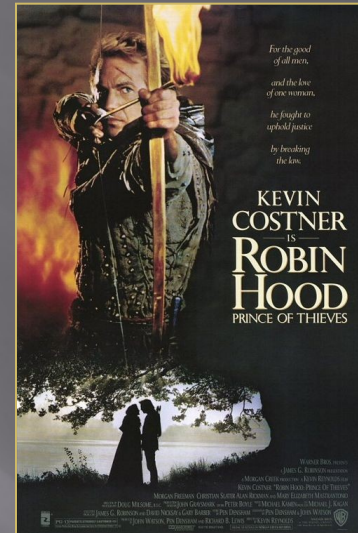
1. Gentrified exhibition sector
2. Deregulation of television
3. Growth of home video

Initial efforts tentative

1. Medium-Budget films
2. Old Style Historical Epics

Internationalization of high concept blockbuster is gradual despite

Jurassic Park ... until *Titanic* that is



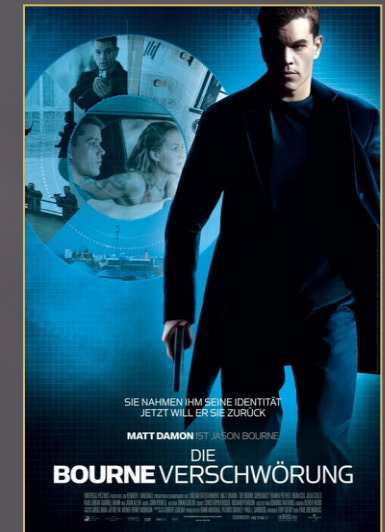
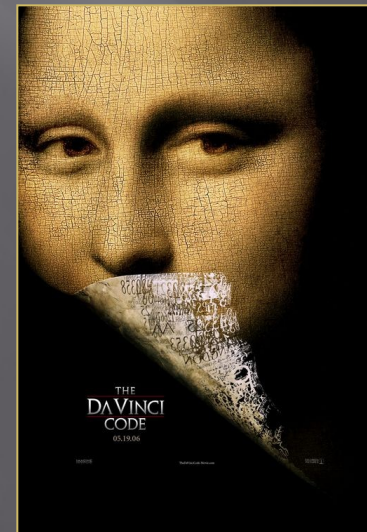
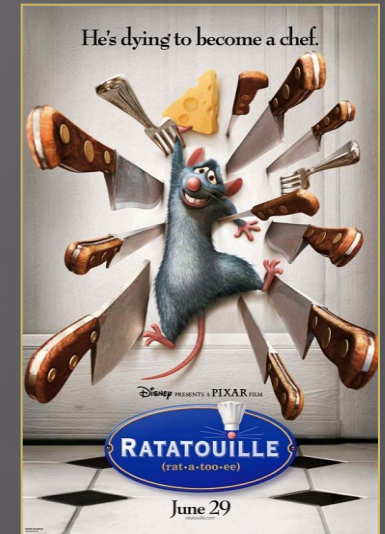
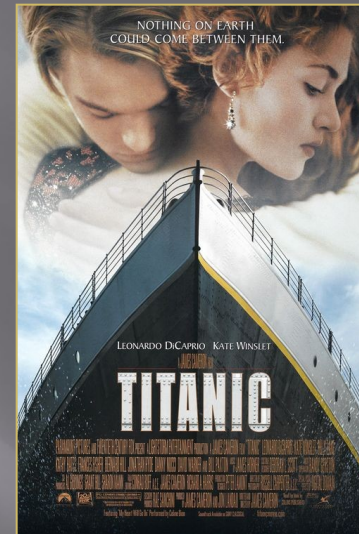
Hollywood's International Perspective

North America has always been biggest market: 40% of income (5% of world's population)

But market cannot support high cost of most Hollywood films

80% of remaining 60% from ...

Japan, Australia, UK, Germany, France, Spain, and Italy



The Big 7 and Survival: or why Prague plays Paris and not vice versa

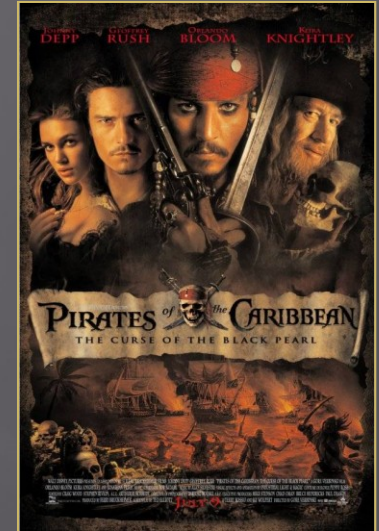
Solvency hinges on Big Seven

These nations have a large middle-class and a solid exchange rate

Hollywood courts movie-watchers in its major overseas markets

It seeks to avoid the alienation of smaller markets like Czech republic

Most 21st century blockbusters made with US and some of big 7 in mind



Content Tailoring

Making Blockbusters Transnational: Negotiating the Amerincan-ness of Hollywood

Economic necessity shapes content

Goals

1. Increase marketability; attract audiences
2. Maximize pleasure; fuel positive sentiments; retain those audiences

Rationale

Viewers often gravitate to assumed domestic fare (based on “national” content/personnel)

Hollywood’s association with the US means that popular Anti-Americanism can damage business



Governing Principles of Tailoring 21st Century Calculated Blockbusters

Exceeds accessibility of 70s/80s fare

Familiarization:

Offers reference points to viewers in the major non-US markets

Dilution:

Reduces perceived American-ness of films – formally and thematically

Cultural Diplomacy:

Showcases normalcy and benefits of “America” overseas



In what ways was *Cars 2* tailored to be marketable and appealing to non-American Audiences?

Cars 2: A Formula (1) Picture

Response to the poor performance of the US-centered *Cars*

Employs travelogue format – pictures major markets as settings

International Groups: avoids associating “evil” with any nation

Shows Americans maturing from overseas experiences and interaction



Promoting *Cars* with Cars

Uses Euro-friendly theme of ecology to reach out to assumed left-liberal positions

Demonizes big oil – i.e. international corporations

But, invokes car-centered media – sports TV – to suggest global media is anodyne

Thus, in contrast to oil, Hollywood is the good face of global commerce!



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Europe's Most Wanted

Animation enables content to be recalibrated through dubbing

Post-cards European locations/
downplays US as a superior location

Humble, unthreatening “Americans”
(are actually nomads from Africa!)

Strong national “foreign” stereotypes

Power: negotiated, multidirectional



Balloons to the Children of the World

Villain parodies US Stereotypes

Also, anti-hero for parents weary of having to watch these films

Circus is metaphor for Hollywood

Promotes superiority of US-European family entertainment

Film promotes itself and twenty-first Century Hollywood



Assembling the Contemporary Transnational Hollywood Blockbuster

These ideas are transferable!

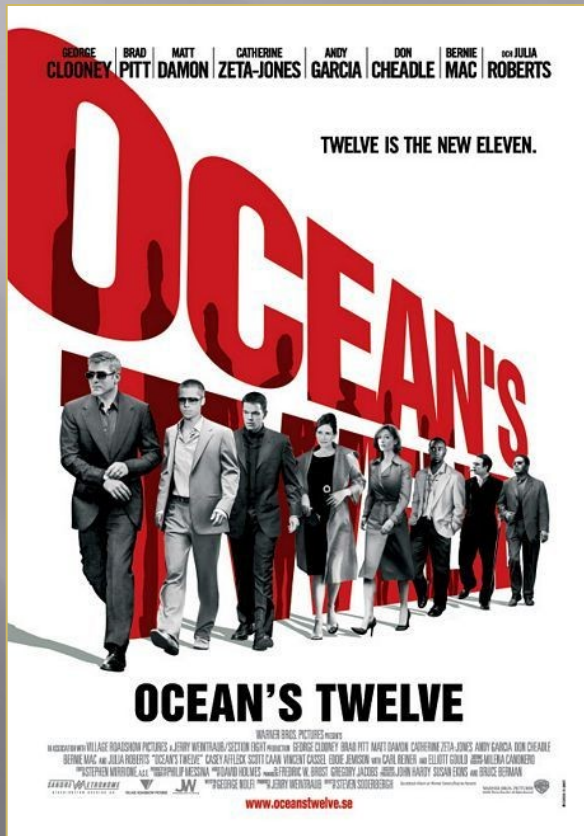
We can deconstruct movies into their constituent elements

Stories take place in time and space, and feature protagonists, antagonists, and supporting characters

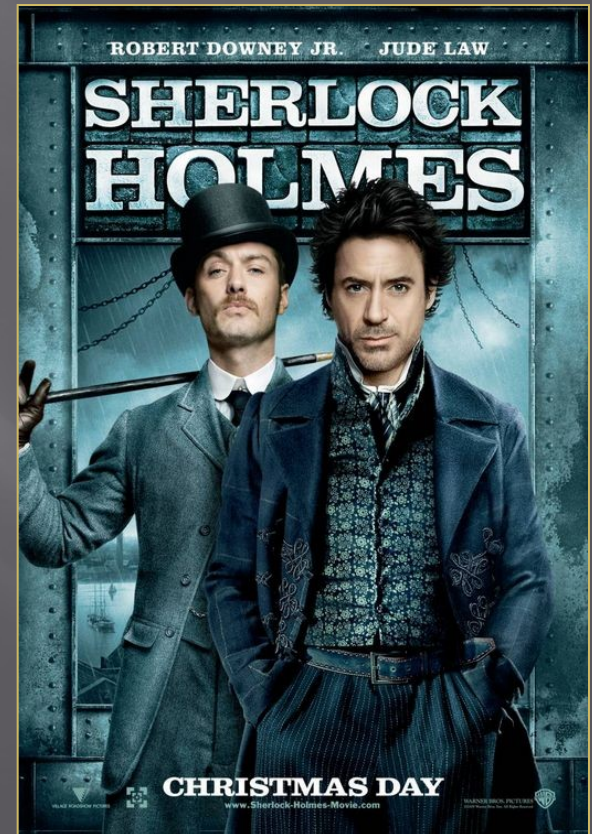
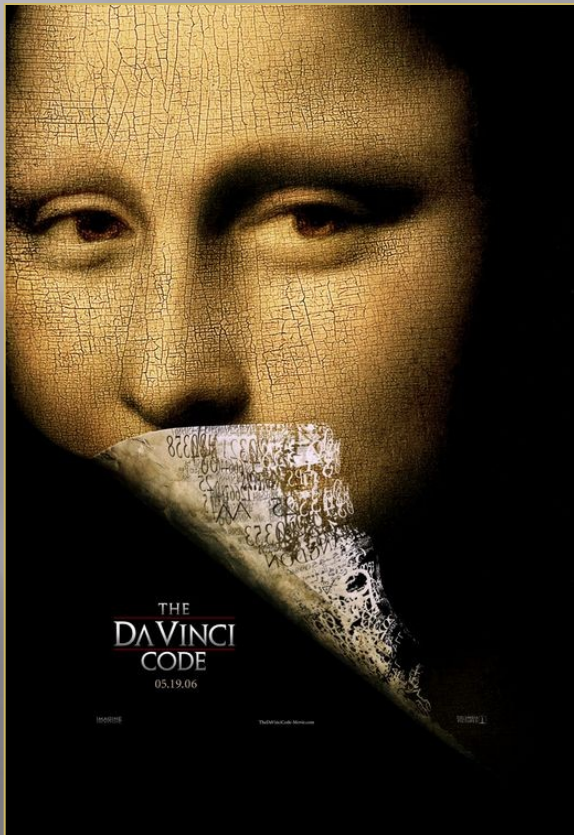
We also need to consider personnel, inter-textuality, (reference to other cultural products) and themes*

*perhaps avoiding academic exercises in free association!

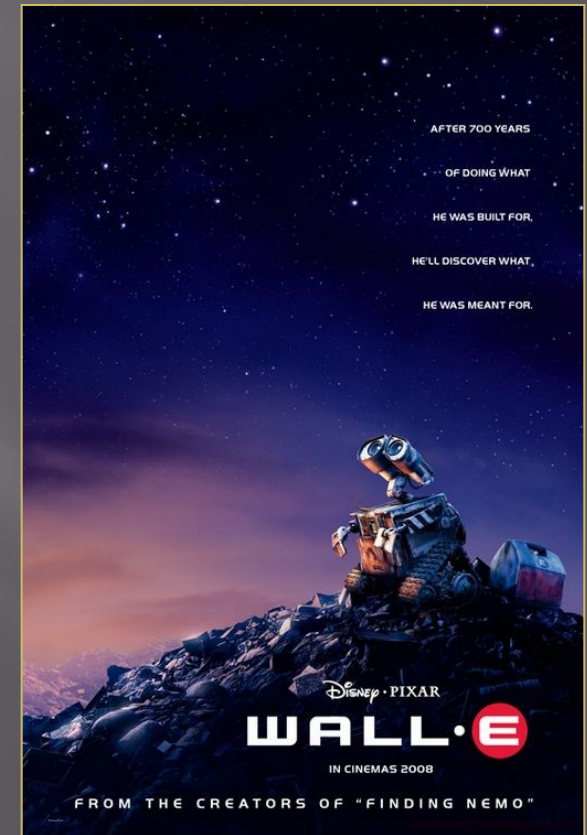
International Settings, Characters, and Performers



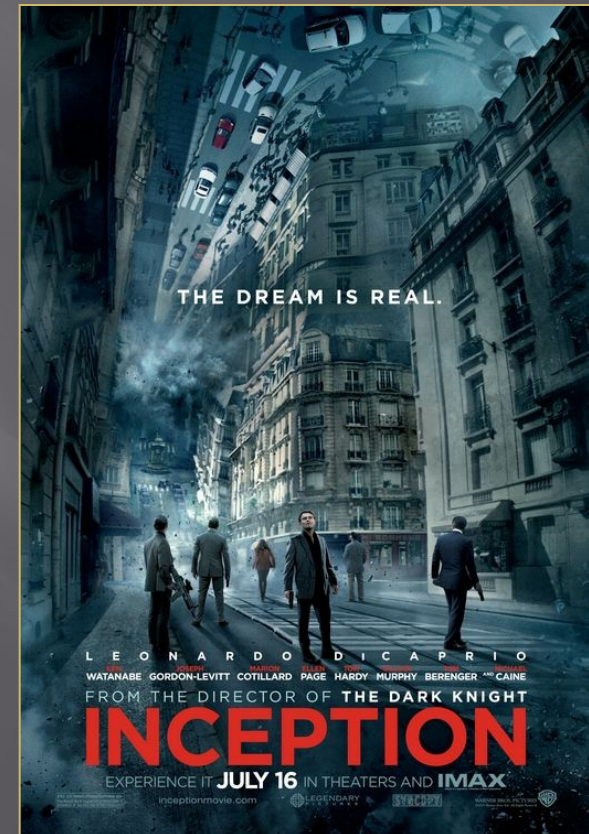
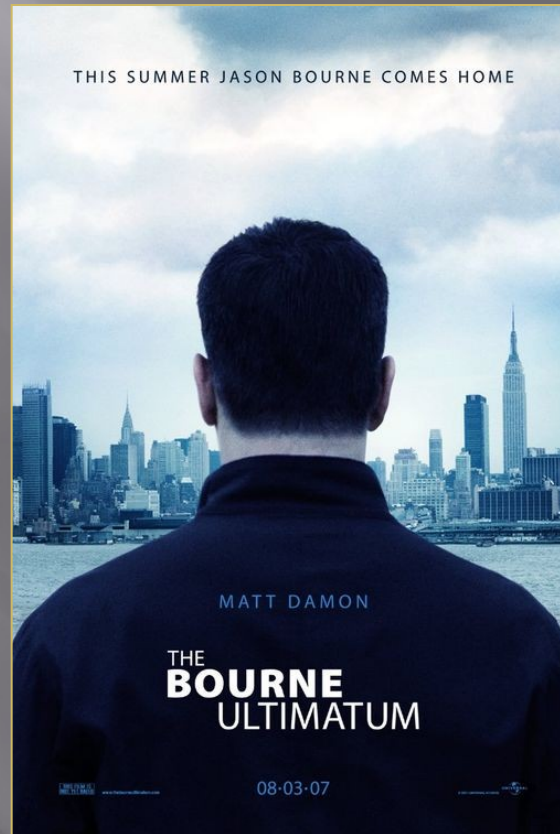
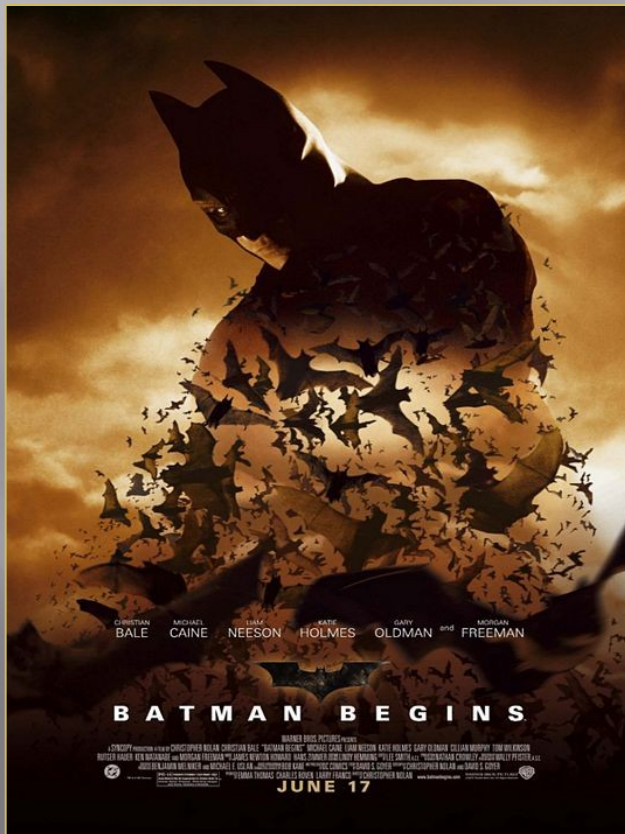
Source Material and Mythology



Depicting the US and Americans Ambivalently



Cross-border flows Shaping Identities of American Characters



Summary

Hollywood Majors needs “**Big 7**” **International markets to remain solvent**

Dilutes perceived American-ness of most high-end films (and also many medium budget films as well)

Spotlights familiar references for major markets

Tempers potentially US-patriotic material

Normalizes cross-border flows of cultural products and of Americans

Often creates overtly accented forms of transnational cinema

Conclusions

Hollywood's global operations tend to be framed in terms of

1. Recentness
2. Imposition of outside culture

It is also important to bear in mind:

1. Their historical dimensions
2. The concessions made to content

“Americanization” stresses public acquiescence to foreign agents, yet we might note that movie-going is a voluntary activity which is encouraged by compromising content to the assumed preferences of local audiences. Hollywood only has a certain amount of confidence in the exportability of “American” movies.