

## Screening European Heritage – Pilot Study

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In his seminal collection of essays *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (2005), Thomas Elsaesser observes that ‘European cinema distinguishes itself from Hollywood and Asian cinemas by dwelling so insistently on the (recent) past’.<sup>1</sup> But what forms has this lasting engagement with the continent’s history taken across the different European film cultures? And, more specifically, what is film’s role in the promotion of European heritage, be it on screen through plots set in the past, costumes and props, or off screen through its interaction with tourist sites and the heritage industries surrounding them? In addressing these questions, the AHRC-funded scoping study ‘Screening European Heritage’ led by Professor Paul Cooke (Principal Investigator) and Professor Rob Stone (Co-Investigator) ventured into new territory, as a comparative study of European heritage film is to this day a desideratum.

In order to reflect its approach historically and conceptually, the project needed to consider the origins of the debate about the heritage film in the UK of the 1980s. This debate arose in response to a wave of costume dramas about English history as well as adaptations of English literary classics that lasted throughout the decade and well into the 1990s. Key examples of this wave are *Chariots of Fire* (1981), *A Room With A View* (1985) and *Emma* (1996), while recent productions such as *Pride and Prejudice* (2005) or *The King’s Speech* (2010) testify to the persistence of the genre. An early critique of the heritage film was formulated by Andrew Higson, describing its image of the past as a ‘visually spectacular pastiche, inviting a nostalgic gaze that resists the ironies and social critiques so often suggested narratively by these films’.<sup>2</sup> Higson developed his position on the topic further in his monograph *English Heritage, English Cinema: Costume Drama Since 1980* (2003).<sup>3</sup> While maintaining a critical stance towards the heritage film’s conservative portrayals of national heritage, he also conceded its potential for alternative and particularly queer readings

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Higson, ‘Re-Presenting the National Past: Nostalgia and Pastiche in the Heritage Film’, in *Fires Were Started: British Cinema and Thatcherism*, ed. by Lester Friedman (London: University College London Press 1993), pp. 109-129, here p. 109.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Higson, *English Heritage, English Cinema: Costume Drama Since 1980* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

of history. Moreover, the monograph deepened his work on the relationship between the arrival of the heritage film and the promotion of the heritage industry during the Thatcher era, and traced the move towards global heritage productions disseminating impressions of 'Englishness' during the 1990s.

In her contributions to the debate, Claire Monk has stressed how politicised the critique of the heritage film was from the beginning. Outlining her position in an interview with 'Screening European Heritage', Monk explained: 'This critique grew out of the wider, very combative, cultural-political climate that we had in Britain in the 1980s. [...] What I have always tried to argue against is the idea that there is a binary split between the supposedly progressive left-wing, multicultural, pro-working class films set in the present and the – by inference – 'conservative' films set in the past that were made in Britain in the 1980s.' In Monk's view, critical assessments of the heritage film and its perspective on the past tended to be based on generalised assumptions about audience reactions. Consequently, an important part of her work has focused on the concrete reception of heritage films, emphasising the diversity of viewers' responses, for instance, in her monograph *Heritage Film Audiences: Period Film and Contemporary Audiences in the UK*.<sup>4</sup> As Monk summarised her position in her interview: 'What I found [...] is that there is one section of the audience that was more conservative than anyone like Andrew Higson or Cairns Craig ever dreamt. But also a left-wing or liberal, generally younger, degree-educated and quite cinephilic audience that enjoys these films but feels self-conscious guilt about it because of their awareness of the debate.'<sup>5</sup>

Both avenues of exploration, being cited here as central voices in an admittedly much broader debate, served as vital incentives for 'Screening European Heritage'. On the one hand, the contributions by Higson and Monk alerted the project to the necessity of relating the heritage aesthetics of the films considered to the social and political climate in which they were produced and received. This was of particular importance as the project examined heritage film on a European scale, from the export of domestic productions beyond their place of origin to transnational productions targeted at a variety of audiences. On the other

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<sup>4</sup> Claire Monk, *Heritage Film Audiences: Period Film and Contemporary Audiences in the UK* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011). See also her recent article on online fan cultures, 'Heritage Film Audiences 2.0: Period Film Audiences and Online Film Cultures', in *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies*, 8 (2011), 431-477.

<sup>5</sup> 'From Political Critique to Online Fandom: Claire Monk on British Heritage Film, its Origins and Afterlife', *Screening European Heritage*, 25 July 2013, <<http://arts.leeds.ac.uk/screeningeuropeanheritage/from-political-critique-to-online-fandom-claire-monk-on-british-heritage-film-its-origins-and-afterlife/>> [accessed 1 September 2013].

hand, the project built on the work conducted on contacts between the heritage film and the heritage industry in 1980s Britain. In this regard, interviews with industry professionals such as festival founder Bill Lawrence and media executive Nick Wild offered insight into the nature of this relationship in Britain today, both on the national and regional levels. Moreover, in discussing this relationship with our network members abroad, the project started to develop a comparative perspective on film's place in the European heritage industries.

More recently, the heritage film was reassessed by Belén Vidal in her monograph *Heritage film: nation, genre and representation* (2012). Vidal's approach was exemplary for the project as she includes several productions about non-British heritages, such as *The Girl with a Pearl Earring* (2003) and *Joyeux Noël (Merry Christmas, 2005)*. By drawing on a broad selection of films, with notable differences in terms of their production, representation and reception, Vidal presents the heritage film not as a rigid category but a flexible genre. In her own words, it is 'a hybrid genre with porous borders, a genre that is becoming less consensual and more political through its own staunch preference for emotional histories, and also more adventurous in its continuous incorporation of a popular historical iconography informed not only by literature or painting, but also by fashion, popular music and television.'<sup>6</sup> This wider definition was a productive starting point for discussing the range of heritage films in contemporary Europe.<sup>7</sup> Of particularly importance was Vidal's reference to television, not only in terms of its popular iconographies, but also as a key producer of heritage films.

How can the notion of heritage film, with its roots in the specific situation of 1980s Britain, be transferred upon historical dramas from the continent and used for comparative analysis? What are the periods and styles characterising heritage films in contemporary Europe, and what are the films' conditions of production and contexts of reception? These questions emerged as the main ones guiding the 'Screening European Heritage' project. They were approached through interviews with film scholars and industry professionals, but also through new forms of textual analysis such as the video essays available on the project website.<sup>8</sup> This enquiry focused on three areas: the Basque Country, Denmark and Germany.

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<sup>6</sup> Belén Vidal, *Heritage Film: Nation Genre Representation* (London : Wallflower, 2012), p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> See also Eckart Voigts-Virchow (ed.), *Janespotting and Beyond: British Heritage Retrovisions since the Mid-1990s* (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2004) and its discussion of post-heritage films.

<sup>8</sup> <<http://arts.leeds.ac.uk/screeningeuropeanheritage/resources/video-essays/>> [accessed 1 September 2013].

At the same time, in its course, the project also opened up some new perspectives on British heritage film. For instance, in his interview with ‘Screening European Heritage’, Lawrence points at a tradition of heritage productions for both cinema and television predating the wave of the 1980s. With regard to cinema, Lawrence mentions Gainsborough Pictures which was well-known not only for its melodramas but also for its historical films: ‘Gainsborough Pictures produced a lot of films around 17th-century-issues, especially costume dramas [...]. *The Wicked Lady* (1945) would be a famous example.’ Lawrence sees this continuity as being due to what he calls a ‘nostalgia drive’ in British society as well as the audience appeal in particular of literary adaptations: ‘There was quite a clear interest in looking back. But there is also an interest in UK cinema very early on to make films out of literature. If literature is selling well in terms of period drama, then it will transfer to cinema quite well.’<sup>9</sup> In Lawrence’s account, producing heritage films as a strategy to achieve box-office successes is by no means a discovery of the 1980s.

Moreover, the project traced some of the changes that definitions of British heritage have undergone since the historical dramas and literary adaptations of the Thatcher era. With regard to Yorkshire, Lawrence recalls that during his time on the board of the region’s film agency, funding applications tended to refer to a certain set of regional themes: the Brontës, Yorkshire’s Asian community, the Yorkshire Ripper murders and the 1984-5 Miners’ Strike. However, as Monk observes in her interview from a historical viewpoint, this reflects an idea of heritage that is much broader than earlier understandings of the term: ‘A key charge made against the heritage film in the original 1990s British critiques was that the ‘national’ past it constructed was bourgeois and Southern, the “England” of the Home Counties and the financial City of London. This original definition expressly excluded films that were about regional heritage, or working class heritage. We do now have these understandings of regional and working class heritage which an agency like Screen Yorkshire will have worked with. But the left-wing anti-heritage-film critique of the 1980s-1990s would have viewed at least three of the key subjects Lawrence cites as diametrically opposed to the ‘heritage film’. A film about the miners’ strike would by definition fall outside that understanding of ‘heritage’ as bourgeois and conservative.’<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> ‘Nostalgia Trips and Market Drives: Bill Lawrence on Heritage Film Past and Present’, *Screening European Heritage*, 8 April 2013, <<http://arts.leeds.ac.uk/screeningeuropeanheritage/between-nostalgia-and-market-bill-lawrence-on-heritage-film/>> [accessed 1 September 2013].

<sup>10</sup> ‘From Political Critique to Online Fandom’.

In the following, this pilot study will outline the main findings of the project with reference to the three focus areas. It seeks to offer a comprehensive account of heritage film by differentiating between local, national and transnational forms of heritage, cinema or television productions about them as well as their reception. What can tentatively be grouped under the umbrella of European heritage film arises at the intersection between these levels. In illustrating some of the dynamics of this interrelation, the project hopes to function as a model for further comparative analyses. While the forms of heritage and the kinds of heritage films to be found in the Basque Country, Denmark and Germany differ markedly, they all illustrate the enduring importance of heritage on the economic, social and cultural levels. Heritage is a way of promoting tourist destinations, confronting the decline of cinema audiences and a tool in identity construction that overwhelmingly builds on moments of historical trauma. However, as above all the German example shows, more recent societal shifts such as migration and globalisation are beginning to transform definitions and portrayals of heritage. Increasingly, heritage refers not only to the nation state but also to migrant and diasporic communities, their cultures and histories. And film plays a central part in giving a voice to these new forms of heritage and negotiating their status in relation to national traditions.

#### The Basque Country: The Region as Allegory of the Nation

Like British cinema, that of the Basque Country in the 1980s also saw a notable increase in films about history and heritage. This coincidence motivated the project's first investigation into how the established definition of heritage film could be expanded beyond the British context. Of course, in the first instance, the project needed to acknowledge the specific context in which Basque films were produced and its political circumstances. After the establishment of the Autonomous Basque Community in 1978, its administration sought to promote Basque cinema at home and abroad. In 1982, the decision was taken to subsidise films that had to be shot in the Basque country with a significant degree of Basque participation. The aims of this measure were, firstly, to build a Basque film industry by training and attracting film professionals and, secondly, to produce heritage films that portrayed Basque history in a way that informed and entertained domestic audiences and were attractive to foreign festivals, distributors and critics. These films were to be shot in Castilian for practical purposes and on the condition that a single copy was subsequently made available to be dubbed into the Basque language of Euskara.

The political nature of Basque heritage film is rooted in the struggle for recognition and independence of the Basque nation. Once the suppression of Basque nationalism under Franco had come to an end, there was a strong urge to reclaim Basque nationhood, including its sense of history. However, this urge was realised only in part with the creation of the Autonomous Basque Community, for it comprises only three of the territories traditionally associated with the Basque Country, excluding Navarre on Spanish soil as well as the Pays Basque in France. And while the Spanish constitution of 1978 gave the Autonomous Basque Community the status of a nationality, the referendum by which it was achieved was rejected by many Basques and the region remained embedded within the Spanish state. In this situation, the Autonomous Basque Community became the location from which the medium of film was exploited to reimagine the history and heritage of *Euskal Herria*, the complete territory of the Basque Country.

The relation between the local and the national thus proved to be a critical one for Basque film. Resorting to archetypical landscapes and traditional ethnographic details, the cinema sought to evoke the heritage of a nation greater than the Autonomous Basque Community where it was produced. And it drew on history and legend to portray a people more independent than the political situation of the present allowed. Here, in fact, lies a fundamental difference to the British heritage film of the 1980s. Instead of suggesting a historically larger but politically unattained nation, the British productions limited their portrayal of national heritage and ‘Englishness’ to a recognisable set of regions and locations, the Home Counties and the City of London. While the Basque films, by portraying expeditions and invasions, tried to expand the viewers’ perception of space in both the historical and the cultural sense, the British ones staged their performances of the bourgeois heritage canon within the safe confines of the country house.

Three films that set out to reclaim the ancient and modern Basque past deleted or rewritten by the dictatorship were *La conquista de Albania* (*The Conquest of Albania*, 1983), *Akelarre* (*Witches’ Sabbath*, 1983) and *Fuego eterno* (*Eternal Fire*, 1985). But these films were also political by commenting in more or less veiled or allegorical fashion on contemporary issues. This is another important difference to the British productions of the 1980s. While some scholars have described the British heritage film as political in terms of its queer gaze, prompting the audience to see the past from a minority perspective, there is little evidence of a commentary on present-day political affairs. Moreover, the British films’

focus on the middle and upper classes stands in sharp contrast to the appeal to the nation as a collective in past and present characterising Basque heritage cinema of the same period.

A brief look at *Akelarre* illustrates exactly how Basque heritage film of the 1980s functioned as a political commentary. The film was based on an auto-da-fé of 1595 detailing the testimonies of witchcraft recorded in the valley of Araiz. Aiming to provide an allegory for the Basque struggle for independence, *Akelarre* portrays a conflict between, on the one hand, an ancient, matriarchal culture with its own language and customs, and, on the other, the patriarchal, oppressive and invasive culture of non-Basque Christianity. Demonised and tortured, the Basques resist, band together and rise up to overthrow their oppressors. Reordering the past from a radical and heroic perspective, the film subverts anti-Basque nationalist history and gives a historical justification for present-day conflict.

In particular, *Akelarre* dramatizes the witch-hunts that terrified the Naverrese town of Zugarramurdi in the seventeenth century in order to reflect events at the time of the film's making. An inquisitor arrives to arrest and torture villagers accused of witchcraft, however, these accusations are partly a measure against growing claims for independence, aiming to suppress the incipient militancy. As one of the foundational films largely funded by the newly autonomous Basque government, *Akelarre* presents its audience with several points of comparison between recent and mythic Basque history. The film acts in defence of Basque heritage by showing how traditional ways of life are demonised and threatened by Spanish-Christian forces of oppression and persecution. Significantly, this filmic intervention into the struggle for independence was released at a time when evidence of the torture of ETA members by Spanish security forces was provoking debate and protest.<sup>11</sup>

The specific nature of this commentary goes some way towards explaining why the Basque version of heritage cinema, as opposed to the British one, was not exported. *Akelarre*, *La conquista de albania* and *Fuego eterno* played at various international film festivals, but their reception centred on their country of origin, where their value was often contested. Precisely for this reason, the Basque case illustrates some of the benefits of seeking a wider definition of heritage film. For instance, the 1980s Basque heritage films serve as reminders of the fact that heritage, in its etymological root, is about ownership, not only of territory but

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<sup>11</sup> A comprehensive discussion of Basque heritage film will be offered by Rob Stone and María Pilar Rodríguez in *Basque Cinema: A Political and Cultural History* (New York/London: I.B. Tauris, forthcoming 2015).

also of history.<sup>12</sup> Heritage films play a key role in defining the ownership of history, assigning it to a certain group or opening it up to transnational identification and consumption, as in the British case. The question of ownership is particularly critical for heritage films that address traumatic histories such as the Second World War or political terrorism. Representing a strong strand within contemporary European cinema, such films define the ownership of history not least through the roles of perpetrators and victims. Some stage heroic re-appropriations of history, as we saw with regard to *Akelarre*, others present a dark heritage marked by moral grey zones and dangers of complicity, as a few examples from the Danish and German contexts show.

#### Denmark: National Icons of the Resistance, Progress and Success

Also in the Danish context, the cinema plays a prominent part in shaping and maintaining the nation's sense of history and heritage, in many cases through films portraying positive aspects of Danish history. Occasionally, the country produces heritage films that travel beyond Denmark and become international successes, most recently, the costume drama *En kongelig affære* (*A Royal Affair*, 2012). However, on the whole, Denmark is characterised by heritage films that seek to reach a large proportion of the country's – comparatively small – domestic audience. As the project's interview with Claus Ladegaard, Head of Development and Production at the Danish Film Institute, showed, over the past five years, Denmark has seen a veritable boom in historical films. Partly caused by an extremely tight market situation in which films about Danish history are more likely to be successful, this trend has reaffirmed the formative role of heritage films in national culture.

One of the main concerns of Danish historical dramas is the Nazi occupation and how Danes reacted to it. As Ladegaard explains in his interview, 'if you look at what could be labelled historical films, at least half of them would be about the way Danes acted during that time. There is a theme, and it is about our role during the war. These films are about being a small country, maybe not being as heroic as we thought we were, and continuously rewriting the history of Danish resistance and collaboration during the war'. This also means that, to a significant degree, the portrayal of national history in Danish film is set against the violent and dark background of the Second World War as a European history. The ways in which this history is portrayed through local agents, national icons and, on a transnational scale, in

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<sup>12</sup> See Stuart Hall, 'Whose Heritage? Unsettling "the Heritage", Re-imagining the Post Nation', in *The Third Text Reader on Art, Culture and Theory*, ed. by Rasheed Araeen, Sean Cubitt and Ziauddin Sardar (London: Continuum, 2002), pp. 72-84.



comparison or response to foreign productions, illustrate the main features of Danish heritage films set during the Nazi occupation.

A recent example of the continuous engagement with the Nazi occupation in Danish cinema is *Flammen & Citronen* (*Flame & Citron*, 2008). The film was a success with Danish audiences but also gained distribution for a range of European art-house cinemas. Its public resonance was partly due to the fact that *Flame & Citron* complicated the widespread image of heroic resistance against the Nazis. As Lagedaard observes, ‘in popular culture, this was more or less the first film that put some question marks behind the official history of Denmark during the war’. While portraying two iconic figures of the Danish resistance, Bent Faurischou-Hviid and Jørgen Haagen Schmith, these become more and more entangled in a net of conspiracies and a grey zone between good and evil.

*Flame & Citron* certainly was an intervention into Danish memory culture, but the film also needs to be seen in the context of European films about the legacy of Nazism. From this point of view, it forms part of a group of productions that explore the darker side of what is commonly celebrated as the positive heritage of resistance. Another example from this group would be the Dutch production *Zwartboek* (*Black Book*, 2006) which undermines the heroism and sacrifice often characterising filmic portrayals of the Dutch resistance. Instead, the film shows a resistance infiltrated by corruption and betrayal, similarly to *Flame & Citron* using the gangster movie as its generic model. And, likewise, *Black Book* was targeted not only at a domestic but also at a European and indeed international audience. A Danish film such as *Flame & Citron* thus renegotiated the national heritage of resistance in a way that interacted with larger trends in memory culture and film production.

*Flame & Citron* stands in sharp contrast to films about the Nazi occupation that present the Danish resistance in a heroic light, such as the more recent *Hvidsten gruppen* (*This Life*, 2012). The film was a return to traditional forms of telling the story of the Nazi occupation, using actual locations in the Danish province and showing the selfless acts of ordinary citizens. As Ladegaard puts it, ‘*This Life* was the pure history of our heroic Danes in the countryside fighting the Germans. It did amazingly at the box office and had fifty per cent more admissions than *Flame & Citron*.’ While the film was subsequently screened at European film festivals such as Karlovy Vary, its approach to history made it, in Ladegaard’s words, ‘a very Danish film’ clearly targeted at a domestic audience. In the Danish film industry, putting the heritage of resistance against the Nazis on screen continues to be a recipe for success.

But Danish cinema is also drawing on more recent periods of national history in order to attract domestic audiences. Despite their significantly higher production costs, heritage films are sought-after by producers because of their ability to create income in a market dominated by blockbusters. Going beyond the Second World War, such films feature positive figures representing progress or success, often in the form of biopics. Current examples are *Spies & Glistrup (Sex, Drugs and Taxation, 2013)* about Simon Spies and Mogens Glistrup, two key figures in the modernisation of post-war Denmark, and *Tarok (Catching the Dream, 2013)* about one of the most celebrated racing horses of the 1970s. These productions show how heritage film in contemporary Europe has by no means lost its function of providing edifying tales about the shared past of a nation like Denmark.

Finally, the Danish context also illustrates the importance of television for heritage film in contemporary Europe. Currently, the country's two public service broadcasters are producing historical drama series which Ladegaard describes as their 'most prestigious projects'. He adds that 'they use enormous amounts of money on this, and about half the population will watch these shows'. The influence of television can in fact be seen across the European film industries. A case in point is the second German public channel ZDF, which is well-known for its adaptations of Rosamunde Pilcher novels. Appropriating the British heritage tradition for German audiences, these television dramas have led to a strong increase of German tourism to their settings in Cornwall. And, of course, British television is famous for its heritage productions such as *Downton Abbey (2010-)*, *Call the Midwife (2012-)* and *Mr Selfridge (2013-)*. These productions are not limited to the national network of domestic viewers, but are also being sold to the United States, for instance. Similarly to British cinema, also heritage productions for British television manage to capitalise on their transnational appeal.

#### Germany: Transnational Memories of War and Migration

There appears to be an immediate parallel between the Danish and the German heritage film due to the enormous importance of the Nazi dictatorship and the Second World War for both. Yet, a closer look reveals decisive differences not only in terms of the ways in which this legacy is approached, but also in terms of the national versus transnational reach of the films in question. Moreover, in engaging with the history of a country which, albeit belatedly, is acknowledging its status as an immigration society, German film has also begun to engage with the heritage of its minorities. In this regard, the 'Screening European Heritage' project

discovered productive intersections with the field of migrant and diasporic cinemas which has seen a great expansion over the last decade in particular.

Films about the Third Reich rank among Germany's most high-profile and successful historical productions. In contrast to the large number of Danish films cited above, many of them are able to reach both domestic and foreign audiences. In the case of an international success like *Der Untergang* (*Downfall*, 2004), it has even been argued that films about the Nazi past are always also designed as export products. While this might understate the importance of the domestic market, it is true that German films about the Nazi past often receive international attention, from *Stalingrad* (1993) to *Sophie Scholl – Die letzten Tage* (*Sophie Scholl: The Final Days*, 2005).

Yet, German film can only draw on a few identificatory figures such as Sophie Scholl in order to construct a positive legacy out of the Nazi past. In this regard, the German situation is markedly different from the Danish one with its heroes of the resistance, and also in a broader sense from the British tradition with its celebration of the country's pre-war history and culture. German productions about the Third Reich confront a legacy that, instead of being cherished and preserved, needs to be worked through and overcome. This discrepancy prompted the project to consider the concept of heritage from yet another point of view, asking to what extent it has to be positively connoted, and if German films about Nazi past can be considered under the heading of heritage at all.<sup>13</sup>

In discussing these questions, Matthew Boswell, Research Fellow at the University of Leeds, introduced the concept of dark heritage. The term refers to legacies of violence and crime, often state-sponsored and large-scale, which are universally condemned yet have a powerful influence on society and culture. For Boswell, there are significant parallels between what we commonly understand as heritage in the positive sense and dark heritages such as the Nazi past. 'Although dark heritage is difficult and traumatic, it's still connected to exactly the same ideas and processes, often in a positive way: things like community-building and the construction of group identities.'<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> For a broader discussion of this question, see Paul Cooke, *Contemporary German Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), pp. 88-99. With regard to the 1990s, Lutz Koepnick has shown how the display of heritage in films set during the Third Reich focuses on examples of the so-called German-Jewish symbiosis. See his 'Reframing the Past: Heritage Cinema and the Holocaust in the 1990s', *New German Critique*, 87 (2002), 47-82.

<sup>14</sup> Visitor interest in sites of dark history is explored in John Lennon and Malcolm Foley, *Dark Tourism: The Attraction of Death and Disaster* (London: Continuum, 2000). With regard to Germany's dark heritage, see in particular Sharon Macdonald, *Negotiating the Nazi Past in Germany and Beyond* (London: Routledge, 2009).

As an example, Boswell cites *Downfall* about Hitler's and the Nazi leadership's final days in the bunker. For Boswell, the film's positive representation of national identity is based on a shared experience of suffering: 'It's a film that represents Germans as victims. It doesn't really attempt to deal with them as perpetrators of terrible crimes – apart from Hitler who is virtually the sole perpetrator, the sole source of evil. *Downfall* is about communities being restored and positive, harmonious group identities arising out of a dark chapter of the past.' While the history portrayed is a problematic one, the film's genre and function are comparable to those of the heritage film, Boswell suspects. However, the construction of a positive legacy out of the Nazi past may come at a price: 'Heritage film is a genre that can be applied to darker subjects as well as lighter ones. The question, of course, is whether this then becomes less about the art of memory and more about the art of forgetting.'<sup>15</sup>

Of course, the dark heritage of Germany also comprises the GDR and in particular the Stasi surveillance influentially portrayed in *Das Leben der Anderen* (*The Lives of Others*, 2006).<sup>16</sup> As the winner of an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, the production underscores the transnational appeal of German films about the country's troubled past. In fact, since *Nirgendwo in Afrika* (*Nowhere in Africa*, 2001), every Oscar-nominated or -winning German film was set in either Nazi or Socialist Germany.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, the project explored the transnational character of heritage film from yet another point of view by discussing the portrayal of migrant and diasporic communities in German cinema. Highly instructive in this context was an email exchange between Principal Investigator Cooke and Daniela Berghahn, Professor of Film Studies at Royal Holloway, University of London.<sup>18</sup> Berghahn describes how the filmic portrayal of these communities began with what she terms 'postmemory documentaries' such as Yüksel Yavuz's *Mein Vater, der Gastarbeiter* (*My Father, the Guestworker*, 1994) or Seyhan Derin's *Ich bin Tochter meiner Mutter* (*Am My Mother's Daughter*, 1996). In these niche productions for small audiences, the filmmakers trace their parent's experiences and memories of migration.

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<sup>15</sup> 'Dark Heritage, Identity and Community: In Conversation with Matthew Boswell', *Screening European Heritage*, 14 June 2013, <<http://arts.leeds.ac.uk/screeningeuropeanheritage/dark-heritage-identity-and-community-in-conversation-with-matthew-boswell/>> [accessed 15 September 2013].

<sup>16</sup> Jaimey Fisher, 'German Historical Film as Production Trend: European Heritage Cinema and Melodrama in *The Lives of Others*' in *The Collapse of the Conventional: German Film and its Politics at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Jaimey Fisher and Brad Prager (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), pp. 186-215.

<sup>17</sup> See Ib Bondebjerg, 'Coming to terms with the past: post-1989 strategies in German film culture', *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*, (1) 2010, 29-42.

<sup>18</sup> 'Diasporic Communities and Heritage Film: An Email Exchange with Daniela Berghahn', *Screening European Heritage*, 31 May 2013, <<http://arts.leeds.ac.uk/screeningeuropeanheritage/diasporic-communities-and-heritage-film-an-email-exchange-with-daniela-berghahn/>> [1 September 2013].

However, while bringing a largely forgotten social heritage to the screen, in terms of their perspective and style, these documentaries can hardly be compared to heritage films in the narrow sense.

First attempts to portray the experience of migration through an aesthetics imitating that of the heritage film are *Solino* (2002) and *Almanya – Willkommen in Deutschland* (*Almanya – Welcome to Germany*, 2011). Berghahn sees the significance of these and other films from different parts of Europe in their attempt ‘to claim a space for the collective memory of immigrants, which has been elided in the official memory of the host nations’. Their aim is ‘to incorporate diasporic memory in the collective memory of France, Germany, Britain or wherever else these immigrants have settled permanently, raised their children and grandchildren and, in most cases, have become citizens’. Like the earlier postmemory documentaries, these films seek to broaden common definitions of heritage by highlighting the contribution which migrants have made to the development of these countries.

Yet, one might wonder to what degree the often difficult experience of migration lends itself to the heritage aesthetics. According to Berghahn, films like *Solino* and *Almanya* confront this problem by giving less attention to the ‘hardship, poverty and marginalization’ that characterised the immigrants’ lives. They manage to do so by ‘looking at the world through the eyes of children and adolescents or, better still, memories of childhood. That’s why those films about diasporic memory that approximate the generic conventions of heritage cinema are often coming-of-age stories [...]. In the eyes of a child, even a shanty town does not have to look drab and dismal, but is transformed into a place charged with positive emotional values – the excitement of adventure, the warm feeling of friendship and so forth.’

Telling the story of an Italian family which moves from Solino, a fictional village in the Italian South, to Duisburg in the industrial zone of the Ruhr in Germany, *Solino*, for instance, has a retro and indeed heritage look. In Berghahn’s words: ‘The scenes set in Solino are every bit as beautiful as those set in Tuscany in James Ivory’s *A Room with a View* (1985). Whitewashed houses, lush green fields, kids playing in the haystacks, the streets paved with white marble that glistens in the bright sunlight and, at night, reflects the gold light of the old-fashioned street-lamps. The visual splendour and charm of the small Italian town, especially the open-air cinema, immediately recalls Giuseppe Tornatore’s *Cinema Paradiso* (1988), which is undisputedly a heritage film.’ But also the grey city of Duisburg forms part of this look, above all through décors, costumes, consumerist objects and popular

culture which recall the 1970s. In this manner, the film allows mainstream audiences to connect to the migrants' experience, creating a shared memory of the times.<sup>19</sup> *Solino* is thus an example of how the heritage film continues to evolve and has the potential of including new histories in the process.<sup>20</sup>

### Heritage Film and the Heritage Industry

Among the member states of the European Union, there is no agreement on what exactly the heritage of Europe is. As Ib Bondebjerg, Professor of Film and Media Studies at the University of Copenhagen, explains in his interview with the project, politics have instead settled on the appealing if vague formula 'unity in diversity'. Moreover, EU-wide support for film production is still in its infancy, offering only a limited contribution through the MEDIA and Eurimages funds, respectively. According to Bondebjerg, a large part of what drives heritage film across Europe is co-production, not only between production companies from different nations but also between public service broadcasters.<sup>21</sup> However, more often than not concerted efforts to produce European heritage films resulted in critical and commercial failures, so-called 'Europuddings' lacking a clear sense of identity and address.

Despite this relative lack of political definition and initiative, heritage film remains an important part of European film culture, exercising a variety of functions as this study has shown. It can be a tool for portraying certain locations or regions as allegorical for a larger culture or nation that is politically unrealised, as in Basque cinema of the 1980s. Moreover, the Danish case illustrates the role of heritage cinema in celebrating national icons, from heroes of the resistance against the Nazi occupation to post-war figures of progress and success. Finally, the transnational dimension of heritage film is apparent in the German context, from films about the Second World War which always also negotiate pan-European memory of the event, to the growing cultural influence of labour migrants and their descendants. Heritage film in contemporary Europe is thus much more than the perpetuation of a recognisable period style based on established cultural classics, as evidenced in British cinema of the 1980s. Instead, it is a mode of film production that actively defines what counts

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<sup>19</sup> A comprehensive account of this trend in European film is given in Daniela Berghahn, *Far-Flung Families in Film: The Diasporic Family in Contemporary European Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

<sup>20</sup> With regard to France's post-colonial heritage and its role in French film, see Dayna Oscherwitz, *Past Forward: French Cinema and the Post-Colonial Heritage* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010).

<sup>21</sup> 'Heritage Film and Cultural Policy: An Interview with Professor Ib Bondebjerg', *Screening European Heritage*, 8 March 2013, <<http://arts.leeds.ac.uk/screeningeuropeanheritage/interview-with-professor-ib-bondebjerg/>> [15 September 2013].

as heritage and to whom it belongs. This can have strong political implications, from the Basque struggle for independence to the claims for recognition raised by migrant and diasporic filmmakers in today's Germany, for instance.

By way of conclusion, this pilot study will address some of the economic implications of heritage film production which, highlighted by industry professionals and film scholars alike, were a continuous concern during our project. A first important aspect is the question of film funding. As mentioned above, heritage films require a significantly larger budget than films set in the present. However, due to their audience appeal, they are also more attractive to producers as a source of revenue. With regard to British film, Lawrence recalls from his time on the board of Screen Yorkshire that producers used to pitch their projects in a way that resonated with the heritage of the region, its traditions and sites.<sup>22</sup> In the case of large-scale British productions, the audience appeal of heritage films also has a transnational dimension as an export brand that has the potential of reaching the lucrative North American market.

A second question was how the production of heritage films relates to the locations where they are set. A large number of heritage films rely on tourist sites for principal photography, be they positively connoted such as the iconic British country houses or places of dark heritage such as the former Stasi headquarters in Berlin Lichtenberg shown in *The Lives of Others*. In a two-way relationship, film productions require the support of these sites to be made and help promoting them after their release.

The relationship between films and sites is often negotiated on a case-by-case basis. However, there are also indications of cultural policies designed to foster tourism through heritage films. With regard to Denmark, Lars-Martin Sørensen, Head of Research Section at the Danish Film Institute, highlights the role of regional agencies which 'try to attract film productions to the periphery of the country [...]. And these regional film funding bodies have been funded by regional municipalities, and their ambition is to not just to attract the production crew [...] but also to make sure that their part of the country is exposed in Danish film. And obviously this is something that they do in order to attract visitors and tourists. But they go about it in an indirect way, by trying to attract film crews and hoping that a side effect will be that you get a nice glimpse of the countryside or the city square.'<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> 'Nostalgia Trips and Market Drives'.

<sup>23</sup> 'The Long Tradition of Danish Historical Dramas: An Interview with Lars-Martin Sørensen, Danish Film Institute', *Screening European Heritage*, 18 September 2013, <<http://arts.leeds.ac.uk/screeningeuropeanheritage/the-long-tradition-of-danish-historical-dramas-an-interview-with-lars-martin-sorensen-danish-film-institute/>> [19 September 2013].

The marketing of films also plays a role in contacts between the film and heritage industries in Denmark. In this respect, Ladegaard mentions *This Life* about the Danish resistance, and specifically the country-inn of the family portrayed in the film: ‘There was a lot of collaboration between the region, the inn, the family who survived the war and the producers in order to promote the film.’ However, the area in which the Danish Film Institute has a clearly defined heritage policy is film preservation. Its archive has for years been at the forefront of restoring and digitising the country’s cinematic heritage. While this is a well-documented fact, research into the nexus between heritage film and heritage sites appears as one of the most productive avenues for future investigation.

The German context offers a different perspective on the nexus between film as a medium of heritage promotion, on the one hand, and the historical sites, on the other: one of not only economic calculation but also memory politics. Returning to *The Lives of Others*, a second major location in the film is the former Stasi prison in Berlin Hohenschönhausen. However, the relationship between the filmmakers and the foundation administering the memorial site of the prison was from the beginning a fraught one. Disagreeing with the positive transformation of the Stasi agent Wiesler as described in the screenplay, the foundation declined the production’s request to shoot on site. But when *The Lives of Others* became a national and international success, it undoubtedly contributed to the public’s awareness of what happened in the Stasi prison, prompting viewers to visit its memorial site.<sup>24</sup> Heritage films, not least when dealing with dark chapters of history, shape the public’s image of the authentic places of remembrance, making such films both a danger of distortion and an incentive for historical engagement.

In Britain, the project had the privilege of observing the interaction between film production and heritage site with regard to a costume drama in the making. Produced by Wild from 360° Media and portraying the Brontë sisters, the film will be shot in Yorkshire. In his interview with ‘Screening European Heritage’, Wild is extremely positive about this relationship with the local heritage and film industry: ‘We have a very close relationship with the Brontë Parsonage Museum’, he says, adding that the museum did all it could to aid the development phase of the project. Wild is equally grateful to the Bradford City of Film for their enduring support. ‘They all really want to make the film happen. I think everybody

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<sup>24</sup> This information was provided by André Kockisch, Head of Public Relations at the Berlin-Hohenschönhausen Memorial, in an interview with the project on 25 April 2013.



realises the positive effect that heritage film can have on the region.’<sup>25</sup> Again, there is evidence of the fact that heritage film is recognised and used as a factor in local and regional development.

The prominence of heritage films in contemporary European cinema has economic as well as cultural reasons. As a brand, they are capable of galvanising domestic audiences, and in some cases an export product for the international market. However, their economic impact is measured not only by box office figures but also by how they foster heritage tourism on the local and regional levels. Moreover, heritage films are powerful media for negotiating a sense of history. Despite all accusations of consensual uses of genre or visual spectacle, they retain a strong potential for inciting debate and dissent. What we propose to call European heritage film is certainly more diverse than it is unified, but it is impossible to deny its persistence and impact across the various European film cultures. In an interesting phrasing, Elsaesser speaks of films that ‘dwell on’ the past, a description which seems particularly true of films that engage with traumatic histories. But, as we have seen, European film also builds on and develops through the past.

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<sup>25</sup> ‘A Producer’s Perspective: In Conversation with Nick Wild, 360° Media’, *Screening European Heritage*, 18 March 2013, <<http://arts.leeds.ac.uk/screeningeuropeanheritage/a-producers-perspective-in-conversation-with-nick-wild-360-media/>> [accessed 15 September 2013].

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