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From *Lola* to *Heaven*: Tom Tykwer Goes Global

"Aber das Eigene muß so gut gelernt sein wie das Fremde."
Friedrich Hölderlin

The question of how and to what extent cultural products engage in transnational and global discourses has become a much debated issue in contemporary society as well as in academia. The following article examines this question in regard to film, and it investigates different cinematic models of such engagement via the works of German director Tom Tykwer.

When multi-talented writer, director, composer, musician, and producer Tom Tykwer burst onto the international film scene in 1998, it was with the smash hit *Lola rennt* (*Run Lola Run*). The movie was an instant success with critics and audiences around large parts of the globe, not a mean feat by any standard, let alone for a young German director who, up to that point, had made all of two feature films in his life. *Run Lola Run*, whose production costs came to about $1.25 million, grossed well over $10 million in the United States and the UK alone, and catapulted its creator and protagonists, especially Lola-Franka Potente, into instant transnational stardom. Her 2001 bit part in *Blow* as Johnny Depp's girlfriend, and her 2002 and 2004 roles as Matt Damon's leading lady in *The Bourne Identity* and *The Bourne Supremacy* attest to that fact. American critics pronounced *Lola* to be a "festival circuit smash hit from Germany that's already become a pop culture phenomenon in Europe,"[1] and called it a "hyperkinetic pop culture fire cracker."[2] In Australia, Tykwer was hailed as belonging "to the new generation of German film-makers who have managed that rare feat: to make domestic productions that have mass appeal."[3] This popular and critical acclaim demonstrated *Lola's* resonance with the movie going public. This resonance is certainly partly based on *Lola's* finely (and timely) tuned pop cultural sensibilities: its MTV-style aesthetics, rushing soundtrack, video game framework, and its two protagonists that are hip, tattooed, and

[1] Rob Blackwelder, "Review: Run Lola Run" in: *SPLICED Online*, 1999. Http://www.splicedonline.com/99reviews/runlolarun.html.

[2] Kenneth Turan, "'Run Lola' Keeps Playful Tale Moving" in: *Los Angeles Times*, June 18, 1999. Online Edition at: http://www.calendarlive.com:8081/s... 7admimg%2F&Theme=&Company=LA+Times.

[3] David Stratton, "Review: Run Lola Run" in: *The Australian*, October 23, 1999. Online Edition at: Http://entertainment.news.com.au/film/archive/91023a.htm.

deeply romantic. However, as I will argue, it is also based on a particular cinematic strategy of globalizing a national film: it is based on the successful fusion of German and American film making in a movie that allows for Hollywood pleasure without giving up its *Heimat* identity. Thus, *Run Lola Run* is an apt expression of the *Zeitgeist* at the turn of the millennium: the film typifies a growing global tendency for transcultural appropriation and hybridization on part of many cultural participants and products. And all of Tom Tykwer's works increasingly seem to engage in such tendencies while at the same time enlisting different cinematic models to do so, his latest 2002 release *Heaven* being a strong case in point. Most of Tykwer's films illustrate and bespeak issues surrounding the exchanges and entanglements between local and global, national and transnational cultures, but *Heaven* is the production to date where this transnationalization has been pushed farthest in a formal sense. In order to trace alternative approaches to such transnational cinematic practices, and to then investigate these differing models, I will focus my analysis on *Run Lola Run* and *Heaven* while also including some cursory looks at Tykwer's other feature films.

The central point of interest in my analysis will be the films' cultural identity and the question of the interplay between their being informed by a specific national cultural paradigm on the one hand, and by one of international popular (American?) culture on the other. As stated earlier, in *Lola,* Tykwer sets up a creative dialogue between German/European and Transnational/Hollywood cinematic discourses. He playfully and ironically mixes up these paradigms and lets them play off of each other while at the same time leaving them intact and recognizable, thus preserving their differences while marrying them into an inspiring union made interesting by artistic and ideological tensions and idiosyncrasies.

In *Heaven,* on the other hand, Tykwer seems to have abandoned this internal dialogical model in favor of a monological one in the Bakhtinian[4] sense that blends and synthesizes cinematic paradigms into an ostensibly more sublime whole, attempting to transcend differences rather than letting them co-exist side by side. He exchanged, so to speak, the multi-cultural tossed salad-approach with the transnationalized smoothie model where all ingredients are blended into a more unified and uniform product that leaves one with less appreciation or knowledge of the elements that went into it, thus divesting the product of a distinct sense of origin and identity.

I

Tykwer in his works follows strategies of "popular appropriation"[5] which, according to French scholar Roger Chartier, attempts to approach popular

[4] See Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination.* Transl. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

[5] See Roger Chartier, *Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computer.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995).

culture in terms of "the specific logic at work in the customs, practices, and ways of making one's own that which is imposed" (Chartier 1995: 90). A cultural analysis that is informed by the notion of appropriation "involves a social history of the various uses...of discourses and models" as well as an investigation of "the ways in which common cultural sets are appropriated differently" (Chartier 1995: 89). The application and understanding of the concept of popular appropriation thus helps to break up the myth of stable and one-way power relations in terms of cultural influence and control, and may hence prove useful for examining the ties between a prevailing popular culture and its transatlantic counterparts.

Tykwer, as said before, exemplifies this popular cultural appropriation since all of his films can be viewed to varying degrees as instances of "practices and ways of making one's own that which is imposed." Tykwer's work recognizes the multitude and diversity of transcultural influences that have come to bear on it. In true post-modern fashion, the director unabashedly, joyfully, and with a sense of irony digs into the high and the low brow, the German and the international cinematic funds with both hands. However, to trace Tykwer's developments as a filmmaker will also provide interesting insights into another peculiar phenomenon: namely the ways in which the apparent need of many cultural products to be *anchored* in a specific national culture intersects with their simultaneous wish to *transcend* this culture. This desire to be local and global at the same time seems to coincide with the furiously accelerating globalization of culture(s): "Globalization expresses itself through the tension between the forces of the global community and those of cultural particularity, ethnic and cultural fragmentation, and homogenization."[6] These developments are obviously the result of a shrinking world that is half pulling, half being pushed together.

II

Tom Tykwer, born in1965 in the Northrhine-Westphalian city of Wuppertal, premiered his first short *Because* in 1990 at the Hofer Filmtage, a prestigious international film festival in Germany, followed in 1992 by another short called *Epilog*. In 1993, he directed his first feature film: *Die tödliche Maria* (*The Deadly Maria*), and in 1997 his second *Winterschläfer* (*Winter Sleepers*). In 1998 he made *Lola rennt* (*Run Lola Run)* which was released internationally in 1999, and which managed to reach number 18 in the US-American box office charts. The film won 8 prizes at Germany's Federal Filmprize ceremony, the nation's most prestigious film awards. In 2000, Tykwer made *Der Krieger und die Kaiserin (The Princess and the*

[6] Montserrat Guibernau, "Globalization and the Nation-State" in: *Understanding Nationalism*. Eds. M. Guibernau and John Hutchinson (Cambridge: Polity; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), pp.242-68, here 244.

Warrior). His last two completed projects to date were a departure from, and, at the same time, a continuation of his style of work. His first international productions were the feature film *Heaven*, which opened the Berlin Filmfestival in 2002, and *True*, a ten minute segment featuring Natalie Portman for the film *Paris, je t'aime*, scheduled to open in 2005. This film is a highly international collaboration involving 20 popular and critically acclaimed directors, including the likes of Jean-Luc Godard, the Coen Brothers, Mike Figgis, Mira Nair, Sally Potter, and Fernando Trueba.

One of Tykwer's distinguishing cinematic features is his films' sense and exploration of space. All of them have a distinct sense of place that comments on and participates in the narrative rather than just provide a backdrop for the unfolding plot. It is not always necessarily a place that audiences can recognize as an existing location, but space is always carefully chosen and created, and acts and interacts in most of Tykwer's films. Territoriality and territory are key aspects in defining nations and national identity (Guibernau 2001: 253), and Tykwer's spatial sensibilities add to the national-cultural German identity of many of his works. From his first feature *Die tödliche Maria* (1993), set in Berlin and Hamburg, to *Winterschläfer* (1997) which takes place in Bavarian Alps that are equal part wintery idyll and deathtrap, to an imaginatively scrambled Berlin in *Lola rennt*, and his unassuming hometown of Wuppertal in *Der Krieger und die Kaiserin* (2000): Tykwer makes places and regions *act* in his movies rather than merely pose. This strong sense of space anchors his films and his protagonists in a specific local culture by visually and narratively reflecting, connecting, and fusing the people in and with places. Thus, space becomes an essential part of the national and cultural identity of Tykwer's works.

Another aspect of the visible cultural roots of Tykwer's films is the variety of set and plot details and props recognizable as objects, habits, venues, and actions of everyday (German) life. Since, as Montserrat Guibernau states, "national identity is based upon the sentiment of belonging to a specific nation, endowed with its own symbols, traditions, sacred places, ceremonies, heroes, history, culture and territory" (Guibernau 2001: 257) the ubiquitous inclusion of such German "symbols, traditions, culture" etc. produces and underscores the films' sense of national origin. This detailing of the filmscape runs the gamut from the mundane and material to the cultural and artistic. The former finds expression in a variety of elements: in all films, there is an abundance of means of public transportation, i.e. busses, subways, trains, the Schwebebahn [literally *Hovering Train*: a unique kind of tram in Wuppertal that hangs down from the tracks rather than running on top of them], as well as people frequently biking or walking places – wide spread and popular activities in Germany; however, when needed, there is the use of distinct German cars (from the vintage beetle in *Winter Sleepers* to the appropriately expensive BMW and

Mercedes in *Lola* – a film revolving largely around money matters – to the orange Opel getaway car in *The Princess and the Warrior*). *Winter Sleepers* showcases hearty Bavarian foods like kraut and sausages as well as the less than enthusiastic and rather hostile attitudes of many in the German service industry. *The Princess and the Warrior* depicts the outside line drying of clothes – almost unheard of in the US these days – and a bottle of *Appolinaris* mineral water on the doctor's desk which is one of the nation's most popular brands. *Lola* features the snack hut *Wurst Maxe* [Sausage Max] and the *Bolle* supermarket, a uniquely Berlin icon. The cultural realm – high and popular – is evoked by shots of historic sites (such as the Gendarmenmarkt) and buildings (such as St. Hedwig's Cathedral or the Oberbaumbrücke) and soccer allusions (Germany's national passion) in *Lola*; by a coffee and cake get-together complete with the German staples *Marmor-* and *Streuselkuchen* [marble and streusel cake] in *The Princess and the Warrior*, not to mention the heroine's name "Sissi;"[7] and, finally, by interior decoration and set up of living spaces reflecting European sensibilities, like three siblings (a girl and two boys reaching or already in their teens) sharing one bedroom, or people drinking from beer steins and coffee cups rather than mugs, and never in their cars.

But all of Tykwer's narratives also contain aspects of, and allusions and nods to cultural influences and elements from outside the framing national paradigm. And the one specific national connection that is most palpable and apparent refers to the United States. Tykwer's films acknowledge these US-ties in a variety of ways, some small, others substantial: *Winter Sleepers* clearly refers to Michelangelo Antonioni's 1966 US film *Blowup:* one of the film's protagonists plays an integral part in a tragic event that he can't remember due to traumatic amnesia. The narrative gives him only photos he himself took as clues to figure out the mystery of this event, but the pictures turn out to be meaningless in that regard, revealing nothing but the man's own projections. Another central person in *Winter Sleepers* is part of a theater group rehearsing Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and the film incorporates parts of scenes and lines from the rehearsal and performance of the play; one couple watches an old American black & white film on TV, and one protagonist is happily whistling *Jingle Bells* in a car on his way to disaster. In *The Princess and the Warrior,* and *Lola*, too, nods to US entertainment culture can be found: a German lunatic breaks briefly into English, ranting about how "fucking stiff" everyone is around

[7] "Sissi" was the nickname of German-born Empress Elisabeth of Austria (1837-1898), and, thus, the name of the eponymous heroine in an immensely popular series of *Sissi*-films. These three German movies were essentially melodramatic romances produced during the 1950s. They starred Romy Schneider and Karl-Heinz Böhm as Emperor Franz-Josef and Empress Elisabeth, and have turned into cult classics in Germany over the past decades.

him, and how there is "no dancing anymore;" other inmates of the psychiatric ward pick a schmaltzy American 50s jukebox song to dance to; and in *Lola*, the German-European techno-soundtrack is interrupted at pivotal moments by the Dinah Washington hit *What a Difference a Day Makes* and the classical Charles Ives piece *The Unanswered Question*. The beginning of the film features side-by-side quotations from T. S. Eliot (who lived in Britain, but was American-born) and Sepp Herberger (Germany's beloved and highly idiosyncratic long serving coach of the national soccer team), and the sports allegory as the film's opening narrative springboard quotes a widely used Hollywood trope while giving it a German spin by using *König Fussball* ('king soccer') as its reference point. *Lola*'s dominant MTV-style video aesthetic as well as the cartoon sequences interspersed throughout are nods to American forms of popular entertainment.

III

After having touched on a variety of elements in Tykwer's works by way of example, I will now focus on one particular aspect in order to substantiate this article's argument. In the following, I will analyze one feature of *Lola* that typifies the kind of transcultural dialogue and exchange in Tykwer's films that I speak of: the way in which the film uses and appropriates the paradigm of the classical Hollywood action thriller.

One important question in film analysis is always that of generic allegiances. *Run Lola Run* has been categorized mostly as an action movie, a "breathless ride"[8] and "a film of nonstop motion."[9] But yet again, the work proves its hybrid nature: in many ways, the film is an *investigation* of, rather than an *example* for the action genre. It is not so much a story conceived of and told in terms of an action movie as it is a study of what an action movie really is. And the film investigates this genre with such radicalism that the result is an almost content-less enactment of the genre's defining traits. In other words, the film presents all the formal elements of the action genre, but refuses to fill them with more than the barest narrative content. Paradoxically, it thus turns itself into the entertaining narrative production of a theoretical generic paradigm.

And *Lola* is much more than an action adventure film. It is also in part a dystopian family drama and an exercise in social critique. Whenever the running stops – and it does so regularly and conspicuously – other genres and styles take over, in terms of content as well as cinematography. For example, the quiet and intimate scenes between Lola's father and his mistress – captured on grainy video with a handheld camera – and the

[8] Jonathan Foreman, "Movie Review: A Dash of Brilliance" in: *The New York Post*, June 18, 1999.

[9] Roger Ebert, "Run Lola Run" in: *Chicago Sun-Times,* July 2, 1999.

dialogues between Lola and Manni in bed counterbalance and rupture the action sequences. Fundamentally though, *Run Lola Run* is the epitome of an action film, a genre that is in turn for many the epitome of mass popular entertainment and Hollywood culture. Thus, the film sets up an internal dialogue between a quintessentially US-American cinematic feature, and a German/European alternative thereof.

The defining feature of the traditional action thriller is a race against time in a battle between good and evil. Additionally, the story usually hinges upon a hero who overcomes obstacles and odds and triumphs in the end. Or, as David Bordwell puts it, the conventions of classical Hollywood cinema – of which the traditional action film is a part – call for "psychologically defined individuals who struggle to solve a clear-cut problem or to attain specific goals. In the course of this struggle, the characters enter into conflict with others or with external circumstances. The story ends with a decisive victory or defeat, a resolution of the problem and a clear achievement or non-achievement of the goals. The principal causal agency is thus the character."[10] Formally, the script approximates a classical three-act structure with an initial exposition, a dramatic climax, i.e. peripetia, and the ensuing resolution of the threatening situation:

> [T]he classical film respects the canonic pattern of establishing an initial state of affairs which gets violated and which must then be set right. (…) [T]he plot consists of an undisturbed stage, the disturbance, the struggle, and the elimination of the disturbance. (Bordwell1986: 19)

More often than not, everything culminates in a happy ending and the formation of a heterosexual couple, because usually, the film offers a

> double causal structure, two plot lines: one involving heterosexual romance (…), the other line involving another sphere – work, war, a mission or quest, other personal relationships. (…) In most cases, the romance sphere and the other sphere of action are distinct but interdependent. The plot may close off one line before the other, but often the two lines coincide at the climax. (Bordwell 1986: 19)

Lastly, according to Bordwell, the time factor mentioned above does not only play a crucial part in action films. Rather, he emphasizes the "deadline" as a "device highly characteristic of classical narration. A

[10] For a condensed discussion of the concept of "classical narrative paradigm" see David Bordwell's "Classical Hollywood Cinema: Narrational Principles and Procedures," in: *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 17-34, here 18. For a thorough account of the same see David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985). A more general background for this context is also provided in David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979).

deadline can be measured by calendars (…), by clocks (…), or simply by cues that time is running out (the last-minute rescue) " (Bordwell 1986: 19).

What deserves attention in an analysis of *Run Lola Run is* how it uses, quotes, and diverges from this familiar paradigm. The film thematizes all of the above elements, distilling their main features from an entire crop of classical (action) movies, while it gives them a subversive spin at the same time. The protagonists, for example, hardly fit the classical profile of The Good fighting The Evil. Rather, we witness a battle between somewhat bad, pretty bad, and very bad. After all, Manni has to fear for his life not because he killed a mobster in the line of duty, but because he lost the 100.000 DM that he just made for his crime boss by fencing a bunch of stolen luxury cars. That notwithstanding, the title heralds the film's bottom line: there is a protagonist and she will run. That, and the giant, menacing looking clock ticking away in the first scene devouring the viewers, already sets up the things to come in an ostentatious and rather ironic way: the audience will witness a scary race against time. The extremely tight deadline propels the film forward and the cutting to clocks and watches happens with such frequency that it is difficult not to see it as an ironic quote of the traditional "measuring of a deadline" in action films, with the countdown of digital bomb displays, and the ticking away of wrist and pocket watches, train station and airport clocks. Equally, if not more blatant is only the use of running itself: a little over half of the screen time is occupied by Lola pounding the pavement, without any other relevant information being conveyed. In terms of limited informational content as well as aesthetic style, these sequences are striking quotations of music videos. These scenes portray pure adrenalin-pumping motion stripped of almost all pretenses but the unrelenting communication of urgency and the protagonist's determination. It is almost racing for racing's sake, the pointlessness of it emphasized by the fact that Lola's efforts turn out to be in vain every single time. The first time, she is too late and ends up dying. The second time, she arrives just on the dot but Manni gets run over by an ambulance. In the third version, she arrives in time only to find out that Manni already solved the problem himself, making her whole marathon redundant in a life-saving sense. The film thus divests Lola's running of narrative meaning and undermines the classical assumption of "principal causal agency" as resting with the character. At the same time, on a visual level the film stoutly reaffirms and magnifies the importance of the eponymous heroine and her actions by granting her run most of the screen time. Again, *Run Lola Run* displays the action film elements as spelled out by traditional genre etiquette, but gives them a twist of its own.

Just as it overdoes the clock motive, it overemphasizes dramatic structure while simultaneously subverting it: there is the initial exposition in the phone call between Manni and Lola, where the "disturbance" is introduced, and the final "elimination of the disturbance," but there is no

clear-cut "undisturbed stage" at the outset of the film, instead, that stage is represented intermittently throughout the film in flashbacks and the two bed scenes.

The script's overall three-act-structure is rather conspicuous, albeit developed by taking substantial liberties with the classical meaning of 'act.' The film resolves the conflict with a "decisive victory or defeat," but it remains hazy in terms of "clear achievement or nonachievement of the goals" – finding DM 100,000 and saving Manni – until the very end. Twice, the couple produces the money but one of them dies, thus partially achieving the goal but tearing apart the heterosexual unit the movie is expected to produce, until finally the film resolves into a happy ending reaffirming the couple and its love in unambiguous Hollywood fashion. The first two versions hence play like ironic reminders of stereotypical views on German (art) cinema: that it is bleak, depressing, and usually won't end on a happy note. It apparently takes several rounds until the film catches on to the proper mass entertainment ways, until it – tongue in cheek – finally gets it "right", welding together aspects of local and global film cultures.

This way of negotiating national and transnational aspects and influences in his works is characteristic for Tykwer, even though *Lola* is the film to date that seems to offer the most convincing model for doing so, a fact that surely accounts in part for its resounding success at home and abroad.

IV

Heaven was not met with quite the same enthusiasm, neither in Germany nor elsewhere. Reviews and comments were mixed, ranging from "an excruciating middlebrow arthouse drama,"[11] and "further sad evidence that Tom Tykwer, director of the resonant and sense-spinning *Run Lola Run*, has turned out to be a one-trick pony – a maker of softheaded metaphysical claptrap,"[12] "banal,"[13] and full of "surface flash"[14] to "this is a good movie that could have been great,"[15] and "a film whose formal elegance is matched by its depth of feeling."[16]

Heaven is a truly multinational work: Tykwer is German, and so was a large part of his crew including the camera man, the editor, and the production designer. The film was written by the late Polish director Krzysztof Kieslowski and his usual collaborator Krzysztof Piesiewicz, but Kieslowski unfortunately died in 1996 before he could realize his script.[17] Cate

[11] Peter Bradshaw, "Heaven" in: *The Guardian*, August 11, 2002.
[12] Owen Gleiberman, "Review: Heaven" in: *Entertainment Weekly*, October 18, 2002.
[13] Philip French, "Review: Heaven" in: *The Observer*, August 11, 2002.
[14] Manohla Dargis, "Review: Heaven" in: *LA Times*, October 4, 2002
[15] Roger Ebert, "Review: Heaven" in: *Chicago Sun-Times*, October 18, 2002.
[16] Stephen Holden, "Review: Heaven" in: *New York Times*, October 4, 2002.
[17] He and his co-author had initially envisioned *Heaven* as the first part of another trilogy (*Three Colors: Red, White, Blue*, and the *Decalogue* are former works of theirs), and it was to be followed, naturally, by *Purgatory* and *Hell*.

Blanchett is Australian, Giovanni Ribisi American, the setting is Italy and the dialogue is in Italian and English. The credits included as producers Briton Anthony Minghella and American Sydney Pollack, the film was produced by an American company and co-supported by French financing. As one British critic observed: "[I]n an abstract way [the film] belongs everywhere and nowhere."[18] This is exactly what makes *Heaven* on the one hand a logical continuation of Tykwer's work, but also marks a significant departure on the other.

As mentioned earlier, a vital aspect of Tykwer's films is their distinct and concrete sense of place that comments on and acts in the narrative, and that helps anchor his films and their protagonists in a specific national and cultural space. In *Heaven,* however, particularly in the film's 2nd half, Tykwer uses space and landscape purely metaphorically rather than as concrete places of living that act and interact. Clearly, *Run Lola Run, Winter Sleepers,* and *The Princess and the Warrior,* all make metaphorical use of their space as well. The crazily scrambled, fast moving Berlin in *Lola,* replete with landmarks evoking the multiple layers of the city's history from the 18th century, the Weimar period, the Nazi years to post-Wall present day, works symbolically as well as literally with the narrative. However, the meaning it adds to the story of two young, disenfranchised Germans trying to come to grips with the topography of the place, as it were, is distinctly location-specific. In a sense, the protagonist(s), arguably, try to 'outrun' the city and what it stands for in German history while simultaneously relishing the dynamics, the energy, and the riches of a contemporary German metropolis. Thus, Berlin operates on a metaphorical as well as a concrete and literal level. Similar arguments can be made for the relationship between plot and space in the case of *The Princess and the Warrior* and *Winter Sleepers*: the naïve but gutsy and persistent nurse Sissi with her frumpy clothes in *Princess* who has been semi-sequestered most of her life in a loony bin, finds a perfect spatial equivalent in the provincial, unassuming, working class city of Wuppertal in the hinterlands of Germany; and the multi-facetted stories and characters of *Winter Sleepers* where most things turn out to be very different from their first appearance and impression, where beauty hides danger, innocence causes guilt, and love turns into hate, is equally well analogized in the splendid and (deceivingly) peaceful looking yet treacherous and dangerous wintery Bavarian Alps.

In *Heaven,* however, Tykwer does not use the Tuscan space for what it *is* at all, but only for what it allegorizes in his film, presumably to create a more universal feel. Thus, the director constructs the meaning of the space out of the story that takes place within it, rather than letting narrative and setting motivate each other. This solely metaphoric level – visualized by a

[18] Philip French, "Heaven," 2002.

permanent reddish-golden glow of picture perfect Tuscany – strips the space of its sense of identity and specificity. The spectators see Tuscany through the eyes of someone who uses it completely severed from its national and cultural spatial self: as the embodiment of a universal idea of love and redemption, i.e. *Heaven.* But Tykwer never develops or substantiates this metaphorical meaning of the space instead he merely posits it by way of Tuscany's beauty. Hence, the images are pretty but feel arbitrarily chosen and therefore void of meaning. This lack of material and cultural concreteness and intimacy seems to rid *Heaven* of the substance and details that in all other Tykwer films create a sense of verisimilitude, and, hence, of recognizability and connection. The viewers thus move through particularly the latter half of *Heaven* with a sense of surface reality and slide show distance that the protagonists seem to experience, too, feeling that they might as well be in any other pretty landscape. This is likely done deliberately to infuse the film with a simplicity, an applicability to anyplace anytime, a fairy tale quality of stock characters in stock settings, concerned with metaphysical questions of love, guilt, and penance rather than psychological or social realism. However, sublating national and territorial identity here does not translate into universality but into non-affiliation, and it divests the metaphysical inquiry of meaning and exigency. As Philip French said the film "belongs everywhere and nowhere" which creates a sense of disengagement between the space and the narrative that translates into disengagement between the spectators and the work. *Heaven* suffers from its unaffiliated visuals, because the images fail to transcend their illustration character. One of the definitions of Kitsch is grandiose form coupled with banal content. One could argue that this film approximates Kitsch in the reverse: that the images collapse under the weight of the grandiose meaning of their assigned metaphorical significance. The pictures feel reduced to backdrops because they signify 'pretty' instead of 'transcendental,' and, hence, fail to say the profound things they are set up to say.

V

The opportunity to make a film of such international status based on and backed by the work of so many influential people in the film community would be any filmmaker's dream who is interested in issues of international and transcultural exchanges. But *Heaven* in its quasi-homelessness eliminates the dialogue between competing elements discussed earlier in favor of a cinematically synthesizing and totalizing monologue, and it therefore lacks the intensity and involvement that seems to result from Tykwer's grounding and involvement in his home culture. To be local and global at the same time, is – in films and cultures – a potentially positive and fascinating thing, but one is the flip side of the other. You need them together, so that they are able to work off of each other. Globalization

scholars posit that "[i]ntrinsic to globalization is the dialectic of the local and the global." (Guibernau 2001: 244) *Heaven*, however, in its belonging "everywhere and nowhere," leaves audiences in an at times stunningly beautiful, but ill-contoured and disengaged no-man's land. In this film, there is no "dialectic of the local and the global" and hence no creative tension between the two, because the distinction between the local and global has been erased all together in an attempt to create an elusive "elsewhere."

In fine, then, Tykwer's career is an illuminating case study about alternative approaches towards globalized and transcultural cinematic production. It illustrates the differences between the salad-bowl style fusion of national and transnational elements in a cultural product a la *Lola*, and the smoothie-like blend of a "universalized" style a la *Heaven.* Thus, Tykwer's works also demonstrate rather vividly the potential as well as the risks and pitfalls involved when the local goes global.