



On Differences that Make the Difference

A multi-methodological research project on
monolingual film remakes in small film industries:
the case of Flanders and The Netherlands

Eduard Cuelenaere

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ON DIFFERENCES THAT MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

A MULTI-METHODOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROJECT ON MONOLINGUAL FILM REMAKES IN SMALL FILM INDUSTRIES: THE CASE OF FLANDERS AND THE NETHERLANDS

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PREFACE

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INTRODUCTION

In 1998, the Dutch director Mike van Diem's film *Karakter* won the Oscar in the category of Best Foreign Language Film. This was, after *De Aanslag* in 1986 and *Antonia* in 1995, the third Dutch film that won the award. Though many might recall this happy event, it is less known that during the pre-selections, another Dutch film was first chosen. Indeed, on 7 October 1997, a jury consisting of six representatives from the Dutch film industry decided to submit Jean Van De Velde's *All Stars*, a comedy about friendship in a football team, for the 70th Academy Awards. However, the film's producer, Rolf Koot, eventually withdrew the film, claiming that the film made zero chance to win the Oscar. This rather weighty decision becomes even more striking when one considers the domestic success of the film. When Koot explained his decision to retract the film, he referred to two main points: first, he did not have enough budget left for an Oscar campaign (in order to get it seen by the jury members) and second, he was convinced that the film lacked international appeal (Trouw, 9 October 1997). Whereas the former point is rather self-explanatory, the latter deserves further elaboration.

Film scholar Peter Verstraten (2016) offers an intriguing hypothesis, as he claims that '[t]he suggestion underlying Koot's position is that the hum[or] of *All Stars* was too local to be appreciated by an American [and, by extension, international] public' (23). In other words, the comedy in *All Stars* would be "typically Dutch", which, according to this scholar, would make it difficult for the film to become popular outside of the Netherlands. Apart from this scholar's understanding, Koot's statement that the film lacked international interest – which would make it less applicable for the Oscar – might also be linked to other factors: the film's Dutch language, or the actors that, before the film came out, mainly starred in Dutch television fiction. Indeed, the film's director once stated in an interview that the characters (and their dynamics) were the most fundamental aspect of the film. Though he was well aware of the fact that the film's actors were not internationally or even nationally acclaimed, he still opted for them because of their acquired fame on television (Van Der Burg, 4 October 2010).

One might wonder why the above-described anecdote is of interest in a dissertation that – at least according to its title – deals with film remakes. To answer that question, we need to go back to the year of 1997 again, or more specifically, to

the summer of 1997. At that time, Jan Verheyen, a Flemish¹ director and distributor worked a few months for the international distribution company PolyGram Filmed Entertainment in London. In the previous ten years, Verheyen (together with Marc Punt) successfully ran the small Belgian distribution company Independent Films. Because of the company's success, the multinational PolyGram wanted to work together with Independent Films. It would not take long before the small Belgian distribution company would become the Belgian branch of PolyGram. On top of this structural cooperation, Verheyen received the prestigious position of senior vice president international distribution at PolyGram (Martens, 1997). Among other things, it was Verheyen's job to watch as many films as possible and to find out which ones were interesting enough to be distributed in the markets where PolyGram was active at the time. During that summer, Verheyen worked on projects like *The Big Lebowski* or *Notting Hill*. Next to these famous projects, PolyGram also distributed Jean Van De Velde's *All Stars*. When Verheyen saw the film, first, as a distributor, he apparently immediately saw the huge potential of the film, and second, as a director, he promptly wanted to make a similar film for a Flemish audience. This is where the central object of this dissertation finally comes into play: instead of creating a similar but different film, Verheyen acquired the remake rights of the *All Stars* and created a Flemish remake in 2000, entitled *Team Spirit*.

What makes the Flemish remake of the Dutch film *All Stars* worthy of all this attention, one might wonder, especially given the fact that three years after *Team Spirit*, a Spanish (*Días de Fútbol*) remake was released, and two years after that, another British one (*Things To Do Before You're 30*) was brought to theaters. First, it should be noted that *Team Spirit* was the first, but not the last Flemish remake of a Dutch film, as six others would follow in the next 17 years. Second, the opposite direction, that is, Dutch filmmakers remaking Flemish films, was initiated in 2010, resulting in a total of four remakes until the year of 2017. Third, compared to the abovementioned Spanish and British remakes of the Dutch *All Stars*, the Flemish remake is spoken in the same language as the source film. Indeed, all 22 films that are part of the Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon are all spoken in Dutch. Fourth, one might know that the Netherlands and Flanders (or Belgium) share, next to the same official language, a common history, including intensive cultural exchanges and

¹ Flanders is the northern, Dutch-speaking part of Belgium.

mutual consumption of media content. Taking these different factors into consideration, this remake practice in the Low Countries is, at the very least, an odd phenomenon.

Moreover, reminding ourselves of the aforementioned statements made by the Dutch producer, Koot, *All Stars* would be too locally anchored to be appreciated by international audiences. Consequently, the film would not resonate with audiences outside the Netherlands because of cultural differences, such as a different sense of humor. However, considering the fact that the Flemish, Spanish, and – to a lesser extent – British remakes were domestic successes, either the Dutch source film was not that locally anchored after all, or the remakes in one way or another “localized” *All Stars*. The latter comes with other questions, namely what does a “locally anchored” film really signify? What does it mean when a film is “localized”, that is, what is being localized and what does this process of localization imply? Next, what does the process of “remaking” a film encompass and how does the process of localization relate to it? Which people are involved in the remake process, how and why do they decide to transform specific elements? Finally, one might also wonder how audiences perceive local aspects in films. How do they interpret (localized) remakes of foreign films? Do they really prefer a local remake over its foreign “original”, and if so, why?

Dealing with these questions in a serious and academic manner has long been hampered by the prejudices that exist toward remakes. Indeed, remakes are known for being heavily criticized because of their commercial underpinnings and “unoriginal” approach. Though the notion of “remake” will probably ring a bell to most people, in order to avoid misconceptions, this dissertation adopts a strict, yet highly open approach to the understanding of the term. In the context of this dissertation, the noun “remake” refers to “film remake”, that is, a film that is based on an already existing film. As will become clear throughout this dissertation, it has proven quite difficult, and, according to some even impossible, to come up with an a-historical definition of “the” remake. Consequently, as will be argued (cf. section 1.5.2), the dissertation embraces a broad interpretation of the term, so as to avoid the exclusion of the many different manifestations that have existed throughout the history of remakes. Additionally, while most people might understand what is meant by “the original film” when discussing film remakes, this dissertation explicitly decides to not use this phrasing. Indeed, due to the myriad of connotations of the notion of originality (cf. Chapter 1 and Chapter 2), as well as its rather problematic discursive background, this dissertation opts for a

more neutral term. That is, instead of talking about a remake's "original film", which would refer to the film on which the remake is directly based, this dissertation chooses for "source film". The term "source film" is inspired by "source text", which is a standard and rather neutral term that is used in the fields that study film adaptations and translations of texts (cf. sections 1.3 and 1.4).²

The present dissertation situates itself within the emerging field of remake studies and wishes to contribute to it by diverging from its Hollywood-centric focus and by opting for a cultural studies approach. Indeed, as will be signaled in the theoretical section of this dissertation, the field of remake studies is known for its focus on the film text on the one hand, and on the context of Hollywood on the other. Though it does not neglect a production and reception context, it very rarely actually investigates these contexts empirically, solely making assumptions. The dissertation's theoretical section will also show that, in terms of geographical focus, during the past decade, several efforts have been made to depart from the field's fixation on Hollywood. Today, there exists some significant work on, for instance, Japanese, Bollywood, Turkish, or even Filipino remakes. However, a sustained investigation into both the particular context of Europe, as well as into smaller film industries still lacks. In an attempt to fill these lacunas, the present dissertation focuses on the remake phenomenon in the highly complex and small cinema context of the Low Countries. Moreover, given the particular history and intricate cultural proximity of the Low Countries, the dissertation wants to find out what these film remakes might disclose about the relation between Flanders and the Netherlands. Therefore, it will put extra emphasis on issues of cultural and national identity, recognition, and look at what Dutch-Flemish film remakes might reveal in this respect. More specifically, I want to answer three research questions, which zoom in on the textual, industrial, and cultural dynamics of the Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon: (1) How and why do the Flemish film remakes differ from or look like the Dutch source films, and vice versa?; (2) How do agents involved in the industrial process relate to the Dutch-Flemish film remakes?; and (3) How do audiences receive Dutch-Flemish film remakes and their source films in the Low Countries?.

² Whereas other scholars in the field of remake studies might prefer a term like "premake" (e.g. Oltman, 2008), the term "source film" seems more self-explanatory and, more importantly, is more common in scholarly debates on remakes.

In order to tackle these questions, the empirical section of this dissertation will be structured along three empirical approaches, that is, textual, production, and reception research. However, before embarking on this empirical inquiry, we first need a better understanding of the theoretical framework, as well as some of the crucial concepts, aims, and general approaches of the field of remake studies. Therefore, a first theoretical chapter will deal with the academic ancestors of the field that studies remakes, tracing how the field came into being and which theoretical concepts it adopted in order to come to a critical analysis of film remakes. Next, the second theoretical chapter summarizes the existing insights, concepts, and approaches that, together, form the field of remake studies. The chapter also provides the dissertation with a necessary introduction into several crucial concepts that help us understand the link between film, culture, identity, the nation(al), and representation. In a third and last theoretical chapter, the particular context of the Low Countries is dealt with. More specifically, the chapter looks at the history of both the Netherlands and Flanders (and Belgium), as well as how they are interrelated, and either attracted to or repulsed by each other. Finally, the chapter looks at the Dutch and Flemish cinema (industries), the cross-border cinema traffic, before eventually delineating and providing a first glance at the Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon.

In a next step, the dissertation takes a meta-perspective on the current research in the field of remakes studies and traces where it could improve on its existing methodical approaches. As such, the methodological section exists out of three chapters. First, Chapter 4 argues for a more systematic approach when conducting a comparative textual analysis in film remake research and finally adduces a possible model to do so. Next, Chapter 5 argues why the field is in need of a revision of its methodical toolset, and looks at closely related research fields to set out a novel multi-methodological approach. Finally, the methodological inquiry's last chapter (6) elucidates the dissertation's methodical design, explaining the methods that were employed in the different empirical stages of the research project.

This brings us to the last section of the present dissertation, that is the empirical inquiry. It is structured in three sections, in line with the research project's three central research questions. The first section, comprising four different chapters, deals with the textual dynamics of the Dutch-Flemish film remakes. Whereas Chapter 7 provides a more general overview of the different textual insights, tracing some of the overarching mechanisms that are at work in the remakes, the three following

chapters (i.e. Chapter 8, Chapter 9, and Chapter 10) provide case studies that each specifically focus on a particular aspect. All of these studies build on the data that were gathered through a systematic comparative textual analysis of nine Dutch-Flemish film pairs, amounting to a total of 18 analyzed films. More specifically, the textual section first wants to trace the dominant textual patterns that shape the Dutch-Flemish film remakes. Second, it wants to find out what the differences and similarities between the remakes and their source films may tell about the surrounding contexts in which they were shaped. Third, it aims to look at if and how the source films were localized during the remake process.

The second empirical section zooms in on the production and industrial dimension of the remake practice. The insights that were gathered in this section come from 17 in-depth expert interviews with Dutch and Flemish people who are active in the remake industries of the Low Countries. Doing so, this second empirical section wants to first grasp how those who are active in the production process of remakes both perceive and evaluate the film remake itself. Second, the section focuses more specifically on the production process behind the remake, investigating how the interviewed experts experience and perceive it. Third, the production research aims to combine different insights in order to find out how the filmmakers' experiences, perceptions, and evaluations may influence the creation of these film remakes.

Finally, the last section investigates the reception context of the Dutch-Flemish film remake phenomenon. It builds on the insights that come from the analysis of four focus groups that were held in both the Netherlands and Flanders. More particularly, this last empirical section investigates how the Dutch and Flemish participants describe and evaluate film remakes in general. Next, it zooms in on the manners in which these audiences experience, interpret, and explain the differences and similarities they see when being confronted with both the source films and remakes from the Dutch-Flemish remake practice. Finally, the section ends with looking at whether or not the Dutch and Flemish audiences prefer the local versions over the foreign versions, and if so, why that is the case.

THEORETICAL INQUIRY

Chapter 1

The pillars of film remake studies

1.1 Introduction

It is often argued that film remakes are symptomatic of our postmodern times. One of the most famous accounts of postmodernism comes from Fredric Jameson, which arguably became the most recognized 'of all theorizations of the "condition"' (Herbert, 2008: 259). Jameson's (1991) central statement concerning the artistic and aesthetic tendencies of current times, which is characterized by late capitalism and a global interrelationship, points to an increased, almost ubiquitous tendency for copying, recycling, and, indeed, remaking. Whereas modernist literature, for instance, quoted popular texts, or mocked their source texts in a parodic way, postmodern literature simply incorporates it in a neutral manner – without ulterior motive (by way of pastiche) – eventually effacing the boundaries between original and imitation. Jameson (1991) asserts that this type of artistic imitation or recycling is definitive of the present and is especially made clear in the realm of cinema, which should be seen as one of the fullest realizations of this shift. This latter aesthetic transformation is, moreover, primarily to be found in what Jameson (1991) defines as "nostalgia films", which are, put simply, films about the past, or more broadly, metageneric films³ (i.e. both intertextual and nostalgic) such as remakes. He goes one step further in claiming that postmodern films, characterized by pastiche and remakes, are reflective of a loss of historicity, or even of an inability to attain artistic 'representations of our own current experience' (Jameson, 1991: 21). If one takes a look at the Hollywood production of films since the 1980s (and especially since the 2000s)⁴, it indeed is quite notable that

³ A metageneric film is not 'a quintessential genre film, but uses the pregiven structure of [for example] the war film as a mere pretext for its production' (Rositzka, 2018: 48). It is, therefore, self-conscious in its employment and exposing of a genre's particular expressive modes of staging.

⁴ Which led Stijn Joye (2009) to state that the new millennium introduced a 'new golden age for artistic imitation' (p. 67) in Hollywood.

'one of the most notable trends has been the apparent growth of film remakes, or films derived in some direct way from previous films' (Herbert, 2008: 7).⁵

However, apart from the fact that there probably will always be remakes (Forrest & Koos, 2002), arguably, there always have been remakes – depending on how one defines the term. Taken outside the cinematic realm – therefore leaving the “film” out of “film remake” – one could argue that from the beginning of (oral) storytelling, where telling, memorizing, and retelling narratives was of crucial importance in order to keep stories alive, they were constantly re-made. This is what brought Walter Benjamin (1992a) to claim that ‘storytelling is always the art of repeating stories’ (p. 90). Moreover, ‘[b]ecause narratives draw their basic materials from life’ (Bordwell & Thompson, 2012: 13), it could be said that, already in their conception, all stories are remakes of sorts, namely of the earlier experiences (or memories thereof) on which they were based. The latter already brings us to one of the core aspects of remake theory, namely the insight that no texts (taken broadly, including experiences) are demarcated (having a clear start or end) as ‘they can be constantly told, retold, reconfigured, and spread across platforms, no matter how many times the monster is defeated or the world is saved’ (Klein & Palmer, 2016: 12).⁶ The term could also, more particularly, be applied to other media (or “arts”). In the musical realm, for instance, people do not tend to speak about remakes, but about “remixes”, “variations”, or “covers”, which all, to some extent, designate the same underlying process of repetition with variation. Indeed, one does not typify new versions of Johan Sebastian Bach’s *Matthäus-Passion* (BMV 244)⁷ as “remakes” or “readaptations”, but as “performances” or “variations”. The same counts for, for example, pastiches in painting, or new “versions” of a theatrical or opera piece. What is more, one could argue that every single execution of a musical, theatrical or opera piece is a remake of sorts.⁸ For the scope of this dissertation, however, an extensive theoretical

⁵ As will be shown in the following, film remakes are part of a much wider tradition of cinematic reworking, including, for instance, the cinematic adaptation of literary texts, as well as sequels, prequels, reboots, franchises, parodies, or pastiches. Given the central object of research, this dissertation will focus almost exclusively on the film remake.

⁶ Cf. the notion of intertextuality, cf. section 1.2.

⁷ In memory of Hanne’s father, Jan Willems, who taught me that there is much more to classical music than Arvo Pärt.

⁸ For a more elaborate comparative analysis of these different arts or media, see, for instance, Philippe’s work on this subject (2013: 23-25).

investigation into the broad applicability of the term ‘remake’ or the process of ‘remaking’ is left aside, leaving space for the analysis of the remake in the realm of cinema.

Given that the process of remaking is undeniably at the core of human storytelling and arts in general, it should not strike as odd that cinema, from its early beginnings, tapped into the remake method. What is more, the originally English term “remake” itself, would, according to Leo Braudy (1998), originate from the film industry⁹ (in combination with movie journalism). Going back to the end of the 19th century, we see that one of the first films ever released, entitled *Exiting the Factory* (*La Sortie de l’Usine Lumière à Lyon*, 1895) and made by Louis Lumière, was even remade twice (and perhaps even more) – and can be differentiated by, for instance, the style of clothes that people on screen are wearing, probably due to the different seasons in which these films were shot. In 1895, Lumière made a slapstick film, *The Sprinkler Sprinkled* (*L’Arroseur Arrosé*)¹⁰, which was remade by the French illusionist and filmmaker George Méliès in 1896 – who named it *Watering the Flowers* (*L’Arroseur*) (Forrest, 2002). Whereas the above examples are all French, the production of film remakes in early cinema did not only take place in France. Think, for instance, of the British filmmaker Robert William Paul’s remakes of other Lumière films, which simultaneously show that film remakes also occurred across nations and cultures in these early days. Think also of the Swedish remake by Ernest Florman of an American film, entitled *The Barbershop* (1894) and produced by the Edison Manufacturing Company (Forrest, 2002) – which demonstrates that even though the American film industry was one of the biggest producers of film remakes worldwide¹¹, their films were also being remade by foreign filmmakers.

⁹ Moine (2007), in her turn, asserts that the term “remake” was invented in the Hollywood film industry to discern between different cinematographic techniques of repetition or rework.

¹⁰ Lumière’s film can also be seen as one of the first adaptations from comic to film as it was based on Hermann Vogel’s *L’Arroseur* (1887), which is at display in the Comic Museum in the French city Angoulême. This example, again, points toward the intertwining of the different recycle practices.

¹¹ Though most researchers seem to agree upon this statement (e.g. Forrest, 2002; Herbert, 2008), due to the overall lack of quantitative studies in remake studies (cf. Chapter 5), unfortunately, there are no datasets that actually confirm the American dominance in film remakes in early cinema.

As quickly became clear, the remake helped bolstering the economies of scale upon which the film industries rapidly relied, aiding in providing a continuous film production through the rearrangement and expansion of existing narrative elements, themes, conventions, motifs, or images (Klein & Palmer, 2016). Indeed, the will or impulse

'to exploit audience interests in comic strips, magic lantern shows, vaudeville, popular songs, and other films and then to replicate those successful formulas over and over until they ceased to make money is foundational to the origins and success of filmmaking worldwide' (Klein & Palmer, 2016: 8).

Anne Friedberg (1993) goes even further in claiming that repetition is actually a fundamental aspect of cinema. On the one hand, it has remade the same narratives (in many different forms, such as fables, myths, plays, or novels) over and over again, while on the other, 'cinema has a metonymic capacity of repeating the same film over time: reissuing it, redistributing it, reseeing it' (p. 177). In other words, what Friedberg (1993) suggests here is that, at its very core, the filmic apparatus is capable of replaying – or, indeed, remaking – itself. As such, she refutes Jameson's understanding of remakes as a highly postmodernist artifact. What follows is that the remake is not so much a postmodern condition, but rather an age-old, even integral feature of the cinematic apparatus: '[f]ilm production has always teetered on this precipice between originality and repetition' (Friedberg, 1993: 177).

Even though the above might seem to unambiguously signal that the film remake's genesis coincided with the emergence of cinema itself, many scholars have criticized this very statement. More particularly, they assert that, on the one hand, in the early days of cinema, 'there was no conceptual or practical difference between the mechanical reproduction of film prints [i.e. "dupes"] and the re-photographing of similarly staged events or scenes [i.e. "film remakes"]' (Herbert, 2008: 127). On the other hand, others argue that before 'film emerged from the veil of public domain to enter into the legal realm of the Copyright Statute' (Forrest, 2002: 90), "film remakes" produced in the US that predate 1912 (i.e. the year film was added to copyright law) should probably not be called "remakes", as practically everyone re-used (or, arguably, pirated or stole) each other's material, which would imply that most of the films then produced were remakes. In this vein, building on Forrest's (2002) research, Lucy Mazdon (2004) adds that once the economic viability of film *an sich* (instead of the

sales for equipment for showing film) became apparent, resulting in the realization that practices like “duping” or “remaking” could actually harm the commercial structure of one’s film business, the film remake was seen as a category apart. In other words, according to this scholar, the commercial potential of the film remake summoned its category and status. As this paragraph already makes clear, some scholars are convinced that there is no such thing as “the film remake”, an a-historical term void of (in this case legal) context. Such a critical assessment of the term itself brings us to the field of film remake studies that decided to investigate this particular form of recycled filmmaking.

Long before the establishment of a proper field – which one could call “remake studies” –, and continuing today, the film remake, as artifact and product, but also as practice or process¹², was examined by scholars coming from many different fields and disciplines (mainly adaptation, translation, and intertextuality studies). As will become clear in this first theoretical chapter, the interdisciplinary origin of the study of film remakes has had two broad consequences for its analysis. First of all, film remake research was relatively early to adopt many of the critical insights from these well-established fields. As such, it could curtail (yet not fully forestall) some of the notorious pitfalls (e.g. fidelity criticism and the issue of originality) from much of the research conducted in fields like adaptation and translation studies (Evans, 2014), which we will address in the following sections. The second consequence of the field’s interdisciplinary background is that, not only as an object of study, but also as a theoretical and discursive term, film remakes have quickly been ‘understood as historical varieties of [one overarching] serial practice’ (Kelleter & Loock, 2017: 125). Film remakes are, therefore, seen as part of a much wider tradition of cinematic reworking or recycling¹³, including the cinematic adaptation of literature, other audiovisual media (e.g. TV), screenplays, true events and newspaper articles, as well as sequels, prequels, reboots, parodies, or pastiches. As will be shown in section 1.5.2, demarcating the above instances of seriality texts with the film remake has been a rather complex endeavor, often reducing their dissimilarity to their medial relationship

¹² Cf. Hutcheon’s (2006) distinction between the adaptation as process and product (section 1.3.4).

¹³ As mentioned in the above, others consider the film remake to be part of much broader traditions that transcend the cinematic, i.e. ‘practices of transposition, translation, interpretation, intertextuality, or hypertextuality’ (Heinze & Krämer, 2015: 10).

with the preceding or succeeding text(s). What is more, in today's digitized and globalized media-environment, marked by a post-production and post-celluloid culture, 'approaches that seek to differentiate processes of adaptation and remaking by appealing to the relationship between a new version (an adaptation or remake) and the medium of the original artifact' (Verevis, 2017: 268) might have become even more difficult given the convergence of these different forms of serialities and their media platforms (cf. section 1.5.2).

In order to elucidate the ways in which the film remake has been studied, understood, and defined, the next sections will sketch out the most important disciplines from which the field of film remakes emerged and learned, i.e. intertextuality, adaptation, and translation studies. By doing so, I will pinpoint some of the crucial theoretical insights that were garnered, especially those which relate to film remakes and were eventually adopted by the field. Moreover, as most of these disciplines attach much importance not only to the theoretical underpinnings but also conceptual bases of their respective objects of study, the last section (1.5.2) will equally position the film remake against highly similar, yet differing forms of serialities¹⁴ or cinematic recycling. By doing so, the overall aim is to come to grips with the notion, discourse, and practice of the film remake by detecting common denominators in the existing academic discourses.

¹⁴ Except for the first part, entitled "Intertextuality (studies)", given that intertextuality is, as will be shown, not a type of serialities, but rather a general aspect or mode that counts for all texts.

1.2 Intertextuality studies

Though the notion of intertextuality has known ‘as many meanings as users’ (Irwin, 2004: 228), Julia Kristeva’s understanding of the term in 1966¹⁵ – simultaneously introducing it into critical discourse – has arguably been the most influential and remains, up until today, authoritative (Moine, 2007: 34). In coining the term, Kristeva drew on Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of ‘dialogism’ (1981 [1935]) – which claims that novels (or, more broadly, texts) are intrinsically dialogic as they fuse, transform, and represent different utterances, discourses¹⁶, as well as languages (each embedded in dissimilar social realities) in one work – which is, according to the latter, an essential part of cultural exchange¹⁷, or indeed, culture in large. Building on Bakhtin’s claims, Kristeva (1969b [1966]) explains that every text is built like a mosaic of citations, absorbing and transforming other texts¹⁸. She states that an author articulates the discourse of the other in her/his own texts by reading the already existing literary corpus and transforming, appropriating, or reformulating this in her/his own writing. A text is, therefore, all texts read by the writer, which, together, perform the text (Kristeva, 1969a). From this perspective, texts emerge as interactions between many texts (e.g. literary, filmic, but also social ones, the latter referring to the social world): every text is constructed in relation to others, which entails that its meanings are not based solely on the “end product”, but rather on the discourses of the other texts. Important are, therefore, the relationships in between texts – it is these connections that eventually form (the production of) meanings.¹⁹ Consequently, a text is inherently linked to other

¹⁵ Yet published three years later (cf. Kristeva, 1969b).

¹⁶ Discourses are clusters of words, images, ideas, and practices that provide us with ways to talk about specific topics, social activity or to talk, think, and act on an institutional fact in society. In a Foucauldian sense, discourses fix a text’s meaning, discarding other interpretations and meanings. Though the meaning of a text is highly contingent, discourses mask themselves as universal, stable, and, therefore, as a-historical (Foucault, 2010 [1969]).

¹⁷ Moreover, Bakhtin equally suggests how people may employ different types of language when addressing different (types of) people in different (types of) contexts (1981 [1935]: 288-291).

¹⁸ In her own words, Kristeva says that ‘tout texte se construit comme mosaïque de citations, tout texte est absorption et transformation d’un autre texte’ (1969 [1966]: 85).

¹⁹ Here, Ferdinand de Saussure’s structuralist linguistics is highly apparent, which argues that signs acquire meaning vis-à-vis other signs, that is, within the structure of texts (Irwin, 2004: 228).

texts, which not only gives these preceding texts a new way of being, but also develops its proper meanings (Kristeva, 1969a). Hence, although each text is “unique”, the emergence of its meanings is only made possible by the relationships that this unique text maintains with other texts.²⁰

Put simply, a text’s meanings come into being in dialogue with other texts’ meanings, which makes every text simultaneously an intertext (Kristeva, 1969a). Yet, a text is an intertext not (solely) because it directly “contains” borrowed elements from other texts, but because the writing that produces it follows from the distribution and dissemination of pre-existing texts. Another important element to Kristeva’s theory is that a text, or, more broadly, language ‘always, despite the intentions of speakers and authors, expresses a plurality of meanings, as it is characterized by heteroglossia, a plurality of voices behind each word’ (Irwin, 2004: 228). Here, Roland Barthes’ marks on Kristeva’s theory become apparent. Announcing the death of the author, Barthes (1977 [1968]) argued that texts do not directly derive their meanings from their author(s), who create it out of nothing, but, indeed, through their connections with other texts. What follows from the latter is that the person that reads a text is fully free in her/his interpretation of that text, or, indeed, in discovering the connections between texts. In other words, though an author may have an intention when creating a text, as she or he ‘is not capable of fixing meaning’ (Irwin, 2004: 230), according to Barthes and by extension Kristeva, a text’s meaning comes into being in the reader’s mind.²¹

As argued by Moine (2007), given that the goal of these scholars’ theoretical approach is not to isolate or locate specific “intertextual objects”, it is not really helpful

²⁰ The underlying idea of intertextuality resonates with the postcolonial term of “hybridity”, which will be discussed in section 2.2.4.

²¹ Understanding audiences as active and acknowledging that the “boundaries” within which meaning is created is determined by an individual’s social background, the broader context in which she/he lives, as well as the aspects of the experienced text, is central to the field of cultural studies. This reminds of Stuart Hall’s (1980) highly influential “encoding/decoding-model”. With this model, Hall (1980) asserts that media texts are encoded with a specific preferred reading when they are created. However, given that audiences are active and have agency, in their decoding of those media texts, they are able to extract the meanings of those texts in ways that are sensible to them. Decoding a media text can be done in three different positions, i.e the dominant/hegemonic one (taking the encoded meaning directly), the negotiated one (which both rejects and accepts some of the encoded meanings), and finally the oppositional one (which fully refutes the encoded meaning).

if one wants to discern or recognize a specific relationship between at least two texts. This is where Gérard Genette's²² reply, in the 1980s, to the aforementioned scholars' work comes in handy. Genette's (1997 [1982]) approach to intertextuality differs in many ways, but primarily because he was one of the first who made a sustainable attempt at describing a system of relations between texts. Graham Allen (2000) typifies Genette's approach as a 'structuralist – by which [he] mean[s] a more circumscribed – rendition of intertextuality' (p. 95). Indeed, it is precisely Genette's goal to, instead of scrutinizing individual works, studying how texts (or more specifically, signs) operate within, and are created by, systems, codes, or cultural practices that are all describable. The task of the critic or analytic, therefore, is to break down literary works into, for instance, its motifs, themes, quotations, or references (which together form a describable system), in order to then reveal these works' relations to the overarching system 'which make up the literary system out of which the work was constructed' (Allen, 2000: 96). Put simply, according to Genette, literary works are never unique or original works (i.e. the intertextual argument) but specific articulations of an 'enclosed system' (i.e. the structuralist argument). Genette (1997 [1982]) adds that the relationship between the literary work and its system is actively disguised by its author, which is what the critic or analytic should decipher. In that sense, Genette clearly steers away from Kristeva's poststructuralist stance, as he holds the structuralist belief that one can 'locate, describe and thus stabilize a text's significance, even if that significance concerns an intertextual relation between a text and other texts' (Allen, 2000: 97).

Doing so, Genette set up a typology, determining specific categories (which are all encompassed by the overarching insight of intertextuality) which differentiate distinct types of relations between texts, while recognizing that these categories intersect or co-exist and should not be considered as mutually exclusive. His approach

²² Herbert (2008) critiqued Genette's theory because of two main points: first of all, the way Genette understands "text" neglects the 'interweaving of the text and reading subject' (p. 16), thereby understanding it as a detached literary object and disregarding human agency in the production (and reading) of texts – which I explained earlier by drawing on Barthes' work (cf. above). Second, Herbert (2008) argues that Genette, who states that the hypertextual is confined to relationships between texts (not in the broad sense), neglects 'how social forces interact with textual production, circulation, and reference' (p. 16) – which does not take into account what Bakhtin (1981 [1935]) typified as dialogism (cf. above).

also diverges from the aforementioned as he coins the term of textual transcendence, which designates ‘all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts’ (Genette, 1997 [1982]: 1). By doing so, Genette restricts the term “intertextuality” to a more particular type of relationships between two texts, in a sense replacing the more general idea (as conceptualized by the aforementioned) of intertextuality with the term of “transtextuality” (or textual transcendence). Finally, he comes up with five encompassing transtextual categories (some of them having sub-categories), listing them in order of growing abstraction and overall scope: (1) intertextuality; (2) paratextuality; (3) metatextuality; (4) architextuality; and (5) hypertextuality. As these will eventually be incorporated in the textual framework that is part of this dissertation’s methodological inquiry (cf. Chapter 4), the following will briefly look at the different transtextual categories, as defined by Genette.

First, Genette’s (1997 [1982]) more confined understanding of intertextuality amounts to ‘a relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts: that is to say, eidetically²³ and typically as the actual presence of one text within another’ (p. 1-2), through (direct) allusion or quotation. Second, paratextuality relates to all connections between the text and what it surrounds (e.g. titles, prefaces, or covers). Third, metatextuality is a relation which unites two texts by way of explicit commentary or critique (think of a book review).²⁴ Fourth, with architextuality, Genette (1997 [1982]) points to a more abstract connection between texts, defined by its inclusive relation which unites every text with an architext (which is a category of sorts, not one particular text), think of the genre(s) in which specific texts occurs (Stam, Burgoyne & Flitterman-Lewis, 1992). Finally, there is hypertextuality, which is defined as a relation that unites a certain text B (hypertext) with a preceding text A (hypotext), which it transforms without commenting on it (cf. metatextuality). Based on a derivative relationship, two modes are discerned within this category, i.e. one of transformation and one of imitation, as well as three regimes, i.e. satirical, playful, and serious. As such, he obtains a classification of six different hypertextual practices, i.e. the imitative ones being pastiche (playful), *charge* (satirical and mocking), and forgery (serious

²³ Which refers to an exceptionally vivid and detailed remembering of something perceived earlier.

²⁴ In a metatextual relationship, the hypertext explicitly comments on the hypotext as an object.

imitation, for instance, to continue an existing work), and the transformative ones being parody (playful), travesty (satirical), and transposition (serious).

It should now be clear that the aforementioned academics understood intertextuality (or transtextuality in “Genettian terms”) as a general condition of all texts, which, naturally, makes it equally applicable to film (texts)²⁵. As we will see in the following sections, the insights generated by these scholars in intertextuality studies had several consequences for the overall understanding and definition of adaptations, translations, and remakes. Yet, the overarching argument – every text is simultaneously an intertext – that these scholars brought to the fore also affected both the so-called fidelity debate (cf. section 1.3), as well as the issues related to originality (cf. section 2.6.3 in Chapter 2) does not necessarily aid (when applied to the filmic text) in elucidating the (specificity of the) film remake (Moine, 2007). In order to break down the connection between intertextuality and the film remake, another important concept needs to be summoned, namely intermediality (which looks at media differences and similarities and the role these play in the meaning-making of communication), which is, arguably, at the center of the study of adaptations. As the final goal of this theoretical section is to eventually link these theoretical disciplines to the object of the film remake, a framework that binds both is needed. Knowing that ‘[w]ithin film scholarship, the most common form of intertextual analysis is that of adaptations’ (Herbert, 2008: 18) and that the study of adaptations is ‘in many respects a sub-section of the over-arching practice of intertextuality’ (Sanders, 2015 [2006]: 17), the following section will focus on the discipline that investigated the relationship between intertextuality, intermediality, and film.

²⁵ To trace the intertextual in cinema, the idea of “interfilmicity” was summoned (see e.g. Moine, 2007; Mellet, 2017). Though this might indeed signal that cinema too is characterized by the condition of intertextuality, I would argue that the concept of “interfilmicity” is somewhat unfortunately formulated as it appears to reduce the intertextual condition of film to solely its connections with other films – neglecting its connections to all sorts of texts next to the filmic ones.

1.3 Adaptation studies

Whereas (the process of) adaptation could explain ‘the capacities for human, cultural, and biological adjustments as a way of surviving, advancing, or simply changing’ (Corrigan, 2017: 25), within this dissertation it refers to film, media, and other closely affiliated artistic practices. Indeed, according to Linda Hutcheon (2006), an adaptation is ‘an acknowledged transposition of a recognizable other work or works’ (p. 8), which makes it ‘a derivation that is not derivative – a work that is second without being secondary’ (p.9). This broad definition of the adaptation goes against, for instance, Thomas Leitch’s (2009 [2007]) assertion that the theory of adaptation is ‘the systematic study of films based on literary sources, [being] one of the oldest areas in film studies’ (p. 1). Though there have been several calls to broaden its “medial scope”²⁶, ‘the implicit literature- or theater-to-film formula continues to have a firm grip on adaptation studies’ (Elleström, 2017: 517). While this dissertation adheres to a broader definition of adaptations (beyond film and both intramedial and intermedial, cf. below), given its specific research object of the film remake, it will focus mainly on adaptations from a film studies perspective. Apart from the fact that, from its genesis on, it has been understood as an intertextual practice, it is also inherently interdisciplinary and shaped by many different theories (Nicklas & Lindner, 2012). Consequently, ‘[t]he discipline of adaptation studies is nothing if not self-reflexive’ (Murray, 2012: 1) – which will be shown in the following. The study of adaptations is, moreover, known for consistently alternating ‘between polemics that attacked earlier assumptions in the field and readings of individual adaptations that have explored the implications of these attacks and so implicitly establish[ing] new orthodoxies’ (Leitch & Meikle, 2014). Hence, in order to better understand the study of adaptation, it should be contextualized in the periods in which it arose and transformed. Whereas today, most academics within the field of adaptation studies seem to agree upon the fact that adaptations are not at all neutral, but an active mode of being, ‘far removed from the

²⁶ Whereas Sanders (2015 [2006]) called to include theatrical performance in adaptation research, Hutcheon (2006) pleaded to expand the field’s focus on the adaptation of literature into film even further in order to encompass a wide range of different media (e.g. theatre, opera, music, television, or even computer games). Thomas Leitch’s (2009 [2007]) work, conversely, aims to study computer gaming, scriptural, visual arts, and non-fiction adaptations.

unimaginative act of imitation, copying, or repetition' (Sanders, 2015 [2006]: 24), this has not always been the case.

In 1911, Ricciotto Canudo published a manifesto arguing that cinema, as a “new” art, should be seen as a synthesis of its preceding arts, namely sculpture, painting, architecture, music, and poetry²⁷. However, the main purpose of his essay was to discern the cinematic art from painting and theatre, aiming to trace its particular aesthetic aspects. In a similar vein, four years later, Vachel Lindsay published what could be considered as the first serious book that argues how film ‘adapts a range of sister arts, including poetry, sculpture, theater, and music, to create its own form’ (Corrigan, 2017: 28). These early comparative assessments of different media (which could be called the adaptation studies’ first phase) might differ heavily from today’s analytic practices in adaptation studies, even though it ‘bears heavily but indirectly upon discussions of film adaptations’ (Herbert, 2008: 19), while already introducing one of its core aspects, i.e. intermediality (cf. section 1.3.1). Inspired by such comparative assessments, in 1957, the second phase of adaptation studies was installed with the release of a landmark study by George Bluestone, entitled *Novels into Film*. Bluestone’s approach – spurring many studies in the following decades – comes down to another (kind of) comparative assessment, yet now scrutinizing the relations (i.e. the intertextual aspect) between a literary work and its filmic adaptation. Ultimately, such an assessment looks for fundamental differences between the two media, regarding media as having particular properties (which, in essence, is the aspect of intermediality). Indeed, most of these studies presume a number of definite, perhaps even absolute differences between, for instance, visual or verbal modes of representation in different media (Leitch & Meikle, 2014). This reminds of Brian McFarlane’s (1996) distinction between “narrative” and “enunciation”: whereas the latter refers to those medium specific formal and stylistic aspects that present a narrative in a specific manner, the former refers to those elements that transcend the medium and are, therefore, not medium specific (e.g. the plot of the story).

²⁷ Which he would later famously call “the seventh art”, adding the art of dance to his list of preceding arts (Bordwell, 1997).

1.3.1 *Adaptation and intermediality*

Even though, as mentioned in the above, adaptations can equally be understood in intramedial terms, that is, adaptations of works inside the same medium (Elleström, 2017) – of which, according to Hutcheon (2006), the film remake²⁸ is an example (cf. section 1.5.2) –, generally they are linked to the aspect of intermediality. Describing the relation between adaptation and intermediality, Lars Elleström (2017) characterizes the latter as ‘an approach that highlights media differences – and hence media similarities – and their constitutive role for meaning-making within communication’ (p. 510), while the former would be ‘a sort of transmediation: a medium represents again, but in a different way, some characteristics that have already been represented by another kind of medium’ (p. 512). In other words, the intermedial approach of adaptation studies brings several new issues to the table (differentiating it from a purely intertextual understanding of adaptation). On the one hand, it demands for expertise in understanding many different media (Semali & Pailliotet, 2018), while on the other, it suggests that adaptation does not occur in a vacuum. That is, ‘adaptation never happens inside an aesthetic vacuum, but inside ideologies and power structures that determine [...] the cultural value attributed to adaptation’ (Nicklas & Lindner, 2012: 16). This quote suggests that the study of adaptations should take notice of the discursive construction of media and should, therefore, integrate an investigation into the sometimes differing cultural values and normative judgements of these media. Unaware of the different connotations of media (or arts), critics in journalistic reviewing and scholars in adaptation studies alike have condemned adaptations for being ‘belated, middlebrow, or culturally inferior’ (Naremore 2000: 6). Expressing his stance toward cinema, Charles Newman (1985), for instance, stated that adapting books to films would be switching to ‘a willfully inferior form of cognition’ (p. 129). Drawing on an imaginary ranking of media, Newman (1985) characterized cinema as a purely capitalist operation. Hutcheon (2006) dates such degrading readings of adaptations even back to Virginia Woolf, who ‘deplored the simplification

²⁸ Think also of Riccardo Fassone (2014) who conceptualizes the film remake as entailing an intramedial adaptation of one or more films, which, employing Genettian terms, produces a hypertext that establishes an intertextual relationship between two or more films. However, as will be shown in section 1.5.2, a film remake does not necessarily exclude intertextual links with other types of text other than film. For another understanding of the film remake as an intramedial type of adaptation, see Ilaria Franciotti and Valerio Sbravatti (2019).

of the literary work that inevitably occurred in its transposition to the new visual medium and called film a “parasite” and literature its “prey” and “victim” (p. 3).

For a big part, such “fidelity criticism” was the result of considering (artistic) media as having highly distinct and definite aesthetic properties, whereby comparative assessments with literary works usually situated the film as a less valuable work (e.g. Hutcheon, 2006). In the early 2000s, however, a third phase²⁹ was introduced in the field of adaptation studies: scholars like James Naremore, Dudley Andrew, Linda Hutcheon, Kamilla Elliott, and Robert Stam started to reject binary discrepancies between source texts and adaptations, and deconstructed hierarchical readings of different media or arts. Fusing the insights from intertextuality with the intermedial approach, the study of film adaptation shifted ‘away from a concern with fidelity to canonical works of literature toward issues of agency, intertextuality, and contextualization’ (Yau, 2014: 499). According to Murray (2012), ‘virtually all academic studies’ (p. 7) share an attack on the notion of fidelity criticism ‘as an inadequate schema for appreciating the richness of and motivations driving adaptations’ (ibid.).

1.3.2 *Against fidelity criticism and artistic hierarchy*

Stam (2000), for instance, argued that the literary word will, probably forever, have some kind of absolute superiority compared to all forms of adaptation, simply because of its seniority as an artistic medium. He adds that such a value-driven ranking of artistic media (with film being at the bottom and literature at the top) is equally the result of what he dubs as iconophobia (being suspect of, and fear for, the visual) and logophilia (a love for the word) (Stam, 2000). Hutcheon (2006) adds that such

‘a negative view of adaptation might simply be the product of thwarted expectations on the part of a fan desiring fidelity to a beloved adapted text or on the part of

²⁹ Leitch and Meikle (2014) actually also talk about a fourth phase, ‘inspired by the rise of the digital media that establishes every reader as a potential writer’. According to these scholars, in the fourth phase, adaptation scholars started using ‘a Wiki-based model of writing as community participation rather than individual creation’, breaking down the differentiation ‘between reading and writing’, thereby recasting ‘adaptation as a quintessential instance of the incessant process of textual production’ (Leitch & Meikle, 2014). This fourth phase will not be discussed further as it, arguably, has been of less importance to the field of remake studies (cf. Chapter 2).

someone teaching literature and therefore needing proximity to the text and perhaps some entertainment value to do so' (p. 4).

Naremore (2000), conversely, ascribes the negative attitude toward film adaptations to the Kantian and Arnoldian views on art, and their impact on society and criticism. The former points toward Immanuel Kant's understanding of aesthetics, wherein 'both the making and the appreciation of art were conceived as specialized, autonomous, and transcendent activities having chiefly to do with media-specific form' (Naremore, 2000: 2). In other words, each medium creates its own kind of art, whereby the latter is intrinsically connected to the medium's essential properties – forgetting the interrelationships across and between distinct media (an intermedial insight) and texts (an intertextual insight). The Arnoldian view on art, however, refers to the aforementioned hierarchical view on media, influenced by Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). In this series of periodical essays, Arnold brings forth a binary view on texts, distinguishing between respectable 'original' texts, and vulgar 'copies', valuing tradition over innovation and mass over culture (Geal, 2018).

The many studies on adaptations released in the third phase (and up until today), which together form 'the leading work on adaptation theory' (Leitch & Meikle, 2014), criticized such Kantian and Arnoldian views on adaptations (from now on summarized in "fidelity criticism"). The critical studies of this third phase all share the lessons learned by the field of intertextuality studies: as all texts are palimpsestic³⁰ intertexts, binary (Arnoldian) distinctions between source texts and adaptations fail to take into account that all texts are derivative. Therefore, as Hutcheon (2006) summarized it, 'to be second is not to be secondary or inferior; likewise, to be first is not to be originary or authoritative' (p. xiii). Moreover, as Stam (2005) stressed, fidelity criticism almost necessarily implies an "essentialist" view, presupposing an extractable "essence" or transferable "core", whereas, in reality, no literary text has a core meaning or closed structure. Indeed, such a statement disregards 'the instability of meaning which is inherent in all texts' (Yau, 2014: 499), forgetting the continuities between adaptations and all other texts, both being 'intertextual palimpsests marked by traces

³⁰ Referring to the palimpsest, a page of a manuscript from which the text was removed in order to make it reusable for another document. Discussing the palimpsestuous nature of texts, Genette writes that '[a]ny text is a hypertext, grafting itself onto a hypotext, an earlier text that it imitates or transforms' (1997 [1982]: ix).

of innumerable earlier texts' (Leitch & Meikle, 2014). Simultaneously, one could argue that fidelity criticism turns 'attention away from adaptation as a creative, transformative process with its own set of artistic and material possibilities' (Yau, 2014: 499). Indeed, scholars in the third phase of adaptation studies proposed to, instead of understanding adaptations as replicas, void of authenticity and to be judged on account of fidelity, think of them as acts of *interpretation* that unavoidably express differences from its source text(s), entering 'into dialog with other texts as it is disseminated over time and across space' (Yau, 2014: 499). As such, the third phase in adaptation studies clearly builds upon intertextual notions – e.g. Stam (2000) dubbing it as 'intertextual dialogism' (p. 64) and Hutcheon (2006) as 'transculturation' (p. xvi).³¹

Moreover, convinced that any critical assessment of adaptations along the lines of the maintaining of fidelity is misguided, scholars in adaptation studies started to rely upon a novel, more nuanced idea of medium specificity – i.e. every 'medium has its own specificity deriving from its respective materials of expression' (Stam, 2000: 59).³² Proposing a critical take on medium specificity, Raymond Williams (1977) argues that the medium does not only shape the "content" of what is communicated but also the social relationships within which the communication takes place' (p. 159). As such, the latter instructs that critics and scholars should always investigate the socio-historical context in which these different media were conceived, distributed, but equally so consumed and understood. In conclusion, though there is no such thing as a pure medium, as 'all arts are "composite" arts' (Mitchell, 1995: 94), or indeed, 'all media are mixed media' (p. 95), we can speak of different media forms. Yet, in order to do so, we must not understand medium in an essentializing manner ("pure media"), but rather underline 'the fact that when we speak of individual media we refer to conventional conceptualizations [i.e. its discursive construction], material restrictions,

³¹ This phase, therefore, clearly echoes the postcolonial term of "hybridity", which will be discussed in section 2.2.4.

³² This reminds of Marshall McLuhan's (1964) now famous claim that 'the medium is the message' (p. 28), *grosso modo* signifying two things: on the one hand, McLuhan meant that we should start studying and understanding the nature of a medium, instead of only its content, as media always shape and control the message. On the other, he claimed that the 'content of any medium is always another medium' (McLuhan, 1964: 8), that is, the content of writing is speech, whereas the content of print is writing, the content of the telegraph print, etc – suggesting a teleological view on media.

and affordances of individual media' (Rippl, 2015: 3)³³. Hence, though we should accept the idea of medium specificity, we should always understand these media from within their particular contexts.

1.3.3 *The sociological turn*

The insight that media should not solely be considered as having highly particular elements that impact the content it transfers, but should equally be understood within its particular socio-cultural context, finally induced what could be dubbed as the 'sociological turn' (Andrew, 1980: 14)³⁴ in adaptation studies – i.e. 'a sociology that takes into account the commercial apparatus, the audience, and the academic culture industry' (Naremore, 2000: 10). From then on, 'the various sources for film adaptations' (Herbert, 2008: 25), as well as the adaptations themselves, were seen 'not as static objects of analysis, but instead as interwoven in a greater cultural fabric' (ibid.). The sociological shift in adaptation studies has had at least two direct consequences for the field, bringing novel issues to the table. First, as fidelity was left behind as one of the chief parameters in comparing adaptations with source texts, it was unclear what would replace it. Indeed, one was left wondering which 'transmedial unit of overlap and comparison' (Herbert, 2008: 25) – i.e. assessing *what* is being adapted exactly – would take the place of fidelity criticism. In this vein, Stam (2000) urged that adaptation studies should engage in the comparing of narratives. As such, he builds upon Genette's approach, examining how different media apply aspects like duration, frequency, order, or narrative additions, eliminations, condensations. Whereas Stam (2000) put the "narrative" forward as the common, transmedial, and analytical ground in the adaptation process, Andrew (2000) suggests that what is being transferred between two different media might equally be, for instance, an image, a sound, or even a full musical piece. Therefore, in theory, all of the Genettian modes of transtextuality

³³ Rippl (2015) further argues that if one wants to grasp the particular characteristics of media, this can only be done by 'a comparative analysis of media that takes into account the history and collaborations of all media, their network of connections' (p. 10).

³⁴ As Murray (2012) revealed, though Dudley Andrew was the one who dubbed the latter turn in 1980, the way he meant it differs from Williams' (1977) plea: whereas Andrew asserts that we should understand adaptations as 'acts of discourse' (1980: 17) in a purely textual sense – meaning that adaptations can be considered 'as a discursive barometer [...] of a given culture' (Murray, 2012: 263) –, Williams (1977) urges us to also investigate the broader cultural, industrial, and commercial context in which media grow.

(i.e. intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, architextuality, and hypertextuality), together with their several sub-categorical modes, could work or perform in the intermedial relationship of the adaptation process. In other words, when conducting research in film adaptation, an analysis of all of these modes is necessary, reminding us of Semali and Pailliotet's (2018) claim that expertise is required in different media.

Second, it raised the question of what adaptations actually adapt to. Given that neither texts nor media operate in a vacuum, they (and their movements) must 'be seen in their coordination with social processes and formations' (Herbert, 2008: 26). Indeed, given that there is no such thing as an a-historical text or medium (i.e. having a stable meaning throughout history), their analysis necessitates an understanding that considers their specific socio-historical contexts. In other words, when a text moves from one medium to another, the text's transformations make its meanings, as well as the specific employments of those media, clear within a particular socio-historical context. Yet, he adds that one must be wary of equating the relations between (adapted) texts and the relations between the contexts in which they came about. Rather, the transtextual relations between texts are indicative of the limits of their contexts, as well as of the restrictions of the relations between these contexts. In conclusion, 'while [adaptations] do not wholly represent the similarities and differences between the "source" and "receptor" social contexts, they reveal the boundaries that delimit the possibilities of cultural continuities and changes' (Herbert, 2008: 27).

Despite the field's awareness of the discursive nature of the adaptation process, Murray (2012) has contended that the so-called sociological turn (dating back to the 1980s) in adaptation studies has unfortunately not realized its full potential. Indeed, Murray's (2012) argues that

'[n]udging adaptation studies beyond its intellectual comfort zone of textual analysis and closely related questions of medium specificity allows us to conceive of something often heralded in adaptation studies but not, to date, fully realised: namely, a sociology of adaptation' (p. 4).

Notwithstanding its good intentions, the field of adaptation studies is known for its methodological myopia, as it has predominantly employed textual analysis as its dominant analytic tool. Murray's (2012) statements and overall meta-analysis of the field will also prove highly important for the methodological section of this dissertation. According to her, an actual sociology of adaptation

'takes us well beyond textual specifics and enables us to ask how the mechanisms by which adaptations are produced influence the kinds of adaptations released, how certain audiences become aware of adapted properties, and how the success of an adaptation may impact differently upon various industry stakeholders' (Murray, 2012: 4).

In that sense, the analysis of adapted texts are not solely interesting for their 'intricate ideological encodings'³⁵, but equally for the 'way they illuminate the contexts of their own production' (Murray, 2012: 5). This scholar, therefore, asserts to shift the field's focus toward not only the industrial structures behind the adaptation process, but equally so toward the networks of agents that make important decisions in the process, as well as the adaptations' commercial, policy, and legal contexts (see also Willems, 2015). Another, related, yet highly important addition to the field is how Murray (2012) states that the commercial and cultural concerns at play in the cultural industry of adaptations are not antithetical but interrelated. As such, her study makes clear 'that the cultural economy's currencies of critical prestige and financial reward are both in play at all times, and that their relationship may be – if not in direct proportion – at least not in indirect ratio either' (Murray, 2012: 7).

On top of her plea for more research into the industrial context surrounding adaptations, Murray (2012) adds another important consequence of the discursive and intertextual understanding of adaptations. Breaking down 'the self-isolating critical wall built up around the text' (p. 9), the third phase opened up 'adaptation studies to concepts of audience agency' (ibid.). This actually brings us back to Barthes (1977 [1968]), who was early in claiming that the reader of a text is free in his/her understanding of that text, independently of the author's intentions.³⁶ Therefore, as noted by Hutcheon (2006), this has another consequence for the adapted text, given that readers, listeners, or spectators, may be both aware (i.e. "knowing audiences") or unaware (i.e. "unknowing audiences") of the adapted status of the text. As such, adapted texts are indeed the 'mosaics of citations that are visible and invisible, heard and silent; they are always already written and read' (Hutcheon, 2006: 21), but with an

³⁵ By which she refers to how 'adaptations [interrogate] the political and ideological underpinnings of their source texts, translating works across cultural, gender, racial and sexual boundaries to secure cultural space for marginali[z]ed discourses' (Murray, 2012: 10).

³⁶ See also footnote 21.

extra condition, namely 'that they [can] also [be] acknowledged as adaptations of specific texts' (ibid.). When audiences are aware of the adapted status of a text, they become 'multilaminated': not only are they directly linked to other recognizable texts, but that same link becomes 'part of their formal identity, but also of what we might call their hermeneutic identity' (Hutcheon, 2006: 21). Depending on the audiences' knowledge of the direct source texts of an adapted text, the 'background noise' (Hinds 1998: 19) of all the other intertextual parallels to other works might spur different interpretations of that same work. In conclusion, it is the audiences' intertextual "knowledge" and "expectations" about other (whether or not direct source) texts, about different media, genres, *et cetera*, as well as about the particular work's status of an adaptation, that should now be brought to the forefront of the attention of adaptation research.

1.3.4 *Adaptation as process and product*

To conclude this section, and as an attempt to synthesize the above, I will elaborate on Hutcheon's (2006) elucidatory distinction between the adaptation as process and as product, a distinction which will be applicable to the film remake as well. First, the adaptation as process refers to its act as 'creative reinterpretation and palimpsest intertextuality' (Hutcheon, 2006: 22). As becomes clear from the latter, Hutcheon (2006) further subdivides the adaptation as a process in (1) a process of creation (i.e. its creative (re-)interpretation) and (2) a process of reception (i.e. its palimpsest intertextuality). Concerning the former, she asserts that, at first, the act of adaptation necessarily involves interpretation, given that adapters too 'are first interpreters and then creators' (Hutcheon, 2006: 18). With regard to the process of creation, according to Hutcheon (2006), there exist two different (yet overlapping) perspectives of how adaptations are made, i.e. as a process of appropriation or salvaging. In other words, though one adapter might choose to fully appropriate a previous story or, more broadly, text, another might decide to preserve or even "reanimate" a text in adapting it.³⁷ As a process of reception, then, Hutcheon sees the adaptation as a form of intertextuality, meaning that 'we [might] experience adaptations (...) as palimpsests through our

³⁷ To be clear, Hutcheon (2006) does not designate two ways of adapting works, but describes two distinctive yet overlapping perspectives of how the creative process is generally understood. In other words, she is very aware that the adaptation process is too complex to be placed into a clearly described double categorization.

memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation' (Hutcheon, 2006: 8).

Second, the adaptation as product refers to how the adaptation is, according to Hutcheon (2006), 'an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works' (p. 7). In other words, for a text to deserve the status of "adaptation", it has to be declared as an adaptation (excluding e.g. plagiarism) and it should extensively engage with its source text(s) (excluding e.g. simple allusions to, and short echoes of, other texts). When Hutcheon (2006) talks about transposition, she refers to how the adapted text could include a shift to another medium or genre, as well as a 'change of frame' (p. 8), referring to how a narrative might be told from a different viewpoint. Moreover, it could imply a move from the real to the fictional (in terms of a story's ontological foundation), or from a biography to a more fictionalized drama. Lastly, this change of frame might equally consist of the shifting to another culture, and perhaps even the change of language. Building on Friedman's (2011) anthropological term³⁸, Hutcheon (2006) argues that, as adapters frequently decide to "indigenize" stories, an analysis of such adaptations 'reveal[s] much about the larger contexts of reception and production' (p. 28). This indigenization occurs in many different forms: though often the language is changed, '[a]dapting across cultures is not simply a matter of translating words' (Hutcheon, 2006: 149). Indeed, there might also be an alteration in time period or place, a shift in the 'political valence from the adapted text to the "transcultured" adaptation' (Hutcheon, 2006: 145), or even specific changes to avoid legal repercussions. Hutcheon (2006) concludes that as cultures naturally change over time, adapters look for the "correct" recontextualization or resetting.

Though Hutcheon (2006), for instance, does dedicate a section to the process of "transculturation" in adaptation in her monograph, many of the abovementioned scholars fall short in theorizing how the adapting of texts might morph the contexts in which these (adapted) texts were conceived. Therefore, as Yau (2014) asserted, delving into translation theory could help with issues of 'agency, context, and intertextuality' (p. 500). Moreover, when explaining the adaptation as a product,

³⁸ Hutcheon (2006) argues that her choice for Friedman's term mainly has to do with the fact that, as a broad anthropological term, 'it implies agency: people pick and choose what they want to transplant to their own soil. Adapters of traveling stories exert power over what they adapt' (p 150).

Hutcheon (2006) mentions that, being 'openly acknowledged and extended reworkings of particular other texts' (p. 16), adaptations actually show many commonalities with translations, which is why both notions are often compared. Because of this, and in combination with the fact that the study of translation (together with its theory) has also been used and applied in film remake research (e.g. Aufderheide 1998; Wills 1998; Grindstaff, 2001; Forrest and Koos 2002; Mazdon, 2000; Mazdon, 2004; Gottlieb, 2007; Evans, 2014), the following section will focus on the discipline that studies translations, zooming in on its most crucial theoretical insights and concepts as it has been of lesser importance to both the fields of adaptation studies³⁹ and remake studies compared to, for instance, the study of intertextuality and intermediality.

³⁹ Translation theorists, on the contrary, have actually engaged extensively with the intersection of both adaptation and translation, especially with how these forms are interconnected. Therefore, in the field of translation studies, 'theorists have debated for a long time the arbitrary boundaries drawn between the two fields' (Chan, 2012: 414). Chan cites John Milton (2009), who, in his work, 'cites instances of adaptive techniques used in translations, in genres like advertisements, theatre texts, and classic fiction' (2014: 415).

1.4 Translation studies

Instead of looking at the field of translation studies in its entirety, given the scope of this dissertation, this section will focus solely on those aspects that have been adopted as conceptual, theoretical, and methodological tools in the field of remake studies. As mentioned, it will, more specifically, address those issues that adaptation studies tend to neglect, suggesting other research questions and paths. Translations share at least one aspect with adaptations (and, as will be shown later on, with film remakes): both have long been infected with the above-described 'normative and source-oriented approaches' (Hermans, 1985: 9). Indeed, in many conceptualizations of translation, the source text was endowed with 'an axiomatic primacy and authority' (Hutcheon, 2006: 16), which resulted in a 'rhetoric of comparison [that] has most often been that of faithfulness and equivalence' (ibid.). In criticizing the latter, Benjamin (1992b) argued that translation should not be seen as the discernment of an established core meaning, which can then be reproduced, paraphrased or copied. On the contrary, translation is, he argues, an engagement with a source text that makes one see that same text in other, sometimes novel ways (Benjamin, 1992b). As a correction to the normative and source-focused approaches of translation studies, a more nuanced understanding of translation was put forward by Benjamin (1992b), perceiving translation more as a global reinterpretation than merely a form of linguistic transfer. This initiated, among other things, what could be called a cultural turn in translation studies, where the "translation unit" (the component to be analyzed) moved from text to culture (or discursive construct). Think, for instance, of Susan Bassnett's (2002) understanding of translation as more of 'an act of both inter-cultural and inter-temporal communication' (p. 9). Understood in this broader sense, the study of translations started not only analyzing textual shifts produced in the translation process but also their ideological implications. In a similar vein, André Lefevere (2012 [1982]) understood translation as rewriting, describing translation as 'the adaptation of a work of literature to a different audience, with the intention of influencing the way in which that audience reads the work' (p. 205). As such, the concept of adaptation (but equally so of, for instance, remake) 'can be expanded to refer to the transformation or manipulation a text is subject to when translated for a different audience and sociocultural context' (Perdikaki, 2017: 5).

Though there have been several attempts at defining what the cultural context specifically is within translation studies, one of the dominant voices in this debate is

Itamar Even-Zohar's (1990), and his idea of the culture as a "polysystem". In his understanding, culture is a site of permanent ideological struggles. In other words, every culture is seen as an open system made up of various, communicating or interacting systems, which are all engaged in the permanent struggle for dominance (Even-Zohar 1990). By proposing this model, Even-Zohar (1997) argued that the object of study of translation studies should no longer be solely texts, but rather the vital cultural systems or models that regulate and determine the production of these cultural artifacts.⁴⁰ Understood within this sense, translations often happen between two different societies, which are both systems consisting of many different systems, and can be both revolutionary (questioning the hegemonic ideologies) or more conservative (confirming the existing cultural values and norms) in the target culture. This is in line with Lefevere's (2012 [1982]) notion of patronage⁴¹, which refers to the influential forces of the overarching regulatory body in a literary system. He further subdivides the term into an ideological, economic, and status component. These three components are 'the powers (persons, institutions) that can further or hinder the reading, writing, and rewriting of literature' (Lefevere, 2016 [1992]: 2)⁴². In short, the ideological component concerns the influence of society, which requires literature to be in line with its other systems. Then, whereas the economic component ensures the writer's employment, or, indeed, income, the status component mirrors the recognized societal position of the writer or translator (Lefevere, 2016 [1992]).

Applying the concept of patronage to the film system, Katerina Perdikaki (2017) argued that 'the ideological component of patronage in the film system may refer to the messages that are to be conveyed by films, including film adaptations' (p.

⁴⁰ This reminds of Murray's (2012) call for a "sociology of adaptation" (cf. section 1.3.3).

⁴¹ Lefevere (1984) explains that patrons are 'people who play a part both in the literary system and in its environment, the culture at large [...] and it should be stressed that the word has both positive and negative connotations. A "patron" is any kind of force that can be influential in encouraging and propagating, but also in discouraging, censoring and destroying works of literature. Patrons can be individuals, and they come most readily to mind in this guise: we think of Maecenas or Louis XIV or the Chinese emperor or the Sultan. But they can also be institutions, such as the Roman Catholic Church, the Communist Party, the BBC' (p. 92).

⁴² The notion of power should be understood in a Foucauldian sense here: 'We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it "excludes", it "represses", it "censors", it "abstracts", it "masks", it "conceals". In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth' (Foucault, 1979: 194).

7), which may, naturally, 'influence the adaptation process accordingly' (ibid.). The economic aspect, then, could be attributed 'to the production aspect of the film industry' (ibid.). Finally, applying the component of the writer's status to the film system 'may refer to the reputation of the producer and the director [and] in the case of adaptations, it can include the reputation of the source novel's author' (ibid.). Hence, both adaptations and films should be understood as open, heterogeneous, and dynamic systems interacting with economic, political, and other systems (such as the literary) from the same or another culture (Yau, 2014: 501). Indeed, the systemic approach implies that films are produced and received 'through channels of communication such as theatrical release, DVDs, the Internet, marketing, reviewing, and criticism [...] with reference to repertoires such as genres' (Yau, 2014: 501), which are, in their turn, 'regulated through the norms adopted or rejected by the institutions created by filmmakers, critics, official bodies, schools and universities, and the media' (ibid.). This is what brought Francesco Casetti (2004) to argue that adaptations are first and foremost 'a phenomenon of recontextualisation of a text, or, even better, of reformulation of its communicative situation' (p. 83) – which reminds of Bakhtin's (1981 [1935]) notion of dialogism, urging us to shift attention to the dialogue between text on the one hand and context on the other.

This brings us to one of the central figures in translation studies, namely Lawrence Venuti (1995; 2007), who pleaded to apply theoretical concepts (and methodologies) of translation studies to the field that studies adaptations. In 1995, talking about the "invisibility of the translator", Venuti touched upon the connection between adaptations and translations. One of the central claims of his work is that because of what he calls "domesticating practices" in society, the translator has become more and more invisible in translations of "foreign" texts (Venuti, 1995). Because of cultural and legal forces, it is increasingly required that 'the translator adhere[s] closely to the foreign text' (Venuti, 1995: 310) – indeed, the translation should 'neither omit anything from the original text nor add anything to it other than such verbal changes as are necessary in translating into English' (ibid.). However, the mere idea that such a faithful rendition is actually a possibility is clearly the result of the illusion of transparency (as well as 'the discursive effect of originality' [Venuti, 1995: 310]). Moreover, experimental, or indeed foreignizing modes of translation are 'likely to encounter opposition from publishers and large segments of Anglophone readers who read for immediate intelligibility' (Venuti, 1995: 310). Eventually, such a stance

toward translations induces a situation wherein the idea of "fluency" becomes the primal quality for translations, whereby all indices or "remains" of foreignness or otherness are to be omitted as they might become stumbling blocks for the target readers (Venuti, 1995).

Though Venuti (1995) is convinced that translations should be fluent and readable, he claims that we should be wary of the very understanding of "readability", and, indeed, what "fluency" means today. According to him, the hegemonic understandings of readability in today's translation circles (but also more broadly, in society) highlight a highly restricted sense of the translated language, where the register, style, or discourse of the source text is neglected. As such, the illusion is created that a translation is actually not really a translation, but the source text itself, reproduced. Additionally, this illusion simultaneously implies that the translator is given a secondary position, whereas the author of the "original" text (who would be unmediated by external determinants) is given a position of authorial originality.⁴³ Even more, such an understanding of the translated text inevitably conceals the processes of assimilation of the source text to the values of the target (or receiving) culture.⁴⁴ Venuti (1995) says that a translator might become visible when her/his translation is bad, when she/he "corrects" mistakes (i.e. by adding "sic" to the error), adds notes or explanations to the translation, or when the reader is aware that the text she/he is reading is originally foreign. However, the translator might also choose to translate in a resistant manner, for instance, by using unusual forms of writing (e.g. by adopting the grammar or style of the source language), or even by employing "foreign"

⁴³ Which reflects the Arnoldian idea of texts (cf. section 1.3), whereby the adaptation is seen as a text of secondary degree, that is, derivative, a mere copy, and, therefore, potentially fake. Yet, Venuti (1995) adds another consequence to the latter: not only is the translation seen as having a secondary-order status, it is argued that it should equally erase this status, in order to create the illusion of actual authorial presence, transforming the translated text to the original.

⁴⁴ Venuti (1995), moreover, adds that when a dominated culture translates a text from a dominant culture, generally, it tends to conserve the elements from the source text, as it wants to preserve parts of its linguistic and cultural otherness. However, when a dominant culture translates a text from a dominated culture, in most cases, it retains some kind of control over the text, which it then integrates in a hegemonic way into its own value system.

vocabulary. The latter signifies what Venuti (1995) dubs as foreignization⁴⁵, or the type of translation which allows for differences, aware of the fact that the “foreign” is in a sense always already mediated by the receiver’s cultural context and frame of reference.

In later research, Venuti (2007) further suggested that the process of reinterpretation of adaptations is not only inspired by the surrounding socio-cultural, economic, and political context, but equally so by the different human actors that are involved in the adaptation process. In that sense, adapters should be understood as active actors who negotiate the cultural values and norms for the employing of, among others, cinematic and novelistic repertoires (Yau, 2014). This implies that, concerning the adaptations themselves, they should be understood as encapsulating and even materializing

‘the influences exerted by the agents involved in its creation; at the same time, it needs to respond to the values and demands of the contemporary sociocultural surroundings in order to provide a reinterpretation of the source material that caters to these demands’ (Perdikaki, 2017: 16).

This resulted in a novel predominant way of conducting research in translation studies, namely through a comparative analysis of the source text(s) and its adaptation(s), tracing ‘significant shifts that reveal its relations with the dominant social values as reflected by the institutionally embedded norms’ (Yau, 2014: 501). Consequently, translation studies embrace a more holistic approach to the inquiry of (translated or adapted) texts, combining contextual inquiry with textual analysis. Such an approach is necessary in adaptation studies, according to Laurence Raw (2009), who expressed his discontent with most of the research in adaptation studies: instead of learning ‘about the process of textual evolution [the field’s research does not reach much further] than reading endless commentaries on completed texts’ (73). In this vein, Venuti (2007) argues that

‘[t]ranslation theory can advance thinking about film adaptations by contributing to the formulation of a more rigorous methodology for studying them. If we abandon

⁴⁵ Another resistant form of translating is by going against the “canon”, i.e. through choosing those source texts that oppose the existing patterns of translating from specific languages and cultures (Venuti, 1995).

the communicative model of translation and instead consider its relation to a source text as hermeneutic, the interpretant can assume crucial importance in analyzing both translations and adaptations [. . .]. The hermeneutic relation can be seen [. . .] as interrogative, exposing the cultural and social conditions of those materials and of the translation or adaptation that has processed them' (p. 41).

1.5 Ergo, remake studies?

If adaptations and translations have been haunted by a myriad of pejorative connotations, then film remakes have suffered at least equally, perhaps even more. As if it were a rule, film remakes were routinely belittled in journalistic, critical, and academic circles since their birth. Consequently, they have received many replacing substantives, ranging from rip-offs to knock-offs, clones, pale imitations, and carbon copies, not rarely combined with adjectives like pointless, painful, excruciating, slavish, stupid, insipid, anemic, inferior, irrelevant, ill-advised, half-hearted, parasitic, lazy, unnecessary, uninspired, unoriginal, redundant (Rosewarne, 2020), and purely commercially driven. Hence, whereas film remakes might have been around since the early days of cinema, and, at least according to Forrest and Koos (2002), will always be there, they were barely taken seriously by film critics and scholars alike. However, in spite of their discursive history of both criticism and conflict, 'film remakes have played an important role in the history of cinema that demands fuller appreciation and understanding' (Herbert, 2008: 28).

1.5.1 *A brief history of an up-and-coming field*

Mazdon (2004) argues that the (possibly unconscious) decision of neglecting film remakes in academic circles is 'perhaps less due to the proliferation of the practice itself (although this is not negligible) than to shifting academic paradigms' (p. 4). She continues that the growing influence of cultural studies globally in the 1970s-1980s may have something to do with it, as it resulted in a move away from the cinematic "canon", in combination with a 'growing interest in the myriad relations between filmic texts and industrial, political and cultural contexts' (ibid.). Additionally, in this period of time, more attention was given to discourses of transnationalism, which resulted in critical analyses of "national" cinema, nuancing 'cries of imperialism and vampirization' (Mazdon, 2004: 4), which were a recurring critique of transnational film remakes (cf. section 2.4.1 in Chapter 2). It was, therefore, only in the 1970s-1990s (cf. Silverman, 1978; Nowlan & Nowlan, 1987; Milberg, 1990; Limbacher, 1991) that systematic and coherent scholarly research started emerging. These fairly marginal studies almost exclusively contributed filmographies and general overviews, presenting, for example, generic info on which films were remade. Instead of making attempts at rigorously defining or theorizing the concept of the film remake, most of these studies took the film remake as a given category (Verevis, 2006). This changed in the 1990s and early

2000s, when several edited volumes (e.g. Horton & McDougal, 1998; Forrest & Koos, 2002), special issues (e.g. Mazdon, 2004; *The Velvet Light Trap*, 2008), monographs (e.g. Durham, 1998; Mazdon, 2000; Verevis, 2006; Zanger, 2006), as well as many individual articles and book chapters that specifically deal with the subject of film remakes were released. Apart from putting forth more sustained definitions and critical analyses of the film remake, these studies shared one specific plea⁴⁶ in the form of ‘a gesture that is equally defensive and corrective, namely the assertion that remakes have an undeservedly bad reputation and that they have been paid almost no serious attention’ (Heinze & Krämer, 2015: 7).

Building on the abovementioned insights from other disciplines (see sections 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4), the normative approaches toward film remakes (e.g. Manderbach, 1988⁴⁷; Protopopoff & Serceau, 1989; Kühle, 2006) that existed in the field – and were (and still are) abundant in film criticism (cf. section 2.6) – were increasingly eschewed, resulting in more theoretically sound and empirically driven⁴⁸ research. Eventually, since the new millennium, the field is characterized by a steady scientific output that abandons normative approaches. In the two decades following the year 2000, studies were released that help us understand the film remake (and practice) itself, while also prompting the idea of the remake as a kind of prism: i.e. a scientific tool that can be used to analyze a variety of aesthetic, cultural, economic, and socio-political questions within and beyond the cinematic realm. As researchers in the field mainly focused on film remakes – probably partially because, as said, the term originates from the film industry – such a focus on the cinematic remake has led to the neglect of other audiovisual remakes, such as the “televisual remake”. This resulted in a broadening of the field’s scope of study objects (e.g. Smith, 2009; Look & Verevis, 2012; Klein & Palmer, 2016) in the 2000s, coinciding with the widening of its geographical frame,

⁴⁶ A tradition that I wholeheartedly replicated in the first paragraph of this section.

⁴⁷ As Wulff (1989) stated in his book review of Manderbach’s study: ‘Selbst wenn man die rigorose Einschränkung des Themas auf die rein filmische Literatur einmal vorübergehend akzeptiert: Auch die exemplarische Analyse vermag weder einzuleuchten noch zu erhellen. Und das hängt mit einem unreflektierten Vorurteil zusammen, das fast die ganze Manderbachsche Studie dominiert: Er geht offenbar davon aus, daß das ‘Remake’ in der Regel von geringerer ästhetischer, formaler und inhaltlicher Qualität sei als das Original’ (p. 71).

⁴⁸ Though mainly limited to textually-focused studies (cf. Chapter 5).

that is, beyond Hollywood (see e.g. Smith, 2016; Smith & Verevis, 2017; Cuelenaere, Joye & Willems, 2019).

Most critics agree that the film remake holds an ambivalent position, with its appeal that derives 'from the tension between difference and repetition, surprise and familiarity, recognition and reconstruction, and that thus carries with it conflicted discourses of authenticity and originality, as well as tradition and influence' (Heinze & Krämer, 2015: 9). Before we can elaborate on these different kinds of aspects of the film remake (cf. Chapter 2), we first need to (try to) determine its formal features and textual boundaries.

1.5.2 *Defining the film remake: a quest doomed for failure?*

One way of defining the film remake is to look at what the remake specifically is not, yet almost. In that sense, building on Frank Kelleter and Kathleen Lookock's (2017) different forms of cinematic remaking, the particular category of the film remake is similar to, but different from:

'the "sequel" (which continues the story of one or more protagonists), the "spin-off" (which diversifies an existing narrative universe without having to focus on an established character constellation), the "revision" (which tells a familiar story from a markedly new perspective), the "spoof" (which does so in a parodist or satirical mode), the "re-imagining" (a revision usually attributed to a director's artistic vision), the "prequel" (which constructs a backstory for popular character constellations or storyworlds), the "franchise" (which, as an explicitly legal entity, engages in transmedia storytelling⁴⁹ and is not necessarily structured in continuing story arcs but can also renew itself episodically or at the level of storyworld), and – most recently – the "reboot" (which seeks to remake an entire series or franchise rather than a single narrative, usually with revisionary ambitions)' (p. 130).

In their account, the film remake itself, in a more limited sense (i.e. compared to the overarching practice of cinematic remaking), is a feature film that repeats the story⁵⁰

⁴⁹ In Jenkins' (2006) understanding, such a type of storytelling requires fuller participation of audiences (or fans) who become active in the production of stories. For more information, see Chapter 2, section 2.2.4.

⁵⁰ Such a limited understanding naturally excludes non-narrative film remakes.

of another film (Kelleter & Loock, 2017). In that understanding, film remakes comprise a cinematic category almost entirely determined by a particular intertextual relation between two films. Or, as Leitch (1990) stated it: remakes are 'new versions of old movies' (p. 37), and, therefore, 'only movies are remade' (ibid.).

In a similar vein, Forrest and Koos (2002) define the remake as 'a new version of an older film that was commercially exhibited' (p. 3). One could also think of Eckart Voigts⁵¹ distinction between the noun "remake", which he understands as a cinematic category, and the practice of "remaking", which he stretches to other medial spheres. What these definitions clearly share is a particular notion of medium specificity. Michael Brashinsky's (1998) highly similar definition renders this clear when he asserts that the film remake 'is nothing but a film based on another film that is itself a system of narrative and cinematic properties' (p. 162) and that it 'interprets the work of the same medium' (p. 163). Likewise, Maria Marcsek-Fuchs (2015) distinguishes between remaking (an intramedial process) and adapting (an intermedial process), yet concludes that both should not be seen as two independent phenomena, but rather as highly interdependent and coexistent. While many critics and scholars are convinced that film remakes are highly similar to film adaptations, which leads many of them to classify remakes as a subcategory of adaptations⁵², according to scholars like Brashinsky (1998) and Marcsek-Fuchs (2015), who rely upon the notion of intermediality, there is a clear distinction between both practices. That is, film remakes are, in the first place, to be seen as filmic texts with a direct, determinant, and dominant intertextual connection with another filmic text (i.e. intramedial). Film adaptations, however, should be understood as filmic texts that have a 'primary intertextual relation with a text in a medium other than film [i.e. intermedial]' (Herbert, 2008: 29). This at first sight simple demarcation between both practices is, however, flawed (Verevis, 2006). Think, for instance, of the cases where 'literary adaptations have themselves been previously adapted to film' (ibid.), which some define as readaptations (e.g. Leitch, 1990; Moine, 2007; Herbert, 2008). In other words: it appears highly difficult to, purely on the basis of the texts themselves, know whether a new film adaptation of a

⁵¹ This insight comes from Heinze and Krämer's (2015) introduction to their edited volume on film remakes. However, they do not mention a reference in their text.

⁵² This would imply that adaptations do not necessarily switch between two different media, which is an understanding of adaptations that is shared by some scholars (e.g. Hutcheon, 2006; Krämer, 2017; Elleström, 2017; Franciotti & Sbravatti, 2019).

book is a film remake (based on the previous film adaptation) or a readaptation (based on the book from which the first film adaptation was derived) or both.

Moreover, Verevis (2006) argues that the distinction between remake and adaptation 'is complicated when sources derive from other (visual) media, such as graphic novels, computer games, television programmes and even serial, experimental and animated films' (82). What is more, remakes from the new millennium would be characterized by their increasing intermediality (Verevis, 2017). Indeed, Verevis (2017) argues that cinema of the new millennium is marked by forces of globalization, conglomeration, digitization, and convergence culture⁵³, which has 'contributed to a new historical period of "postproduction"' (p. 149). On the one hand, this new period resulted in an increase of new editing practices, the use of computer generated images and special effects, and developments in sound design. On the other hand, said period of postproduction is equally marked by a transformed media culture, 'characterized by a proliferation of viewing screens and new communicative technologies (iPhones, Twitter, Instagram), a rapid increase in digital distribution (downloading, streaming), and intensification of interest in moving-image content (iTunes, Netflix, YouTube)' (ibid.). In a response to the growing chaos of global digital culture, filmmakers increasingly tend to 'interpret, reproduce, remake, and make use of available cultural products' (ibid.). In this understanding, the remake should not (as in some of the above definitions) be seen as a film based on another film, but as 'the translation of narrative units and popular characters from a preexisting (celluloid) medium to a new, digital one' (Verevis, 2017: 150).

A textual definition of the film remake becomes extra complicated when the above-described notion of intertextuality (cf. section 1.2) is brought to the table. At first sight, some of the insights from intertextuality studies might actually help to elucidate the film remake. Many remake scholars have, therefore, employed intertextual insights in their attempts to define the film remake textually (e.g. Forrest & Koos, 2002; Verevis, 2006; Herbert, 2008; Heinze & Krämer, 2015). Think, for instance, of Moine's (2007) usage of Genette's (1997 [1982]) transtextual approach, which focuses on the recognition of particular types of relationships between two texts. Building on Genette's categorization, Moine (2007) argues that the relationship that a film remake keeps with

⁵³ Which, naturally, refers to Henry Jenkins (2006) famous concept of convergence (cf. section 2.2.4).

its source text is a hypertextual one. In other words, the film remake holds a relation that unites a hypertext (i.e. the film remake) with a hypotext (i.e. the source film), which it transforms without explicitly commenting on it⁵⁴. More specifically, she argues, film remakes are united with their hypotexts by a relation of transformation (instead of imitation) which is not satirical nor playful: in other words, in Genettian terms, a film remake's hypertextual relation with its source text is one of transposition⁵⁵.

The latter definition of the film remake may, at first sight, appear to have little consequences for its understanding. However, as Herbert (2008) correctly stated, its effects 'are great and resonate throughout the discourses about film [...] remakes' (p. 33). The direct result of explaining the film remake solely through its hypertextual relationship with a source film indirectly promotes comparative analyses with only one other film text, and therefore, neglects (or, in Leitch's [1990] terms, disavows) its broader intertextual (or, in Genettian terms, transtextual) connection with other texts. Moreover, when applying the broader intertextual insight – that states that every text is simultaneously an intertext – to film remakes, one is confronted with another issue: if every film is intertextual, and therefore intertextually linked to many other films (as well as other texts), how can one discern a film remake (which is, naturally, equally intertextual) from a non-remake? Attempts at answering this question were undertaken by, for instance, Verevis (2006) and Herbert (2008) who both, though in different wordings, stated that film remakes should be understood as more direct, determinant, dominant, stabilized, or limited forms of intertextual relationships. This reminds of Hutcheon's (2006) definition of an adaptation, which, according to her, is an 'extensive transposition of a particular work or works' (p. 7). In her terms, an adaptation can only

⁵⁴ As this, in Genettian terms, would make it a metatextual relationship (cf. section 1.2). The line between a metatextual and hypertextual relationship is, however, not always that clear to draw (Stam, Burgoyne & Flitterman-Lewis, 1992). In Moine's (2007) understanding, the difference comes down to the difference in explicitness: whereas the metatextual relationship between text A and text B is explicit, the hypertextual relationship between text C and text D is implicit or even masked.

⁵⁵ Moine (2007) further claims that remakes want to disguise this transposition. In other words, she claims, remakes mask their highly repetitive nature. For a more detailed investigation into a Genettian understanding of film remakes, see section 1.2, as well as Philippe's work on this subject (2013).

be an adaptation when it extensively engages with its source text(s). In a similar vein, Verevis (2006) states that the film remake's

'intertextual structures (unlike those of genre) are highly particular in their repetition of narrative units, and these repetitions most often (though certainly not always) relate to the content ("the order of the message") rather than to the form (or the "code") of the film' (p. 21).

Heinze and Krämer (2015) criticized the latter by stating that placing the narrative unit central to the film remake (see also Kelleter & Looock, 2017) runs the risk of broadening its definition too much, which eventually renders it useless – as in such an understanding, on a macro-level, all (filmic) texts become (generic) remakes, while on a micro-level, none are (as this would be a copy instead of a remake).

Moreover, Moine (2007) claims that advancing the intramedial aspect as one of the conditions of the film remake does not take into account that, oftentimes, the reality of the remake process shows that the material that is being remade is not necessarily a film, but rather a specific type or genre of text, namely the scenario of the source film. In this specific sense, most film remakes would be both intramedial (i.e. from film scenario A to film scenario B) and intermedial (from film scenario B to film B). Because of the latter difficulty, Moine (2007) brings us to another possible avenue, one which, according to some (e.g. Forrest & Koos, 2002; Leitch, 1990), might provide a waterproof answer to the complexity of defining the film remake. What fundamentally distinguishes the film remake, she argues, 'is not that it is a practice of cinematic repetition, but that it constitutes [...] an institutionalized and regulated form, which makes the term "remake" specific for the cinematic realm and audiovisual work' (Moine, 2007: 22)⁵⁶. Hence, a remake is a film that is remade legally, which differs it, at least in a legal sense, from plagiarism. In other words, if one wishes to produce a new version of a film, one must hold the remake rights of that film.

Such an understanding of the film remake, however, entails several consequences and brings up new issues. First, films that clearly repeat or even imitate

⁵⁶ Own translation, originally: 'Ce qui distingue fondamentalement le remake, ce n'est pas qu'il soit une pratique de reprise et de répétition cinématographique, c'est qu'il en constitue, à l'échelle de l'œuvre filmique toute entière, une forme institutionnalisée et réglementée, le terme de « remake » étant spécifique au cinéma et aux œuvres audiovisuelles' (Moine, 2007: 22).

other films, but do not credit or acknowledge their sources are, in this understanding, not considered as remakes (Verevis, 2006). Second, and related to the former, all USA film remakes that were, for instance, released before 1912 (i.e. the year where copyright for films was installed in the USA), would not fall under this definition. Third, and equally related to the first consequence, it is still difficult to differentiate between readaptations and remakes, especially because

‘the producers of a remake typically pay no adaptation fees to the makers of the original film, but rather purchase adaptation rights from the authors of the property on which that film was based, even though the remake is competing much more directly with the original film [...] than with the story or play or novel on which it is based’ (Leitch, 1990: 139).

Fourth, basing the definition of the film remake purely on its legal contract ignores the intertextuality of the remake while privileging the direct source film – as it, in other words, communicates that the remake, because of its legal basis, is only connected to the direct source text, which then ‘serves as a retrospectively designated point of origin and semantic fixity’ (Verevis, 2006: 21). Lastly, considering the intertextual argument that ‘all art involves borrowing and adapting earlier material’ (Smith, 2016: 23), the line that is drawn between borrowing on the one hand and plagiarism on the other varies across cultures and times. In other words, as copyright law is not universally and a-historically defined, it becomes useless in an abstract and purely textual definition of the film remake.

Drawing themselves on, among others, the above distinctive aspects that demarcate the boundaries of the film remake textually, several scholars have tried to come up with different typologies and categorizations of the film remake. Notable examples are: (1) Leitch’s (1990) taxonomy – based upon a “triangular” intertextual relationship between the remake, ‘the original film they remake, and the property on which both films are based’ (Leitch, 1990: 139) – which differentiates between the readaptation (neglecting the preceding film adaptation), the update (which takes a clear revisionary stance toward a source text), the homage (which pays tribute to an earlier film), and the true remake (which wants to “surpass” the source film); (2) Michael Druxman’s (1975) distinction between the disguised, direct, and non-remake, based on three factors that are driven by industrial pragmatism (i.e. the pre-sold and low-risk nature of the remake, the possibility to exploit adaptation and remake rights,

and the profit potential for exploiting stars and screen techniques); (3) Michael Schaudig's (1996) categorization of the imitative, innovative, and original remake; (4) Harvey Greenberg's (1991) distinguishing – which locates motivations for remakes in personal reasons, based on psychoanalytic or “Oedipal inflections” – between the acknowledged, close remake and the acknowledged, transformed remake on the one hand, and the unacknowledged, disguised remake on the other; (5) Robert Eberwein's (1998) extensive typology – capturing technological, national, and medial aspects, as well as issues of genres, gender, or racial, temporal, and cultural settings – which lists 15 different categories, which are then further subdivided, resulting in about 30 categories; and (6) Verevis' (2006) attempt – drawing upon Rick Altman's (1999) theorization of film genres – which differentiates between close or direct remakes, transformed or disguised remakes, and non-remakes (i.e. ‘those films that open up so substantial a difference [...] that they even may have more in common with a genre or production cycle than with a particular precursor text, even though the remake may have a like title and credit a common source’ [Verevis, 2006: 85]).

Though the above categorizations and typologies, which attempt to classify different types of remakes formally (or textually), might prove useful for analysts and critics alike who wish to label different types of remakes, a critical inquiry into all of them shows that they do not explicate the practice of remaking in any sense, nor do they help us understand its repetitive structures (Dusi, 2011). This also counts for the aforementioned myriad of definitions that have emerged in the past decades. Although these scholars' endeavors might provide handy signposts, ‘their competition is often characterized by a normative insistence that we use the right words, as if cinematic formats existed as ideal forms that are then articulated more or less precisely by this or that film’ (Kelleter & Loock, 2017: 129-30). On the contrary, not only are filmic formats never ideal (in the Platonic sense), they equally do not exist (at least for long) in canonized shapes as they are contextually dependent. Indeed, ‘formal boundaries are always fluid [and] cinematic remaking is a reflexive, multi-agential, and temporally shifting process, ultimately competition-based and spanning the fields of production and reception’ (Kelleter & Loock, 2017: 130). Therefore, as argued by many scholars (e.g. Verevis, 2006; Moine, 2007; Herbert, 2008; Dusi, 2011; Heinze & Krämer, 2015; Kelleter & Loock, 2017), if we want to take the remake seriously, we have to recognize the complexity of the term, the phenomenon, the practice, and its surrounding

discourses. In the context of adaptation studies, Leitch (2012) once stated the following:

'After reviewing the problems involved in organizing the discipline more rigorously, adaptation scholars may well decide to defer the question of what [is or] isn't an adaptation indefinitely. After all, no matter how they answer that question, they will be imposing new disciplinary constraints on a field that may well flourish more successfully when a thousand flowers bloom ends' (p. 103).

In a similar vein, this dissertation does not intend to adhere to an existing (or add yet another) a-historical definition of "the" film remake (cf. Introduction) that inevitably excludes practices that might be considered as remakes. Instead, it embraces the complexity and contingency of both the term and everything it might refer to. As such, rather than making another (impossible) attempt to fully demarcate the film remake, this dissertation takes another approach by promoting a more holistic inquiry into the film remake.

Moreover, with the difficulty of defining the film remake in mind, one might wonder how (and if) it is still possible to differentiate between different kinds of serialities in a particular moment of time? As asserted by Kelleter and Loock (2017), 'any investigation of remaking as a formatting practice, while not being required to participate in typological controversies, needs to study them as part of the research field itself' (p. 130). Once that awareness kicks in, academic debates and definitions themselves become apparent as part of larger discursive networks, mediated by actors who (often unconsciously) sustain these serial cultures. Ergo, instead of trying endlessly (and probably fruitlessly) to come up with a purely textual, a-historical, and highly abstract definition of the film remake, we should investigate

'public discourses, media scholarship, industry operations, audience engagements, packaging practices, and the aesthetic activities of "remade" films themselves [...] Which categories, evaluations, procedures, and so on, of filmic iteration are invented, identified, or performed by whom (or what) at which point?' (Kelleter & Loock, 2017: 131).

Such a stance toward the research object of the remake is informed by the poststructuralist turn in intertextuality studies, which – building on, for instance, Kristeva's, Bakhtin's, and Barthes' insights (cf. section 1.2) – results in the attention

being shifted to how a text should be understood and analyzed through its intertextual and highly discursive networks. Applied to the film remake, Friedberg (1993) claims that 'the intertextual referentiality between a remake and its "original" is largely extratextual, outside the film text itself in the historical or discursive context of the film's production or reception' (p. 175). '[I]t is therefore not a question of knowing which objects are *essentially* remakes, but of determining which objects are *designed or interpreted as remakes*' (Moine, 2007: 2 [original emphasis])⁵⁷. This approach takes into account how remakes are understood within, e.g., both production and reception contexts⁵⁸ to come up with findings that are always contextually defined.⁵⁹ In other words, this dissertation's approach embraces the *a priori* historicity and contingency of terms that attempt to grasp complex cultural phenomena. Hence, rather than trying to understand the film remake in a cultural vacuum, this dissertation follows the plea to investigate film remakes within their specific contexts (see Chapter 2) and solely claims to understand them within the boundaries of these studied contexts. Therefore, for purely analytical reasons (rather than terminological demands) and to limit its scope, this dissertation will (in section 3.3.3) eventually demarcate its central object of research (i.e. Dutch-Flemish monolingual film remakes) by providing a working definition, without making claims about "the" film remake.

In the next chapter, I will show how the different insights accumulated in the above-described theoretical disciplines (cf. section 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4) were employed in order to come to a critical understanding and analysis of film remakes, which

⁵⁷ Original quote: 'il ne s'agit pas dès lors de savoir quels sont les objets qui seraient *par essence* des remakes, mais de déterminer quels objets sont *conçus ou interprétés comme* des remakes' (Moine, 2007: 2 [original emphasis]).

⁵⁸ When applied to this dissertation's object of research, i.e. Dutch-Flemish film remakes, it will (in section 3.3.3) become clear that, indeed, these films are designed as remakes both industrially and legally. They are, however, not straightforwardly interpreted as remakes, as this depends on the awareness of the remake label (or the knowing of the audience, cf. section 2.6.2).

⁵⁹ One might wonder how, in that case, we know whether or not the "earliest remakes" might be called remakes or not, as probably neither the industry, nor the audiences perceived them as remakes. In other words, how can we come up with a history of remakes if we do not agree upon a single definition? Again, I would argue that there is no such thing as "one" correct remake history. There are many possible remake histories that each have their different focuses, interpretations, and findings. Such an approach not only acknowledges the complexity of history itself, but equally so of the past and present remake phenomena.

arguably amount to a field of remake studies. The following chapter will, instead of offering a detailed chronological sketch of the different theoretical debates in remake studies, focus on existing theories, concepts, and interdisciplinary underpinnings of the field of film remake studies.

Chapter 2

Understanding the (transnational) remake

2.1 Introduction

As Thompson (1998) once claimed, cinema bears a 'defamiliarizing force' (p. 11). In other words, films have the capacity to exhibit familiar things, the everyday world, as well as ideology in a deviating, unfamiliar, or remarkable way, thereby providing opportunities for deeper insight. In that sense, one could argue that the film remake, as a sort of prism, holds an even bigger potential to 'defamiliarize' the banal. Horton and McDougal (1998) already hinted at the analogy between this defamiliarizing force and the film remake by stating that remakes 'provoke a double pleasure in that they offer what we have known previously, but with novel or at least different interpretations, representations, twists, developments, resolutions' (p. 6). I claim that, in a more general sense, the film remake is particularly well-suited for scholarly analysis as it is able to disentangle, locate or "defamiliarize" the familiar, the banal, the unattainable, and often invisible and render it more visible. The central element that makes this possible is the remake's inherent potential to be compared it with its direct predecessor(s), which helps to illuminate the (at first sight) banal interventions that were made to (re)create these films. As source films and remakes often have a more or less identical narrative and dialogic structure, the underlying, latent, and ideologically informed meanings become more tangible when juxtaposing their different cinematic manifestations. Wierzbicki (2015) explains this metaphorically:

'Of course, apples and oranges can be compared, in many ways, and surely there is more to be gained by comparing these two types of tree-grown citrus fruits than by comparing apples to, say, rain storms or algorithms. But there is perhaps more to be gained, because the range of variables is narrower, by comparing a ripe apple to one that is worm-eaten, or by comparing a market-ready Granny Smith to an equally saleable McIntosh or Fuji, or by comparing prime specimens of Golden Delicious apples collected from neighb[o]ring orchards' (p. 166)

Therefore, by comparing a film remake with its source text(s) and looking into the re-contextualization of a specific narrative, it becomes possible to acquire insights into the actual process of meaning-making in and by films. In other words, film remakes

are prisms through which we can analyze and elucidate both the textual and extratextual processes that are at work in creating, experiencing, and interpreting films. Consequently, the following sections will employ the prism of the remake through which the textual (section 2.3), cultural (section 2.4), production (section 2.5), and reception (section 2.6) dimensions of the remake process will be investigated.

Understanding the film remake implies that attention should be paid to how producers give meaning to its status or label, as well as how audiences and critics receive and interpret these labels.⁶⁰ Indeed, though the practice of remaking films is perhaps seen as ‘one of several industrial and cultural activities of repetition (and variation)’ (Loock & Verevis, 2012: 2), crucial differences between these different forms are not only indicated by their dissimilar labels, but equally so by their distinct statuses. This seems to signal that ‘different forms of reception and evaluation, and the aura and level of prestige accorded to varying practices of “differential repetitions” have to do with the particular medium and art form in which they materialize⁶¹’ (Heinze & Krämer, 2015: 11).

With the above in mind, Verevis (2006) related the film remake to the different processes or contexts of production, circulation, and reception. Doing so, he is able to uncover the numerous and at times opposing forces that regulate film remakes. In a similar manner, Heinze and Krämer (2015) argued that ‘the greatest hermeneutic potential lies in [the] combination and [...] analysis of how the levels of production, text, reception, and context are negotiated by those involved in creating, marketing, evaluating, and analyzing remakes’ (p. 9). The following sections will, therefore, sketch a more multi-faceted “categorization of film remakes”, situating them within their different textual and discursive contextual (cultural, production, and reception) levels. Yet, before I can embark on these different dimensions, I need to set the stage by adducing a general framework that helps us understand the relationship between film,

⁶⁰ These insights come from both intertextuality (cf. section 1.2) and adaptation studies (cf. section 1.3).

⁶¹ The different status (and accompanied value judgements) between a film remake and, for instance, a new performance of an opera might equally have to do with the fact that the former is materialized (on a physical medium), whereas, in most cases, the latter is not. Because of its mere materialization, one is more easily capable of comparing a novel version with the previous one.

culture, and identity. As such, though this dissertation clearly inscribes itself in the field of remake studies, it places emphasis on a cultural studies approach.

2.2 Setting the stage: film, culture, and identity

As Mazdon (2000: 125) argues, '[...] the issues of identity lie at the heart of the remake [...] [indeed] [w]hat is perhaps unique about the remake is the way in which [its] narrative or formal explorations mirror the very films' own revelation of the instability of identity'. Herbert (2006) builds on this argument and asserts that, in the cases when a remake is produced within a national context that differs from its source film (cf. section 2.4.2), 'the very migration from one national context to another undercuts any singular notion of identity' (p. 29). On a very basic level, it could be said that the remake, in itself, complicates any fixed, "natural", or singular understanding of a film's (representation of) identity, as it always transforms (the identity of) its source film while replicating it. However, before elaborating on how film remakes are related to, and deal with (cultural) identity, we are in need of a broader theoretical framework that helps us grasp the highly complex interactions between films (more generally), their (representation of) identities, and their surrounding cultures, between the cinemas they connect and, more broadly, between the cultures in which they are conceived, produced, and distributed. Though films are not made in a cultural vacuum, they do not straightforwardly mirror, nor do they simply define their cultural contexts. Therefore, the next parts will examine the complex and multi-layered relationship between film and culture.

2.2.1 *Representing cultural identity in/and film*

How one defines "culture" depends highly on the approach one prefers, varying from, for instance, an anthropological standpoint (mainly interested in 'the modes of being human of the cultural Other' [Raud, 2016: 2]) to the stance within cultural studies (which is primarily 'engaged with practices of current popular culture, lifestyles and consumer products' [ibid.]). One could also think of the abovementioned (cf. section 1.4) interpretation by Even-Zohar (1990), who claims that cultures, a system of other systems, are dynamic, hybrid, and highly heterogenous sites of constant ideological struggles, with altering norms and values throughout time. Though Even-Zohar's (1990) definition adduces some important aspects, given the subject of this dissertation, another, more appropriate definition is used which comes from one of the key thinkers within cultural studies, Stuart Hall (1996a):

'By culture, here we mean the actual grounded terrain of practices, representations, languages and customs of any specific society. We also mean the contradictory forms of common sense which have taken root in and helped to shape popular life' (p. 439).

As such, culture relates to issues of common social meanings (discourses), being 'the various ways we make sense of the world' (Barker & Jane, 2016). Naturally, as language is never a neutral medium for the creation of meaning and interpretation of objects that exist outside of that language, meanings are not just "out there": 'they are generated through signs, most notably those of language' (ibid).

Naturally, people living in these cultures produce different kinds of artifacts or products, such as books, paintings, television programs, and many other media (cf. section 2.5). Popular media like film are crucial representational apparatuses, socially constructing and representing the world in meaningful ways (Hall, 1996a; Barker & Jane, 2016). Moreover, these media supply subject positions people may identify with. In other words, media such as film are valuable means which are capable of constructing identities (Madianou, 2005). Importantly, the concept of identity should not be thought of as a fixed or essential accumulation of personality, looks, qualities, beliefs, and expressions that, together, form a person. On the contrary, people's identities should be seen as non-essentialist, dynamic, hybrid, and indeed contingently formed in the interactions between individual people and their socio-cultural surroundings (Giddens, 1991). In that sense, identity gives people a particular location in the world, connecting them with the society they live in. It is, consequently, a 'mediating concept between the external and the internal, the individual and society [...] a convenient tool through which to understand many aspects – personal, philosophical, political – of our lives' (Sarup, 1996: 28). As such, identity provides people with an idea of who they are, how they can relate to others, as well as how they connect with the world (Gauntlett, 2002). In summary, Barker (2012) defines identity as follows:

'[i]dentity is a temporary stabilization of meaning of a description of ourselves with which we emotionally identify. Identity is a becoming rather than a fixed entity involving the suturing or stitching together of the discursive "outside" with the "internal" processes of subjectivity. Identities are points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us' (p. 504).

We should, therefore, understand identity as a self-reflexive project that it is never fully complete and which thusly 'has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual' (Giddens, 1991: 52). In that sense, identity is not something that "is", but something that one "does", and, therefore, more of a performance than a given. In this vein, Judith Butler (2007) adds that identities should not only be seen as performative, but equally so as discursively constructed. Apart from signaling that identity is a self-reflexive project, the idea of performance suggests that specific aspects in (social) reality (think of, e.g., ethnicity or gender) exist because people believe in them, and, as these beliefs are constantly reconfirmed, they eventually have real or material consequences⁶². The latter connects to Butler's (2007) discursive approach, which assumes that identities are built collectively and come into being in a continuous negotiation between different subjects – and, therefore, exist in discourses. Importantly, this constructivist understanding of identity applies both to individual and collective identities, which are inextricably linked (Hall, 1991). Apart from its discursive and performative nature, cultural identities are multi-layered, which means that they are derived from a heterogenous collection of "sources" such as ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, or social class. Moreover, one could argue that all of these "sources" upon which identities are built each form their own sub-identity (i.e. gender identity, national identity, sexual identity, etc.). Oftentimes, these different sources are contradictory or even conflictive in the construction of identity, ultimately leading to highly fragmented identities.

In conclusion, although many individuals⁶³ believe that their identity is both unique and stable (Brah, 1996), it should be understood as something that is in a constant process of becoming, shaped by interactions with other people and by the experiences one has in the outside world. These experiences and interactions are often mediated, which means that people create their "narrative self", for instance, by watching films, identifying with, or distinguishing themselves from, characters they experience on the screen – and, naturally, the manners in which these characters are

⁶² Think of the famous Thomas theorem which claims that '[i]f men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences' (Thomas & Thomas, 1928: 571).

⁶³ The word "individual" in itself already communicates that we are "in-dividu", or, indeed, non-divisible, impartible, one.

represented.⁶⁴ Therefore, as the field of cultural studies – wherein this dissertation is situated – proclaims, studying and analyzing these mediated experiences and interactions in popular media like film remakes will partially help us understand how people form their identities, and hence, might understand the world that surrounds them and the creatures that inhabit it. With the above in mind, and because this dissertation will eventually deal with film remakes from different nations, the following sections will elaborate on how the link between nations, cinemas, and identities can be understood, as well as how forces of globalization might have impacted this link.

2.2.2 *The national in film*

As mentioned in the above, nationality is one of the possible sources of a multi-layered cultural identity. What is more, Hall (1996b) argues that the collective cultural identity of the nation (i.e. in short, national identity) is in fact ‘one of the principal sources of cultural identity’ (p. 611). As argued by Gellner (1994), the concept of nation generally signifies a community that surpasses the immediate environment of an individual, where the connectedness stems from the construction of a shared culture. In that sense, a nation is a community where its members share the same culture and recognize each other as being part of the same nation (Gellner, 1994). However, the term “nation” should, in line with the concept of identity, be understood as a non-essentialist and highly discursive construct. Indeed, Benedict Anderson (1991) argues that the nation is ‘an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign’ (p. 6). By this, he means that the nation should not be seen as a material or tangible reality, but rather as a mental construct through which people can project or understand their ideas and behavior. This mental construction does not simply come into being. It needs to be created by what one could call nationalism, that is the cultural aspiration and pursuit of a national feeling⁶⁵. In other words, nations

⁶⁴ Richard Dyer (1985) usefully distinguishes between (1) what is being represented on screen and how this is done (e.g. through specific conventions); (2) how is it being representative of something (e.g. a particular social group through specific stereotypes); (3) who is responsible for these representations (i.e. asking who creates them and why do they do this); and finally (4) how do audiences understand or interpret these representations.

⁶⁵ In that sense, I do not understand nationalism in a typical political sense, which would define it as the aspiration or pursuit of not only the recognition but also the protection of the nation by

cannot exist without nationalism. There are three additional important aspects to Anderson's (1991) understanding of the nation as an imagined community, that is, first, the nation is always confined to a specific group, and second – this follows from the latter –, the nation always indirectly assumes "others" who are not part of the nation. Lastly, although in most cases members of a nation are never able to meet or know most of their fellow members (hence the designation as 'imagined'), they still feel connected to the nation and are able to form an image of its other members (Anderson, 1991).

As suggested, media are highly important for the construction of identities. Naturally, the same could be said for the construction of national identities. Indeed, what is crucial for the mental construction of nations are the existing discourses in society that are about the nation, whereby media and other forms of communication play an important role. It is, however, important to differentiate between different forms of nationalism, ranging from highly manifest to more implicit forms of nationalism. Here, Michael Billig's (1995) concept of banal nationalism comes in handy. Billig (1995) claims that nationalism should not be reduced to the palpable or visible (e.g., propagandist) appearances or articulations of nationalism. His notion of banal nationalism, therefore, refers to those banal, yet highly ideological, messages that 'enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced' (Billig, 1995: 6). In a similar vein, Tim Edensor (2002) argues that 'besides [the] overt displays and self-conscious cultural assertions, national identity is grounded in the everyday, in the mundane details of social interaction, habits, routines and practical knowledge' (p. 17). In today's society, where media play a chief role in the discursive construction of meaning, the national is frequently signaled or brought to mind. The latter becomes, according to Billig (1995), apparent when specific symbols (with the national flag as the most manifest nationalistic symbol) are employed at sporting events, or even in the simple use of language where togetherness is implied (think of speaking about movies from "our" country or how "we" would react to the winning of the world cup by "our" national soccer team). Billig (1995) concludes that the "banal" in banal nationalism should not be understood as harmless, but rather as highly powerful.

the state – which, as a political organization, organizes and controls the society. This aspiration can eventually lead to a pursuit of political independence, with as its most far-reaching ideal the nation state (Willems, 2014).

Indeed, he argues that the power of such forms of banal nationalism lies in their omnipresence and constant repetition, promoting a feeling of naturalness – which, in a sense, can render nationalism invisible.

Even though cinema can never perfectly reflect ‘an already fully formed and homogeneous national culture and identity’ (Higson 2002: 63), it does, generally, privilege specific subject positions of the national subject. With the aim of unraveling this in a textual manner, Mette Hjort (2000) came up with a theoretical framework that builds on the notion of the theme⁶⁶. The first thing that Hjort (2000) mentions is that she has theoretically inquired into the concepts of “nation”, “national”, and “theme” because national cinemas are to a substantial degree thematically defined. In other words, she wanted to find out how we can place particular films under the denominator of “national cinema” (cf. below) by looking at their themes. However useful this might be for the debate of “national cinema” (cf. below) for the scope of this dissertation, her theory will prove specifically useful in equipping us with theoretical tools that help us to analyze films in terms of national symbols or specificity, or, indeed, national identity.

The first interesting statement that Hjort (2000) makes is that filmmakers definitely not always employ specific national symbols with the intent of (re)producing a specific national identity. Rather on the contrary, in most cases, they only want (whether consciously or not) to embed their stories in a cultural or national context that is recognizable to their target audience (cf. 2.4.3). In that sense, in the process of filming, many decisions are made to produce films that resemble a certain reality (Hjort, 2000: 108), with which audiences can identify. Second, building on Peter Lamarque and Stein H. Olsen’s (1994) theory, Hjort (2000) differentiates between topical themes – i.e. those that ‘involve only concepts that arise within, and remain relevant to, a highly specific historical or cultural formation’ (p. 97) and perennial themes – i.e. those that ‘bring into focus subject matter that resonates across historical and cultural boundaries’ which is why they ‘are universal or quasi-universal in their thrust’ (ibid). As

⁶⁶ Hjort (2000) argues that ‘a film’s theme is what the work in question is about’ (p. 97). Moreover, building on Lamarque and Olsen’s claims (1994), themes are not true or false, highly intertextual (as a theme is essentially a semantic construct that should be seen as a point of contact between one and many texts), as well as intermedial. Concerning the latter, Hjort (2000) states that ‘while themes may emerge as a result of a literary or cinematic stance, they are not themselves always specifically literary or cinematic’ (p. 97).

Lamarque and Olsen (1994) assert: a theme necessarily implies thematization and can, therefore, only emerge when the audience's attention is drawn to features that signify the theme(s) by focusing on particular elements. Third, Hjort (2002) states that, naturally, thematic hybridity (e.g. combining perennial with topical themes) is equally possible, and a topical theme may often function as a secondary background, providing 'the necessary means of anchoring perennial themes within specific cultural formations' (p. 309).

Connecting all of this to the notion of nation, Hjort advances that since the nation signifies the specificity of a community and its cultural context, 'the theme of nation is a likely candidate for topical theme par excellence' (Hjort 2000: 98). She then adduces two general types of strategies, the monocultural and intercultural approach, that enable the thematization of the nation: 'a given themati[z]ation is monocultural if it is a matter uniquely of systematically foregrounding elements from the very national culture that is being themati[z]ed' (Hjort, 2000: 102-103). This strategy generally implicates the hyper-saturation of specific national elements in the film. The intercultural approach, however, 'is more efficient in many ways, for the contrastive mobiliz[ation] of different national cultures easily directs audience attention toward the very question of national identity and specificity' (2000: 103). Starting from such a description of the theme of nation, Hjort (2002: 308) contends that not many filmmakers would agree that their films have the nation as a primary theme, yet many would concur that their films are about a specific reality in which they (and their audiences) find themselves. To explicate the latter, she puts forward the concept of 'banal aboutness', arguing that

'all films that make use, for example, of recogni[z]ably Danish locations, the Danish language, Danish actors and props that mirror the material culture of Danes, qualify as being about Denmark [and] that such elements can provide the basis for a given film's national quality, but that they cannot, in and of themselves, constitute a theme' (Hjort 2000: 99).

Though Hjort (2000) does not mention this herself, her approach comes close to Willemsen's (1994) differentiation between national specificity on the one hand, and nationalism on the other. Whereas the former points toward films that are part of a national specificity (i.e. about the nation), the latter refers to films that are nationalist in their aspirations.

Knowing how to distinguish between films that are about the nation (i.e. mirroring the material culture of the nation) and those that are national in their theme(s) (i.e. explicitly foregrounding specific national elements) is, however, not simply interchangeable with how to discern what signifies national cinema. How can we, for instance, differentiate between French cinema and Australian cinema? And are these synonymous with French or Australian national cinema? In this vein, it has been argued that the mere idea of grouping films under the flag of a nation runs the risk of being essentialist and homogenizing, in the sense that solely emphasizing the similarities between films by making them part of one nation neglects the diversity that characterizes all forms of film production (Higson, 1989). This is not necessarily true, as John Hill (1992) argues: 'it is quite possible to conceive of a national cinema which is nationally specific without being either nationalist or attached to homogeni[z]ing myths of national identity' (p. 16). As such, Hill (1992) proposes a less essentialist and limited, but more pluralist understanding of the national cinema concept. Can we, however, straightforwardly equate specific cultural specificities in films with national specificities? In a later publication, Higson (2000b) argues that adopting the terms of "national cinema" and "national specificities" seems 'to gloss over too many other questions of community, culture, belonging and identity that are often either defiantly local or loosely transnational' (p. 72). Therefore, he argues that, in all cases, 'concepts like "national life" and "national culture" [...] seem destined to imply a homogeni[z]ing and enclosing tendency' (ibid). As Willems (2014) correctly stated, the disagreement between Hill (1992) and Higson (2000b) mainly comes down to a different interpretation of the term "nation", whereby the former understands it mainly in geographical terms, whereas the latter links it to the concept of national identity formation.

The different interpretations of "nation" in national cinema are of crucial importance here. Indeed, if we equate the "nation" in national cinema with the geographical confinements (often of the state), then, for instance, all films produced in France are national films. However, as this dissertation wants to be conceptually hygienic, we differentiate between films that are from France (i.e. French films, in terms of geography) and national French films (i.e. films that deal with national identity in a specific way that one could call "French"). Hence, if we want to distinguish between, for instance, national French and German cinema, then we are looking for recurring textual patterns such as genres, style and narration, but also contextual factors such

as the production modalities, industrial aspects, distribution and screening, the audience, as well as discourses about the films and the film policy within those specific nations (Willems, 2014). In other words, the recognition of the diversity of a given national film production context (cf. Hill, 1992) does not necessarily render the search for dominant characteristics, patterns, and conventions in that film production impossible. Indeed, by systematically analyzing a given national film production context, one could potentially make general statements about the dominant patterns (both textually and contextually) within that group of (national) films (Willems, 2014). With Anderson's (1991) claims in mind, one could indeed get a hold of what the "national" means in a specific national cinema by systematically analyzing how it is imagined, both textually and contextually, as well as in terms of its production and reception. As Castells (2010) asserted: 'nationalism is indeed culturally, and politically, constructed, but what really matters, both theoretically and practically, is, as for all identities, how, from what, by whom, and for what it is constructed' (p. 34).

2.2.3 *Globalization, the transnational, and film*

Now that we know there exists a conceptual difference between films that deal with the theme of the nation⁶⁷ and films that are "about" the nation in a banal manner on the one hand, and between French films (i.e. produced in France) and national French films (i.e. understood discursively as French, or, how it is imagined in Anderson's [1991] terms) on the other, how can we make sense of this in times of globalization and the rise of a transnational awareness?

Arguably, one of the most significant transformations at the end of the late twentieth century is the mixture of different processes, which is generally indicated as "globalization", or, indeed, by its similar but different term "transnationalism". Globalization is signaled by political events like the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, dissolving the so-called "three-world" division of global powers, or the financial-economic crisis of 2008. The process of globalization is, however, equally indicated by economic consequences whereby, for instance, in 1971, due to the Nixon shock, the convertibility of the U.S. dollar to gold was ended unilaterally. This event increasingly transformed the world economy into an era of highly fluctuating exchange rates, dematerializing money (Harvey, 1989), and interconnecting hyperactive stock markets.

⁶⁷ Which one could, arguably, call "nationalist films".

On top of this, because of the collapse of the planned economies of the Soviet Union, capitalism further expanded globally and became dominant. One could also think of globalization as a sociological process, where, for instance, the increase in tourism and overall mobility has had huge effects on humanity and its social formations (Tomlinson, 2012).

This dissertation follows Tomlinson's (2012) reading of globalization, seeing it both as cause and effect, and referring 'to the rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependencies that characterize material, social, economic and cultural life in the modern world' (p. 352). In the face of this increasing globalization, arguably, nations became progressively less important, becoming smaller parts of greater, and sometimes massive macro-systems. In the 1990s, several technological and economic evolutions (labeled under the denominator of "convergence") further accelerated this already expanding force of globalization (Giddens, 1991; Chareonwongsak, 2002). Eventually, the combination of the above evolutions (labeled under "globalization") caused what is often signified as the "crisis" of the modern nation-state (McGrew, 1992). Partially because of these globalizing forces, an upsurge of what one could dub as international (between two nations), multinational (between multiple nations), and supranational (the conjoining of different nations) movements has swept across the globe. What these different movements share is not only their expanding aspect, but also, perhaps more importantly, the different ways in which, in each of them, the independence of the nation is guarded at all times, holding their internal integrity or coherence. This contrasts with the transnational movement, another, related but different (and much debated) concept that is partially caused by globalization. As defined by Herbert (2008), transnationalism 'describes those flows of peoples, resources, and information that occur between and in excess of the nation as a socio-political formation' (p. 42). Hence, what differentiates the prefix "trans" from others like "inter", "supra", or "multi" is that it signifies those movements between different nations that thoroughly reshape or modify these same nations (and their borders), which fundamentally surpass and bypass 'national lines of power and sovereignty' (Herbert, 2008: 42). In a similar vein, the "trans" in transnational is not 'merely a bridge between more than one traditional national approach but rather it finds something quite different in that transition' (Galt, 2016: 10).

In this context of globalization and the "crisis" of the nation-state, in the 1990s, the national cinema concept was starting to get criticized, while some even questioned

its overall relevance as a concept (Willems, 2014). The term transnationalism slowly started to get more attention within film studies, giving birth to the concept of “transnational cinema” (Berry, 1993). Indeed, when applied to cinema, ‘the concept of transnationalism enables us to better understand the changing ways in which the contemporary world is being imagined by an increasing number of filmmakers across genres as a global system rather than as a collection of more or less autonomous nations’ (Ezra & Rowden, 2006: 1). It could be argued that the term of transnationalism is increasingly used because the metaphor of globalization is often used negatively (cf. above). As such, the concept of transnational cinema does not only point toward the acceleration of transnationalization (due to globalization [Higson, 2011]) of, for instance, the film production worldwide (Ezra & Rowden, 2006), but equally so to the fact that the transnational aspect has always been an integral aspect of national cinema (Bergfelder, 2000; Higson, 2010). The latter is exemplified in the economic underpinnings of film production worldwide, which has long been transnational. The same could be said for the many filmmakers who moved across the globe to produce their films, but also for the international financing, co-producing, distributing, and exhibiting strategies, as well as for the film policy tendencies that have long been transnational in their core (Willems, 2014). As section 2.4.1 will argue, the film remake can also be seen as both a consequence and cause of transnational and globalizing processes. One could also allege the overall Hollywood dominance worldwide, which has had huge influence on cinema more generally, in terms of text, production, and reception. Though Burgoyne (2016) argues that ‘film, from its inception, has been transnational’ (p. 5), Herbert (2008) claims that ‘the contemporary period has witnessed the rapid development and profound intensification of systems of connection across the globe; by the 1990s, many of these forces crystallized and became observably dominant’ (p. 6). Combining these insights, the study of transnational cinema attempts to look beyond the national system, by focusing on, for instance, cross-border partnerships, emigrating film stars, films without clear national elements, as well as new digital media (e.g. streaming platforms) that allow for new forms of transnational film consumption (Ezra & Rowden, 2006). As Tim Bergfelder (2005) argues, these and other – such as the film practices of diaspora, postcolonial, and exile filmmakers – developments problematize the national cinema concept, which is why research should refocus its attention to the transnational aspect.

However, most scholars agree that, whereas globalization has definitely resulted in increased levels of interconnectivity and exchange, it has simultaneously led to a renewed local dynamic (Willems, 2014). This is often called the “global-local nexus” (e.g. Tickell & Peck, 1995). The concept tells us that the local aspect does not necessarily contradict the global. Rather on the contrary, it seems to be intrinsically connected to it. In political terms, for instance, globalization has led to the growing importance of the subsidiarity principle, which further eroded the national state, in favor of local and/or regional levels (Willems, 2014). In terms of the media then, at first, it becomes clear that people no longer solely consume media products from within their proper nations. Indeed, as Herbert (2008) argues, ‘[j]ust as populations across the world have become more diasporic, so too have media become more mobile and/or taken up “mobile” forms of address’ (p. 59) – which has, in its turn, led to a sort of virtualization, or an abstraction of identity, the latter being disconnected from its social contexts (Tomlinson, 2012). However, apart from these centrifugal forces, globalization has also led to centripetal ones, resulting in, for instance, what David Morley and Kevin Robins (2002) dub “neo-nationalisms”. The rise of, at times, reactionary and forceful new nationalisms symptomizes a struggle ‘to adapt the principles of national community – which have most fulfilled the desire for wholeness and security’ (p. 188). This is also reflected in the fact that national states often remain dominant in the organization of culture, economics, and politics (Young, Zuelow & Sturm, 2007).

In terms of national identity, several scholars (e.g. Kinnvall, 2004; Skey, 2013) emphasize how a sense of national belonging remains of chief importance in today’s globalized society. It indeed appears that a defensive reconfirmation of homogeneous national identities⁶⁸ is taking place, which, in its most radical form can be felt in recent

⁶⁸ Edensor (2002) sees this differently, however, and claims that ‘[m]odern nation-building has entailed the incorporation of all internal differences, so that whatever regional and ethnic differences may pre-date the nation’s formation they all become subservient to, and part of, the greater national entity. Region, city, village all remain tied to the nation as a larger ontological and practical framework within which local activities take place. Local differences are absorbed into a “code of larger significance” [...] Such differences are not erased; far from it. For the modern classifying imperatives which accompany the formation of national identity (re)construct regions and localities as integral constituents of national variety. Accordingly,

developments like the Brexit in 2020 and the sustained wave of nationalist and protectionist movements throughout Europe. As argued by Willems (2014), one could also point toward a redefinition of the nation and national identity, which is given a more democratic and pluralistic content. Billig (1995) also nuances the postmodern idea that the nation has become less influential and important in asserting that '[n]ationhood is still being reproduced: it can still call for ultimate sacrifices; and, daily, its symbols and assumptions are flagged' (p. 9). Think also of Craig Calhoun (2007: 27) who agrees with Billig (1995) and states that

'[n]ationalism is easily underestimated. To start with, in its most pervasive forms it is often not noticed. Analysts focus on eruptions of violence, waves of racial or ethnic discrimination, and mass social movements. They fail to see the everyday nationalism that organizes people's sense of belonging in the world'.

This stance is also found in national cinema debates where several authors (e.g. Hayward, 2002; Hill, 2002; Halle, 2006) stick to the concept of national cinema. Hill (2002), for instance, argues that globalization paradoxically reinforces national cinemas: whereas British cinema is increasingly dependent on international funding sources and audiences, it simultaneously strengthens the ability to discuss national issues. Randal Halle (2006), on the other hand, argues for the conservation of the concept national cinema because national film audiences often do not have an eye for "hidden" information such as the international financing, and instead look for visible indicators such as the actors, or indeed the nationality of the director and the language of the film⁶⁹. In this vein, oftentimes, films are still marketed (Berry, 2006) and critically received (Nebesio, 2011) in terms of nationality. It is, moreover, also argued that the institutional governmental framework also strengthens the survival of the national cinema concept (Petrie, 2000). Think, for instance, of how the presence of government agencies in film markets and at film festivals still promotes their national cinema (Christie, 2013) or how national or regional film support is still quintessential for the durability of the European film industry (Willems, 2014).

distinct customs, dialects, costumes and diets, natural history, sites of interest, styles of architecture and historical episodes are all catalogued and disseminated as part of an imagined, internally complex national geography' (p. 66)

⁶⁹ These latter aspects are clear examples of what Hjort (2000) dubbed 'banal aboutness' (cf. section 2.2.3).

Finally, in terms of the film texts themselves, there is, since around the 1980s, a clear move away from explicit national films, resulting in less “nation affirming movies” (Willems, 2014). In this vein, Ib Bondebjerg (2008) points out that the steering away from explicit nation films applies to the whole of European media culture. In European film production, for example, Bondebjerg (2008) marks a shift from a focus on national themes (cf. Hjort, 2000, section 2.2.2) to more transnationally defined themes, where different European cultural identities are presented. Importantly, he adds that the representation of cultural identities themselves are influenced by the globalizing and transnationalizing tendencies. In other words, Bondebjerg (2008) discovers less pronounced and less essentialist national discourses in European films since the 1980s. This does, however, not imply that the representation of the national identity disappears, but rather that it is redefined and given a more pluralistic rendition in films themselves. Indeed, in British cinema, for instance, during the second half of the 20th century, Higson (2000a) marks a clear shift from a cinema that (re)produced more homogeneous representations of national identity ‘to one of heterogeneity and dissent’ (p. 38) where the nation is much less imagined as a unique, self-evident and organic community. The same goes for the Danish film production, where Hjort (2000) marks an apparent decline in the importance of national elements in films.

In conclusion, if we want to theorize the nation in film studies today, it seems necessary to adopt a dialectical approach, whereby both the notion of transnational cinema and the more traditional frame of national cinema are taken into account (Harvey, 2018). Although it is undoubtedly important to acknowledge that the transnational notion is essential to understand cinema’s history, current status, and future, we should not neglect the still highly significant notion of the nation(al). Therefore, ‘a critical transnationalism does not ghettoize transnational film-making in interstitial and marginal spaces but rather interrogates how these film-making activities negotiate with the national on all levels – from cultural policy to financial sources, from the multiculturalism of difference to how it reconfigures the nation’s image of itself’ (Higbee & Lim, 2010: 18). In this context, Berry (2006) calls for a paradigm shift, wherein the various relationships between national and transnational concepts are studied. Indeed, we should pay attention to the very ‘tensions among national, regional, and local traditions; among national, international, and global perspectives’ (Hake, 2002: 2). Instead of rejecting the concept of national cinema, it still proves useful in analytical terms, provided that various insights from transnational cinema

studies are taken into account (White, 2004). Higson beautifully summarizes this section by stating that ‘it would be impossible – and certainly unwise – to ignore the concept [of national cinema] altogether’ (2006: 23), yet, simultaneously, it does not seem useful ‘to think through cultural diversity and cultural specificity in solely national terms’, given that ‘the contingent communities that cinema imagines are much more likely to be either local or transnational than national’ (ibid.). Furthermore, Higson argues that

‘cinema establishes a sense of the national through presenting familiar images, images of the mundane, the quotidian, the unremarkable, but which are at the same time steeped in the habitual customs and cultural fabric of a particular nation, signifiers of national identity that are, as Michael Billig puts it, so banal that we take them for granted’ (2011: 1).

2.2.4 *Cultural imperialism or cross-cultural hybridization?*

Though this dissertation adopts a more neutral reading of the process of globalization, the concept is often seen as highly Western and implying a total integration of sorts, which aims to create one single dominant system that covers the entire planet. Understood in that limited sense, an extreme form of globalization might eventually induce cultural homogenization around the globe instead of perpetuating different, more equal systems which co-exist (DeVereaux & Griffin, 2006). Understood in this sense, ‘globalization often carries the same negative connotations embodied in such terms as the “Coca-Col[atiza]tion,” “McDonaldization,” and “Americanization” of cultures: processes that are seen as serious threats to cultural identity’ (DeVereaux & Griffin, 2006: 2). If there is indeed such thing as a global village, then, as Todd Gitlin (2002) argues, ‘it speaks American [,] wears jeans, drinks Coke, eats at the golden arches, walks on swooshed shoes, plays electric guitars, recognizes Mickey Mouse, James Dean, E.T., Bart Simpson, R2-D2, and Pamela Anderson’ (p. 176). It is indeed undeniably true that Hollywood exercises its power through globalization and transnationalism, namely ‘through its exclusive hold upon the US theatrical film market and its dominance over film labor, marketing, distribution, and exhibition throughout

much of the world' (Herbert, 2008: 103)⁷⁰. Meir (2019) investigated the existing corpus of European cinema historiography and found that what all scholars seem to agree upon is that the "international" or "global" equates with "American". He adds that even though this equation might be 'problematic in many discussions of global versus local in Film Studies generally' (Meir, 2019: 8), 'in the specific field of film industry studies, this equation is neither problematic nor inaccurate' (ibid.). In this context, Kristin Thompson (1984) marked that, though Pathé 'listed forty-one offices in major cities around the world' (p. 5) in the 1910s, 'over three-quarters of the big European producers' profits were coming from the American market' (p. 20) in the period before World War I. Indeed, whereas the US market has long been the largest and most dominant market for film products in the world, even today, it remains so, even while considering 'the rapid growth of the Chinese theatrical market' (Meir, 2019: 8).

Through its own particular globalization process, Hollywood was able to construct novel types of (transnational) interconnectedness, strategically securing and maintaining control over the means of cultural production and distribution. Consequently, 'profits even from much indigenous production [are] filtered back to these US-based companies' (Meir, 2019: 4). This allowed the Hollywood film industry to determine specific types of textual circulation. In this vein, Higson (2002) states that 'Hollywood [has become] an integral and naturalized part of the national culture, or the popular imagination, of most countries in which cinema is an established entertainment form' (p. 39). Apart from its global influence, from the 1980s on, the Hollywood film industry is increasingly characterized 'by an "industrial intertextuality," wherein the patterns of production and marketing coincide with strategically-produced narrative or aesthetic links with other cultural products' (Herbert, 2008: 84-85). As we have seen in the afore, intertextuality is not unique or novel to Hollywood or filmmaking in general. However, several authors (e.g. Kinder, 1991; Marshall, 2002; Jenkins, 2006) assert that the Hollywood film industry has most commercialized the aspect of intertextuality.

⁷⁰ Many other explanations for the dominance of Hollywood have been brought forward. Smith (2016) categorizes these in (1) the textualist work that tries to identify textual elements that would make Hollywood products more appealing; (2) the work in political economy and cultural studies which emphasize industrial processes and political pressure; and (3) anthropological work that looks at cross-cultural readings, decodings, and specific interpretations of Hollywood products.

Marsha Kinder (1991), for instance, states that even though employing the intertextual strategy as a commodity is age-old, 'by the 1980s this [specific commercialized form of] intertextuality and its commodification had been greatly elaborated and intensified' (p. 40), which eventually led to what one could call an intertextual 'super-system' (ibid.). Connecting this to the process of globalization, she argues that the employment of 'networked texts' (Kinder, 1991: 156) and other related commodities (e.g. merchandizing) are linked with the global consolidation of corporates, which is, partially, the result of the intense competition on a global scale. Indeed, Herbert (2008) argues that with its specific "networked logic", 'Hollywood exerts its power by allowing/disallowing the flow of cultural texts and further by engendering the revisions which these texts must undergo in order to continue circulating' (p. 103). In a similar vein, P. David Marshall (2002) asserts that due to globalization, intertextuality 'is connected back to the industrial process' (p. 69). Additionally, he argues that what is 'closely connected to these intertextual links is the concentration of media ownership' (Marshall, 2002: 70), which produces what he defines as 'the new intertextual commodity' (ibid.).

The above is summarized in Henry Jenkins' (2006) larger concept of "media convergence", which, as discussed in the above, signifies 'the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior or media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they wanted' (p. 2). According to Jenkins (2006), the process of convergence, therefore, entails a combination of (reckless) conglomeration of corporations in the cultural industry on the one hand, and the interacting between different media technologies (instead of displacing "old media" by "new media") and 'transmedia storytelling' on the other. Such a type of storytelling, says Jenkins (2010), 'represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience' (p. 944).⁷¹ As such, it demands fuller participation of audiences (or fans) who become active in the production of this

⁷¹ Jenkins (2010) adds that '[w]e should be clear that narrative represents simply one kind of transmedia logic that is shaping the contemporary entertainment realm. We might identify a range of others – including branding, spectacle, performance, games, perhaps others – which can operate either independently or may be combined within any given entertainment experience' (p. 944).

cultural circuit. Indeed, in order to 'fully experience any fictional world, consumers must assume the role of hunters and gatherers, chasing down bits of the story across media channels' (Jenkins, 2006: 21). The latter aspect by Jenkins (2006) points to the fact that, even though industries, and more broadly, cultures, have to cope with the influences of globalization (which often cause power imbalances worldwide), people may have their own, unique ways of dealing with these processes – i.e. we should notice the audiences' agency within these broader structures.

Hence, as was shown in the above, because of the globalizing, transnationalizing, and digitizing processes, (arguably mostly American) media products such as films were increasingly distributed and circulated across the globe. Whereas the afore provides us with a macro-level perspective of some of the quintessential structural factors of globalization (e.g. global economics or the overall convergence and conglomeration of the media), the following will focus on an equally important perspective, namely that of the micro-level – or, put simply, it will recognize the aspect of agency. The following will, therefore, cover some important concepts that elucidate how cultural industries around the world may deal with the dominant flows. In this vein, Arjun Appadurai (1996) claimed that 'globali[z]ation does not necessarily or even frequently imply homogeni[z]ation or Americani[z]ation' (p. 14), rather on the contrary, 'the new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing cent[er]-periphery models' (p. 32). In similar terms, Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2004) asserted that globalization should be understood 'as a process of hybridization that gives rise to a global *mélange*' (p. 59).

The approaches taken by amongst others, Appadurai (1996) and Nederveen Pieterse (2004) mirror Marwan M. Kraidy's (2005) stance toward the cultural logic of globalization, namely understood as a form of hybridity. This postcolonial notion points toward two important aspects: first, it looks at how "foreign" ideas are translated, relocated, and repeated 'in the name of tradition' (Bhabha, 1995: 207), and second, it investigates how the process of hybridity might be creative and evoke new ideas. Bhabha (1995) adds that hybridity in the form of homogenization, which he understands as not respecting differences between cultural traditions, is stifling rather than creative. In any case, as Sanders (2015) asserts, a 'debate about dominance and suppression [...] is crucial for any consideration of intertextual relationships' (p. 18). In this context, Kraidy (2005) interprets globalization as a highly complex process through

which cultures interact with and borrow from one another – thereby critiquing that globalization is some kind of simple one-way process of cultural homogenization. Moreover, Kraidy (2005) argues that even though cultural exchange should be understood as hybrid in nature, we should not overlook or ignore the fact that these processes of hybridization are highly dependent on structural determinants. In this context, Smith (2016) argues that whereas ‘most analyses of globali[z]ation that focus solely on cultural imperialism tend to over-emphasi[z]e the structural factors of economic power and dominance [...], most analyses that focus on processes of hybridi[z]ation tend to offer a politically benign vision of diversity’ (p. 17). Combining the macro (perpetuated by cultural imperialism or globalization scholars who generally investigate the industrial context) with the micro (brought to the fore by, e.g. cultural studies perspectives and hybridization scholars who research the reception context) perspective, Kraidy (2005) provides us with a framework that he dubbed ‘critical transculturalism’. Critical transculturalism refocuses attention to the inherent hybridizing nature of all cultural exchanges, while not losing sight of the structural realities that often entail an uneven distribution of power. Put simply, Kraidy’s (2005) framework of critical transculturalism ‘takes a more integrative approach that considers the active links between production, text, and reception in the moment of cultural reproduction’ (p. 149).⁷²

Now that we have a better understanding of the relationship between film, identity, and culture, as well as between the nation(al), processes of globalization and transnationalism – and their possible impact on how films may deal with, for instance, national identity – we can start to get a solid grip on the film remake as process (of creation and reception) and product (i.e. as an extensive, partially textual, transposition or transformation). With Hutcheon’s (2006) understanding of adaptation as process and product in mind, the following sections will look at the textual, cultural, production, and reception aspect of the film remake.

⁷² Eventually, as will be discussed in the methodical design of this dissertation (cf. Chapter 6), Kraidy’s (2005) framework is crucial to my multi-methodological approach because of the aforementioned combination of macro and micro perspectives.

2.3 A remake's textual transformations

During the production process of a film remake, inevitably, textual elements that are part of the source text are omitted, substituted, included, and transformed in the remake. Stuart McDougal, for instance, argued that in remaking his own *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), Hitchcock could rethink 'the relations between texts, between characters (real and fictional), and between the work of a younger, more exuberant director and a mature craftsman' (p. 67). Catherine Grant (2002) agrees with this claim, but adds that we should not forget that remakes are more than solely the intertextual connection with their direct source text: 'contemporary film auteurs [...] make aspects of [earlier] texts their own, overwriting them with their own traceable signatures, perhaps reconfiguring them by incorporating references to other (rewritten) intertexts' (p. 58). Adopting a broad definition⁷³, Verevis (2006) argues that the practice of remaking films

'can range from the limited repetition of a classic shot or scene, for example the many reprises of the Odessa Steps sequence of *The Battleship Potemkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925) – *Bananas* (Woody Allen, 1971), *Brazil* (Terry Gilliam, 1985), *The Untouchables* (Brian De Palma, 1987), *Steps* (Zbigniew Rybczynski, 1987) and *Naked Gun 3313: The Final Insult* (Peter Segal, 1994) – to the "quasi-independent" repetitions of a single story or popular myth, for example the successive versions of *Dracula* or *Robin Hood* or the *Titanic* story' (Verevis, 2006: 21).

Yet, Verevis (2006) says that, more commonly, film remakes are characterized by their highly particular repetitions of narrative elements which 'often (though certainly not always) relate to the content ("the order of the message") rather than to the form (or "the code") of the film' (p. 21). He argues that *Obsession* (1976, De Palma) exemplifies both of these repetitive strategies, given that it repeats both the narrative approach and visible stylistic characteristics (think of the doubling effects and 'voyeuristic use of point-of-view shots') of Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958). In addition to the latter and building on Genette's work (cf. section 1.2), Philippe (2013) distinguishes between three overlapping types of transformations that characterize the remake process. First, there are the purely formal transformations which affect the films' meaning(s) only

⁷³ Cf. section 1.5.2.

unintentionally or by accident. Second, there are thematic transformations that aim at actually transforming the films' meaning(s). Third, there is a narrative transformation to be discerned. Concerning the latter, a remake might make changes to the source film's anachrony (which refers to the discrepancy between the order of happenings in a story and the order in which they appear on screen) by, for instance, adding or removing flashbacks or flashforwards. Within the type of narrative transformation, one might also think of the adjustment of the focalization points, which refers to the perspective through which the narrative is presented. Think, for instance, of the 1993 remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978, Kaufman; 1956, Siegel) by Abel Ferrara who focalizes the story through a pre-adolescent instead of an adult (Philippe, 2013).

In terms of formal transformations, then, Philippe (2013) indicates that remakes might increase or reduce certain formal elements. Think, for instance, of James Wierzbicki's (2015) research which compared the sound of Hollywood remakes of Japanese horror films, demonstrating that while remakes may be similar in visual terms, they generally sound quite different. In addition to this, Moine (2007) found that many of the Hollywood remakes she analyzed showed a combination of narrative and formal transformations. Indeed, she claims that it is typical for Hollywood remakes, independent of their genres and periods of production, to render (through different cinematographic techniques) the narrative of the remake more explanatory, clear, or obvious (Moine, 2007). One could interpret this trait both positively and negatively: in a more positive sense, it could be seen as a viable manner to more effectively or firmly construct the existing narrative, whereas, in a negative sense, it could be read as resulting in simplifications.

Moine (2007) adds that oftentimes, Hollywood remakes equally reduce the ambiguity of certain characters. In the case of *Human Desire* (1954), for instance, the character of Jacques Lantier in the source film *La Bête Humaine* (1938) lost a lot of its fissures or little character traits. Think also of the character of John "Jack" Sommersby in *Sommersby* (1993) and the equivalent of Martin Guerre of its source film, *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (1982, Vigne). In the French film, Moine (2007) argues, the character of Martin Guerre is not at all altruistic and has several "negative" traits. In the Hollywood remake, however, Jack does not carry these negative character traits and becomes a

highly altruistic person⁷⁴. The scholar concludes that '[b]y often characterizing their characters more clearly than in the French film, [Hollywood] remakes tend to simplify the issues of the story as well as the motivations of the characters, while also moralizing the stories' (p. 72). This also reminds of Ginette Vincendeau's (1993) findings in which she differentiates between American and French cinematic traditions. In line with the above, she claims that American films privilege 'clear-cut motivation, both of causality (no loose ends) and character (good or evil)' (p. 23), whereas, the French films' main principle is one of ambiguity. These differences are most explicitly shown in the differences in French and American film endings: whereas the American versions generally provide happy resolutions, the French versions lack such comforting endings (Vincendeau, 1993). Hutcheon (2006) adds another possibility, namely where the remake process 'might end up not only altering characters' nationalities, but on the contrary, actually deemphasizing any national, regional, or historical specificities' (p. 147), as in the case of Hollywood remakes, which, she argues, are generally made for international audiences (cf. section 2.4.2 and 2.4.3).

In terms of thematic transformations, Philippe (2013) indicates that these transformations touch upon the meaning(s) of the source film. Think, for example, of how Moine (2007) asserts that 'class or social determinations are more important and above all more direct in the construction of French narratives than in their [American] remakes' (p. 75). Indeed, in the American remakes, Moine (2007) found that social questions tended to remain in the periphery of the plots themselves and, more precisely, did not play a role in the conflicts which fueled the dramaturgy. Think also of how gender roles or issues of masculinity might be differently represented in a film remake. In this context, Johannes Fehrle (2015) showed that one of the central transformations of the 2007 remake of *3:10 to Yuma* (1975, Daves) is how it portrays masculinity in different manners: whereas the source film addresses the subject of a perceived crisis of masculinity in the USA of the 1950s and "solves" it by restoring the patriarchy, the 2007 remake (*3:10 to Yuma*, Mangold) allows for more readings, mirroring a multiplicity of gender concepts. Elseways, Herbert (2008) argued that the impending danger developed in the American remake of *A Narrow Escape* (1908, Frère), titled *A Lonely Villa* (1909, Griffith), is associated with gender:

⁷⁴ Arguably, this might also be related to Hollywood's star system demanding the character of Jack Sommersby to be sympathetic because of the casting of Richard Gere in this role.

'whereas *A Narrow Escape* features a mother and a young boy being assailed by bandits, *A Lonely Villa* depicts a family comprised of a mother and three daughters. In this respect, the "American" version of the story is moved from merely the protection of home and family – of the domestic – toward the protection of a specifically feminine domestic sphere' (p. 133).

One could also think of how the remake process might transform the genre of the source film. Forrest and Koos (2002) give the example of the B movie producer Bryan Foy who remade *Tiger Shark* (1932, Hawks) at least ten times, many of them in different genres. In a similar vein, Moine (2007) has argued that the cultural reorientation that often happens in the remake process often affects the modes of representation (such as genre). Conversely, particular generic conventions equally model the fictional worlds of films, inscribing them in a known landscape. As such, genres might bring foreign films in line with a typical 'Hollywood form and worldview which are common to American spectators or "globalized" spectators familiar with Hollywood cinema' (Moine, 2007: 145). In other words, thematic transformations can also transform the diegesis in terms of the time and space of the universe designated by the story (Philippe, 2013).

To conclude this section, it should now be quite evident that in the film remake process, many different textual adjustments are hypothetically possible. Instead of exhaustively summing up all the existing research that textually compares and interprets film tandems, this dissertation emphasizes that Quaresima's following statement (made in 2002) still holds today: '[t]he critical literature on the remake may seem vast, but it is made up almost entirely of descriptions, or of limited comparative analyses of paired texts, carried out according to the most diverse and unsystematic criteria' (p. 78). Therefore, as I will argue in Chapter 4, the field is in need of a descriptive textual model (with clear criteria) that helps in more systematically analyzing film remakes and which delves deeper into the textual changes that may occur in the film remake process. Yet, merely describing the different types of textual adjustments (as I did in the above section) seems insufficient. We, therefore, also need a theoretical framework to be able to understand *why* (motives, constraints, lures) these textual adjustments are there, and *how* they were performed. As will be shown in the following sections, remakes transform their source films in a myriad of different ways because of a myriad of different reasons. While some filmmakers simply want to technically update the source film (cf. section 2.5.2), others want to make the film

recognizable for a new target audience (i.e. through localization, cf. section 2.4.3). Some of the textual transformations might even be driven by commercial or other practical aspects (cf. section 2.5.2), or, indeed, because times have “changed” and cultures have “evolved”, which makes some forms of cultural representations simply outdated.

Hence, in a next step, we should open up the overall structure by adding human agency (both in individual and cultural forms) to the equation – thereby acknowledging that cultural artifacts’ meanings are always polysemic, and that meaning always comes into being intertextually and discursively (cf. section 1.2). Given that the meanings of a film are, inter-subjectively “created”, and, therefore, part of a never-ending process of interpretation, one should not only analyze the film remake textually, but also investigate its discursive nature. As argued by Verevis (2006: 101), ‘textual accounts of remaking need to be placed in a contextual history, in “a sociology [of remaking] that takes into account the commercial apparatus, the audience, and the . . . [broader] culture industry”’. Consequently, the next sections will deal with the cultural, production, and reception context of the film remake.

2.4 A remake's cultural context

2.4.1 *Cinematic remaking as looking inward and outward*

Building on the insights of the above sections, one could argue that cinematic remaking knows a multidirectional nature, as it simultaneously looks 'outwards (transnationalism, globalization), inwards (cultural traditions and aesthetic conventions), backwards (history and memory), and sideways (crossmedial practices and interdisciplinary research)' (Zhang, 2010: 31). Studying the film remake could potentially aid us in better grasping these very aspects. Given the scope of this dissertation, here, I will solely focus on the first two aspects, whereas the latter one⁷⁵ will partially be dealt with in the methodology section.

Understanding remaking as looking both outward and inward tells us that film remakes are concerned with the processes of globalization, transnationalism, and equally so with specific cultural or national traditions and conventions. With regards to the globalizing and transnationalizing processes within the realm of cinema, and more broadly, society, it is interesting to look at one particular type of the film remake, i.e. that of the transnational film remake. Whether it is called cross-cultural remaking (e.g. Horton & McDougal, 1998; Mazdon, 2000; Forrest & Koos, 2002; Verevis, 2006; Smith, 2016; Ross, 2017; Smith & Verevis, 2017) or transnational remaking (e.g. Mazdon, 2000; Moine, 2007; Herbert, 2008; Heinze & Krämer, 2015; Smith, 2016; Smith & Verevis, 2017; Verevis, 2017; Rawle, 2018), arguably, this specific form of film remaking has received the largest attention in the field. Herbert (2008) dedicated his PhD project to the study of the Hollywood transnational film remake and defined it as follows: 'transnational film remakes [are] films made in one national or regional context and then subsequently remade in another' (p. 5). Throughout his work, Herbert (2008) advances that transnational film remakes can be understood as 'both symptoms and privileged articulations of contemporary cultural globalization, and as such, demonstrate cultural alignments and struggles for power in a transnational field' (p. 96).

⁷⁵ For an investigation into how film remakes deal with history and memory, see e.g. Gaëlle Philippe (2013: 95-105) and Leonardo Quaresima (2002).

Smith and Verevis (2017) argue that the history of cinematic remaking crossing national and cultural borders is long. Not only did many filmmakers remake films from other filmmakers from other national or cultural contexts, some remade their own films in different contexts (think, for instance, of Alfred Hitchcock's British and American version of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934; 1956). Indeed, much of the films that were remade transnationally were the result of the international mobility of filmmakers on the one hand, and of the cultural and institutional boundaries between (national) cinema industries on the other (Herbert, 2008). As was shown in section 1.5.2, depending on how one defines the film remake, its practice was transnational from its early beginnings. For example, several films from Weimar Germany received British and American remakes in the 1930s (Herbert, 2008). Or, more famously, from the late 1970s on throughout the early 1990s, Hollywood has known a cycle⁷⁶ of remaking popular French genre films (often romantic comedies) (Mazdon, 2000). More broadly, Hollywood periodically remade films from other European countries, such as the Netherlands (e.g. *Spoorloos*, 1988), Denmark (e.g. *Nattevagten*, 1994), Spain (e.g. *Abre los Ojos*, 1997), Italy (e.g. *Travolti da un insolito destino nell'azzurro mare d'agosto*, 1974), Belgium (e.g. *Loft*, 2008)⁷⁷ or Germany (*Der Himmel Uber Berlin*, 1987) since the late 1970s. From the new millennium on, however, Hollywood's remaking practice has become even more global, as it started remaking Argentinian (e.g. *Nueve Reines*, 2000), Japanese (e.g. *Ringu*, 1998), Taiwanese (e.g. *Eat Drink Man Woman*, 1994), South Korean (e.g. *Oldeubo*⁷⁸, 2003), Russian (*Solaris*, 1972), Brazilian (e.g. *Doña Flor and Her Two Husbands*, 1966) and Hong Kong (e.g. *Infernal Affairs*, 2002) films (Herbert, 2008).

However, as much research shows (e.g. Herbert, 2008; Smith, 2016; Smith & Verevis, 2017; Verevis, 2017), the transnational film remake practice should not be confined to the Hollywood industry remaking non-Hollywood films. Iain Robert Smith (2016), for instance, analyzed the reverse practice, namely where Hollywood films themselves are used, appropriated, remade or even stolen by filmmakers from Turkey,

⁷⁶ Apart from the cycle of Hollywood remakes of French films, arguably, there have been other cycles. Think, for instance, of the many Hollywood remakes of both East Asian cinema (mainly horror) and Nordic cinema since the new millennium (Stenport, 2016).

⁷⁷ Which, as we will see in the next chapter was first remade in the Netherlands.

⁷⁸ 올드보이 in Korean.

the Philippines, and India. There are also several examples of Korean (Diffrient 2009; Chung & Diffrient, 2015), Brazilian (Vieira, 1995), Japanese (Griffin, 2014), and Nigerian (Behrend, 2009; Krings, 2015) remakes of Hollywood films. Though little is known about the history of European film remakes⁷⁹, Herbert (2008: 217) has argued that the flows of film remakes within Europe have generally 'conformed to much greater patterns of cultural and cinematic exchange'. Think, for instance, of how the expressionist cinema of Weimar Germany from the 1910s until the early 1930s circulated not only across the globe, but also resulted in, among others, a Czechoslovak-French remake of the German film *Der Golem* (1920), titled *Le Golem* (1936) and released 16 years later. Herbert (2008: 217) adds that 'despite this tendency of cycling, there are numerous "oddball" transnational film remakes [...] which defy trends or common patterns of exchange'. What these cycles and seemingly singular remakes share, though, is their 'system of "trial and error" that, in some accounts, resembles the means by which genres develop over time' (Herbert 2008: 218). Hence, driven by a rather conservative commercial logic, these so-called "oddball" remakes regularly launched cycles, ultimately seeking to bypass the financial risks of film production by employing tried-and-tested formulas. Because of the industrial nature of this logic, usually, just a handful of financially unsuccessful remakes were sufficient to either stop a cycle, or incite a transformation in the strategy, leading to another distinct type of cycle (Herbert, 2008).

Think also of how, in the past two decades, the European film industries have been breathing new life into the remake practice. Meir (2019: 133) has, for instance, demonstrated how large European film industries and powerful pan-European studios in the early 2000s slowly started to follow Hollywood's lead by 'utilizing tried and tested generic models, [...] remaking older films [...] or readapting source material that has provided the basis for successful films'. Yet, nevertheless, as Smith and Verevis (2017) argue, while the practice of transnational film remaking is 'far from being a practice restricted to specific national industries, but something that has occurred in the majority of established film industries around the globe [...] it is still notable just how Hollywood-centric this scholarship has been' (p. 8).

⁷⁹ A volume on the particular phenomenon of European film remakes will be published with Edinburgh University Press in 2021 ("European Film Remakes", edited by Cuelenaere, Willems, and Joye).

With the long history and almost global nature of the transnational film remake practice in mind, one wonders how specifically it forms the symptom of cultural globalization. First, given the widespread geographical and cultural context of the phenomenon, it is hard to align the transnational film remake practice with an abstract, a-historical cultural process. As argued by Herbert (2008), transnational film remakes 'inform us [about] the transnational cultural flows, as well as the imbalances among these flows' (p. 101; see also Smith, 2016). Second, though transnational film remakes clearly predate globalization, Herbert (2008) speaks of a renewed context of what he calls 'new proximity' (p. 102), resulting in an 'increased rate in interaction among cultural producers' (ibid.), which, he argues, 'sets the ground for the production of transnational film remakes' (ibid.; see also Verevis, 2017). He adds that this did not necessarily lead to a quantitative increase, 'but rather [to] a genuine increase in the importance of transnational remakes to the cultural industries that produce them' (Herbert, 2008: 102). Third, most scholars in remake studies (e.g. Mazdon, 2000; Verevis, 2006; Herbert, 2008; Smith, 2016) do agree that it is not illogical that the majority of transnational film remakes arise within globally dominant cinemas (read: mostly Hollywood), given that their industries wield 'power over the geography of cultural production and dissemination' (Herbert, 2008: 103). In other words, though transnational film remaking takes place all over the world, the practice should definitely be regarded as yet another means for Hollywood to develop new (and sustain old) forms of transnational interconnectedness, with the aim of strategically securing and maintaining dominance over the means of worldwide film circulation (e.g. Smith, 2016).

However, as Herbert (2008) asserted, the above is only one part of the story, as one should equally understand the transnational film remake as an articulation of cultural globalization. As articulations, transnational film remakes themselves form contingent connections between dissimilar elements and processes that, in one way or another, become (or are) part of the broader process of cultural globalization. Put otherwise, the transnational film remake articulates flows, cultures, but equally so the national, traditional, in a specific manner. Notwithstanding the varying perspectives of scholars working in the fields of remake, adaptation, or translation studies, most seem to agree that the film remake is characterized by an inherently hybrid status (cf. sections 1.5.2 and 2.2.4). Whether or not one is convinced that every text is an intertext, it is clear that film remakes are directly linked to one or more preceding (film) texts that may or may not be embedded in dissimilar cultural contexts. Hence,

interestingly, the aspect of flexibility or hybridity that characterizes (national) identity (cf. sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2) equally characterizes the film remake. Indeed, as the aforementioned sections showed, film remakes are equally 'mobile and flexible, finding their exact articulation(s) within specific historical and cultural contexts' (Herbert, 2008: 45). Reminding ourselves of the intertextual (or indeed, transtextual) argument, one could argue that if we understand nations and their identities as texts, then we could equally interpret them as 'embedded within a web of intertextual, transtextual, and contextual network of relations' (ibid.).

This reminds of Mazdon's (2000) statements in the context of the Hollywood remake cycle of French films in the 1970s-'80s. In her study, Mazdon (2000) asserts that the film remake should be understood as a feature of a broader network of cultural reproduction on the one hand, and as echoing the very identity of film itself on the other (namely as inherently hybrid). Building on intertextual insights, as well as on translation theory (mainly Venuti's [1995] work, cf. section 1.4), she nuances the common (in this case) French critical discourses of the American remakes of French films in the 70s-80s. Whereas she does not ignore that, in many ways, the economic dominance of Hollywood vis-à-vis France becomes apparent during this remake cycle (calling it "a harsh reality"), she equally points toward the cultural power of the French films – indeed, French films are usually related to high art, whereas the American cinema is often equated with cheap commercialism. In short, relations of dominance are highly dependent on the perspective you take. Further critiquing the – as she argues, too simplistic – notion of American cultural imperialism (or 'Americanization'), Mazdon (2000) argues that, for instance, McBride's American remake of the French *Breathless* (*À bout de souffle*, Godard, 1960) should be regarded as 'a reproduction of a reproduction' (p. 83). Indeed, the American *Breathless* (1983) 'reappropriates for Hollywood Godard's own appropriation and transformation of a specific Hollywood tradition' (ibid.). As such, both the French and American version function as two reproductions of equal value 'while performing an equivalent if inverse rewriting' (Mazdon, 2000: 84).

Rather than understanding the USA *Breathless* as merely a copy of a French text within Hollywood, Mazdon (2000) claims that the remake process has brought forth another film that, among other things, alters the story and its concerns in novel ways. Consequently, both the source film and its remake 'should be seen as highly ambivalent texts, each incorporating various discourses which are open to further

“translation” as they are viewed by different audiences’ (Mazdon, 2000: 144). Finally, she also links this to the idea of national cinema and identity, claiming that a comparative analysis of many of the USA remakes of French comedies from the 1980s equally reveal many similarities (revealing, in its turn, the transnational in these films), which undermines ‘attempts to posit straightforward “national” definitions of cinematic production’ (Mazdon, 2000: 106). In a similar vein, Herbert (2006) argued that ‘the very migration from one national context to another undercuts any singular notion of identity’ (p. 29). Yet, many of the French source films under analysis in Mazdon’s (2000) book were, in critical and journalistic discourses, often described as “national” products *par excellence* – generally because of the films’ themes, narratives, characters, aesthetics, etc. Such a description enables their American remakes to be ‘act[s] of violence against the “national culture”’ (Mazdon, 2000: 88) of France. However, as Mazdon’s (2000) analysis shows, films articulate national and non-national discourses in highly complex manners. This is what Mazdon (2000) typifies as one of the central paradoxes of the remake practice: whereas the film remake clearly demonstrates that transnationalism is at the core of cinematic production, it is simultaneously mobilized to reinforce national identities. In conclusion, these films’ identities as “national” products are fixed not by their production process ‘but by subsequent moments of reception’ (Mazdon, 2000: 88).⁸⁰

2.4.2 *Cultural translation in transnational film remakes*

As Mary Louise Pratt (1992) states, ‘[w]hile subjected peoples cannot readily control what emanates from the dominant culture, they do determine to varying extents what they absorb into their own, and what they use it for’ (p. 6). In a similar vein, Appadurai (1996) asserted that:

‘The central problem of today’s global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization [...] Most often, the homogenization argument subspecies into either an argument about Americanization or an argument about commoditization, and very often the two arguments are closely linked. What these arguments fail to consider is that at least as rapidly as forces

⁸⁰ Which will be further explored in section 2.6.

from various metropolises are brought into new societies they tend to become indigenized in one way or another' (p. 32).

Applied to the worldwide dominance of Hollywood, for example, Andrew Horton (1998) claimed that 'the ways in which minority cultures appropriate and make use of that dominant discourse can prove instructive for both narrative film studies and cultural studies' (p. 173). Therefore, the following section will discuss the idea of cultural translation and the strategy of localization (which belongs to the idea of cultural translation) and how it relates to the production of film remakes – as such, the following sections explicate both *why* and *how* textual transformations (cf. section 2.3) are performed in the remake process as a result of cultural translation.

In order to better understand the power balance that might be at play in the remake practice, Mazdon (2000) builds on Venuti's (1995) findings concerning translations and the role of the translator and applies it to film remakes. As we have seen, Venuti (1995) emphasizes the ideological work involved in the translation process, and how it might reflect particular discourses and structures of power in specific societies. In this vein, he claims that dominated cultures (often because of their small size or limited economic resources) will be more likely to translate more than an economically strong dominant culture. Venuti (1995) asserts that when a dominated culture translates a text from a dominant culture, generally, it tends to conserve the elements from the source text, aiming to preserve parts of its linguistic and cultural otherness. However, when a dominant culture translates a text from a dominated culture, in most cases, it retains some kind of control over the text, which it then integrates or assimilates in a hegemonic way into its own value system.

It becomes clear that the distinction between dominated and dominant cultures is at the center of Venuti's (1995) reading of the translation process. Though Joao Luiz Vieira and Robert Stam's (1990) study of Brazilian parodies of American films adopts the same binary between dominator/dominated, they question Venuti's (1995) statements in terms of how dominated cultures tend to conserve aspects from the text of the dominant culture. Building on Bakhtin's (1984 [1941]) famous concept of the 'carnavalesque' – which, in the latter scholar's understanding is a literary mode that simultaneously frees and subverts the premises of a dominant style through parody, irony, or the grotesque – they claim that through parody, these Brazilian films are able to subvert the dominant discourses of their American sources.

'By appropriating an existing discourse but introducing into it an orientation oblique, or even diametrically opposing it to that of the original, parody is especially well-suited to the needs of the oppressed and the powerless, precisely because it assumes the force of the dominant discourse, only to deploy that force, through a kind of artistic jujitsu, against domination' (Vieira & Stam, 1990: 84).

In other words, these scholars understand a particular mode within transnational adaptations as 'a manner to direct cathartic laughter against dominant cinema, a way to overturn – however, briefly – the hegemonic power exerted over marginal filmmaking practice' (Smith, 2016: 26).

Yet, there are a few issues with Vieira and Stam's account. First of all, these scholars themselves already suggested that, eventually, most of the Brazilian parodies under their analysis did not fully realize their rebellious or overthrowing potential. Second, and perhaps more importantly, whereas both Venuti's (1995) and Vieira and Stam's (1990) accounts rightly point us toward the possible political motivations in the remake process, they also rely on highly binary models of the dominated/suppressed and the dominant/suppressor. As such, they indirectly disregard 'the much more ambivalent and interrelated, sometimes even reciprocal 'nature of many of these borrowings' (Smith, 2016: 28). As Mazdon (2000) also advanced, understanding the relations of dominance depends on the taken perspective. This brings us to Smith (2016) who calls for a more nuanced or holistic analysis of the dynamics between Hollywood and other cinemas, as it is 'not enough to acknowledge Hollywood's dominance' (p. 5). On top of the latter, we also 'need to interrogate what exactly happens when these Hollywood films become the source texts for films made in other national cinemas' (ibid.). Smith's (2016) study of Turkish, Filipino, and Indian remakes of Hollywood productions puts the notions of "interrelationship" and the "meme"⁸¹

⁸¹ According to Smith (2016), transnational adaptations can be regarded as "memes". He considers the concept of the meme highly useful, mainly because of its scalability. Indeed, 'the meme can be used all the way from a micro-level investigation of the spread and adaptation of specific individual elements such as a character or piece of music to a macro-level investigation of the ways in which an industry such as Hollywood has been spread and adapted around the world' (Smith, 2016: 32). Though Smith's nuanced and holistic approach to transnational remakes proves useful, one wonders whether his concept of the "meme" is equally useful. The

central in order to better investigate the multifaceted cultural dynamics that form the basis of the transnational dissemination. As such, building on Kraidy's (2005) critical transculturalism, Smith (2016) calls for close analyses of hybrid cultural texts, yet by embedding them in their specific socio-historic context. By doing so, Smith avoids the pitfall of cultural imperialism that sustains a hegemon-victim dichotomy and instead succeeds in tracing the "global in the local" (p. 22). In other words, rather than reducing the dynamics between Hollywood and other national cinemas to cultural imperialism, 'we need to concentrate on the slow working together of cultures that overlap, borrow from each other and live together in far more interesting ways than any abridged or inauthentic mode of understanding can allow' (Said, 2003 [1978]: xxii). A comparative analysis of film remakes in terms of the nation, therefore, comes down 'to discuss[ing] these border crossings in a way that finds points of difference without exacerbating national stereotypes and finds points of similarity without losing recognition of cultural specificity' (Smith, 2016: 9).

Summarizing the above, Moine (2007) argues that the transnational film remake can be considered as a particular form of exchange between two cinematographies, which emerges from a transfer of images, ideas, and specific representations, from, for instance, French films to American films, reformulating them in their specific systems of conventions and representations. Consequently, a comparative analysis of film tandems could be seen as a comparative anthropology of cinematographic works of sorts, which are able to elucidate differences between, in the case of Moine (2007), 'a French and Hollywoodian imagination, [revealing] aesthetic codes, generic configurations, reference universes specific to French cinema and Hollywood cinema' (p. 8). Reminded of Venuti's (1995, cf. above) claims, the

title of his book (*The Hollywood Meme*), therefore, not only reveals the central thesis which is put forward by the author, but also the provisional interdependence between this claim and the socio-cultural context of Hollywood. Consequently, it is unclear if the metaphor of the "meme" is also applicable to other smaller contexts and lesser known films, since it seems that the connotation of the term unveils a notion of reputation or prior success. That is to say, all the examples used by Smith are notable and popular films, going from 'Spiderman' to 'The Godfather', which is of course evident, since the author chose to analyze the adaptation of Hollywood films. However, does this imply that transnational adaptations are always made of (a combination of) famous texts, thereby excluding lesser known works? Is there only a "Hollywood meme", or just as well a "European meme", or even a broader "transnational meme"? For a more elaborate review of Smith's book (2016), see Cuelenaere (2017).

process of cultural translation that is at work in the remake process should not be considered as a neutral process, as it is subject to power dynamics – e.g., a Hollywood remake, by transposing a French film into a Hollywood form, consequently operates as a cultural translation along to the same modalities by which dominant cultures linguistically translate the texts of the dominated cultures.⁸² As argued by Moine (2007), shifting the question of the transnational remake to the field of a comparative anthropology of cinematic works does not necessarily imply adopting a naive position, where the cultural would exist autonomously and independently of the economic and the ideological. Hence, the ways of practicing (cultural) translation ‘are historically, geographically, and ideologically marked and reflect particular relations to the dominant Other (another language, another discourse) in a given culture’ (Moine, 2007: 9).

Whereas the idea of cultural translation refers to the transformation of film remakes in terms of cultural elements, the specific strategy of localization implies a particular intention (i.e. the aim for recognizability and identification). As one of the crucial reasons of existence for transnational film remakes is its capability of (re-)establishing the cultural proximity with its target audience through the process of localization (in terms of i.a. textual, linguistic, and cultural aspects) (Stephens & Lee, 2018), the following section will elaborate on this matter.

2.4.3 *Localization, and the aim for recognizability/identification*

What has been called the “global-local nexus” signals a ‘process through which global events, values and ideas are localized in interpretation and outcome’ (Kinnvall & Jönsson, 2002: 247). Indeed, the digitalization that came along with globalization led to a multiplication of platforms for distribution – think of the growing number of television channels and the rise of online distribution platforms. Combined with a ‘a notable rise in the demand for audiovisual content but also in competition’ (Esser, Bernal-Merino & Smith, 2016: 1), this process has ‘resulted in the growing demand for localization’ (ibid.) because for a successful international rollout, the content needs to be localized in one way or another. As localization is both highly contextual bound as

⁸² Moreover, as will be discussed in section 2.6, film remakes often bury the reference to their source films, which equally cultivates a tradition of transparency comparable to the one implemented in Anglo-American literary translations (cf. Venuti, 1995, section 1.4).

well as fluid, multiple, and diverse in its core, it knows many different forms: think of subtitling, dubbing, or even the use of voice-overs (Esser, Bernal-Merino & Smith, 2016).

Whereas the strategy of localization is definitely not new, the new millennium has marked a clear revival, or indeed, explosion of localization strategies in many different sectors (e.g. television (formats), game, and film industry). In this vein, it is argued that '[w]hat is new [...], is the volume and significance of localization and the expansion of both audiovisual production and translation companies into new territory', indeed, in the contemporary context, 'film and TV production companies [increasingly] grow their revenues through international license sales and often also the actual production or co-production of local adaptations for foreign markets' (Esser, Bernal-Merino & Smith, 2016: 5). Applied to film remakes, the process of localization could also refer to the utilization and reworking of characters, plots, and other textual forms from cultural imports for particular socio-historic contexts (Smith, 2016). This reminds us of what Hutcheon (2006) called indigenization in adaptations, which is employed in many different manners: though adapters often alter the language of the source text⁸³, '[a]dapting across cultures is not simply a matter of translating words' (Hutcheon, 2006: 149), as it equally implies adjusting the text to conform to local expectations. A related yet different term is the concept of 'glocalization' (Robertson, 1995), which, put simply, points toward the practice wherein global corporations that aim for global success with some of their products localize them (often as little as necessary) to meet the preferences and tastes of local cultures. One might also think of the term 'delocalization', which is actually understood as a form of globalization (Straubhaar, 2007: 169) – there are other terms that denote the same idea, think of 'internationalization' and 'interlocalization' (Pym, 2017: 123–124). This notion indicates the same phenomenon whereby, for instance, filmmakers produce remakes both for their own and for other non-domestic markets. The crucial element of this concept is that filmmakers, before or while producing a remake, not only prepare for the dissemination of that film in their own market, but also anticipate the foreign export – and in some cases only aim for the latter. This double anticipation often implies that local aspects are avoided in order to make them exportable (Straubhaar, 2007).

⁸³ Language should be seen as vital to a film's ability in addressing the target audience, as it 'anchor[es] a sense of local or national identity' (Dyer & Vincendeau, 2013: 9).

The main explanation for the process of localization has to do with the producer's aim for recognizability⁸⁴, which is, in its turn, generally commercially driven (Esser, Bernal-Merino & Smith, 2016). Indeed, in a similar vein, Mueller (2019) argues that 'the insistence on cultural distinction is driven by commercial concerns rather than by aesthetic, artistic or ideological identity positions' (p. 2). Moreover, as Smith (2016) found, there exists more of a tendency to localize borrowed plots in contexts where the source text is not known. When cultural products are released in other local contexts, 'requiring local cultural adaptation, the actors involved in the production process aim to produce a connectivity [...] in the sense of a perceived local cultural proximity on the side of the audience' (Suna, 2018: 31). In Hutcheon's (2006) words: in order '[t]o appeal to a global market or even a very particular one, a television series or a stage musical may have to alter the cultural, regional, or historical specifics of the text being adapted' (p. 30). This proximity might then lead to 'identification with or a distinction from forms of belonging and communit[iz]ation' (ibid.). Of course, this identification or (cultural) affiliation can occur with many different constituted collectives such as nation, ethnicity, or gender (Anthias, 2006).

When Suna (2018) talks about cultural proximity, she refers to the much debated concept that was introduced by Joseph Straubhaar (1991; 2007) and later further developed with Antonio La Pastina (2005). The term⁸⁵ is defined as follows: 'cultural proximity is the desire for cultural products as similar as possible to one's own language, culture, history, and values' (Straubhaar, LaRose & Davenport, 2013: 504). In other words, Jennifer Buonanno (2008) argues that cultural proximity is not the only, but definitely 'a primary factor in orienting cultural demand and consumption, according to the need for and pleasure derived from recognition, familiarity and identity. Among the symbolic material that competes for the public's time and attention, people expect

⁸⁴ Think also of when Venuti's (1995) talks about the dominant strategy in Anglophone translations whereby all indices of the "foreignness" of the text are to be omitted in order to make the translated text more "fluent" for the target culture.

⁸⁵ A highly related term is "cultural discount" (Hoskin & Mirus, 1988), which could be described as the "pull" version of cultural proximity. Indeed, cultural discount complicates or even impedes the consumption of foreign cultural products because they "feel" less proximate in terms of culture. Buonanno (2008) summarizes it as follows: 'Since programmes rooted in a different culture lend themselves less well to activating mechanisms of recognition and identification, they are less attractive for a local audience: their value is reduced compared to local programmes. This reduction in value is the cultural discount' (p. 96).

and are pleased to recognize themselves, their own social, individual and collective world, their customs and lifestyles, accents, faces, landscapes and everything else that they perceive as close and familiar' (p. 96). Indeed, the concept of cultural proximity incorporates an allusion to the feeling of belonging to an imagined community (Straubhaar, 2007)⁸⁶. As such it is the local culture, which is indicative of the recognizable (linguistic) environment of the everyday, that structures the degree of perception of cultural proximity to a cultural product (La Pastina & Straubhaar, 2005). Though the concept has been criticized for inducing a homogenous perspective on cultural context, it actually 'emphasi[z]es a plurality within the national/cultural context' (Suna, 2018: 32).⁸⁷ Therefore, local culture should not be seen as synonymous with national culture, as, '[i]n the context of globali[z]ation and hybridi[z]ation of culture, viewers access and rely on various cultural contexts simultaneously that are not equal to a nation state' (Suna, 2018: 32).

Additionally, La Pastina and Straubhaar (2005) stress that cultural proximity might also occur without particular references to a local culture, as it could equally develop on, for instance, a transnational level. Here, Straubhaar (2007) suggests that, apart from cultural proximity, more transnational forms of proximity might occur, such as genre proximity (e.g. the structure of melodrama has offshoots in almost all parts of world, which is why it can cross cultural borders), value proximity (think of the consequences of rapid industrialization or economic change in several cultures which put religion and other values under challenge), and thematic proximity (e.g. 'commonalities of rural, regional pasts that appeal both to rural people and those who have migrated to cities' [p. 202]). Indeed, there are many elements or references that appeal quasi-universally or trans-locally, such as quasi-universal images, archetypes, themes, narrative structures, or norms and values (Grüne, 2016). However, as Suna

⁸⁶ Which is, moreover, in line with existing research in media psychology (e.g. Livingstone, 1998), which suggests that cultural differences are expected to influence processes of identification and parasocial interaction (e.g. individuals' mediated experiences with someone on screen). What is more, studies in the field of cultural sociology (e.g. Lamont & Thévenot, 2000) argue that audiences from different national contexts possess different "repertoires of evaluation" which are employed to evaluate and judge and which can eventually result in dissimilar preferences.

⁸⁷ Cf. the concept of transnationalism in section 2.2.3.

(2018) emphasizes, 'the attractiveness [...] lies in a combination of trans-local and local references that they find comprehensible' (p. 32).

In conclusion, the processes of cultural translation and localization that are at work in the remake process indicate that cultures and nations are imagined and constructed, representing a heterogenous dynamic collective. Additionally, the manners in which film remakes are localized flag the role of cinema as a form of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995, cf. section 2.2.2) that presents implicit, latent, sometimes invisible reminders of national connections as well as shared experiences. As will be shown in the empirical section of this dissertation, it is these types of everyday, taken-for-granted representations of the nation that eventually form the means by which the nation is (re)produced hegemonically. Indeed, because filmmakers generally want their films to be recognizable and have a sense of authenticity (i.e. "about" a culture), they recurrently employ particular national identity discourses, which (constantly) reiterates specific national stereotypes⁸⁸ and myths, which gives their films a "national" character. The following section will, therefore, focus on those agents that stand in between the film and its audiences.

⁸⁸ Knowing that stereotypes function as (1) an ordering process of a complex reality; (2) a short cut to a complex set of many different assumptions that mirror a society's values; (3) a way of referring to the "world" through social constructions; (4) an expression of "our" values and beliefs and, therefore, often of (the dominant) ideology which they serve to "naturalize" (Dyer, 1993).

2.5 A remake's production context

Though the idea to remake a film might probably “originate” in the mind of only one person, the work that has to be done in between the inception of the idea to remake a film and the eventual release of that film remake is probably the result of many different people. One might equally wonder why that person thought of remaking a film in the first place, and who or what might have convinced her/him to eventually proceed in actually producing a film remake. How do filmmakers, moreover, come to decide which films they want to remake? Is it, furthermore, possible to simply link the transformations that were made to a film remake to the filmmakers who were in charge of it? And what does this disclose about the meanings that are conveyed by that film remake? The following sections will deal with these issues and more.

2.5.1 *The figure of the “remaker”?*

Regarding the person(s) responsible for the production of the artifact or product, Hutcheon (2006) argued – in the context of film adaptations – that the medium of film is one of the ‘most complicated media of all from this point of view’ (p. 81) because of the simple reason that filmmaking is a highly collaborative process, in which many different agents have a say. With that in mind, one might indeed wonder if, among those different agents in the process of making a film (remake), there is perhaps a major “remaker” to be discerned. Could it, for instance, be ‘the often underrated screenwriter’ (Hutcheon, 2006: 81) who is at the basis of a film, as she or he ‘creates or (creatively adapts) a film’s plot, characters, dialogue, and theme’ (Corliss 1974: 542)? However, how does one deal with the cases wherein many different people have worked on a film remake’s screenplay? Moreover, is this still the case when a director, when she/he starts shooting a specific scene and at the last moment decides to make a small change to the script? Though the music composer might not immediately leap to mind as the primary remaker, it is she or he who is in charge of the music ‘that reinforces emotions or provokes reactions in the audience and directs our interpretation of different characters’ (Hutcheon, 2006: 81). But then what about costume and set designers, the cinematographers (and DOPs), or the actors themselves – who are those that ‘embody and give material existence to the adaptation [or remake]’ (Hutcheon, 2006: 81)?

Eventually, Hutcheon (2006) comes to the conclusion that, even though all of the above-mentioned figures are crucial in the creative process of making a film (remake), it is 'the director and the screenwriter [who] share the primary task of adaptation' (p. 85). She continues that, generally, in the adaptive process, someone starts writing a screenplay, which marks the beginning of the whole process, after which someone first interprets this adapted screenplay, paraphrasing it for a new medium (i.e. film), before, finally, a director gives the new text an embodied life (Hutcheon, 2006). As such, indirectly, Hutcheon (2006) makes a distinction between the process of "adapting" on the one hand, and the process of creating the film 'as an autonomous work of art' (ibid.) on the other. It seems, however, rather difficult to draw a clear line between the transformation of an already existing text, and the creation of something new. Indeed, as Hutcheon (2006) argues herself, every 'adapter is an interpreter before becoming a creator' (p. 84). In a final conclusion, she adds that 'it is evident from both studio press releases and critical response that the director is ultimately held responsible for the overall vision and therefore for the adaptation as adaptation' (Hutcheon, 2006: 85). In a similar vein, Verevis (2017) argues that film remakes in the new millennium embrace the figure of the "postauteur", by which he means that 'new millennial filmmakers [...] seek to insert themselves into the innumerable flows of global film and media production, not by setting out to create something that is new (original) but rather by remaking what already exists' (p. 156). In other words, today's postauteurs' agency and "brand-name vision"⁸⁹ are the two aspects that most affect the promotion and reception of their films. According to Verevis (2017), cinematic remaking is, therefore, increasingly 'understood in terms of a filmmaker's desire to repeatedly express and modify a particular aesthetic sensibility and worldview' (p. 156), signaling a shift from a focus on original authorship toward trademarks and reproducibility.

Whether the new millennium is characterized by an auteurist or postauteurist stance toward films, both imply that directors are still seen as the symbols of their films, remakes or not. This is crucial if we want to, for instance, understand how audiences interpret (specific) film remakes, because they might understand and experience a film

⁸⁹ This concept refers to the contemporary understanding of how a filmmaker's particular "vision" or "style" has become a brand, which can function as a prism through which older films are beamed, eventually resulting in a new film (remake) which mainly reflects the filmmaker's "singular voice".

remake mainly through the lens of the person that directed it. However, I argue, in order to provide answers to that question, it might be more fruitful to actually research audiences, and analyze their discourses (cf. section 2.6). If we want to, conversely, analyze why and how (considering the intents, motives, and urges) film remakes actually come into being, productionally or industrially, then a broader analysis of the different agents involved in the process of film remaking (or, indeed, its industry) might provide us with better answers. As observed by Miguel Fernández Labayen and Ana Martín Morán (2019), while the majority of studies in remake studies recognizes the importance of the industrial context, actual empirical research that investigates the industrial dimensions of film remakes is lacking. This lacuna results in the fact that many analyses understand ‘film remakes as processes of narrative, aesthetic, and cultural adaptation’ (Labayen & Morán, 2019: 283). The research conducted by Labayen and Morán (2019), for instance, shows that the profile of remake rights representatives in the production, distribution, and circulation of comedy remakes has ‘interesting implications both for how remakes get done (i.e. the business model of the remake trade), but also for which kind of remakes are done’ (p. 284). Because of the little knowledge about the specific roles of producers, directors, scriptwriters (and script adaptors), distributors, and others, all acting as gatekeepers, it is highly difficult to define different significant stages of the remake process, giving ‘rise to an inability to establish agreed, standard concepts in this field’ (Delgado and Avis, 2018: 3).

Hutcheon (2006) concludes that considering the adapter’s subjective intentions and will might feel as a step backward in our “posthumanist” times – which disrupts homogenous understandings about what it means to be human, deconstructing ‘the liberal humanist subject’ (Miah, 2008: 84). Moreover, though some might argue that paying attention to this kind of intentions reduces art to autobiographies and analytical practices to voyeurism, there is, arguably, no film without filmmaker⁹⁰. Furthermore, in the realm of literary studies (and arguably less so in film studies), attempting to grasp and understand the creative process of writing

⁹⁰ Ergo, there is no film remake without its creator(s). What is more, one could argue that, as many film remakes differ heavily from their direct source texts, the way in which both versions vary cannot be solely explained by the differing contextual circumstances (or, the generic requirements, for instance) in which they were conceived. In other words, their ‘variations function as indicators of the adapter’s “voice”’ (Hutcheon, 2006: 109).

itself is still seen as a disenchanting undertaking, and is therefore, taboo, 'out of critical fashion [...], journalistic, or simply Romantic' (Hutcheon, 2006: 108). However, as Hutcheon (2006) argues, 'adaptation teaches [us] that if we cannot talk about the creative process, we cannot fully understand the urge to adapt and therefore perhaps the very process of adaptation' (p. 107). In their famous critique of including inquiries into the authors' intentions when analyzing texts, William Kurtz Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley (1989 [1946]) claim that, on the one hand, it is impossible to fully determine an author's intention, while on the other, as the text finally enters the public realm, its meaning cannot be simply grasped by only basing the analysis on the author's intentions.

Especially the latter argument of Wimsatt and Beardsley (1989 [1946]) seems of importance here and can easily be placed under the notion of what Friedberg (1993) and Verevis (2006) have called the extratextual. As Wimsatt (1976) later claimed that 'in the moment it [i.e. the art work] emerges, it enters a public and in a certain sense an objective realm; it claims and gets attention from an audience; it invites and receives discussion, about its meaning and value, in an idiom of inter-subjectivity and conceptualization' (p. 11–12). It is not hard to imagine that audiences might read interviews with filmmakers who talk about how they interpret their proper films, why they made them, how they made them, etc. Hence, even though Wimsatt employs his argument against integrating intent in the analysis of texts, it equally gives weight to the argument that, if we wish to understand how film remakes are interpreted and come into being, we should investigate the filmmakers' intentions, both to better understand the creative dimensions of a remake, as well as the interpretative ones. As Hutcheon (2006) notes, when considering an adapter's intentions, it is not to fully grasp the meanings of the adaptation (as these are discursively constructed), but to hold the authors' statements against the text that she/he created – the text bearing the marks of choices made by her/him, 'marks that betray the assumptions of the creator' (p. 108–109) –, in order to trace the 'urge to adapt' (p. 107) and to better comprehend the decisions made in the process of adaptation. The following section will, therefore, look into the intentions and motives behind the remake process, while also paying attention to the industrial and cultural contexts that may affect these.

2.5.2 *Lures, motives, and constraints*

Usually, 'ideas about popular culture construct cultural producers as invariably motivated by commercial greed and a common ideological mission, an assumption which elides the varied motives and ideals of those involved in the culture industries, and their artistic independence' (Edensor, 2002: 14). In the particular context of adaptations, Hutcheon (2006) asserted that 'there are manifestly many different possible intentions behind the act of adaptation: the urge to consume and erase the memory of the adapted text or to call it into question is as likely as the desire to pay tribute by copying' (p. 7). In the following, the most important intentions, motives, lures, and constraints behind both the film remake practice itself and the ways in which it performs textual transformations will be discussed.

Commercial aspects

It is undeniably true that throughout their history, film remakes have become 'an established industrial category of textual re-working' (Heinze & Krämer, 2015: 8), highly similar to, for instance, film genres, where already existing and, generally, successful material is recycled in one way or another. Indeed, for a great deal, film remakes can be explained as industrial products which are situated in 'the material conditions of commercial filmmaking, where plots are copied and formulas forever reiterated' (p. 84), as Altman (1999) argued in the context of film genres. The practice of film remaking is, therefore, often, yet certainly not in all cases, motivated by some form of economic risk-management. As argued by Verevis (2006), the economic lures are evident, as '[f]or film producers, remakes are consistently thought to provide suitable models, and something of a financial guarantee' (p. 3). Understood in a commercial sense, film remakes are what scholars call "pre-sold" to their audiences (e.g. Verevis, 2009; Murray, 2012; Rawle, 2018), as, on the one hand, their viewers are 'assumed to have some prior experience, or at least possess a "narrative image", of the original story – an earlier film, literary or other property – before engaging in its particular retelling' (Verevis, 2006: 3). On the other hand, a film remake is seen as pre-sold because, in most cases, the film on which it is directly based has already proven its commercial success (Verevis, 2006). In that sense, oftentimes, film remakes tap into known, recognizable, nostalgic, and successful filmic properties, with the aim of reproducing the source film's success. This explains why, throughout history, it was mostly in economically difficult times (e.g. during the Great Depression in the 1930s,

or the oil crises in the 1970s) that studios and production companies have increasingly resorted to the tactic of acquiring adaptation and remake rights and embarking on such recycled projects (Forrest & Koos, 2002).

In the contemporary context (and, arguably, since the 1980s), the practice of remaking films has regained worldwide success because of another economic reason: today, film companies have to fight for attention with a constantly increasing amount of media, such as a revived independent film sector, DVDs, television, social media, games, or streaming services. Yet, at the same time, the cost of producing, marketing, and distributing films has climbed even higher (Eliashberg, Elberse & Leenders, 2006). Because of these higher costs, today, many of the films are funded by different studios and investment partners⁹¹, which arguably involves an even higher degree of risk and ‘need to present convincing arguments for its income-earning potential’ (Ross, 2017: 138). Given that ‘[e]ach film, viewed as a locus of investment and an intensive utilizer of lab[o]r, equipment, and supplies must presell itself as a project before it can sell itself as a product’ (Harney, 2002: 64), film remakes are generally quite appealing in this sense as the production team can point toward the domestic (and lack of international) success of its filmic predecessor(s). In a similar vein, Verevis (2017) argues that because ‘the new millennium is characterized by an exponential increase in content and availability [...], selection becomes a major concern’ (p. 158). Put simply, more than ever, in order to get a potential film project greenlit, one has to be convinced that it will make enough “noise” (and, therefore, money) in the avalanche of cultural products. Again, remakes may provide possible answers to this issue, as its ‘title, proprietary character, or signature tune may contribute to audience interest around a new release and mark it out in a digitized culture distinguished by accelerated proliferation’ (ibid.). Kelleter (2012) summarized this well:

‘Altogether, I argue that popular seriality, highly standardized and at the same time extremely flexible in terms of storytelling and usage, is best investigated as a commercially driven, largely self-reinforcing process of narrative and experiential proliferation. It is a process that produces its own follow-up possibilities, because structurally, a serial narrative is always open-ended, promising to constantly renew

⁹¹ Already with the coming of the studio system, allegiances were formed between private investors and banks on the one hand and production companies on the other (Bluestone, 1957).

the ever same moment. More abstractly put, popular seriality promises to accomplish a paradox which may well be the structural utopia of all capitalist culture: it promises a potentially infinite innovation of reproduction' (p. 22).

The different forms of commercial underpinnings that exist in film remake projects become very apparent in many instances of the Hollywood transnational film remake practice. Indeed, in films such as *Vanilla Sky* (2001) which remakes the Spanish *Abre Los Ojos* (1997), or *Insomnia* (2002) which remakes a Norwegian film with the same title (1997), 'foreign films are dispossessed of "local detail" and "political content" to exploit new (English-language) markets' (Verevis, 2006: 3). Indeed, this is a type of cultural translation (with clear textual repercussions), or, more specifically, localization, that is commercially driven. One could argue that, in these instances, remaking becomes a process of appropriation, signaling forms of cultural domination or imperialism, as well as "'terroristic marketing practices" designed to block an original's competition in the US market' (Verevis, 2006: 3).

Personal aspects

Though remakes undeniably partially mirror the conservative nature of film industries that are driven by economic imperatives (Stern, 1997), they equally reflect the personal incentives of their filmmakers. In this context, Eberwein (1998) asserts that some filmmakers 'with sufficient clout and economic support may remake a film for personal reasons' (p. 18). In a similar vein, building on Druxman's (1975) study, Verevis (2006) argues that in addition to the conservative nature and pragmatism of the industry, the practice of remaking films can equally be traced in the filmmakers' aspiration to repeatedly convey and adjust 'a particular aesthetic sensibility or world view in light of new developments and interests' (p. 6). In other words, deciding to remake an already existing film might just as well be driven by the 'perceived continuing viability of an original story' (Verevis, 2006: 5). Filmmakers may, for instance, remake their own films (i.e. so-called "autoremakes", cf. Eberwein, 1998; Moine, 2007), 'ironing out earlier flaws, exploiting new technologies and modifying various aspects of the film in line with a new cinematic and socio-cultural context and a changed directorial perspective' (Ross, 2017: 138). Next to Hitchcock's already mentioned color remake of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1934), one could also cite George Sluizer's 1993 American

remake (*The Vanishing*) of his Dutch film titled *Spoorloos* (1971) or Erik Van Looy's Hollywood remake of his Belgian film *Loft* (2008)⁹².

One could also think of filmmakers who are driven by an aspiration to honor a work (and often its director) they love through imitation, which could lead to another type of remake that is personally motivated, i.e. the “homage” remake. A famous example is Gus Van Sant's color remake of Hitchcock's *Psycho* in 1998, or, more recently, Luca Guadagnino's 2018 remake of *Suspiria* (1977, Argento). Opposite to the homage remake, Leitch (1990) adduces what he dubs as “true remakes”⁹³, which ‘deal with the contradictory claims of all remakes – that they are just like their originals only better – [binding] a focus on a cinematic original with an accommodating stance which seeks to make the original relevant by updating it’ (p. 49). Leitch gives the examples of Bob Rafelson's remake of *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (Garnett, 1946) and Lawrence Kasdan's *Body Heat* (1981) which “remakes” *Double Indemnity* (Wilder, 1944).⁹⁴ Building on Eberwein's (1998) propositions, Ross (2017) claims that ‘[a]ll in all [...] agency can be a key factor behind the emergence of a remake, notwithstanding the caveat that studios are unlikely to grant individuals the freedom to develop pet projects that do not promise profits’ (p. 139). Yet, as was discussed in section 2.5.1, there is not one single figure of the “remaker”. Rather on the contrary, as also argued by Evans (2014), a key difference between remakes and literary texts is that in the case of the film remake, a myriad of agents and processes is involved, giving rise to ‘more hybrid and multiply adapted’ (p. 306) texts.

Technical and legal aspects

One must also note that throughout history, the changing of film technologies have greatly affected remake practices. Forrest and Koos (2002), for example, argue that when production companies want to test novel technical innovations (which can be

⁹² The Belgian source film by Van Looy was actually also remade in the Netherlands in 2010 (*Loft*, Beumer, 2010), which is why this case will be part of this dissertation's empirical part.

⁹³ Cf. section 1.5.2

⁹⁴ Verevis (2006) criticized Leitch's argument by stating that *Double Indemnity* ‘had already been more directly remade as a lesser-known movie for television, directed by Jack Smight in 1973’ (p. 114), and ‘can more broadly be seen as a remaking of [James M.] Cain's [the writer of a 1943 novel on which *Double Indemnity* was based] oeuvre (or at least those works by which he is best remembered)’ (p. 113).

costly), they cut down the risk in doing this by employing ‘pretested stories’ (p. 3) that already proved to be profitable. Think for instance of the myriad of “talker remakes” in the 1930s in the USA (Loock, 2016)⁹⁵, as well as, for instance, the many color remakes after World War II (Herbert, 2008). Therefore, it should not strike as odd that the first major color movie to use the three-strip Technicolor process (Ross, 2017) was a remake of Allan Dwan’s 1922 silent movie *Robin Hood* (Druxman, 1975). Closer to today, the same could be said of the so-called “live-action” remakes of Disney’s animation classics, which make use of novel techniques, such as artificial intelligence to allow digital characters to operate in manners that mimic actual animals in *The Lion King* (Favreau, 2019). Another closely related remake benefit is its potential to exploit new film stars, which, according to Ross (2017), is a commonly employed strategy, whereby ‘elements such as the plot, characterization, dialogue and camerawork are subordinated to the goal of foregrounding one or more budding or famous actors’ (139).

Apart from (and, naturally, in coexistence with) the economic, personal, and technical factors, there is the legal aspect that may both motivate and constraint remake projects. Concerning the former, one could adduce the tactic where studios ‘purchas[e] the rights to novels, plays and stories in perpetuity [which] meant that a company was able to produce multiple versions of a particular property without making additional payments to the copyright holder’ (Verevis, 2006: 6).⁹⁶ Concerning the latter, as Hutcheon (2006) suggests, ‘[a]daptations are not only spawned by the capitalist desire for gain; they are also controlled by the same in law, for they constitute a threat to the ownership of cultural and intellectual property’ (p. 89). In this context, and as was already discussed in section 1.5.2, Smith (2016)⁹⁷ asserts that whereas the

⁹⁵ Though there is not much research that exists on this topic, one can find much anecdotal proof that 1930s sound remakes of silent films from preceding decades (“talker remakes”) were also popular in national film industries across Europe (see, e.g., Bachmann 2013; Bock & Bergfelder 2009; Gundle 2013; Hake 2002; Wood 1986).

⁹⁶ This reflects the phenomenon in the literary realm where ‘the end of the copyright period for canonical works tends to push commercially-oriented publishers to put out reprints’ (Ross, 2017: 137).

⁹⁷ In his study of remakes of Hollywood films (cf. section 2.2.4), Smith (2016) found that ‘copyright law plays a relatively small role in determining the particular types of transnational adaptation’ (p. 147), while playing ‘a significant role in shaping the level to which the source text is recreated’ (ibid.).

production of all types of cultural artifacts involve ‘borrowing and adapting earlier material, there is often a line drawn between an acceptable level of borrowing and what is defined as unacceptable plagiarism’ (p. 23). However, as he continues, the distinction between plagiarism and acceptable borrowing is culturally defined and changes over time. This becomes even more difficult when a producer wants to remake a foreign film, as in that case, there might be different understandings of intellectual property or copyright at play due to different national jurisdictions. In the case of a big part of the Western world, it was the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works from 1886 that provided the first international copyright. Yet, only in 1908, the convention was revised and explicitly added cinematographic productions to the law. The USA and most European countries (think of France, Belgium, Germany, or Norway) signed the Berlin Act in 1908, which meant that around the year of 1910, most of these countries protected film against plagiarism internationally. Many other European countries followed in the following ten years. It should be noted that the (global) installing of the Berne Convention mainly served the (powerful) exporting nations, offering them another competitive trade-related advantage (Smith, 2016).

Such power differentials arguably still exist today – even within the Western world – yet in different forms. Due to ‘competing regimes of copyright control’ (Smith, 2016: 25), different governmental policies, and dissimilar ‘industrialised modes of production’ (ibid.), the rights to remake a film often differ heavily in price. It is, therefore, a fact that the cost of remake rights of Hollywood films are much higher than those of smaller, for instance, European countries (Mazdon, 2000; Labayen & Morán, 2019). In this way, the dominant or powerful position of Hollywood and other big film industries is reaffirmed through the trade of remake rights. Indeed, many of the companies (ranging from small to big ones) that mediate remake rights and produce remakes outside Hollywood are actually run by, owned by, or at least closely connected to, the Hollywood film industry (Labayen & Morán, 2019). What is more, as mentioned in section 2.5.1, Labayen and Morán found that around the first decade of the new millennium, there is a global rise of so-called “remake right representatives”⁹⁸ who

⁹⁸ Think of Roy Lee who has been called “Remake Man”, as he is known for representing the remake rights of a myriad of Asian horror films that performed extremely well domestically, which he then sold to Hollywood companies starting in the year of 2001.

intermediate between different (local) production companies (that buy and sell these remake rights) and represent IPs (i.e. intellectual properties). They argue that ‘as new institutional media modalities, remake rights representatives are intervening in transnational media businesses by forging a new industrial character which rests mostly on the construction of film remaking as culturally proximate for different territories’ (Labayen & Morán, 2019: 284). Understanding the roles of these figures is crucial, as they influence which remakes get done as well as how they are done.

Political and textual aspects

There might also be political motivations or constraints to produce film remakes. In this context, remakes do not differ from translations: they can both be seen as political and ideological barometers (Venuti, 2004). Indeed, as Ross (2017) argues, both (re)translations and remakes ‘can offer clues as to the extent and nature of censorship in operation at a certain juncture’ (p. 139). What is more, Hollywood cinema in the 1950s gives us ample evidence of the relations between film remakes and censorship. The Production Code, which was applied from 1934 until 1968, and installed in 1930 by Will Hays, consisted of a collection of stringent guidelines for the members of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (Kochberg, 2003). These guidelines were made up of moral and ideological principles and are to be understood as a form of self-censorship. As Ross (2017) argues, ‘[t]he activities of the PCA [Production Code Administration] go a long way to explaining why so much remaking took place in the USA between the early 1930s and early 1950s’ (p. 140). He adduces the example of *The Maltese Falcon* (1931, Del Ruth), which is a pre-PCA film as, for instance, ‘lead-actor Ricardo Cortez had played the detective Sam Spade as a quite outrageous womani[z]er’ (ibid.) which ‘would have been unacceptable after the enforcement of the Code’ (ibid.). Therefore, rather than rereleasing the 1931 version, two remakes⁹⁹ were produced that did follow the rules of the Production Code.

Finally, Look (2012) has argued that there might also be textual elements that invite for repetition. In other words, some films lend themselves better for being remade than others because of their particular textual aspects. Building on an

⁹⁹ In 1936, *Satan Met a Lady* was released. Five years later, the now more famous remake titled *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) was released.

comparative analysis of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956; 1978), Loock (2012) suggests that

'the style, the setting, and the ending of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* lend themselves to variation because they belong to the kinds of aesthetic and narrative choices that have no impact on the overall body snatcher premise, the central metaphor, the character constellation, or the way the plot unfolds' (p. 132).

The argument here is that such textual elements guarantee a movie's "remake potential". In their study about remake right representatives, Labayen and Morán (2019) indicate that, 'brows[ing] through the generic categories that these intermediaries use to advertise the films whose remake rights they represent, one can see that there is an overwhelming number of film comedies' (p. 293). This finding might suggest that the comedy genre, because of its particular textual aspects and conventions, invites more remakes than say action films. However, interviewing the producers and intermediators, these scholars found that the preference for comedy is equally explained by its domestic commercial success and the fact that, as a genre, it can easily be localized and is 'deeply linked to local stars, and idiomatic and variations, much more so than the thriller or horror' (p. 294).

2.6 A remake's reception context

As argued in the above, the film remake could also be seen as a label/etiquette (a category employed by distributors and exhibitors) or contract (being a sort of mental contract between producer and consumer) (see e.g. Altman, 1999) that works similarly to film genres, which always come with specific audience expectations and preconceptions. Moreover, as discussed by several scholars in intertextuality, adaptation, and translation studies (cf. sections 1.2; 1.3; and 1.4), eventually, it is the audiences, or indeed, every one of us, who individually and together actively¹⁰⁰ give meaning to cultural artifacts. Therefore, in order to more holistically understand film remakes, we need to investigate how audiences are linked to the label, practice, and product of the film remake.

2.6.1 *Cultural capital*

Film remakes are related to cultural value in many different ways, not only by their mere label, but also because of the cultural cachet of the films they rework. However, it should be clear that cultural value is not inherently part of the film remake itself, but is ascribed to it discursively, that is, extratextually (Verevis, 2006). Therefore, the production (i.e. also including the marketing and distribution shackles of the production process) side of the film remake practice is one possible factor in the (re)creation of cultural value. However, this is only part of the story, as value is equally created, negotiated, and negated in reception contexts.

As was discussed in section 2.4.1, when considering the American remakes of French films in the 1980s, we should take into account that French films are associated with a “high art” status in the American market (Mazdon, 2000). In that sense, by remaking these French films in the 80s, ‘American producers seek to appropriate some of that cultural capital’ (Evans, 2014: 306). This reminds of Hutcheon’s (2006) claim that ‘one way to gain respectability or increase cultural capital is for an adaptation to be upwardly mobile [as is illustrated by] the many early cinematic adaptations of Dante and Shakespeare’ (p. 91). In other words, the remake process may transfer the cultural cachet that is ascribed to the source text to the remake. Yet, this does not happen in a straightforward manner, as both these artifacts are, naturally,

¹⁰⁰ See footnote 21.

embedded in sometimes differing discursive contexts. Conversely, as Naremore (2000) asserts, one of the major issues of remakes

'is quite similar to the problem of adaptation [namely that it] can be subsumed under the more general theory of artistic imitation, in the restricted sense of works of art that imitate other works of art. [Consequently] all the 'imitative' types of film are in danger of being assigned a low cultural status, or even of eliciting critical opprobrium, because they are copies of "culturally treasured" originals' (Naremore, 2000, 13).

This shows that exactly the opposite might happen during the remake process. A telling example is Gus Van Sant's 1998 remake of *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960), which received a lot of critique because it "dared" to remake one of the most loved and culturally treasured films in cinema history (Verevis, 2006). In the opposite direction, producing a film remake might also play a role in the acceptance, rejection, or canonization of the source film. Indeed, as Lefevere (2016 [1992]) has demonstrated in the field of translations, rewriting (e.g. translation, adaptation, reference work, or critique) an existing literary work plays a chief role in how these works are received. In other words, 'our knowledge of a particular film may be based upon critical appraisal, various forms of marketing and publicity or indeed the remake' (Mazdon, 2004: 2). However, most scholars (e.g. Verevis, 2006; Moine, 2007; Herbert, 2008; Philippe, 2013; Heinze & Krämer, 2015; Smith, 2016) seem to agree upon the fact that 'both [as] a category of text and [...] an industrial phenomenon, remakes (and the industry trend for remaking) are especially vulnerable to criticism rooted in preconceived notions of cultural value' (Mee, 2017: 194). Oftentimes, this disdain 'is rooted in the neoromantic belief that art should somehow not be concerned with making money' (Klein & Palmer, 2016: 12). This same neoromantic belief, stemming from the 1950s – a time where the auteur theory was highly influential –, also relies on the idea that the creator of a film is 'a heroic, visionary, and idiosyncratic artist [...] [which] would appear to conflict with the apparent lack of "originality" in remakes' (Herbert, 2008: 189).¹⁰¹

It appears that Hollywood is very aware of the pejorative connotation of the remake label, as is illustrated by a remarkable shift in recent communication strategies.

¹⁰¹ The aspect of originality in discussions about film remakes will be discussed in section 2.6.3.

As film writer Ben Child (2016) claims, the term “remake” itself, alongside the kin term “reboot”, seems to have become a dirty word in Hollywood. American studios reacted to the negative aura of the remake practice by promoting the films using different language: ‘For the record, we are NOT making a reboot, but rather a continuation of the awesome JUMANJI story’, as leading actor Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson wrote on his Instagram profile when talking about his upcoming film *Jumanji* (2017, Kasdan). Moreover, an interview with the producer of *Terminator: Genisys* (2015, Taylor) illustrates that Johnson was certainly not the first to promote his film as not being a reboot or remake: ‘I think what’s important to remember when thinking about this movie is that it’s not a sequel, and it’s not a remake’ (Lamble, 2015). Other examples of this apparently new “non-remake strategy” are even more explicit, as the director of *The Amazing Spider-Man* (2012, Webb) stated that it is ‘really important for us to be able to communicate that this isn’t a remake of Sam Raimi’s movie. There’s a new territory, there’s a new villain, it’s a different Peter Parker’ (Gallagher, 2012). This differs significantly from what we read in older scholarly accounts on the remake practice, claiming exactly the opposite: ‘Several marketing executives emphasiz[e] the high marketability of artistic imitation’ (Joye, 2009: 61). It thus seems that the negative aura of the remake phenomenon might have triggered an awareness in contemporary Hollywood, whereby the promotion and communication strategy of a movie is increasingly focused on communicating the non-remake status of the film.

2.6.2 *Knowing and unknowing audiences*

In section 1.3.3, Hutcheon (2006) made an important remark in the context of adaptation studies, that is that spectators may be both aware and unaware about the adapted status of the text. In other words, a viewer might know that, when she/he is watching a film adaptation, it is actually a film that is based upon another text. She/he might also not know this, which will affect her/his experience of that film. Hutcheon (2006) added that when spectators know of the adapted status of a text, they (often unconsciously) link it directly to the text on which it is based, and, as such, that link, in some way or another, becomes part of the film’s (perceived) identity. When applied to film remakes, depending on the audiences’ knowledge of the direct source film(s) of the film remake, the intertextual “background noise” of the source film¹⁰² might greatly

¹⁰² Naturally, this equally counts for all other intertextual references that are part of the film remake.

affect the interpretations of the remake (Mee, 2017). This background noise must be understood both textually and extratextually, which, in line with the insights from section 1.2, means that the intertextual associations refer to both the references to the texts themselves as well as their surrounding discourses. Watching the film remake as remake¹⁰³ instead of watching it as a non-remake might consequently lead to different interpretations but also judgements of the film.

In some cases, filmmakers might opt to market their film remakes as remakes in order to invite audiences to adopt a sort of comparative form of reception (Heinze & Krämer, 2015), or for them ‘to enjoy the differences that have been worked, consciously and sometimes unconsciously, between the texts’ (Horton & McDougal, 1998: 6). In other cases, filmmakers may want to hide the fact that their film is actually a film based on an already existing film by not marketing it in such a way. This reminds of Venuti’s (1995) claims in terms of the “readability” and “fluency” of a translated text, of which today’s hegemonic understanding demands the translation¹⁰⁴ to become invisible, which eventually creates the illusion that a translation is not a translation, but the source text itself, reproduced. Arguably, this is a strategy that is often applied in the film remake industry (Mazdon, 2000; Moine, 2007). However, the spectatorial attitude of comparison may be triggered by a paratextual marking of the film as being based on another film, or, indeed, the knowledge of the spectator of the source film which might lead to the recognition of the source film. In that sense, ‘when spectators

¹⁰³ This is a reference to Hutcheon’s (2006) term “adaptation as adaptation”, which refers to a ‘straightforward awareness of the adaptation’s enriching, palimpsestic doubleness’ (p. 120). A palimpsest is a manuscript page from which the text has been removed (e.g. by washing it off) in order to reuse the page for another document.

¹⁰⁴ In the context of translations, Venuti (1995) also links this issue to the translator, who, in comparison with the author of the source text is given a secondary position as she/he has to efface her-/himself. In other words, the author of the source text is given a position of authorial originality, whereas the translator is seen as secondary. Though one could possibly apply this to the film remake practice (think, for instance, of the cases where canonized films are being remade in order to honor them), I would not claim that it is a general tendency for filmmakers to make themselves invisible in their remakes. Indeed, as was discussed in section 2.5.1, Verevis (2017) argued that in the new millennium, one could speak of “postauteurs” whose agency and “brand-name vision” are the two chief aspects that are employed in the promotion and reception of their film remakes. As such, cinematic remaking is now more understood in terms of an “author’s” aspiration to continuously ‘express and modify a particular aesthetic sensibility and worldview’ (Verevis, 2017: 156).

recognize so-called unacknowledged or hidden remakes, for example, it is they who ascribe the status of remake to a film' (Heinze & Krämer, 2015: 8). In a similar vein, Moine (2007) wonders whether a remake is still a remake for audiences who have not seen and are not aware of the source film's existence. In the cases where there are no visible or obvious textual or paratextual markers (think of opening and end credits or post-credit scenes, cf. sections 1.2 and Chapter 4) that refer to the source film, the awareness of the remake label 'depends above all on the skill and memory of the spectator' (Moine, 2007: 44).

As Smith (2016) found, filmmakers adjust their remakes to the knowing or "awareness" of the target audience. In this vein, his research showed that the more parodic forms of appropriation were employed in those cases where the audiences recognized 'what is being borrowed and commented upon' (Smith, 2016: 147). This also counts for the, what Smith (2016) calls, more "opportunistic" remakes that aim to 'associate themselves directly with the source text through iconographic resemblance [by utilizing] this borrowed iconography as exploitable elements through which to draw in an audience who are aware of the source text' (p. 147). Moreover, it was also discovered that (in comparison to, for instance, Turkish or Filipino remakes) Bollywood remakes localized the borrowed plots more heavily. Smith (2016), again, links this to the degree of awareness and knowledge of the source films, claiming that the higher degree of localization in India is due to the relative lack of market penetration of US media in the country' (p. 147). Indeed, it would not make much sense to, for instance, parody or self-consciously imitate source films that are unknown to these Indian audiences, he asserts. In that sense, the Bollywood case studies under his analysis show many resemblances to a standard Hollywood remake strategy, where the source films that function as basis are relatively unknown to an American (and often global) audience, resulting in less parodic or direct imitative remakes.

Though Hutcheon's (2006) distinction is highly useful, I claim that there is no clear line to be drawn between "knowing" and "unknowing" audiences, as, naturally, there are different degrees of "knowing" a text – therefore, it is probably more justified to speak of a continuum where "knowing" and "unknowing" audiences are placed on its two ends. Think, for instance, about the amount of times a person might have watched a source film, which will affect the knowledge about and experience of that film. Moreover, one might also know that the film that she/he is about to see is a film remake, without having seen the film on which it was based. These will all result in

different readings, experiences, and interpretations, eventually affecting the audiences' horizons of expectations. When audiences are aware of the "remake label", they might, for instance, have higher expectations toward the film, simply because they might think that the filmmakers "got another attempt at getting it right". In that case, they might differently judge what they are about to see. Conversely, it might, for instance, equally be the case that a person is aware of a film's remake status and, because she/he is convinced that generally film remakes are worse than non-remakes, she/he sets the bar lower and expects less of the film. At any rate, it is quite fair to assume that a great deal of the unknowing audiences will differently experience a film remake than a knowing audience, not in the least in terms of originality. Moine (2007) argued that 'an audience who is unaware will receive the remake as an original' (p. 45), which, as was discussed in the above (cf. section 2.6.1), might greatly affect the cultural value that is ascribed to it, and eventually, how it is experienced and understood.

2.6.3 *The issues of originality and fidelity in critical and popular reception*

As mentioned in several of the above sections, the phenomenon of the film remake raises issues about repetition, transformation, novelty, but also originality. In analyzing the modern prejudices against film genres, Braudy (2002) found that they 'can be traced to the aesthetic theories of the Romantic period' (p. 105), which, overall, privilege originality, uniqueness, inspiration, and singular expression. Indeed, the 'late twentieth century made a particular virtue out of querying the ability or even necessity of being "original", not least in the arts' (Sanders, 2015: 1). This Romantic understanding of originality is often linked with Edward Young's 1759 (1918) publication, titled *Conjectures on Original Composition*. As Macfarlane (2007) argues,

'Young's opinions as laid out in that work—his exasperation with imitation, his conviction that true literature was uninfluenced, his beliefs that retrospect meant relapse and that infatuation with the literary past was fatal to the literary future—are now frequently taken as a manifesto for Romantic poetic theory concerning originality *avant la lettre*' (p. 18; original emphasis).

What follows from this stance toward artistic creation and originality is that there is a clear difference between an "original" work of art and an imitation. Whereas the former 'rises spontaneously from the vital root of genius; it *grows*, it is not *made*' (Young, 1918 [1759]: 7), the latter 'is lab[o]red over, refashioned from "pre-existent materials", and

therefore does not belong to the individual' (Macfarlane, 2007: 19, original emphasis). While Umberto Eco (1985) has argued that the time we live in (a postmodern, he asserts) is one where 'iteration and repetition seem to dominate the whole world of artistic creativity, and in which it is difficult to distinguish between repetition of the media and the repetition of the so-called major arts' (p. 166), the film remake still encounters what one could call lingering effects of the Romantic idea of aesthetics and originality.

Walter Benjamin's famous essay *The work of art in the mechanical age of reproduction* (2001 [1935]) also touches on the core of originality, as well as on the debate surrounding the commercialization of art, while also discussing the issue of faithfulness toward the initial (master's) work. Building on Benjamin's insights, Michael A. Arnzen states that remakes, 'particularly those rare ones which revive what popular critics term the "buried treasures" of film history—both support and complicate Benjamin's notion' (1996: 190). Although film itself is inherently a mechanical reproduction – which can make no claim of authenticity¹⁰⁵ by means of originality –, the remake causes authentic fictions to lose their aura due to the process of reproducing the narrative, he argues. Additionally, Arnzen (1996) asserts that these remakes do reify the aura of the original, but only for the sake of profit. However, according to Victor Ginsburgh, Pierre Pestiau and Sheila Weyers (2006), Benjamin's assertion that technically reproducing works of art degrades or even destroys the aura of the original does not appear to be valid when applied to remakes: 'copies do not destroy the aura of the original, but contribute to its value' (3). The latter assumption can be linked to one of Leitch's (1990) four categories of the remake: the homage. This type of remake accepts the authority or prestigious status of the original and tries to reveal and valorize it in a well-intended manner. Often, directors of this kind of remake want the original movie to be remembered and commemorated through the remaking. The important difference here is that Leitch suggests that this idea of a remake contributing to the original is only one form or manifestation of the remake practice, whereas Ginsburg et al. claim that this idea is valid for all remakes. Leitch also states that 'remakes typically invoke the aura of their originals rather than their memory' (1990: 142). By this, he demonstrates that filmmakers do not want the source

¹⁰⁵ To me, as a term, authenticity refers to "uniqueness", being one of its kind, whereas originality points toward being "unaffected" or "solely from the self".

film to be remembered by the audience, because then the two movies may have to compete with each other. Instead, they want to invoke an immaterial atmosphere that seems to emanate from the original (aura). Benjamin's thesis further postulates that through reproduction, an essential bundle of elements (of the original) is appropriated due to changes in the films' inherent context¹⁰⁶. As Arnzen already mentioned, film itself is intrinsically mechanically reproduced, which by definition means that there is no original to be found, nor is there an inherent aura connected to it. Nevertheless, what he fails to mention is that this is where the beholder, or the audience, comes into play, attaching (contextual) meaning to the movie. Hence, the aura is subjectively and socially constructed. Next to the criterium of originality, remakes have equally been judged in terms of their fidelity toward the source film, especially when the latter is critically acclaimed or highly regarded. In this vein, Moine (2007) pointed toward an interesting paradox:

[remakes] should "respect", not "betray", especially when [their source film] is prestigious, yet they are at the same time judged on their capacity to "innovate", not to "copy", not to "slavishly reproduce", to use some of the most recurrent terms in French critical literature' (p. 14).

However, the insights and conceptual frameworks of intertextuality, adaptation, and translation studies (cf. sections 1.2; 1.3; and 1.4) have provided remake scholars with metaphors 'to describe the way in which accounts of [remaking] usually cent[er] on issues of fidelity and freedom' (Verevis, 2006: 82), in order to deconstruct these. In both the case of fidelity (being similar to) and originality or freedom (being different from), as argued by Verevis (2006), 'the text being translated [or remade] ultimately serves to affirm the identity and integrity of the (presumed) original' (p. 82). In addition to Moine (2007), he states that apart from the fact that a canonized text generates more concern in terms of accuracy and fidelity, it is also considered more worthy of translation (Verevis, 2006). Criticizing the latter from within the field of translation studies, Eric Cazdyn (2002) argues that it is not the translator's task to transmit the "original" meaning of a text, but rather to free a 'pure language [...] that is imprisoned in the original as well as [...] in the language of the translation' (p. 95). He continues

¹⁰⁶ And, one step further, one could also argue that since the age of mechanical reproduction, an emphasis on "originality" has become even greater due to the common association between reproductions and commercial underpinnings.

that 'this pure language is not the original in its pristine state that is then defiled by the translation' (ibid.). Rather on the contrary, it is much larger and can be touched upon by linking the "original" with the translation. As such, Cazdyn (2002) brings forth a novel understanding of translation, which, by translating 'an original text, inevitably transforms the original text itself' (p. 117).

The latter idea reminds of the insight of intertextuality which tells us that a text's meanings derive from its relations with other preceding and succeeding texts (cf. section 1.2). Indeed, as the concept of intertextuality has taught us, every text should be seen as an intertext, that is, as being built like a mosaic of citations, absorbing and transforming other texts. Consequently, building on this idea, Braudy (2002) asserts that absolute originality 'is finally a fraud because all art must exist in some relation to the forms of the past, whether in contrast or continuation' (p. 107).¹⁰⁷ In a similar vein, yet in a different context, Edward Said claimed that literature is 'an order of repetition, not of originality—but an eccentric order of repetition, not one of sameness' (1985: 12). Building on the latter, Hutcheon (2006) put forth that the same counts for adaptation, which, '[d]espite being temporally second, [...] is both an interpretive and a creative act; it is storytelling as both rereading and rereading' (p. 111). In other words, instead of being a 'faded imitation of a superior, authentic original [the film remake is] a "citation" grafted into a new context and thereby inevitably "refunctioned" or

¹⁰⁷ On a more personal note, I think that using originality as a criterium for judging a film is, therefore, inherently flawed. One might wonder whether, in that case, I indirectly argue for a hollowing of the concept of originality. Not necessarily so. As true originality does not exist in the arts, I would argue that it is, arguably, more fruitful to either ignore the concept or to opt for a radically different interpretation. Would it not be more interesting to think of originality as the way in which someone creatively got to work with existing elements, and the manner in which she/he combines these elements to come up with something new? Acknowledging that there is no such thing as the Romantic notion of originality apparently seems to cause much anxiety, and is associated with Baudrillard's (1994) idea of the "simulacrum" and the "fake" society. Indeed, as Mazdon (2004) argues, '[r]esponse and rejection can be perceived on a number of levels ranging from organic farming methods and a 'return to the soil' to religious and political fundamentalism in all its forms' (p. 9). Regardless of this, I am convinced that it is not the task of the scientist to judge films (and, therefore, film remakes). However, I do think that science is, among other things, here to critically analyze the concepts we use, and to investigate the criteria that are employed to judge films throughout history in order to find out where and in which period of time people have had specific ideas about culture and art, and why this might have been the case.

“disseminated” (Ray, 2001: 127). In conclusion, our awareness that today’s importance of originality in the arts is actually an 18th century invention should make us realize that a binary differentiation between (and associated value judgements of) so-called “original” films and “unoriginal” remakes is flawed. As theories of intertextuality, translation, and adaptation studies indicate, all texts intersect with, and transform a myriad of already existing texts. Put simply, ‘every text is an unoriginal intertext, including the “original” texts from which [...] remakes purport to derive’ (Herbert, 2008: 31). Mazdon (2004) summarized this well:

‘If we accept that the remake can also be shown to have multiple origins and that the identity of its origins will be altered by its own coming into being, then we can see that it is possible, indeed necessary, to discard the straightforward causality of the relationship between origin and copy (an approach which has underwritten a great many accounts of the process) in fav[o]r of a much more fluid approach’ (p. 6).

Those remakes that do not want to hide their label as remakes make their repetitive process so evident that they rule out the possibility of originality from the start. Because of this and in combination with the above-described valorization of originality, throughout history, film criticism has judged film remakes rather negatively. As discussed in section 1.5, film remakes have been haunted by a myriad of pejorative connotations. Indeed, as if it were a habit, film remakes have been belittled in critical, academic, but mainly journalistic circles. This critical disdain for remakes can be divided into two periods, linked to two general discourses on remakes. First, there is the neoromantic ‘belief in the auteur as a heroic, visionary, and idiosyncratic artist’ (Herbert, 2008: 189) which prevailed during the 1950s and 1960s and had great influence until at least the 1980s. This stance toward remakes coincided with the influential auteur theory, advanced by members of the *Cahiers du cinéma*, including André Bazin and François Truffaut, as well as other scholars and critics related to the *Nouvelle Vague*. The auteur theory states that directors, or auteurs, (must) express themselves in their films, i.e., their thoughts and feelings about a certain subject, or in broader terms their *Weltanschauung*. Accordingly, films that are original creative conceptions and reflections of a “genius auteur or artist” cannot, or should not, be remade. In this respect, if one chooses to remake a film, critics who are inclined to this discourse are apt to compare the remake to the original rather than judging the film *an sich*.

However, beginning in the 1980s, a second discourse on the remake came to the fore, influenced by postmodern thoughts. These conceptualized the remake ‘as a privileged cultural articulation and simultaneously deconstructed the former cultural hierarchies by which they were degraded’ (Herbert, 2008: 198). From then on, critics and scholars alike focused on remakes’ reflections of (national) cultural identities and attitudes, instead of directors’ visions or worldviews. As Brown (2007) argued, whereas before, remaking (and filmmaking in general) was more of ‘a question of individual artistic formation, [scholars and critics in the 1980s see] the aesthetic re-orientation of the original as almost entirely dependent on the different ideological and cultural contexts into which the story is assimilated’ (p. 351). This evolution notwithstanding, a discourse of antipathy toward remakes remained prevalent, although now in terms of cultural domination or assimilation, often labelled as “Americanization” because many European –most often French – movies were remade in Hollywood at that time.¹⁰⁸ The notion of Americanization reflected the anxiety about cultural globalization, which matched strongly with a postromantic conception of film art (Herbert, 2008). Though there is ample proof¹⁰⁹ that the neoromantic critique of remakes is prevalent in today’s film critique, concerning the postromantic type of critique, there is less to no empirical proof that this type of film critique is also common for non-Hollywood film remakes.

As we have seen in the above, contemporary scholarly tradition in remake studies problematizes notions of hierarchy, originality, and fidelity – so-called ‘originals’ are often a priori preferred to (and, therefore, ranked higher than) their remakes. Apart from the discrepancy between scholarly research and film criticism in terms of originality and fidelity, research shows that there also seems to exist a discrepancy between scholarly research and actual audience responses (Mee, 2017). Indeed, ‘[a]udiences and fans frequently frame their reactions to new versions, or even to rum[o]rs of mooted productions, within discussions of taste, respect for the original texts, and, especially, of value and quality’ (Mee, 2017: 193). Moreover, in comparison to adaptations from book to film, where fidelity is generally ascribed value, a film remake’s faithfulness toward its source film(s) is often seen as highly uncreative (Mee, 2017). Additional research equally found that the concern with fidelity (or ‘preserving’

¹⁰⁸ Cf. section 2.2.4.

¹⁰⁹ Unfortunately, this is anecdotal proof rather than systematic or quantitative (cf. Rosewarne, 2020).

of originality) can, at times, clash with the demand of audiences that (in this case television) remakes should be 'relevant representations of national culture' (Kaptan, 2018: 207). This, according to Kaptan (2018), calls for a highly subtle balance between being faithful toward the source film and the adherence to another cultural context. Additionally, in his study of the American remake of the Japanese horror *Ringu* (Nakata, 1998), Hills (2005) argues that many of the knowing audiences preferred the "original" because they like to present themselves as early adopters (in this case, cultists), claiming that they have seen the source film first – even before it achieved more widespread acclaim. Mee (2017) concludes that, in comparison to, for example, intranational film remakes, transnational remakes are granted an extra reason for existence, because of the 'additional cross-cultural aspect to their appeal [i.e.,] the lack of subtitles, recognizable actors, changes to familiar locations or customs and practices' (p. 200), which also guarantees them a new audience – which, in turn, defies easy complaints of senselessness.

Chapter 3

The Low Countries' monolingual film remake phenomenon

3.1 Introduction

Though one might have an idea about the monolingual remake as a remake in which the dialogues are in the same language as in the source film, the complex political, socio-cultural, and linguistic history or context of the Low Countries makes the central case of this dissertation rather complicated. Therefore, the following sections will first provide us with a brief history on the Low Countries: the Netherlands and Belgium (Flanders). More specifically, section 3.2.1 will delve deeper into how both the region of Flanders and the country of the Netherlands came into being, how they have been related to each other throughout history, and how their respective national identities have developed. Due to its importance for further understanding the practice of monolingual remakes in the Low Countries, particular attention will be paid to the linguistic aspect. Whereas the section 3.2.1 sketches a broader picture of the history of the Low Countries, section 3.2.2 will, more particularly, look in which ways (and when) the different regions of the Low Countries were (mostly culturally) attracted to, or repulsed by, one another. In a next step, section 3.3 will apply the insights from the previous section from the chapter to the Dutch and Flemish cinema by looking at their development and broader context (cf. section 3.3.1) as well as by focusing on the filmic exchanges, industrial collaborations, and cross-border reception (cf. section 3.3.2). Finally, section 3.3.3 will demarcate this dissertation's main object of research, i.e. the Dutch-Flemish monolingual film remakes, while also providing some necessary contextual information that will enable us to, in the empirical section, investigate the remake practice and phenomenon itself.

3.2 History and context

3.2.1 *The Low Countries and the development of the Netherlands and Belgium (Flanders)*

Though the Low Countries (or the Low Lands) are generally considered to encompass the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg, given the subject of this dissertation, I generally employ a more strict understanding of the term: when I speak of the Low Countries, I always use it to refer to the Netherlands on the one hand, and Flanders, which is the northern Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, on the other. However, depending on the perspective (political, linguistic, geographic, ...), the term may also, next to the Netherlands, include Luxembourg and refer to Belgium¹¹⁰ as a whole, instead of only Flanders.

As Paul Arblaster (2006) argues in his *History of the Low Countries*, the Netherlands and Belgium can be taken together, '[d]espite the divisions and variety within and between [them]' (p. 7). Politically, the area of the Low Countries was, though briefly, unified twice in 1543-1581 and 1815-1830. Economically, between 1948 and 1958, a union of economic co-operation was formed between Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, which is today known as the Benelux. Historically, one cannot treat the area of present-day Netherlands and Belgium apart 'at any time prior to 1650 when the political separation begun in 1581 was finalized' (Arblaster, 2006: 7). Geographically, it makes even more sense to speak of the Low Countries, as Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg, geomorphologically, form the western coastal border of the North European Plain. The area of the Low Countries is, therefore, 'defined by the low-lying North Sea coast, and especially by the delta area where Scheldt, Maas and Rhine meet the sea' (Arblaster, 2006: 8). Linguistically, probably since the Middle Ages (and perhaps even before), the area of present-day Flanders and the Netherlands has been characterized by Dutch language variants. In the 19th century, Flanders adopted the Dutch language standard from the Netherlands, which in 1898 became an official language in Belgium (Donaldson, 1983).

¹¹⁰ It should, however, also be noted that oftentimes, when one speaks of the Netherlands and Belgium, one refers to the Netherlands and Flanders more specifically.

Nevertheless, today, it is often said that the Netherlands and Flanders are two regions separated by the same language¹¹¹. As mentioned in the afore, since the 17th century, the Low Countries have been cut in two, which lead to a distinct (though at times, overlapping or interdependent) socio-cultural, religious¹¹², and political development in Flanders and the Netherlands (Van de Craen & Willemyns, 1988). Compared to the South of the Low Countries (i.e., approximately today's Flanders), from 1650 on, the North (i.e., approximately today's the Netherlands) has always remained independent, 'making it one of the oldest countries in Europe' (Van den Bulck & Van Poecke, 1996: 220). In other words, because of its centralized organization from the 17th century onwards (ibid.), there has since been quite a concrete sense of a national identity, at least among the elite or higher classes. One of the consequences was that the existence of a Dutch nation has never really been questioned (Goudsblom, 1988). Another consequence was that a standard language was developed quite easily. In the 18th century, then, an increasing amount of national institutions came into being, along with the advancement of a state, which slowly made the Netherlands into a nation-state (Righart, 1992). Again in contrast with the South (as will be shown in the following), the Netherlands could always retain its independence and never had its language pressured (Cajot, 2012). This led to the fact that the Dutch 'nationhood never turned into nationalism and that [it] was not primarily based on ethnolinguistic identity' (Van den Bulck & Van Poecke, 1996: 221). Still, a sense of national unity was established through the dissemination of cultural artifacts which, both implicitly and explicitly, pointed to specific national elements or aspects and other 'typical' Dutch norms and values (Kossmann, 1992; Righart, 1992). Think, for instance, of how the issue of the religious and ideological heterogeneity was 'praised as a national virtue of pluralism and diversity' (Van den Bulck & Van Poecke, 1996: 221) and was "resolved" with the system of pillarization¹¹³ at the end of the 19th

¹¹¹ The saying "separated by the same language" is commonly attributed to playwright and critic George Shaw who first claimed this when talking about The United States and Great Britain, which would be 'two countries separated by a common language' (e.g., Shapiro, 2015).

¹¹² During the 19th and 20th century Belgium was mainly Catholic, whereas in the Netherlands, a hegemonic Protestant minority governed Dutch culture and politics (Kossmann, 1978).

¹¹³ As such, the Netherlands conceived a layer between the 'state, society, and religion, structured vertically in ideological groups of Catholics, Liberals, Socialists, and [...] Protestants;

century – which should be interpreted as a highly modernist project, which, again, proved the virtue of the nation-state (Hellemans, 1988; 1990).

In comparison to the Low Countries' North, 'the South remained under foreign rule for over two centuries' (Van den Bulck & Van Poecke, 1996: 221), which resulted in a highly complex situation (Cajot, 2012). Due to this foreign political domination, the French language became hegemonic, which prevented the northern linguistic advancement to expand within what we now know as "Belgium". Though since 1830 (the inception of Belgium as a state) there have always been more Flemings, due to the 19th-century industrialization¹¹⁴ which flourished mainly in Wallonia, the Flemish regions were less influential in the new nation state of Belgium. While French dominated Belgian public life, in the northern part of Belgium, '95% of the population spoke a Dutch dialect and often did not understand French' (De Wever & Willems, 2020: 22). As Van den Bulck and Van Poecke (1996) assert, because of the French dominance, 'the Flemish national identity was formed on the basis of ethnic or ethnolinguistic nationhood' (p. 221). Put differently, for a Flemish nation to be conceived, a national culture and/or language was necessary. At first, it was specifically (the political recognition of a proper) language that became a crucial aspect in the (contrastive) self-identification of the Flemish movement. Yet, because of its past, Flanders did not have a standard language. Consequently, the Flemish elite persuaded the standard language from the Netherlands, namely the standard Dutch (De Wever & Willems, 2020). Indeed, the earliest Flemish movement (between 1830-1840) consisted of a cultural elite which regarded the Netherlands as a sort of utopian land, especially with regard to its standard language (Donaldson, 1983).

Importantly, even though a close connection with the northern Dutch standard language was 'preferable in a context in which the dominant position of French had to be contested' (De Wever & Willems, 2020: 24), politically, a clear distance was kept from the Netherlands. For the record, this movement should be interpreted as part of

while in Flanders, Nationalist-separatist groups also tried to build a segregated "pillar" of organizations. Notwithstanding these broad similarities, there were significant variations in both pillarized systems' (Biltreyst, Van Oort & Meers, 2019: 102). Whereas the Dutch pillarization already broke down during the 1960-1970s, Belgium would follow later.

¹¹⁴ According to de Jong and Solar (1998), this early industrialization of Belgium would mark the greatest economic distinction between both countries, given that the Dutch economy would flourish in a later stage. However, the 20th century would have evened this out.

a Belgian nationalism which aimed to transform the country 'into a crossroads of Germanic and Romance culture [...] [which for them] implied [...] an official recognition of Dutch by means of language laws' (ibid.). This clear choice to adopt the northern Dutch language standard could have resulted in the development of common media, which could then have contributed to the formation of a "Greater Dutch" nation. Yet, as Bruno De Wever and Gertjan Willems argue, 'the [Belgian] media landscape was and is determined almost entirely by [distinct] Belgian and Flemish social and political frameworks' (2020: 24), while the media landscape from the Netherlands is determined by Dutch frameworks. During the 20th century (especially the 1960s-1970s), several nationalist ('Diets') movements (as well as some political parties) that strived for a Greater Dutch culture arose. Yet, their attempts had little impact on actual nation-forming processes (of a Greater Netherlands, a Dutch-speaking nation encompassing both the North and South of the Low Countries). One could also point toward similar, yet purely cultural endeavors – think, for instance of several Dutch-Flemish media collaborations and institutions that strive for such and other collaborations (cf. below). However, these have also had no nation-forming effects (De Wever & Willems, 2020). Additionally, from the turn of the 20th century on (and mainly after the First World War), the Flemish movement became highly significant and changed in form. After the First World War, the Belgian government did not accept a short list of Flemish requirements, which is why part of the Flemish movement became more and more anti-Belgian. During the 1930s, a series of crucial language laws turned Flanders into an officially monolingual region, which equally resulted in the development of a Flemish cultural landscape. After the Second World War, the Flemish movement was largely discredited, but in the late 1950s, and especially in the 1960s, the Flemish movement succeeded again to make the government meet more of their requirements, which led to new language laws as well as securing the language boundary between the North and South of Belgium. Starting with the first state reform in 1970, Belgium slowly but steadily became a federal state, with Flanders (as a region and community) gaining more and more political autonomy.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ As a federal state, Belgium consists of three communities (i.e. the Flemish, French, and German-speaking community) and three regions (i.e. Flemish Region, Brussels-Capital Region, and Walloon Region).

The formation of a Flemish government transformed the Flemish identity construction, resulting in a 'more self-assured and self-conscious interpretation' (De Wever & Willems, 2020: 31): on the one hand, influenced by processes of globalization and postmodernity, national discourses increasingly opted for a more pluralistic and less essentialist representation of the Flemish identity. On the other hand, however, an ethnocultural and homogeneous Flemish identity image remained present in society, with a clear (extreme right) political revival starting at the end of the 1980s (ibid.). These same authors also claim that while several novelists explicitly and consciously contributed to a Flemish identity construction after the Second World War, from the 1980s on, this clearly changed because of the association between the Flemish nationalist movement and extreme right political parties. The same could also be said of Flemish television: whereas in the first decades, television producers explicitly contributed to the development of a Flemish culture and identity, today, they still focus on recognition and the everyday¹¹⁶, but they seem to be driven by commercial and economic reasonings instead of ideological ones (Van den Bulck & Dhoest, 2020). Arguably, the result – though with a different interpretation and aim – is similar: a Flemish identity as well as the region of Flanders is produced, reproduced, and imagined. Simultaneously, as De Wever and Willems (2020) assert, one should not forget that today's situation in Flanders is highly complicated, as the Belgian nation also remains important – and often functions as a point of reference in different media and cultural artifacts.

3.2.2 *The Low Countries: attraction and/or repulsion?*

The relationship between the Netherlands and Flanders 'has always oscillated between attraction and repulsion, and has a turbulent history' (Brems, 2017: 1). There are, naturally, plentiful factors that have influenced these processes of attraction and repulsion (or, more nuanced, indifference) between Flanders and the Netherlands. The most obvious factor is the Dutch language. Indeed, as was shown in the above, both regions have Dutch as (one of) their standard language(s). When in 1815 the United Kingdom of the Netherlands (consisting of today's Belgium and the Netherlands) was created as a buffer state against France, a sense of unity was of chief importance to

¹¹⁶ The 2016-2020 management contract between the Flemish government and the Flemish public broadcaster still mentions that the broadcaster should further develop the identity and diversity of Flemish culture.

Willem I. That feeling of unity could be achieved with a common language, as in that period, 'about 75 per cent of the new kingdom's population spoke Dutch, half of which were Flemings' (Brems, 2017: 3). Yet, one should acknowledge that, even though from a linguistic perspective one could consider the new kingdom as Dutch-speaking, both the Flemings and northern compatriots (who spoke different dialects) themselves were not convinced that these dialects formed one language (*ibid.*). This shows that even during this brief moment of (political) consolidation, the inhabitants of the Low Countries may not have felt "one", despite their common language.

Nevertheless, as will become clear in the following sections, Flanders has always directed its attention more toward the Netherlands than the other way around. According to several scholars, the Netherlands was long seen as the shining example to Flanders, and this in many different terrains: musical, cultural (e.g. the early sexual revolution in the Netherlands) but also political (Hooghe, 2009; Van der Hoeven, 2012). Yet, other crucial factors may be at play here. One might, for instance, adduce 'Flanders' longstanding struggle for cultural autonomy within the Belgian state' (McMartin, 2019: 161), whereas the Dutch identity was never really questioned. Indeed,

'For ages, [T]he Netherlands seemed to assume that there can be only one identity (a perpetuation of William I's opinion), which is defined by the dominant Netherlands, based on one linguistic norm (Netherlandic Dutch). In Flanders, many people shared this feeling. It was only during periods of burgeoning independence that an own language norm was advanced' (Brems, 2018: 14).

Arguably, the Dutch standard language was introduced somewhat artificially in Flanders at the end of the 19th century, and has, therefore, not been able to develop in the same way as in the Netherlands (*cf.* section 3.2.1). Whereas many Flemish people distanced themselves from their dialects, they were equally unwilling or even unable to speak the Dutch standard language. Due to this cultural hierarchy, Flanders was long situated at the periphery, whereas the Netherlands was at the center. However, an "intermediate" language slowly but steadily (*cf.* below) arose in the Dutch speaking part of Belgium, which 'stressed Flanders' cultural emancipation vis-à-vis the Netherlands, at the same time acting as a galvanizing factor in the move toward independence' (Brems, 2017: 14).

This unequal power relation between Flanders and the Netherlands is confirmed when one looks at the intralingual translation between Dutch (or Netherlandic) Dutch and Flemish Dutch. As Elke Brems (2017) indicates, during the 19th century (until 1914) and after the Second World War, ‘the Netherlandic Dutch norm was prevalent and the Flemings translated their texts into Netherlandic Dutch’ (p. 1). If writers wanted to gain cultural capital, they had to write or translate their texts into the northern variant. In the run-up and during the Second World War, however, efforts were made to alter the route of the intralingual translation, now from Netherlandic Dutch to Flemish Dutch.¹¹⁷ Whereas in the 1960s and 1970s, Flanders still aimed to adopt the Netherlandic Dutch standard language (at the expense of the Flemish Dutch)¹¹⁸, in the period 1970-1993, when Flanders increasingly started to claim a proper cultural identity¹¹⁹ (cf. section 3.2.1), the Flemish attitude toward the Netherlands (and its language norms) slowly began to change (Cajot, 2012).

Apart from the struggle for autonomy, one could also point toward another crucial factor that explains the unequal power balance or the Flemish focus on the Netherlands: the smaller size of the Flemish market and industry. Indeed, because of the simple fact that the Netherlands is bigger – not only in terms of inhabitants – it can take advantage of economies of scale. Due to this economic imbalance, it makes sense that Flanders may be more interested in working together with the Netherlands than the other way around. Indeed, whether or not it is a ‘real or perceived underdog status vis-à-vis its neighb[o]rs to the north’ (McMartin, 2019: 159), there is definitely more to gain for Flanders from working together with the Netherlands than vice versa. For instance, research shows that especially from the 1960s on (but also before that

¹¹⁷ One should notice that these translations were actually “retranslations” based on foreign (e.g., Scandinavian) books that already received a Netherlandic Dutch translation (Brems, 2017).

¹¹⁸ Think, for instance, of how the Flemish popular comic series *Suske & Wiske* was translated and adapted for a Dutch audience for more than ten years, starting in 1953. In 1964, however, it was decided to publish a single Netherlandic Dutch version that was sold in both the Flemish and Dutch market (Meesters, 2000). The motivation behind the latter decision was both a cultural-political one (following the campaign to adhere to the Netherlandic Dutch), as well as an economic one (one only had to produce one set of printing plates instead of two).

¹¹⁹ And, consequently, ‘Flanders became an established and self-evident national entity, leaving behind its former insecurities and complexes vis-à-vis the more recogni[z]ed French and Dutch cultures’ (Dhoest, 2007: 65).

time), the (extra) needs and expectations of Flemish television audiences were answered by the Dutch television (which was more casual, progressive, free fought, and daring), which they could receive via antenna or cable (Bauwens, 2007). Indeed, what these Flemish audiences could not find in the Flemish public broadcaster's output was answered by the northern neighbors. In the year of 1970, it was found that, on average, 43,9% of the Flemish audiences that watch TV, watched Dutch television. The share for Dutch television of the total viewing volume increased in the following years, up until the inception of the commercial broadcaster, VTM ('Vlaamse Televisie Maatschappij'), in 1989¹²⁰ (Bauwens, 2007). Though systematic research on the specific topic lacks, there does exist quite some anecdotal evidence that there is no question of the other direction (i.e. Dutch people watching a significant amount of Flemish television). Indeed, while many Flemings watched Dutch television (until the year of 1989), the opposite direction seems to have never really existed (Hooghe, 2009). Whereas in the year of 1980, for instance, the Dutch channels NED1 and NED2 together had a market share of 23,5% in Flanders, the Flemish channels BRTN1 and BRTN2 only had a market share of 3% in the Netherlands (Servaes & Heinsman, 1992: 372).

Arguably, the final blow of the Flemish attitude toward the Dutch (culture and language) was given from the 1990s onwards, where from that moment on 'Dutch can be considered a pluricentric language with more or less equal power balance' (Brems, 2017: 1). One of the crucial contributing factors to this evolution is the inception of VTM in 1989, the first commercial TV broadcaster in Flanders (Van Hoof & Vandekerckhove, 2013). Not only did this initiate a process of commercialization within the Flemish audiovisual industry, the government could also not impose language norms onto the broadcaster (as they could with the public broadcaster). Consequently, VTM was able to broadcast programs in what is called "interlanguage" ('tussentaal',

¹²⁰ The fact that the Flemish interest in Dutch television almost changed overnight (data show that already in the first weeks of the launching of VTM the Flemish market share for Dutch television almost fully diminished, cf. Bauwens [2007]) suggests that the Flemish inclination toward Dutch television was mainly to answer their needs, and not necessarily because of a clear effect of cultural proximity – perhaps except for the fact that Flemish audiences could, arguably, understand the content without the need for subtitles.

'Verkavelingsvlaams' or 'soap-Vlaams')¹²¹. Before 1989, Flemish audiences almost exclusively watched Flemish¹²² and/or Dutch public broadcasters. Their programs were both always in Standard Dutch, 'with the exception of comedy and period drama, where dialect was used for increased realism as the standard Dutch had connotations of stiffness' (Dhoest, 2007: 66). Another consequence was that the BRT ('Belgische Radio- en Televisieomroep', the Flemish public broadcaster) was also no longer exclusively (except for news broadcasts and cultural programs) spoken in the Dutch standard language (Van de Velde, 1996) and that it started producing much more domestic fiction (Dhoest, 2007)¹²³. Additionally, before 1989, the Flemish public television had quite 'a strong tradition of cultural nationalism, but since the introduction of commercial broadcasting in 1989 "Flemishness" is less explicitly a preoccupation for the broadcasting officials' (Dhoest, 2007: 63).

While the year of 1989 practically made Dutch into a pluricentric language – which means that the development of the (standard) language is directed from more than one center –, Dutch Dutch and Flemish Dutch should still not be considered as two distinct languages, despite their different variants and historical evolutions (Brems,

¹²¹ Cf. Koen Plevoets (2013). It was and is often assumed that the Flemish "interlanguage" is only a temporary transition stage in the convergence process from Flemish Dutch toward Dutch Dutch. Yet, the Flemish intermediate language might actually become the real standard language for informal communication in Flanders (De Caluwe, 2009).

¹²² Actually, the public broadcaster played quite a prominent role in the promotion of the northern standard language standard – a social project that mainly took off in Flanders from the 1950s (Van Poecke & Van den Bulck, 1991; Van Hoof & Jaspers, 2012).

¹²³ As argued by Dhoest (2007), on a formal level, 'the emphasis has shifted from idiosyncratic to genre productions, in particular sitcoms, soaps and crime drama. All of these are strongly influenced by internationally spread genres, conventions and formats; so, on the surface at least, contemporary Flemish fiction presents a case for the globali[z]ation and Americani[z]ation theses'. However, as he continues, that does not imply that domestic fiction as such has become less influential and national. Indeed, '[a]ll Flemish fiction is made in Flanders by Flemish broadcasters or production companies, and it is mostly broadcast in Flanders to Flemish audiences, only some dramas are exported to the Netherlands' (Dhoest, 2007: 63). Generally, the Flemish television landscape became more diverse, yet most genres are still 'strongly rooted in social reality and lack the glamour, fantasy and action elements typical of many American productions' (ibid.). Hence, today's Flemish television fiction offers quite varied representations of the Flemish region, aiming to 'fit with the experiences of viewers' (ibid.). In conclusion, from the 1990s on, the viewers have become the central point of reference, in comparison to the producer-centered approach before the 1990s.

2017). Yet, in terms of intelligibility, research shows that, on a regional level, Flemish people have ‘significantly fewer intelligibility problems with correctly understanding Netherlandic Dutch varieties than the other way around, for which both phonetic and lexical evidence has been found’ (Impe, 2010: 185).¹²⁴ Additionally, in terms of language attitudes, research shows that most Dutch-speaking people in the Low Countries hold the most positive attitude toward the two national standard varieties (Standard Dutch and Standard Belgian/Flemish Dutch). Yet, the same research equally indicates that – and this is in line with previous research (Boets & de Schutter, 1977; Deprez & de Schutter, 1981) – overall, both Flemish and Dutch people prefer their own national standard variety as well as their own regionally colored variety (Impe, 2010: 91).¹²⁵ Put simply, even though the same Dutch language is spoken, written, and understood in both Flanders and the Netherlands, there are many different regional varieties within and between both these regions, and people tend to prefer their national (Dutch or Flemish) varieties.

Despite (or, perhaps, partially because of) this linguistic preference, there exist several institutions that aim to stimulate the linguistic, educational, and literary cooperation between Belgium (Flanders), the Netherlands (and Suriname). One of these initiatives is the Dutch Language Union (‘Taalunie’)¹²⁶, which was established in 1980 (De Caluwe, 2013). Apart from striving for more collaboration among these regions, the organization also defines what is to be considered as Standard Dutch and what is not. Even though Dutch is pluricentric (bicentric in practice), De Caluwe (2013) argues that the Dutch Dutch is the dominant variant, not only because of its demographic prevalence, but also because of its language history. He argues that if one wishes to ‘determine the status of (non-)dominant varieties, exploring only the linguistic standards isn’t sufficient, [as] we also take into account the cultural organization of the language communities’ (De Caluwe, 2013: 45).

¹²⁴ I would like to thank dr. Anne-Sophie Ghyselen for sending me these studies.

¹²⁵ There are, naturally, nuances to these findings, as it was, for instance, found that people from the Dutch and Flemish region of Limburg preferred each other’s language variety more than other regional varieties (Impe, 2010).

¹²⁶ This was actually an idea put forward by the ‘Algemeen-Nederlands Verbond’ (ANV), which is an association under Dutch law that was established in 1895 by Hippoliet Meert. The organization aims to promote cooperation between the Netherlands and Flanders (Van Hees & De Schepper, 1995).

As such, within the context of the Low Countries, he differentiates between parallel markets (independent) on the one hand, and unified markets (cooperating) on the other. Among the parallel markets in Flanders and the Netherlands, he places the newspaper and magazine market, which are both solely domestically focused (cf. also Cajot, 2012). De Caluwe (2013) argues that these markets are, moreover, highly symmetrical, indicating that there would be no dominant region in this case. Arguably, this has changed given that, in the past two decades, the Flemish media companies DPG Media and Mediahuis increasingly expanded in the Netherlands by buying several Dutch magazine and newspaper titles. The audiovisual markets in the Low Countries are also highly parallel and domestically focused (Cajot, 2012; De Caluwe, 2013). Again, the inception of VTM was the crucial moment here, leading to a liberalization of the market and initiating a wider range of domestic productions (cf. above). The same goes for the radio market, as well as the broader music market (though there are several cases of bands and songs that do cross the border). In the context of advertisements, one could also speak of a parallel market, even for products that are marketed almost identically in both regions. Next, the film markets in the Low Countries are marked as highly parallel, which means that they are almost (except from a few co-productions that cross the border) fully separated from each other (cf. section 3.3.2). A report of the period 2004-2012 confirms the above and expands it to other media: there is hardly any substantial cross-border traffic between Flanders and the Netherlands in terms of newspapers, magazines, and radio, but also literature, dance performances, (music) theatre productions, and television (Van Baelen, 2013; see also Raats & Donders, 2020).

Apart from some recent successes in co-productions of television programs and fiction, from the 1990s on, the Netherlands and Flanders have started to adapt each other's television formats (Van Keulen, 2020) and remade each other's television fiction. A famous example of a Flemish television format that is localized in the Netherlands is *De Mol* (1998-now)¹²⁷ or *Wat Als?* (2012). Additionally, there are also several examples of remakes of fiction series, such as the Flemish *De Kampioenen* (1990-2011, remade in *De Victorie* [1994]), *Flikken* (1999-2009, remade in *Flikken*

¹²⁷ Indicative of this phenomenon is when in 2017, the Flemish independent production companies Woestijnvis, Lector Media, and De Mensen have started a venture (Fabiola) in the Netherlands to sell their formats to the Dutch television market.

Maastricht [2007-now] and *Flikken Rotterdam* [2016-now]), *4eVeR* (2017-2019, remade in *#FOREVER* [2019]), and *Dertigers* (2019, remade in *Dertigers* [2020-now]), or more recently the Dutch *De Luizenmoeder* (2018-2019, remade in *De Luizenmoeder* [2019-2020]).

The latter examples should be placed in the broader European context wherein, since the 1990s, the local production (which, importantly, encompasses localized television formats) started to increase and the import of foreign TV programs decreased significantly (Esser, 2007; Straubhaar, 2007). Moreover, both the Netherlands and Flanders still import a lot more TV programs from the UK and the USA, and only in second instance from one another.¹²⁸ However, when it comes down to format adaptation, a slightly different picture is painted: whereas in the Netherlands, most formats indeed come from the UK, Belgium (Flanders) takes the second place, and the USA only takes the third place. In Flanders, on the other hand, most formats come from the Netherlands, while the UK takes the second place and the USA the third. In other words, in comparison to (ready-made) program import, format adaptations between the Netherlands and Flanders happen significantly more (Van Keulen, 2020). Jolien van Keulen (2020) argues that this finding is quite significant, given that formats are generally understood as being “languageless” and “culturally neutral” (i.e. localizable), which, in theory, enables them to travel almost everywhere (cf. section 2.4.3). The fact that the Netherlands and Flanders exchange significantly more formats than with other European countries might tell us something about their cultural and linguistic closeness, but given their overall adaptability, there might be another reason. According to Van Keulen (2020), instead of a cultural or linguistic proximity, one should look at a “production proximity” or “industrial proximity” of sorts. Indeed, even though De Caluwe (2013) speaks of two parallel television markets, their industries (and their actors) show a lot more connectivity, agreement, and proximity. Hence, next to the fact that their production budgets are often highly similar (which eases the format adaptation process), one should notice the personal connections between producers, writers, etc. These latter people watch each other’s programs and exchange ideas (Van Keulen, 2020). As will be shown in the following, in quite a similar

¹²⁸ Research shows that imported ready-made TV programs are barely exchanged within European markets, except when it concerns neighboring countries that speak the same language (Esser, 2009).

vein, the film industries in the Low Countries have, next to the co-production strategy, started to invest in the remaking of each other's films (cf. below).

Partially as a response to these centrifugal forces in the Low Countries, in the past decades (starting in the 1980s), several governmental initiatives were undertaken that aim to keep the idea alive that there is still enough unity between the different parts of the Low Countries, and that this unity should be propagated. Next to the already mentioned Dutch Language Union, in 1946, a cultural treaty between Belgium and the Netherlands¹²⁹ was signed (which would, from 1995 on, be led by the committee 'Commissie Cultureel Verdrag Nederland-Vlaanderen')¹³⁰, which until its dissolution in 2015 received subsidies from the Flemish Government to increase the cultural cooperation between Flanders and Netherlands in the fields of culture, education, science, and welfare. Think also of organizations like deBuren ('Het Vlaams-Nederlands Huis deBuren'), which is a continuation of the cultural cooperation between Flanders and the Netherlands that was initiated in the 1980s. More specifically, deBuren is a cultural organization founded in 2004 by both the Dutch and Flemish governments. The aim of the organization and the associated center is to promote the culture of the Low Countries in both regions. A similar, yet different initiative is 'the low countries' ('de lage landen'), previously called 'Ons Erfdeel', which originated in 1957. Next to promoting the cultural cooperation between Flanders and the Netherlands, it also aims to promote the Dutch and Flemish culture abroad. Another example is the Flemish cultural organization 'de Brakke Grond', which was founded in 1981. The organization is financed by the Flemish government and promotes the cultural identity of Flanders, aiming to present characteristic developments in the field of art and culture from Flanders, essentially advocating for more Flemish-Dutch cooperation. In conclusion, while most markets in the Netherlands and Flanders are parallel or region-specific, there have been several initiatives that are trying to unify on different levels. Whereas it seems that most of these unifying initiatives are driven by ideological incentives (e.g. in the case of *the low countries*), there might equally be economic motivations behind the decision to cooperate (given that both markets are small and might flourish by accumulating budgets and expertise).

¹²⁹ Which, in practice, was mostly between the Netherlands and Flanders.

¹³⁰ Which was also an initiative by the ANV, cf. footnote 126.

José Cajot (2012) concludes that, since the 1990s, the relationship between Flanders and the Netherlands – especially Flanders toward the Netherlands¹³¹ – is characterized by a drastic decline in contact and communication, and a far-reaching decrease in recognition and acceptance. Therefore, he argues, the Dutch language area is, in fact, bi-national, and rather bipolar than bicentric.

'The increased perception of having a proper identity, especially on the Flemish side, leads to an over fixation of individuality and to an enlargement of differences. Hence, there exists a language schism in the Low Countries' (Cajot, 2012: 64).

This is reflected in the fact that cultural artifacts (literature, radio, television, film, etc) produced in both regions of the Low Countries are increasingly less exchanged between one another. This also becomes apparent in the fact that when television content is imported from across the border, it is almost in all cases subtitled. One finds a similar tendency when international animation films are distributed in the Low Countries: since 1995, these films receive a separate dubbed version for the Dutch and Flemish market. The same goes for, for example, Flemish or Dutch animation films that cross each other's borders. Another strategy that is employed is a mix of both Dutch and Flemish accents in the same film (Kintaert, 2011). Finally, Cajot (2012) also mentions that the Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon is also an indicator of the process of increasing disinterest. Before delving deeper into the monolingual remake phenomenon of the Low Countries, I will briefly contextualize and historicize the small cinema industries of the Netherlands and Flanders.

¹³¹ Whereas 'until the last quarter of the 20th century, Flemish intellectuals looked up to the North (who were inspired by it), as the Netherlands was their leading example and proof that a fully-fledged culture in Dutch was possible' (Cajot, 2012: 52), the opposite direction has always been less significant (cf. above).

3.3 The (small) film industries of the Netherlands and Flanders

As was shown in section 3.2.1, there might be several (historical, political, linguistic, and cultural) reasons to join Flanders with the Netherlands into the “Low Countries”. The same could be said for a cinema of the Low Countries, as Ernest Mathijs (2004) claims¹³². In other words, Mathijs (2004) puts forward the idea of a supra-national Low Countries cinema of sorts¹³³. To make his point, he adduces different textual factors that in some way make a film “feel” like it is from the Low Countries. Aware of the constructive and non-essential character of national identity, he asserts that Low Countries films are loaded with self-doubt or uncertainty (especially in terms of cultural identity). Additionally, some of the most recurrent issues or themes in Low Countries cinema would be authenticity, individuality, and the portrayal of the “real”. The latter is also reflected in the Low Countries’ documentary tradition (think of Henri Storck, Joris Ivens, Bert Haanstra, etc), which has had an international impact. A particular use, portrayal or representation of sex (seeing the latter as a metaphor for the living of life) would also be “typical” for Low Countries cinema (e.g. the sexual openness in many Dutch films from the 1970s-1980s). In terms of style, Mathijs (2004) adduces what is called “magic realism”¹³⁴ (originating from a Belgian literary tradition). He concludes that ‘in general, [...] the quest for and inability to obtain a fixed cultural identity breathes through almost every Low Countries film’ (Mathijs, 2004: 11).

Because of the latter, and in combination with the complex cultural connections within the Low Countries (cf. section 3.2.2), ‘many debates inevitably revolve around the question of what it means to be part of the region, and how to define one’s own cultural identity in relation to it; [...] With what and who does one feel

¹³² Moreover, when Mathijs (2004) talks about the Low Countries, he refers to the Netherlands, Belgium (as a whole), and Luxembourg. Even though he acknowledges that the concept can be quite problematic, as it groups together three countries (with, though at times overlapping, distinct historical backgrounds), he argues that the moments in which the entire region was unified (which, would make the region culturally proximate), justifies its use.

¹³³ As indicated in section 2.2.2, this dissertation differentiates between, for instance, films that are from Poland (in terms of geography) and national Polish films (i.e. films that deal with national identity in a specific way that one could call “Polish”).

¹³⁴ This genre of film often depicts “real-world settings” but combines it with supernatural or magic elements.

affiliated, and how is identity self-presented?’ (Mathijs, 2004: 4). Even though there might be different reasons to talk about (and delve into) a cinema of the Low Countries, I will discuss Dutch and Flemish film separately while acknowledging their overlap and proximity. To do so, I adopt the conceptual lens of ‘small cinemas’ by Mette Hjort and Duncan Petrie (2007). The reasons for this decision are manifold: (1) Low Countries cinema can be considered as a supra-national cinema of sorts (cf. Mathijs, 2004); (2) Belgian and Dutch cinema can both be considered as two independent national cinemas; (3) Belgian cinema can also be considered as consisting of two, separate regional cinemas divided by a linguistic border; and (4) Flemish cinema can be considered as an autonomous regional cinema. Moreover, the Netherlands and Flanders are both seen as two small film industries because of their overall small market sizes (in 2019, Flanders has almost 6.6 million inhabitants, whereas the Netherlands has about 17.4 million inhabitants). As Hjort and Petrie assert, ‘[s]mall nations by definition have very limited domestic markets for all locally produced goods and services – including culture – and so have been forced by the neo-liberal economic and political pressures of globali[z]ation into a greater dependency on external markets’ (Hjort & Petrie, 2007: 15), which can equally be applied to the Dutch and Flemish film markets (cf. Table 1 and Jones, 2017).

The concept of small cinemas reminds us that we should combine the subnational, regional, national, international, transnational, and global lenses (cf. section 2.2.2 and 2.2.3) to study cinema. Moreover, Hjort and Petrie (2007) believe that an analysis of the relationships between film and national elements should be part of present and future film studies, claiming that research on cinema can benefit from a consideration of small national (or regional) cinemas and industries, provided that these are seen as small but permeable aspects of a transnational network. In the context of such interconnected networks, small nations and/or regions often choose to emphasize the uniqueness of their national identity in order to bolster their existence (Hjort & Petrie, 2007). By examining the relations between cinema and the nation, one can understand ‘the specificity of various contemporary and historical conjunctures’ (Hjort & Petrie, 2007: 13). Finally, analyzing small nations can uncover ‘the emergence of regional networks and alliances that are providing transnational alternatives to the neo-liberal model of globali[z]ation driving contemporary Hollywood’ (Hjort & Petrie, 2007: 17). Therefore, the following section will briefly look at the Dutch and Flemish

cinemas, and, more particularly, how they, in general terms, both portray and construct a (similar yet distinct) cultural and/or national identity.

3.3.1 *Dutch versus Flemish cinema and identity*

Even though the first Dutch film productions arose between the end of the 19th century and the early 20th century, an actual national cinema originated in the 1930s when sound was introduced in film (Pisters, 2011; Hofstede, 2000). During these years, different studios were built and several films were produced (e.g. *Willem van Oranje* in 1934). The Second World War put an end to the flourishing Dutch cinema industry, and it was only in the 1960s-1970s that the glory days from before the war would come back (Pisters, 2011). Yet, in the mid-1950s, the Dutch government, together with the Netherlands Cinema Association ('Bioscoopbond')¹³⁵, established the famous Dutch Film and Television Academy ('Nederlandse Film en Televisie Academie', now the 'Nederlandse Filmacademie') in Amsterdam. A few years later, the first forms of subsidies for film were initiated (Hofstede, 2000). From the 1970s on, many Dutch films that were subsidized by the government would become relatively to highly successful (think of *Turks Fruit* in 1973 which was a domestic hit). During the 1980s, the Dutch cinema did not perform well domestically, except for, for instance, Dick Maas' Hollywood-inspired formula films such as *De Lift* in 1983¹³⁶ and *Flodder* (1986), a comedy film series which performed exceptionally well.

¹³⁵ The Netherlands Cinema Association ('Nederlandse Bioscoopbond' or NBB) was founded in 1921 and formed an association of producers, distributors, and cinemas. Until the 1980s, the association has been highly influential in the Dutch film world. Members of the NBB were forbidden to trade with non-members, which made the association deeply influential. 'A marginal circuit of "non-commercial" cinemas did exist, mostly consisting of politico-religious organizations screening Christian or Socialist films and to a lesser degree cinephile societies screening mostly art films. Since the early interwar period, the NBB had pursued the marginalization of these secondary, often pillarized circuits' (Biltreyst, Van Oort & Meers, 2019: 103). As Belgium did not know a similar influential institution, its cinema industry 'was less centralized around one corporative trade organization regulating the market. Instead, many Catholic, Socialist, and to a lesser extent, Liberal, and Flemish-Nationalist cinemas coexisted alongside commercial cinemas, not-for-profit and for-profit alike. Rather than a trade organization, the market decided what constituted a viable cinema operation' (ibid.). For more information on the influence of the NBB in the Netherlands, cf. Thunnis van Oort (2017).

¹³⁶ Which he remade himself in 2001 (titled *Down*) in the US.

Because of the fruitful collaborations with Dutch television broadcasters on the one hand, the support of new tax arrangements (which made it more attractive for investors to invest their money in Dutch film productions) such as the cv-construction¹³⁷, the inception of the Dutch Film Fund ('Nederlands Filmfonds' or NFF)¹³⁸, as well as new European film subsidies (Eurimages¹³⁹), the Dutch cinema was revived in the 1990s (Pisters, 2011). Films such as *Antonia* (1995), *Karakter* (1997), *All Stars* (1997), and *Abeltje* (1998) were popular (domestic) successes. It is, however, unmistakably true that from the end of the Second World War on, the American culture and film production has been highly popular and influential in the Netherlands. In this vein, Bart Hofstede (2000) argues that the Dutch film industry is heavily affected by the American dominance (especially since the 1980s), which, for instance, results in Dutch filmmakers producing Hollywood-like films¹⁴⁰, some of which

¹³⁷ Which was initiated in 1999 and stands for 'commanditaire vennootschap'. It is a type of limited partnership business entity, which, in short, allowed investors to deduct their investments in film productions from their taxes. In 2006, these cv constructions were banned by the European Court in Brussels.

¹³⁸ The fund was created in 1993 when the Dutch Film Fund merged with the Dutch Film Production Fund.

¹³⁹ The co-production fund of the Council of Europe, launched in 1989. Think also of MEDIA (launched in 1991), which is another supranational program by the European Commission.

¹⁴⁰ This concept refers to Higson's (2018) comment on "like-Hollywood" films which show much 'cultural familiarity with Hollywood' (Higson, 2018: 316). The latter hints at a subversion of the common assumption that 'Hollywood is [...] the stronger industry that exploits smaller industries such as those of Europe, virtually mining it for raw materials' (Meir, 2020) and suggests the opposite: Europe is now employing Hollywood's own techniques to fight its dominance. As asserted by Mueller (2019: 2), this type of European genre cinema, however, equally fulfills 'the desire to retain cultural specificity as an important tool to express distinct collective and national experiences and identities'. Think also of the concept "karaoke-Americanism" which was first (passingly) launched by Thomas Elsaesser (2005) and further developed by Jaap Kooijman (2008a; 2008b). Whereas Elsaesser (2005) founded the concept to address the complex dynamic between European cinema and American cinema since the 1980s (i.e. one of overlap, attraction, and repulsion), Kooijman (2008a) defines it as 'both faithful imitation and playful parody, both mimicry and mockery, enabling an appropriation of Hollywood which leaves room for ambiguity' (191). More specifically, for Kooijman, this concept points toward the phenomenon where, for instance, Belgian or Dutch filmmakers appropriate cultural traditions that are known as "American" to shape the identity of, e.g. a Belgian or Dutch film. As such, the concept refers to a balance in between a conscious imitation, adaptation, or active

are even produced in English in order to distribute them more easily worldwide. Whereas some Dutch filmmakers moved to Hollywood, others stayed in the Netherlands and started to produce cheap ‘telefilms’ (i.e. films for television) (Hofstede, 2000). At any rate, several film critics started to plea for more Dutch authenticity, realism, or identity in its cinema (Pisters, 2011). Next to the Hollywood-inspired genre films, Dutch filmmakers started to focus more on the portrayal of ‘Dutchness’, or, more broadly on the Dutch culture. This clearly resonated with the Dutch audiences, as the domestic market shares heavily increased in the first decade of the 21st century.

From the 1990s on, and especially since the 2000s, the Dutch film industry increasingly started to focus on popular cinema in order to attract wide audiences – with success, as shown in Table 1 (cf. below). This is, for instance, reflected in the high amount of (next to drama and youth films) romantic comedies that were released since the success of *Alles is Liefde* (2007). The emphasis on popular cinema is strengthened by the many collaborations between film producers and television companies, as well as by the different semi-automatic subsidies and economic measurements. In 1985, for instance, the CoBo Fund (which stands for the ‘Co-productiefonds Binnenlandse Omroep’) was initiated¹⁴¹. In 2009, then, the Abraham Tuschinski Fund Foundation¹⁴² was conceived. Additionally, in 2014, the cash rebate system (or Film Production Incentive¹⁴³) was established under auspices of the Dutch Film Fund. Consequently, from 2014 until recently, more than half of the Film Fund's money was paid to film producers without a substantive assessment in terms of content. Many critics argued that, because there was less money for subsidies that were selectively granted, the control over quality and diversity has been compromised (van Gestel, April 2019). Van Gestel (April 2019) asserts that, when a successful (in

performance, while at the same time not disdaining or ignoring one's own (cultural) identity (cf. Chapter 10). The notion of “Hollywood-like films” is, however, preferred in this dissertation because it does not carry the same pejorative connotation.

¹⁴¹ The fund receives fees from Belgian and German cable companies that broadcast television programs from Dutch public channels. As such, it subsidizes co-production projects of one or more Dutch public broadcasters with independent film producers or institutions, or with Belgian and German public broadcasters,.

¹⁴² This foundation specifically supports the production of popular Dutch films of which the production budget is at least € 1.5 million.

¹⁴³ This is a financial measurement by the Dutch Film Fund which enables film producers to refund 30% of their film spending in the Netherlands.

terms of domestic admissions) romantic comedy was produced, the producer automatically received government funding for her/his next project. If the film was financially disappointing, however, the contribution to the next film would simply be lower, which results in a cheaper follow-up. Others criticized the lack of filmmakers with non-Dutch roots, which results in a still highly white and overall homogenous film repertoire (Pisters, 2011).

Table 1: Total amount of cinema admissions for national/regional films and domestic market share of the Dutch and Belgian/Flemish film market between 1995-2019 (BE means the market share of Belgian films within Belgium; FL/BE means the market share of Flemish films within Belgium; FL means the market share of Flemish films within Flanders)^{a, b}.

Year	Total admissions NL	NL films	Domestic market share NL	Total admissions BE/FL	FL films	Domestic market share BE/FL
1995	17.200.000	30	7,2%	19.239.000 (BE)	12	2,5% (BE)
1996	16.800.000	37	5,5%	21.211.000 (BE)	9	5,3% (BE)
1997	18.900.000	25	3,7%	22.073.000 (BE)	5	3,6% (BE)
1998	20.100.000	33	6,1%	25.386.000 (BE)	5	0,5% (BE)
1999	18.600.000	30	5,5%	21.869.000 (BE)	11	4,1% (BE)
2000	21.500.000	34	5,9%	23.548.000 (BE)	14	2,9% (BE)
2001	23.900.000	28	9,5%	24.035.000 (BE)	9	1,4% (BE)
2002	24.100.000	29	10,5%	24.379.000 (BE)	6	1,2% (BE) 1% (FL/BE)
2003	24.900.000	33	13,27%	22.713.000 (BE)	7	4,62% (FL/BE)
2004	23.000.000	28	9,2%	24.116.000 (BE)	12	4,8% (BE)
2005	20.600.000	39	13,2%	22.097.000 (BE)	19	4,8% (FL/BE)
2006	23.400.000	29	11,18%	23.929.000 (BE)	12	6,75% (FL/BE)
2007	23.100.000	21	13,53%	22.677.000 (BE)	17	7,78% (FL/BE)
2008	23.500.000	30	17,87%	21.923.000 (BE) 10.844.070 (FL)	22	9,45% (FL/BE) 18,15% (FL)
2009	27.300.000	37	17,38%	21.500.000 (BE) 10.426.437 (FL)	26	10% (FL/BE) 18,37% (FL)
2010	28.200.000	52	15,85%	21.314.000 (BE) 10.223.991 (FL)	23	10,25% (FL/BE) 20,53% (FL)
2011	30.500.000	48	22,34%	22.276.000 (BE) 10.574.967 (FL)	30	8,29% (FL/BE) 17,25% (FL)
2012	30.600.000	63	15,81%	20.789.000 (BE) 10.236.597 (FL)	30	8,35% (FL/BE) 16,8% (FL)
2013	30.800.000	57	20,5%	20.872.000 (BE) 10.128.943 (FL)	26	9,56% (FL/BE) 19,69% (FL)
2014	30.800.000	57	20,8%	20.888.000 (BE) 9.844.087 (FL)	34	9,79% (FL/BE) 20,93% (FL)
2015	33.000.000	61	18,8%	21.425.000 (BE) 10.370.084 (FL)	38	11,23% (FL/BE) 23,37% (FL)
2016	34.200.000	58	12,3%	20.581.000 (BE) 9.728.335 (FL)	42	9,21% (FL/BE) 16,39% (FL)
2017	36.000.000	58	11,2%	21.010.000 (BE) 9.685.362 (FL)	40	8,06% (FL/BE) 16,64% (FL)
2018	35.715.451	66	10,4%	19.407.000 (BE) 9.144.316 (FL)	35	11,46% (FL/BE) 24,35% (FL)
2019	38.018.390	75	11,7%	N/A	33	N/A

^a While the Dutch data has always been systematically assembled by official initiatives (in this case from the organization 'Filmdistributeurs Nederland', 'Bioscoopmonitor', 'Nederlandse Federatie van de Cinematografie', and 'Nederlandse Vereniging van Bioscoopexploitanten/ de Nederlandse Vereniging van Filmdistributeurs'), the Belgian/Flemish data has not. Therefore, I have compiled data from different sources and found that, at times, the different organizations contradict each other's data. In other words, the data from Belgium/Flanders should be taken with a grain of salt. One should not that: (1) the data on the total amount of Belgian admissions comes from different yearbooks of 'Mediasalles' and 'Statbel'; (2) The data on the total amount of Flemish admissions (FL) comes from 'Statbel'; (3) the total amount of Dutch films also includes co-productions; (4) the latter also goes for the total amount of Flemish films; (5) the total amount of Flemish films produced per year comes from data collected from a dataset by Gertjan Willems and VAF; (6) as there are no data available of Flemish admissions to Flemish films (FL) until the year of 2008, the other years only show data of either the amount of admissions to Flemish films in the whole of Belgium (FL/BE) or the amount of admissions to all films made in Belgium compared to the total of national admissions (BE); (7) the data gathered for the Flemish/Belgian domestic market shares come from VAF, 'Mediasalles', and 'Statbel'.

^b One might wonder why, until the year of 2003, the total amount of admissions is higher in Belgium than in the Netherlands (especially given the fact that the Netherlands always had more inhabitants). Indeed, '[n]otwithstanding the many resemblances between both neighboring societies, their moviegoing industries and cultures diverged strongly, despite the fact that neither country developed its own film production industry. Throughout most of the twentieth century, Belgium boasted the highest number of cinema screens and seats per capita in Europe, as well as very high cinema attendance rates, whereas the Netherlands sat at the bottom of the same statistics [...] From the 1970s onward, the number of screens per inhabitant in both countries tended to converge, but attendance in Belgium still remains significantly higher' (Biltereyst, van Oort & Meers, 2019: 102-103). Existing research points both toward cinematic and non-cinematic factors for this low level of film attendance in the Netherlands (in comparison to e.g. Belgium), ranging from the influence 'of Calvinism and its view of visual culture and cinema, the vertical stratification of Dutch society, and the role of class' (Biltereyst, van Oort & Meers, 2019: 100), to issues related to 'the severe national censorship system, heavy municipal entertainment taxes, and the policy of the Dutch film exhibitors' association of restricting the number of cinema operations in the country' (ibid.).

The latter inevitably brings us to the issue of Dutch cinema and Dutch identity, or, what makes a Dutch film “typically Dutch”. As discussed in section 2.2.2, tracing those textual and contextual elements that might differentiate national Dutch films from, for example, national French films, does not necessarily contradict the recognition of the diversity of a national film production context. Hofstede (2000) points toward the importance of the Dutch language (and especially the Amsterdam dialect). Additionally, as Pisters (2011) argues, typical cliché images of Dutch films are, for instance, windmills, drugs use, bad weather, tulips, the explicit portrayal of passion and sex, or teenage holidays in Salou. Think also of the overall critical stance of the intellectual elite toward the Dutch film. Indeed, ‘[e]ven though the attitude [toward] Dutch cinema has become much more positive over the years, in critical reception as well as at the box office, the persistent prejudices have not died out’ (Verstraten, 2016: 14). Peter Verstraten (2016) links one of the most recurring negative prejudices toward Dutch film with its explicit display of sex and nudity. He argues that the idea of explicit sexuality in Dutch cinema is ‘deeply ingrained in [the] collective memory [of the Dutch]’ (p. 14), which, in its turn, resulted in a series of other films that attempted the same, aiming to become equally successful. Hence, ‘regardless of the many films which do without this combination [of sex and nudity]’ (ibid.), many people still equate Dutch film with nudity. A second prejudice that Verstraten signals is the belief that a qualitative Dutch film is always an exception to the rule. When it comes down to what makes Dutch films “typically Dutch”, Verstraten (2016) adduces the aspect of humor and irony, simply because of its domestic box-office appeal:

‘Apparently, Dutch films strike a chord among the general public in case they contain some dose of hum[o]r and irony. Moreover, several films with comic elements which did not sell that many tickets as the titles mentioned above, have received a favourable reception, like the work by Alex van Warmerdam, some titles by Eddy Terstall, Pieter Kramer or Paula van der Oest. [...] The sheer fact that so many Dutch films contain a fair amount of hum[o]r is perhaps culturally ingrained’ (p. 24).

Similar to the Dutch situation, the Flemish cinema did not just come into being. However, Bruno Verpoorten (1984) asserts that, in comparison to the Dutch film culture, one cannot simply speak of a Belgian film culture. During the first two decades, the Belgian film “industry” was limited to a small amount of minor companies. At that time, there was no separate Flemish film sector, as the early film industry was

characterized by a Belgian structure with French as the dominant language (Willems, Biltereyst & Vande Winkel, 2020). What is more, from the early beginnings, the Belgian film context is defined by a strong international dimension (mainly French in the beginnings). Similar to the Dutch situation, from the 1930s on, Flemish film initiatives started to originate (ibid.). In the Flemish context, the arrival of the sound film in the late 1920s was of crucial importance to this development, as 'language now gained a much more prominent place in both film production and reception' (Willems, Biltereyst & Vande Winkel, 2020: 228). Jan Vanderheyen, who was first a Flemish film distributor, quickly realized that the coming of sound film provided opportunities for a Flemish cinema. Together with Edith Kiel, Vanderheyden made films that became popular within Flanders, and, at times, even in the Netherlands (Vande Winkel & Van Engeland, 2014). They aimed for popular films, made for wide audiences, by employing a mix of simple storylines, accessible humor, a hint of romance, all clearly set in recognizable Flemish environments, and Flemish references (Biltereyst & Van Bauwel, 2004; Vande Winkel & Van Engeland, 2014).

During the interbellum, an avalanche of foreign films was imported, mainly from the USA, and in secondary degree from France, Germany, and other European countries. Similar to the Dutch context, it was in the 1950s that the idea of governmental financial support for the domestic film production gained more popularity. In 1952, a systematic support measure (called the 'detaxation' rule) was taken to support the entire Belgian film production. Because of this rule, film producers could refund a part of the entertainment taxes on the cinema tickets of Belgian films. As Gertjan Willems, Daniël Biltereyst, and Roel Vande Winkel (2020) argue, in order to be able to receive a refund, the film had to be recognized as 'Belgian', which indirectly forced film production into a national context. 'Films now officially received a nationality: Belgian' (Willems, Biltereyst & Vande Winkel, 2020: 243). This would change in the coming two decades, as a group of Flemings who were inspired by the split of the Belgian public broadcaster in 1960, rejected the plans for a unitary organization of a Belgian film institute. As a result, in 1964, a Flemish 'film committee' was initiated that advised the minister of Dutch culture on the allocation of subsidies. This linguistic division of the Belgian film sector was accelerated in the 1960s-1970s. Indeed, from this period onwards, film productions had to "express" themselves as Flemish in order to enjoy support – a Flemish cinema was constructed (ibid.).

During the 1960s and 1970s, Flemish film policy was largely devoted to the cultural education or elevation of the film audience. The Flemish film policy focused mainly on aspects like recognizability, quality, and the "Flemishness" of the films (ibid.). At the beginning of the 1980s, then, the film policy was refocused on the public reach and attraction of private and foreign investments. In this context, a renewed emphasis emerged on films with a "clear" Flemish character (in terms of language, themes or being based on a Flemish literary work). Nevertheless, the emphasis on a Flemish identity and culture is now different, as it is now embedded in a commercial, or, indeed, market-economic discourse. Whereas the 1960s-1970s were known for their many Flemish historical films, the 1980s-1990s were increasingly characterized by films that are situated in a contemporary Flanders. As Willems, Biltreyst, and Vande Winkel (2020) argue, this change mirrors the transformation of the Flemish identity, as (cf. section 3.2.1 and 3.2.2) the region of Flanders drastically changed on many different levels during the second half of the 20th century: 'The earlier longing for the past was replaced by a stronger Flemish self-confidence. This was expressed in more films about the contemporary, own society' (p. 250).

Partially as a result of the introduction of VTM (cf. section 3.2.2) and the overall consolidation of the Flemish identity, from the 2000s on, the Flemish cinema has been defined by a "linguistic turn" (Verheul, 2016). Whereas before the new millennium, most Flemish productions were ambiguous in terms of their language, holding 'the middle ground between Standard (southern-)Dutch and the local vernacular of the story's setting' (Verheul, 2016: 324), Flemish films have increasingly started to adopt local Flemish dialects or regiolects in the 2000s – which, Verheul (2016) says, has made Flemish films less artificial and more authentic. Eventually, the inception of the Flemish Audiovisual Fund (VAF) in 2002 would become of crucial importance to the further development of Flemish cinema, also in the context of the nation-building project of Flanders (ibid.). Since 2002, an increasing amount of Flemish films has been produced, and the domestic market share has also risen (cf. Table 1). In addition to the film fund, these positive developments are equally the result of the federal 'Tax Shelter'¹⁴⁴, which is a measurement that encourages companies to invest

¹⁴⁴ The Belgian tax shelter was initiated in 2002. From then on, investors could receive an additional tax exemption as well as an extra financial return, which together account for a return of almost 10%. The measurement aims to make it easier for film producers to acquire financing.

in audiovisual productions (Engelen & Vande Winkel, 2010). In addition, another initiative was launched in 2012: Screen Flanders, an economically oriented supporting measure that was introduced by the Flemish government (Willems, Biltreyst, Meers & Vande Winkel, 2018). What is more, recent research indicates that young people are, as compared to 2001, more positive about the Flemish cinema (Veenstra, Meers & Biltreyst, 2020). In terms of content, many Flemish films are still trying to establish and secure their connection with the domestic market by focusing on a high degree of Flemish recognizability, sometimes very expressively using specific dialects. Flemish settings, culture, and history continue to play an important role and are usually still interpreted as fairly white and traditional. Although VAF still focuses on creating successful 'Flemish cinema', the fund has now exchanged the label of "Flemish cinema" for "Belgian cinema from Flanders".

3.3.2 *The filmic exchange and/or collaboration between the small cinemas of the Low Countries*

As suggested in section 3.2.2, De Caluwe (2013) and Cajot (2012) argue that, today, the film markets in the Low Countries are clearly parallel, in the sense that there is barely, aside from a few exceptions, any cross-border traffic. It is, however, unclear if this has always been the case. Additionally, the concept of small cinemas dictates that 'small filmmaking nations have sought alliances in recent times with nations that are similarly perceived to be grappling with the inequities that size, under some definition of that term, generates' (Hjort & Petrie, 2007: 2). Moreover, the higher production costs of local media artifacts have made it increasingly attractive for media industries to seek for other (often highly similar) markets beyond their own borders (Rohn, 2004). In this vein, one wonders, aside from the Dutch and Flemish audiences, if the same indifference equally applies to both the industrial and policy context.

Concerning the national/regional governments and their film policies, there has been a (structural) collaboration between the Netherlands and Flanders. Indeed, from 1964 until the early 1980s, Flanders¹⁴⁵ maintained a separate co-production

¹⁴⁵ There was no similar cooperation with the French Community. In practice, because of cultural-ideological motives (with the aim of protecting the cultural autonomy of Flanders), the Flemish film policy makers did not want to structurally collaborate with the French Community. From the 1980s on, these Flemish ideological motivations largely disappeared and the French Community was regarded as any other foreign co-production partner (Willems, 2017).

policy (protocol and then) agreement with the Netherlands. Gertjan Willems (2017) asserts that apart from their geographical proximity, many of the filmic collaborations between Flanders and the Netherlands can be explained by their common language, similar industrial structure, and market size¹⁴⁶. More specifically, in 1964, when the Flemish “film committee” was launched (cf. section 3.3.1), the envisioned policy system had to be as analogous as possible to the Dutch model in order to facilitate co-productions between both regions. Yet, due to the powerful Netherlands Cinema Association (cf. section 3.3.1), instead of agreeing upon an actual co-production agreement, a more informal protocol was signed, recognizing and already attempting to stimulate the principle of Belgian-Dutch (which were, in practice, Flemish-Dutch) co-productions. Willems (2017) adds that there were mainly economic or commercial motives behind the Flemish-Dutch co-production agreements, as they allowed for bigger budgets as well as for wider distribution opportunities.

However, apart from these commercial considerations, Willems (2017) also signals important cultural-ideological motivations behind these co-productions. As discussed in section 3.2.1 and 3.2.2, during the 20th century (and especially during the 1960s-1970s), there were different initiatives that strived for one, great, encompassing Dutch culture (aiming to unite the North and South of the Low Countries). It was, therefore, clearly within this ideological context that the co-production policy between Flanders and the Netherlands was conceived and motivated. In other words, Flemish and Dutch films were both seen as part of a shared Dutch culture. The idea of establishing a great Dutch film culture becomes apparent in the first three Flemish-Dutch co-productions that were released between 1967 and 1969, as the Dutch and Flemish subsidies were equal in size. The reason for leaving the path of equal support mainly had to do with the difficulty of marketing or positioning these films both as Flemish and Dutch¹⁴⁷. Moreover, except for *Mira* (1971), most of the majoritarian Flemish co-productions were not very successful in the Netherlands, which made

¹⁴⁶ The two latter aspects, i.e., a similar industrial structure and market size could be linked to Van Keulen’s (2020) concept of ‘production proximity’.

¹⁴⁷ Even *Mira* (1971), which was successful in both regions, was received as a Flemish film in Flanders (due to the book on which it was based, the screenwriter, the main role, and the dialogs) and a Dutch film in the Netherlands (due to the director and actress Willeke Van Ammelrooy) (Willems, 2017). What is more, the voice of the Dutch actress Willeke Van Ammelrooy was dubbed (by the Flemish Mia Van Roy) in the Flemish version.

producers doubt whether Dutch-Flemish co-productions were actually that desirable (Willems, 2017). Additionally, next to the fact that several Dutch producers were afraid of the cumbersome administrative procedure in Belgium, co-productions between the two regions often caused tensions in terms of the distribution of the cast, crew, and film activities between the co-production partners (ibid.).

The period of the 1960s-1970s shows that Greater Dutch films were never really a thing. Due to a lack of systematic research, it is, however, unclear whether during the same period, one could speak of a Greater Dutch audience – in the sense that films made in the Low Countries were successfully received in both regions. Even though Willems (2017) asserts that, except for *Mira*, most Flemish films performed bad in the Netherlands during the 1960s-1970s, it is unclear (due to a lack of systematic research) whether the opposite direction was equally disappointing. As mentioned in section 3.2.2, from the 1960s on, many Flemings turned to Dutch television because it offered content that the Flemish BRT did not provide at that time. Interestingly, the same process might be at play in the film context, as, for instance, in the 1970s, there was a specific genre of Dutch films that was highly popular in Flanders. Here, I refer to the well-known series of Dutch films that were particularly permissive, open, and explicit when it comes down to sexuality and nudity (Buelens, 2015), and which did not have Flemish counterparts at the time. Examples are films by Paul Verhoeven such as *Wat Zien ik!?* (1971), *Turks Fruit* (1973), *Keetje Tippel* (1975), *Spetters* (1980), or, for instance, Wim Verstappen and Pim de la Parra their productions such as *Blue Movie* (1971) and *Frank en Eva* (1973). The fact that these films performed exceptionally well in Flanders might indeed point to their innovative approach, at least in comparison to the other film material that was available in Flanders at the time. There is, up until now, no research that points toward a wave of cross-border traffic in the opposite direction.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the situation in Flanders drastically changed, due to the overall liberalization of the cultural policy. As discussed in section 3.3.1, influenced by the market-economic trends in the European audiovisual sector, reaching bigger audiences and attracting private and foreign investors became the focus. Consequently, in terms of co-productions, the cultural-ideological motivations from the 1960s-1970s became less important, while commercial motivations gained in importance. In this new context, while the amount of co-productions with other regions and countries increased, the Netherlands remained the most important structural co-

production partner for Flemish films due to historical, geographical and linguistic reasons. For the same reasons, from the Dutch perspective, the Flemish partners have always been of major importance, up until today (Willems, 2016). This is rather significant, given that the Dutch film policy has, at least until the 2000s, been highly protective toward Dutch films, which was accompanied by a reluctant position toward co-productions (ibid.). Whereas before the 2000s, the risk of losing cultural (Dutch) authenticity was the main motivation behind the anti-co-production strategy, today, it is, next to its important economic benefits, seen as an adventure that might broaden the view of filmmakers and promote cultural creativity.

In comparison to the 1970s, during the 1980s-1990s there was not one clear genre or series of films that performed well across the Dutch-Flemish border. However, there is some anecdotal evidence of a few Flemish films that did perform particularly well in the Netherlands: think, for instance, of *Hector* (1987) with 193.075 admissions, *Koko Flanel* (1990) with 704.870 admissions, and *Daens* (1992) with 75.733 admissions.¹⁴⁸ The fact that the first two performed exceptionally well may simply have to do with the fact that Urbanus (Urbain Joseph Servranckx), a Flemish comedian who played the main role in these films, was also well-known in the Netherlands. The relative success of *Daens*, on the other hand, mainly has to do with the perseverance of Dutch distributor Shooting Star that decided to widely distribute the Flemish film in the Netherlands. The quality of the film as well as the Oscar nomination were the crucial motivations to launch a big marketing campaign in the Netherlands. The year report of the 'Nederlandse Federatie van de Cinematografie' in 1993 stated that '[t]he well-known prejudice that Flemish films never perform well in the Netherlands is now being denied by the big success in these first weeks' (p. 38). Though there exists no systematic research, one might find a similar tendency in the opposite direction, where only a few Dutch films from the 1980s-1990s performed well in Flanders (such as *Flodder*, released in 1986).

When the Flemish Audiovisual Fund was launched in 2002, new structural agreements were made with the Dutch Film Fund. The official cooperation between both film funds started in 2005, and has, since then, been renewed twice (in 2008 and 2015), each time extending the range, amount of support, and number of supported

¹⁴⁸ Data gathered by myself from the yearbooks of 'Nederlandse Bioscoop Bond' and 'Nederlandse Federatie van de Cinematografie'.

feature films. As Willems (2016) argues, it appears that even in times of economic low conjuncture, both sides preferred to cooperate. Today, the cooperation between the Dutch Film Fund and the Flemish Audiovisual Fund with regard to Dutch-Flemish co-productions provide support for (1) long fiction feature films (four of each region every year); (2) long animated films (one of each region every year); and (3) long documentaries (three of each region every year).¹⁴⁹ In order to be admissible, the audiovisual projects must have already received production or realization support in their own production region (the Netherlands or Flanders) by the relevant fund (NFF or VAF). Interestingly, the aim of the cooperation is

‘to establish a co-production policy between the two territories, to arrange reciprocity, to stimulate cooperation between the two film communities, and to promote the cultural and professional exchange between the two territories. In this view, this agreement aims for "creative" contributions from one film community to projects from the other film community (e.g. involving Heads of Departments, author's contributions, ...), rather than for purely "economically" oriented expenditure in the other territory (e.g. technical finish, ...)’ (VAF/NFF, 2018, article 1.2).

Willems (2016) argues that this is rather striking, given that policy-driven international cooperation usually happens via economic arrangements instead of through selective culturally inspired arrangements. In line with the overall strategy of VAF but less with the strategy of NFF, the cooperation agreement mainly opts for artistically inspired and qualitative film projects. Next to the policy context, one might also point toward the (at times structural) cooperation between Dutch and Flemish producers and distributors. Indeed, many of the major independent distributors who are active in either the Flemish/Belgian or Dutch market have distribution offices across the border (e.g. Cinéart, September Film, and Paradiso), while ‘[o]thers, such as Dutch Filmworks and Independent Films, work with distributors in Belgium to acquire films for the Benelux countries’ (Smits, 2019: 128). Next to cooperating in terms of distribution, the Flemish Kinopolis Film Distribution (KFD) and Dutch Filmworks (DFW) work together by co-

¹⁴⁹ Additionally, each year, both VAF and NFF grant one co-production an extra bonus of EUR 100,000 on top of the 'classic' co-production premium of EUR 200,000. This is also referred to as the VAF-NFF Plus scheme and is meant for the project with the greatest potential for display in the other country.

producing Dutch-Flemish films. The same goes for the more specialized independent distributors, which often 'have distribution offices in the Netherlands and Belgium, such as Cinemien, The Searchers and Lumiere while others work with partners in Belgium to acquire films for the Benelux countries' (Smits, 2019: 129). Think also of how, in 2019, the Flemish production company Marmalade acquired the Dutch audiovisual media producer and distributor Just Media Group.

The difficulties of successfully releasing Dutch or Flemish films across the Dutch-Flemish border that existed in the 1980s-1990s kept on existing throughout the first two decades of the 2000s.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, there are many examples of highly popular Dutch films that underperformed in Flanders: *Zwartboek* (2006), *Oorlogswinter* (2008), *Komt een vrouw bij de dokter* (2009), *Gooische Vrouwen* (2011), *Soof* (2013) or, more recently, *Bankier van het Verzet* (2018), and *De Beentjes van Sint Hildegard* (2020). The same can be said of the opposite direction, where highly popular Flemish films were unsuccessful in the Netherlands: *De Zaak Alzheimer* (2003), *Windkracht 10: Koksijde Rescue* (2006), *Ben X* (2007), *Dossier K.* (2009), *Frits & Freddy* (2010), *F.C. De Kampioenen: Kampioen zijn blijft plezant!* (2013), and *De Buurtpolitie: De Tunnel* (2018) or *Niet Schieten* (2018). A quick look at these films already shows that all of these films are targeted at large and generally domestic audiences. As data on European film circulation within Europe show¹⁵¹, European audiences from a different region are, in general, not keen on watching domestically oriented films from other European nations (Jones, 2020). Generally, European films only circulate within Europe when they are either

¹⁵⁰ Though there is a clear exception that proves the rule: almost all productions by the Flemish production company Studio 100 (that mainly produces children's television series and films) are highly successfully released in both Flanders and the Netherlands. There are different reasons that might explain their success within the Low Countries: (1) the target groups of these programs and films are young, often illiterate children (2) they have positioned themselves within both the Flemish and the Dutch market from the early beginnings; (3) many of their programs and films star both Flemish and Dutch actors and actresses; (4) in most of the cases, Dutch and Flemish dialects are avoided; (5) some of their films get dubbed in Dutch Dutch or Flemish Dutch.

¹⁵¹ Tim Raats, Ilse Schooneknaep, and Caroline Pauwels (2018) signal three barriers for European film productions that not only hamper cross-border distribution, but also domestic distribution: low budgets, small market sizes, and the cultural specificity and language barriers that form barriers of distribution.

‘(a) a big-budget Hollywood-style action/adventure blockbuster or animation; (b) a medium-budget middlebrow quality drama based on a best-selling book and an Oscar-winning Hollywood star attached; or (c) a low-budget MEDIA-supported art-house film made by a Palme-d’Or-winning auteur’ (ibid.).

In this vein, European art films, at least in comparison to mainstream films, generally perform ‘better’ (taking into account the more modest box office expectations) (Jones, 2020). This partially explains the relative ‘popularity’ of a handful of Flemish art films (e.g. *De Helaasheid der Dingen* in 2009, *Rundskop* in 2011, *The Broken Circle Breakdown* in 2012, and *Girl* in 2018), which perform pretty well in the arthouse circuit in the Netherlands. For instance, the prominent art-house theater Louis Hartlooper Complex in Utrecht started a yearly film festival in 2013, devoted to Flemish (art-house) cinema. In 2015, it was retitled ‘Belgian Film Festival’, and in 2016, it had its (for the time being) last edition. The Netherlands is currently less internationally recognized for their arthouse films, which clarifies why there is no similar trend of watching Dutch art films in the Flemish arthouse circuit. Another, often heard, motivation for the relative success of *De Helaasheid der Dingen* (2009) in the Netherlands, as well as of popular mainstream films like *New Kids Turbo* (2010) and *New Kids Nitro* (2011) in Flanders is their exotic representation of typical Flemish or Dutch humor and dialects. Whereas the *New Kids*-films portray a group of young male friends from the Northern part of Brabant in a highly stereotypical manner, *De Helaasheid der Dingen* is representative of what Florian Vanlee, Sofie Van Bauwel, and Frederik Dhaenens (2018) typify as the parish: ‘the parish motif presents a hyperbole of Flemish non-urban life in serial tragicomedies. The Flemish non-urban community has always functioned as a powerful reference to ordinary Flemishness’ (p. 8). What both films share, though, is their (at times highly stereotypical) representation of the lower classes and their focus on the humoristic aspect. Indeed, both films can be understood as two highly exotic representations of “Flemishness” and “Dutchness” from an outsider perspective.

The simple fact that on the one hand, Dutch and Flemish audiences are generally indifferent toward each other’s films, while on the other, the Dutch and Flemish film industries like to cooperate, might already be a first important explanation of the Dutch-Flemish monolingual remake practice. However, before embarking on an empirical analysis of the film remake phenomenon of the Low Countries, a clear understanding of what a Dutch-Flemish film remake constitutes is necessary.

3.3.3 Delineating the Dutch-Flemish film remake practice

First of all, this dissertation's main object of research is located in the rather small geo-linguistic context of the Low Countries, which, as mentioned in the afore, I limit to the Netherlands on the one hand, and Flanders on the other. The phenomenon that I will describe in the following started in the year of 2000, when the Flemish director Jan Verheyen released a film titled *Team Spirit* (cf. Table 2, below). At first sight, it might not be clear what differentiates this film from the other 13 Flemish films (cf. Table 1) that were released that year. It was Jan Verheyen's fourth film after having made a few Flemish popular successes and one Hollywood flop. The narrative of the film deals with the lives of six friends who, together, are also part of a local football team. Though the film is definitely a comedy, the main theme of the film consists of the difficulties of growing older, which comes with new responsibilities that might clash with old habits. Again, one might wonder what sets this film apart and what makes it particularly interesting. However, the synopsis of this Flemish film will probably ring a bell to Dutch audiences, not because they know or have seen *Team Spirit*¹⁵², but because they know a Dutch film with a highly similar narrative: *All Stars*, directed by the Dutch director Jean van de Velde and released three years earlier, in 1997. Upon closer inspection, one realizes that the at first sight "normal" Flemish film *Team Spirit* is actually a remake of the Dutch film *All Stars*.

Because of the big success of this remake (cf. Table 2), five years later, Jan Verheyen would give it another try and released *Buitenspel*, again based on a Dutch source film titled *In Oranje* (2004) which was released one year earlier. Again, the film performed – though a little less than the previous remake – particularly well in the domestic box office (cf. Table 2). When in 2010 the first Dutch remake (*Loft*, 2010) of a Flemish film (also titled *Loft*, 2008) was released, the Dutch-Flemish film remake phenomenon was born. Eventually, starting in 2000 and (for the time being) ending in the year of 2017, a total of 11 Dutch-Flemish film remakes was released, consisting of seven Flemish remakes and four Dutch remakes. As discussed in section 1.5.2, given that this dissertation embraces the *a priori* historicity of a term like the film remake, it solely wishes to investigate "the" film remake within the specific context of the Low Countries. After sketching the context of the Low Countries in the previous sections,

¹⁵² Given that, generally, Flemish films do not perform well in the Netherlands (cf. section 3.3.2).

for analytical reasons (instead of terminological demands) as well as to limit the scope of the dissertation, a clear demarcation of the central object of research (i.e. Dutch-Flemish monolingual film remakes) is necessary. In short, without making a-historical claims about “the” film remake, I will provide a working definition of the monolingual Dutch-Flemish remake.

There are a few elements that make the Dutch-Flemish film remake stand apart, which I will employ to demarcate my object of research: (1) it concerns films that are produced and released in the Low Countries; (2) it concerns Dutch-spoken films; (3) it concerns films that are based on (among other things) an already existing Dutch or Flemish film from across the Dutch-Flemish border; (4) the intertextual connection between the film remake and its source film is legally (or contractually) typified as a film remake. In short, within the boundaries of this dissertation, I define Dutch-Flemish film remakes as *Dutch or Flemish films that are based on already existing Flemish or Dutch films, and are legally recognized as film remakes*. Based on this working definition, I compiled a list of all 11 Dutch-Flemish film remakes which can be found in Table 2.

Table 2: The total of Dutch-Flemish source films and subsequent remakes (between 1997 and 2017) with tickets sold domestically^a

Source Film	Film Remake
All Stars (1997, Jean van de Velde, NL, 298.600)	<i>Team Spirit</i> (2000, Jan Verheyen, BE, 358.000)
In Oranje (<i>In Orange</i> , 2004, Joram Lürsen, NL, 192.900)	<i>Buitenspel</i> (<i>Gilles</i> , 2005, Jan Verheyen, BE, 230.000)
Alles is Liefde (<i>Love Is All</i> , 2007, Joram Lürsen, NL, 1.318.000)	<i>Zot van A.</i> (<i>Crazy About Ya</i> , 2010, Jan Verheyen, BE, 447.324)
Loft (2008, Erik Van Looy, BE, 1.194.434)	<i>Loft</i> (2010, Antoinette Beumer, NL, 445.000)
Smoorverliefd (<i>Madly in Love</i> , 2010, Hilde Van Mieghem, BE, 142.507)	<i>Smoorverliefd</i> (<i>Madly in Love</i> , 2013, Hilde Van Mieghem, NL, 204.422)
Hasta La Vista (<i>Come as You Are</i> , 2011, Geoffrey Enthoven, BE, 240.000)	<i>Adios Amigos</i> (2016, Albert Jan van Rees, NL, 16.054)
Brasserie Romantiek (<i>Brasserie Romantique</i> , 2012, Joël Vanhoebrouck, BE, 105.168)	<i>Brasserie Valentijn</i> (<i>Brasserie Valentine</i> , 2016, Sanne Vogel, NL, 95.000)
Alles is Familie (<i>Family Way</i> , 2012, Joram Lürsen, NL, 860.000)	<i>Allemaal Familie</i> (<i>The Family Way</i> , 2017, Dries Vos, BE, 60.851)
Mannenhartens^b (<i>Men's Hearts</i> , 2013, Mark de Cloe, NL, 450.000)	<i>Wat Mannen Willen</i> (<i>What Men Want</i> , 2015, Filip Peeters, BE, 190.000)
Homies (2015, Jon Karthaus, NL, 205.246)	<i>Bad Trip</i> (2017, Dries Vos, BE, 50.176)
Het Verlangen (<i>The Longing</i> , 2017, Joram Lürsen, NL, 137.778)	<i>Verborgen Verlangen</i> (<i>Hidden Desire</i> , 2017, Maarten Moerkerke, BE, 15.501)
<p>^a These numbers were collected by consulting online reports of the Flemish Audiovisual Fund (VAF) and the Dutch Cinema Monitor ("de Bioscoopmonitor") of the independent research agency Film Research Netherlands. To give a general idea, in 2019, the Netherlands has a population number of 17,28 million, whereas Flanders has 6,596 million inhabitants.</p> <p>^b It should, however, be noted that this film is actually already a remake of a German source film titled <i>Männerherzen</i> (2009). A comparative textual analysis (cf. Chapter 7) and in-depth interview (cf. Chapter 11) with the director showed that <i>Wat Mannen Willen</i> is based on both the German and the Dutch source films.</p>	

Looking at the above table, it becomes clear that, in the period between 2000 and 2017, on average, about one Dutch-Flemish remake was released every two years. In the year of 2017, for instance, no less than three Flemish film remakes were released. Additionally, on average, there is a gap of about three years between the release of the source film and the film remake, which makes these films temporally immediate remakes (Forrest & Koos, 2002) or examples of synchronic remaking (Loock, 2019). There is even one example (*Verborgen Verlangen*) where both source film and film remake were released in the same year. It also quickly becomes clear that, in terms of domestic admissions, all source films were highly successful. What is more, two of the source films are in the top 20-list of most successful domestic films (in terms of domestic admissions): whereas *Lof* is on the first place in the Belgian list, *Alles is Liefde* takes the 15th place in the Dutch list. The same cannot be said of the film remakes that are based on these source films, given that only eight out of 11 performed good to very good. Taking into account that Flanders has less inhabitants than the Netherlands, only three remakes performed better than their source texts, which is in line with existing research (Pestieau, Ginsburgh & Weyers, 2007). Still, the Dutch-Flemish film remakes released in the period 2000-2015 (a total of six) performed exceptionally well in their respective domestic box offices.

The film remakes released in the period 2015-2017, however, were (except for *Wat Mannen Willen*) less successful in terms of domestic admissions, with the possibility that some of these might not even guarantee a return on investment. One could adduce a myriad of different factors that might be at play here: first, it might simply have to do with the quality of both the remakes themselves and the films on which these remakes are based. Second, it might be because of the growing popularity of SVOD services like 'Netflix' which are increasingly purchasing the rights to distribute Flemish and Dutch films on their platforms. Consequently, selling these rights has become an extra lucrative business for producers (and sometimes distributors), which makes the need to sell remake rights less important. Third, and this possible factor is connected to the latter, because of the growing global popularity of SVOD services, audiences worldwide might become increasingly aware of, and open to foreign fiction films. In the realm of television (format) studies, for instance, the concept of 'hyperawareness' was coined by Hogg (2016), signalling the (especially young) audiences' increased awareness of the global format trade. In a digitized context

where streaming platforms become all the more important, European audiences are progressively aware of the existence of the different local versions of a television format (Esser, Jensen, Keinonen, & Lemor, 2016b). This growing consciousness can, according to Hogg (2016), at times, prompt hostile reactions toward own or foreign versions of (televisual) content. A similar process might be happening in the Dutch-Flemish film market, which could indeed explain the decreasing admissions for these film remakes.

The overall financial disappointment of these films may have triggered the reluctant attitude toward the decision to remake another Dutch or Flemish remake since 2017 – for now, no future remake plans have been announced. Other factors that may have strengthened this reluctant attitude may include the fact that a Flemish production company that was central to the production of Flemish remakes during this period (i.e. Marmalade, cf. Chapter 11) got a negative reputation¹⁵³ in the industry. One might also adduce the over-production of Flemish/Dutch films more generally (which is being increasingly criticized in both the Netherlands and Flanders), combined with a call for more “qualitative” and “original” content, or the overall critique toward the practice of remaking films. Indeed, while systematic research on this topic lacks, looking at the articles and reviews published in several Dutch and Flemish newspapers, the overall critical, or indeed negative stance toward film remakes also exists in the context of the Low Countries.

The table also shows that, with the exception of two cases, the titles of all source films were (though sometimes only slightly) changed when remade. Apart from the more obvious creative reasons, this may equally have to do with filmmakers wanting to avoid confusing Dutch and/or Flemish audiences by using exactly the same title in an area where the same language is spoken. Furthermore, in terms of directors, one finds that the names of Jan Verheyen and Joram Lürsen each appear thrice on the list of respectively film remakes and source films, whereas Dries Vos also appears twice on the list. Moreover, there is one case where a director (Hilde Van Mieghem) directed both the source film and its remake, which makes *Smooverliefd* an

¹⁵³ In 2017-2018, several newspaper articles (e.g., De Smet & Cools, January 2018; Hendrixx, November 2017) were published claiming that Marmalade was known for its financial mismanagement, mainly having issues with paying their customers in time.

autoremake¹⁵⁴ (Eberwein, 1998). Additionally, there is also one case (i.e. *Wat Mannen Willen*) where its source film is, in its turn, also a remake. Indeed, the Dutch *Mannenharten* is actually a remake of the German film *Männerherzen* (2009). In other words, it appears that the Dutch-Flemish remake practice transcends the borders of the Low Countries. What is more, as Table 3 shows, *Männerherzen* is not an isolated case, given that some other Dutch-Flemish source films that received a remake within the Low Countries have received other international (yet mostly European) remakes.

Table 3: Dutch-Flemish source films and/or remakes that were remade in/were based upon a (or more) foreign source film(s)/remake(s)

Dutch-Flemish film	Foreign film
All Stars (source film)	(1) <i>Días de fútbol</i> (2003, ESP, David Serrano de la Peña, remake) (2) <i>Things to Do Before You're 30</i> (2005, UK, Simon Shore, remake)
Alles is Liefde (source film)	(1) <i>Alles ist Liebe</i> (2014, DE, Markus Goller, remake) (2) <i>Milosc jest wszystkim</i> (2018, PL, Michał Kwieciński, remake)
Loft (source film)	<i>The Loft</i> (2014, USA, Erik Van Looy, remake)
Hasta La Vista (source film)	<i>Come as You Are</i> (2019, USA, Richard Wong, remake)
Mannenharten (remake)	<i>Männerherzen</i> (2009, DE, Simon Verhoeven, source film)

It becomes quickly clear that, in terms of these foreign remakes, all of them were released after a previous successful release in either the Netherlands or Flanders – except for *Come as You Are*, which is released three years after the rather unsuccessful Dutch remake, *Adios Amigos*. The relative diversity of (mainly European) countries – next to either Flanders or the Netherlands – where the Dutch-Flemish films were remade, suggests that the remake phenomenon under analysis transcends the context of the Low Countries. Moreover, when looking beyond the Dutch-Flemish monolingual remakes, one finds several examples of so-called intranational remakes in the Low Countries. Think, for instance, of the Flemish film *De Witte van Sichem*

¹⁵⁴ It should be noted that Erik Van Looy, who directed the source film *Loft* (2008) also directed at least one scene for the Dutch remake, *Loft* (2010), to replace Antoinette Beumer (the director of the Dutch remake project) who had had an accident on set (cf. Chapter 10).

(1980) which could¹⁵⁵ be interpreted as a remake of *De Witte* (1934), which is also a Flemish film. Furthermore, there are also many examples of Dutch or Flemish remakes that are based on foreign (European) films. Think, for instance, of the many Dutch remakes that were based on German source films: *Liever Verliefd* (2003, based on *Sex oder Liebe?* [2000]), or *Voor elkaar gemaakt* (2017, based on *Vaterfreuden* [2014]). There exist also a few instances of Dutch remakes of Spanish (*Kankerlijers* [2014] based on *Planta 4A* [2003]; *Ja, ik wil!* [2015] based on *3 bodas de más* [2013]) and Danish films (*Vet Hard* [2005] based on *Gamle mænd i nye biler* [2002]). Though there are – for now – no Flemish remakes based on source films that are not from the Netherlands, there are already quite a few Flemish films that received foreign remakes: next to *Loft* and *Hasta La Vista* (cf. Table 3), the film *Ben X* (2007) received a Swedish remake, titled *IRL* (2013), and *Iedereen beroemd!* (2000) received a Bollywood remake: *Fanny Khan* (2018). There are also quite a few examples of Dutch films that received a German remake: next to *Alles ist Liebe* (cf. Table 3), there is also *Sophie Kocht* (2015, based on *Soof* [2013]), *Misfit* (2019, based on *Misfit* [2017]), and *Werkstatthelden* (2020, based on *De Marathon* [2012]). Other famous examples are the American remakes of *Spoorloos* (1988, remade into *The Vanishing* [1993]), *De Liff* (1983, remade into *Down* [2001]), *Interview* (2003, remade into *Interview* [2007]), and *Het Diner* (2013, remade into *The Diner* [2017]).

The examples of American remakes of Dutch/Flemish films can be placed under the (heterogenous) practice of Hollywood remaking mainly European films since the 1970s (cf. section 2.2.2). However, the other, non-Hollywood and mostly European remakes of the abovementioned Dutch/Flemish films (an vice versa) should be placed under another, more recent millennial practice. This phenomenon should first be contextualized within broader globalizing and digital developments (cf. section 2.2.3), which have drastically changed the industrial context of European cinema¹⁵⁶. It is within

¹⁵⁵ *De Witte van Sichem* could also be understood as a readaptation of the novel on which both films are based: *De Witte* by Ernest Claes (1920).

¹⁵⁶ Among other things, the quantity of European films produced annually surpassed the number of 1,000. Between 2013 and 2017, on average, admissions to European films outside Europe itself amount to 20% (to 90 million on a total of 440 admissions), mainly driven by the Chinese market – China instead of the US is now the largest export market for European films (Kanzler & Patrizia, 2019). Moreover, several vertically and horizontally integrated pan-European studios with large back catalogues have succeeded in producing mid to big-budget films that perform well globally (Meir, 2019).

this renewed context that pan-European studios such as the French StudioCanal have seen potential in remakes and became quite active in the remake industry by purchasing and selling remake rights (Meir, 2019). However, most of the abovementioned examples were not produced by such large pan-European production companies. Conversely, most¹⁵⁷ of the abovementioned remakes of Dutch/Flemish films were produced by local European production companies. Recent research shows that, around the late 2000s, several European-based companies started concentrating on the acquisition, representation, and selling of remake rights of mostly European films, which is now deemed as a viable financial strategy (Labayen & Morán, 2019). Most of these films are considered as mid-budget, local-language remakes of chiefly romantic comedies, comedies, and thrillers which have already proven to be successful in their domestic markets. Indeed, most of these remakes projects' business models are '[b]ased on the widespread ignorance of local audiences of other national cinemas' hits' (Labayen & Morán, 2019: 284).

With the afore in mind, one might wonder what makes the monolingual Dutch-Flemish remakes unique in comparison to, for instance, a German remake of a Dutch film. The most striking difference is of course the fact that Dutch-Flemish film remakes are both spoken in Dutch, which makes them monolingual, complicating the main feature of the other abovementioned European remakes: i.e. them being local-language film remakes¹⁵⁸. This becomes even more significant when one looks at the small size of both the Dutch and Flemish market, which limits their budgets and makes film producers more dependent on governmental support. Additionally, whereas most of the European markets in which the abovementioned film remakes are produced are not linguistically proximate, they are also (arguably) less geographically and culturally

¹⁵⁷ One must note that in some cases (not the ones mentioned in the above), the film remake rights are mediated (and sometimes the remakes are produced) by companies like Globalgate Entertainment and Sony Pictures International Productions, which are divisions of large American transnational companies Lions Gate Entertainment Corporation and Sony Pictures Entertainment, respectively. Indeed, these are made up of (or work closely together with) several locally oriented subdivisions (or national/local production companies) that localize/remake specific films, which are therefore called local-language remakes (cf. Labayen & Moran, 2019).

¹⁵⁸ One could, arguably, understand Dutch-Flemish film remakes as a particular type of local-language remakes, as the Dutch film versions employ different regional and/or national varieties of Dutch than the Flemish versions.

proximate than the Low Countries' markets. Indeed, given that both regions are geographically adjoining, share a long history, and are, arguably, culturally proximate, one might assume that, due to a higher degree of cultural proximity (cf. section 2.4.3), both regions are able to exchange each other's films instead of having to remake them. Finally, there seems to be a paradoxical dynamic at work in the Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon: whereas Dutch and Flemish audiences are, generally, not interested in watching each other's films (cf. section 3.3.2), Flemish and Dutch filmmakers do systematically remake each other's films. In order to unravel this intriguing paradox, as well as the complex dynamics that operate in the Dutch-Flemish monolingual remake phenomenon, the following sections of this dissertation will empirically dissect these film remakes from within their industrial and socio-cultural contexts.

METHODOLOGICAL INQUIRY

Preamble

Before embarking on this dissertation's empirical inquiry, I will first present a methodological investigation into the scholarly field that studies film remakes. Building on the insights of the previous theoretical chapters, the following two chapters discuss the (limited) methodological toolbox of the field. Therefore, before actually constructing a methodical design specifically for the purposes of this dissertation (cf. Chapter 6), I will first provide a brief overview of the existing (mainly textual) methods (and underlying methodologies) that have been employed to study film remakes. More specifically, I will pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses of the current methodological approaches in the field and indicate other possible methods that might be employed to strengthen the empirical fundamentals of the field. In a next step, these methodological insights will inform this dissertation with the necessary methodological arguments and methodical tools to conduct the empirical research.

It should be noted that both Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 are published in, respectively, an edited volume and a peer-reviewed journal. The following methodological discussion and reflections will, therefore, not (yet) specifically be applied to the main study object of this dissertation (i.e. Dutch-Flemish film remakes). Instead, the specific application to the context of the Low Countries, as well as addressing the methodical issues which enabled me to conduct the empirical research of this dissertation will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Chapter 4

Toward a model of systematic textual analysis

Positioning

This first methodological chapter argues that, even though the field of remake studies has a strong tradition in textual (film) research, this has almost never been done systematically. Indeed, textual analyses of film remakes have, generally, been carried out in highly diverse manners and often following unsystematic criteria. Therefore, the chapter asserts that if the field wants to get a hold of the textual mechanisms that operate in the remake process of a film, one is in need of a descriptive framework with clearly defined codes that allows for a systematic analysis of film remakes. As such, building on existing frameworks (e.g. sections 1.2 and 2.4.3), I construct a framework that allows for a systematic descriptive analysis of film remakes. However, as several remake scholars have argued (cf. sections 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6), if we want to understand the film remake more holistically, we should acknowledge that, apart from a textual dimension, the film remake also has an extra-textual dimension. The chapter also touches upon the need for self-reflexivity¹⁵⁹ when conducting cross-cultural analysis. The model that is central to this chapter, as well as the broader insights it formulates, will provide the dissertation (cf. section 6.2) with the necessary tools to analyze Dutch-Flemish film remakes more systematically.

Reference

Cuelenaere, E. (2021; forthcoming). The film remake as a prism: toward a model of systematic textual analysis. In E. Cuelenaere, G. Willems & S. Joye (Eds.), *European Film Remakes*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

¹⁵⁹ This will be specifically applied to this dissertation's cross-cultural approach in Chapter 6.

4.1 Introduction

As demonstrated by the rich academic output of scholars in remake studies, the comparative assessment of two highly similar film texts 'is particularly well-suited for scholarly analysis as it is able to disentangle, locate or "defamiliarize" the familiar, the banal, the unattainable and often invisible and render it more visible' (Cuelenaere, Joye & Willems, 2019: 264). Remakes are, generally, known for showing many narrative commonalities with their source films, which, after comparison, makes the sometimes highly detailed (often latent and ideologically instructed) adjustments or adaptations more palpable. Hence, by juxtaposing film remakes with their filmic predecessors and inquiring into the localizing and adapting processes of their (changed) narratives, one can obtain a unique glimpse into the workings of 'making meaning' in films. Yet, if one wishes to be as scientifically rigorous as possible, it is at least equally important to take into consideration how exactly this textual juxtaposition is carried out. In 2002, Quaresima remarked that '[t]he critical literature on the remake may seem vast, but it is made up almost entirely of descriptions, or of limited comparative analyses of paired texts, carried out according to the most diverse and unsystematic criteria' (78). Since then, I would argue, there have been little¹⁶⁰ to no serious attempts at conceiving a descriptive textual model (with clear criteria) that helps in more systematically analyzing film remakes.

One of the leading scholars of television format studies, Moran, argued that, because of the serial principle present in all television formats, it seems appropriate to systematically analyze television formats through the method of semiotics, as it 'helps identify repetition as a recurring feature of popular fiction and entertainment, whether the form be printed stories, popular song or television program production' (Moran, 2009: 11). As recent (both theoretically and empirically driven) research shows, the industrial, cultural, and textual process of formatting television content is (to a certain extent) comparable to the process of remaking films (see, for example, Verevis, 2017; Labayen & Morán, 2019). Therefore, it might be useful to look at how scholars in format studies have been analyzing these television formats textually in the past decades – of course, taking into account the commonalities and differences between both cultural

¹⁶⁰ Probably, the only exception would be Verevis' semantic/syntactic model (2006) – based on Altman's genre theory – which is handy, yet somewhat underdeveloped and hardly adopted in the context of film remakes.

artifacts and adapting the model correspondingly. As such, in order to systematize the comparative textual study of film remakes, I found that a set of descriptive textual codes helps in structuring the process of analysis (see Cuelenaere, Joye & Willems, 2019 for an example of the method applied to Flemish-Dutch remakes). The underlying assumption and objective here is actually indebted to a structuralist thought where 'behavior, institutions and texts are seen as analyzable in terms of an underlying network of relationships, the crucial point being that the elements which constitute the network gain their meaning from the relations that hold between the elements' (Stam, 2005: 18). The goal of this chapter is, therefore, to identify the mechanisms that form the basis for a text, which will eventually aid us in understanding the remake process and, in a next step, "discover" the meanings of (and around) those texts that went through it.

It might, at first sight, seem that a systematic textual organization is incompatible with the late poststructuralist – or, indeed, Foucauldian – discursive idea that meaning is always governed by socio-culturally and historically defined discourses (cf. section 1.2). Yet, as argued by Berry-Flint (2004), this – very justified – poststructuralist criticism does not necessarily imply that a more systematized approach to textual analyses (in his case, genre analysis) has become impossible or obsolete. A discursive stance 'does not disregard the importance of textual organization; it simply sees films as sites rather than sources of meaning. Their reception is thus primarily determined socio-culturally because of the ways that social discourses organize what sense viewers make of films' aesthetic and phenomenological effects' (Berry-Flint, 2004: 38). Indeed, even if one is convinced by the idea that the work of semioticians is highly myopic – in the sense that it disregards cultural specificities and adheres meaning to the text itself – it can still 'form the matrix, and provide much of the vocabulary, for approaches ranging from the linguistic, psychoanalytic, feminist and Marxist to the narratological, reception-oriented and translinguistic' (Stam, 2005: x).

Put simply: the textual framework that I will clarify in the following adopts the structuralist idea that defines a text, and thus a film text, as an amalgam of codes and mechanisms that together form a structure. Yet, as film remakes are generally quite clearly connected to their source (texts), one should, naturally, integrate the analysis of those remade texts as well – with 'source text' taken broadly, thus not only referring to "acknowledged" source text(s) (cf. section 1.2). Therefore, by systematically

analyzing a set of films – or, in this case, tandems of source films and their remakes – through a set of clearly defined codes, and looking for specific patterns, one can get a hold of the mechanisms that transform these texts and create meaning. However – and this is where the discursive influence comes in – in a next step, one should open up the overall structure by adding human agency (both in individual and cultural forms) to the equation – thus acknowledging that cultural artifacts’ meanings are always polysemic, and that meaning always comes into being intertextually and discursively. Hence, ‘a concern with the historical, social and cultural aspects [...] can at least help counter the frequent recourse to the structuralist goal of “discovering” deep structures and ahistorical essences’ (Van der Heide, 2002: 35), which suggests that the formal elements in texts are always simultaneously social (i.e. not individually, nor collectively, but rather inter-subjectively defined) properties, inscribed in one or more cultures. Hence, given that the meanings of a film are, inter-subjectively “created”, and, therefore, part of a never-ending process of interpretation, one should not only analyze the film remake textually, but also investigate its discursive nature. As argued by Verevis (2006: 101), “textual accounts of remaking need to be placed in a contextual history, in “a sociology [of remaking] that takes into account the commercial apparatus, the audience, and the ... [broader] culture industry”, mirroring Staiger’s (2000) historical materialist approach. Consequently, the next essential phase in the analysis is to conduct production and reception research. In conclusion, the model that I will describe in the following helps in descriptively analyzing film remakes. Yet, the analyst that uses it should acknowledge that merely describing the similarities and differences is insufficient. A more holistic analysis of the film remake necessitates, next to a descriptive layer, an interpretative layer, calling for both production and reception analysis. Therefore, the model will as clearly as possible demarcate the lines between textual and extra-textual elements of analysis.

4.2 A descriptive analysis of film remakes: formal, transtextual, and cultural codes

Moran (2009) stated that various scholars, coming from many different fields, have attempted to address the issue of cultural transformation by building on models of adaptation. Yet, he continues, these attempts have, hitherto, resulted in highly abstract or idealist versions of models, which, of course, have been useful theoretically, but perhaps less useful when being applied methodically, or, indeed, practically. When investigating the remaking of television formats, one of the important analyses that should be done is concerned with the process of adaptation or translation, for which Moran builds on Heylen's (1994) work in the field of translation studies. Subsequently, Moran came up with three different types of codes, i.e., linguistic codes, intertextual codes, and cultural codes, which range from elementary to more complex degrees of text. It is important to note that these codes should not be seen as mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they signify a multi-layered and complex process of remaking, which means that these codes interact and overlap rather than forming clearly distinct textual matters. These codes are, therefore, to be seen as a suggestive set or structuring of ideas that 'can help frame the discussion of the adaptation process relating to TV formats' (Moran, 2009: 46), and, for our purposes, to the analysis of film remakes.

Before elaborating on Moran's model and adapting his way of framing the textual analysis of remaking television formats to the film remake process, it is necessary to critically reflect on his focus on the process of localization (cf. section 2.4.3). Indeed, one of the important underlying mechanisms that Moran seeks to locate with his framework is culturally driven and is generally typified as 'localization'. In other words, Moran built the whole model around that specific notion, indirectly assuming that the process of localizing textual elements in television formats is quintessential if one wants to understand commonalities and differences found through the use of the textual codes. Applying this to transnational or cross-cultural remakes, one should, therefore, be equally wary of interpreting the found textual differences solely in terms of localization¹⁶¹. In addition, what is often taken for granted when conducting cross-

¹⁶¹ The process of localization is, moreover, often interpreted solely in terms of the nation. This reminds of what is known as methodological nationalism, that is (unconsciously) holding the idea that the nation-state is the natural starting point for every explanation of data (Beck & Sznaider, 2006).

cultural analyses is that through the found differences, inevitably, culturally local themes or essential contextual factors are revealed (Livingstone, 2003). Such an assumption overstates 'internal homogeneity while underplaying heterogeneity, ambiguity and borderline phenomena' (Livingstone, 2003: 479), which can partially be solved by deliberately tracing cultural similarities as well.

Another justified critique for the localization approach can be summarized in what is being typified as the "cultural opacity" of the scholar. In other words, the analyst who investigates film remakes may, of course, lack an adequate comprehension of a specific cultural context. Therefore, when tracing the mechanism of localization in the analysis of film remakes, one should acknowledge a few pitfalls: first of all, there is no final or perfect way of "correctly" interpreting a text culturally. Thinking that one can "correctly" understand a text culturally will not result in a 'wrong' interpretation, but rather in what has been defined as projective appropriation, i.e., the projection of one's own belief system and theoretical viewpoints upon (film) texts from other cultures (Willems, 1994). Probably even more problematic is when an analyst 'adopts an ethnographic persona by reading texts as culturally, socially and historically authentic, thereby interpreting social behavior and even the presence of art[e]facts and particular landscapes as culturally accurate' (Van der Heide, 2002: 31-32). As such, the preferred relationship between analyst and cultural object of research is what is labelled as "creative understanding" (cf. the work of Willems, 1994): a dialectical interconnection where 'the analyst is conscious of his or her own cultural location when engaging in the analysis of cultural texts [which necessarily involves] a process of "othering" oneself, but not of becoming (or attempting to become) the "other"' (Van der Heide, 2002: 29).

Moreover, as I have argued earlier (see Cuelenaere, Joye & Willems, 2019), the comparative analysis of film remakes itself helps when interpreting similarities and differences culturally, simply because narratives of both the source film and remake are often very similar, making the differences more explicit. Indeed, '[w]hen the border asserts itself so blatantly, there are ways of acquiring an intra-cultural interpretation (note that this is an interpretation and not an explanation) for the analyst to consider' (Van der Heide, 2002: 31). This mirrors Bakhtin's notion of "outsiderness" (1986), arguing that meaning often "reveals" itself more clearly when it is placed in contact with other (alien) meaning(s), resulting in dialogue (cf. section 1.2). Even though apples and oranges can, of course, be compared, 'there is perhaps more to be gained,

because the range of variables is narrower, by comparing a ripe apple to one that is worm-eaten, or by comparing a market-ready Granny Smith to an equally saleable McIntosh or Fuji' (Wierzbicki 2015: 166). Hence, a possible solution of the abovementioned pitfall can be found in the dynamics of the comparative film analysis itself. Of course, it is much recommended to also compare the findings and results with analyses by other analysts, 'preferably from other cultural and ideological perspectives' (Van der Heide, 2002: 31). Moreover, research in the field of television formats shows that localization processes 'might be much more limited, unintentional and more constrained than is usually argued' (Van Keulen & Krijnen, 2014: 290). As such, if one wishes to understand the film remake more holistically, the textual analysis of film remakes is only one step in the right direction. Indeed, one should not only look at culturally driven (e.g. employing cultural stereotypes to create recognizability) decisions in the remake process, but equally so the personally (e.g. bringing a homage to the source film), industrially (e.g. omitting scenes because of budgetary reasons), textually (e.g. genre-specific constraints), and even accidentally motivated (e.g. forgetting to change specific elements while filming) choices (cf. section 2.3). The model, therefore, intends to point at the importance of keeping a distance between *what* has been changed in remakes, *why* this have been altered, *how* this has been done, by *whom* it was done, and finally, *what* this all means.

Starting from the theoretical basis put forward by Moran (2009) – and clearly signaling where I modify or take distance from his model –, I will now elaborate on a framework (cf. Table 4) that distinguishes between three different codes (formal, transtextual, and cultural). This set of codes should help the analyst in more systematically studying film tandems¹⁶². The general idea is that they inform, structure, and guide the textual analysis. As such, these codes (and, therefore, the model) are to be seen as instruments or possible means, not an end to a means. Moreover, as mentioned above, the codes overlap in many ways, yet, in accordance with Moine (2007)¹⁶³, I claim that it is specifically at the moment of imbrication that these codes

¹⁶² Though I conceived the model specifically for the analysis of film remakes, the model could definitely form the basis for scrutinizing other, similar, forms of serialities.

¹⁶³ Moine actually talks about the categories proposed by Genette (which I will adopt in the transtextual code), but the assumptions and conclusions are equally applicable to the codes I

become interesting and prove to be productive. Also, it is, naturally, perfectly possible to only partially employ the model in a comparative analysis, for instance focusing solely on the transtextual codes while ignoring the formal and cultural codes. Lastly, the model could equally so function as a set of parameters for more quantitatively oriented analyses of film remakes.

Table 4: *The Descriptive Model*

Formal code	Transtextual code	Cultural code
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mise-en-scène ▪ Cinematography ▪ Sound ▪ Editing ▪ Characters ▪ Narrative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Intertextual</i> elements (presence of an <i>indirect</i> source text in the text): quotation and allusion ▪ <i>Architextual</i> elements (relationship between the text and a text of its kind) ▪ <i>Hypertextual</i> markers (explicit reference to <i>direct</i> source text (or hypotext)) ▪ <i>Metatextual</i> elements (references of one text on another text) ▪ <i>Intratextual</i> elements (reference to (status of) the text itself) ▪ <i>Paratextual</i> elements (textual elements that accompany the text) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Explicit</i> cultural references (clear and manifest) ▪ <i>Implicit</i> cultural references (unclear, implied)

4.2.1 Formal code

The poetics of cinema arguably differs from a literary or televisual one. Yet, Moran (2009) adopts the concepts of form and style, as defined by Bordwell and Thompson (2004), when describing the ‘linguistic code’. Given that Bordwell and Thompson have actually coined the umbrella term of ‘film form’, consisting of both a formal and stylistic system, I decided to dub the textual set that deals with form and style the ‘formal code’. The film form signifies the overall system of relationships between the different elements or parts, consisting of both the formal and stylistic system which constantly

propose. The original quote says the following: ‘les catégories proposées par Genette se révél[e]nt beaucoup plus productives quand on les envisage non de façon cloisonnées, mais qu’on s’intéresse à leurs zones de recouvrement ou de cohabitation partielle’ (Moine, 2007: 41).

interact (Bordwell & Thompson 2004). Put simply, the formal system consists of, taken broadly, the narrative or non-narrative, and how these are discursively constructed. Think also of the themes of a narrative, or specific acts, as well as differences in time and space. One could also add focalization points or the overall structure of how scenes are arranged. Equally important are the characters that are part of the (non-)narrative, how they behave, their names, their histories, etc. The stylistic system, on the other hand, deals with the *mise-en-scène* (clothing, make-up, props, locations, ...), cinematography (camera use, color, light, ...), sound (rhythm, silence, tonality, musical scores, ...), and finally the editing. Simplified, the first system looks at *what* is being told on screen, and the second at *how* that is being done – yet, both of these systems cannot be seen as isolated or highly distinct from each other.

Moran argues that '[a]t this level, the adaptation of a program format will involve one or more of these [...] codes in a relatively simple operation of omission, inclusion, substitution or permutation' (2009: 46). As we are dealing with at least two film texts and given that these are, naturally, put in a comparative framework, things get a bit more complicated. Indeed, describing the processes of 'omission', 'inclusion', 'substitution', or 'permutation' all depends on which film was analyzed first. However, a rule of thumb here could be that one should always hold the broader aim or focus of the analysis in mind and openly communicate which approach was taken and why. It, for instance, often makes sense to analyze films and their remakes in a chronological way: which film or script was first released, and which film(s) came after that and was, therefore, directly based on one or more of those previous texts. The danger of the latter approach, however, is that one can fall into the trap of seeing the direct source film as more original – which often results in connecting value to this status – only because it was "first". Yet, at the same time, it should be acknowledged that when explaining processes of, e.g., omission and inclusion, a linear chronology is actually always already implied – which basically justifies or normalizes said approach.

4.2.2 *Transtextual code*

The second type of translation that Moran adds to his adaptation model is the very broadly defined 'intertextual code'. In Moran's view, these intertextual elements are a lot less discrete than the previous code, as they connect 'with specific bodies of knowledge held by particular communities' (2009: 48). Consequently, this code transcends the texts themselves and looks at the broader industrial, but also national

contexts which shape these texts. Finally, Moran also puts the overarching element of genre under this code. For the sake of methodological clarity, as well as conceptual hygiene, I decided to not integrate an actual contextual analysis (e.g. information gathered through in-depth interviews) in the textual model. Instead of using such a broad (and, *in se*, both textually and extra-textually defined) code, I suggest to exchange the idea of intertextuality with Genette's conceptualization of textual transcendence, which signifies 'all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts' (1997: 1). There is no straightforward way to fully, or indeed a-historically, define the film remake textually. Yet, it could be said that, in comparison to non-remakes, a film remake is more clearly defined by (its relationship with) one or more previous source texts. Indeed, 'the smallest common denominator uniting [the] attempts to come to grips with the remake seems to be their tendency to restrict the notion of remaking to intra-medial re-workings of texts' (Heinze & Krämer, 2015: 10). If one wants to analyze film remakes textually, it, therefore, seems logical to fully consider the textual relationships that exist between a film remake, and its direct and indirect source texts.

In the 1980s, Genette stated that the object of a theory of literary forms should not solely consider the text itself, but rather its so-called textual transcendence – the textual connections with other, preceding and succeeding, texts. Here, Genette builds on Kristeva's notion of intertextuality (1980), which states that every text is a mosaic of quotations, absorbing and transforming other texts (cf. section 1.2). However, as asserted by Prince in the foreword of one of Genette's books, 'though all literary texts are hypertextual, some are more hypertextual than others, more massively and explicitly palimpsestuous' (Genette 1997: ix), which is probably where the film remake belongs. There have been several scholars (e.g. Horton & McDougal, 1998; Quaresima, 2002; Zanger, 2006; Moine, 2007) that have adopted Genette's poetics intending to define the film remake and its relationship(s) with other texts. In *Film Remakes*, Verevis (2006), building on Stam's work (2005), suggested that Genette's work on transtextuality may also be helpful when analyzing film remakes and comparing them to their source text(s) (see also Herbert, 2008). Therefore, in the following, I will elaborate on Genette's notion of transtextuality and zoom in on its different categories and subcategories. Hence, I will adopt his poetics and associated (sub)categories, and demonstrate how these can be used to systematically compare

film remakes with their source texts, and can help us build a more cohesive methodology to scrutinize remakes textually.

Genette classified five types of transtextual relationships and listed them 'more or less in the order of increasing abstraction, implication, and comprehensiveness' (1997: 1): intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, architextuality, and hypertextuality. These categorizations prove to be handy tools – mainly as a way of framing the (trans)textual findings – when comparing film remakes with their direct and indirect source texts. They can be adopted in at least two ways: on the one hand, they guide the analyst in finding transtextual relationships between two or more texts (in a broad sense, they are quite clearly operationalized), and on the other hand, they can help the analyst in better describing (i.e. in a more detailed way) what happens on screen. Building on, and slightly diverging from, the applications of Genette's framework by Stam (2005) and later Verevis (2006) on respectively film analysis and film remake analysis, I will demonstrate why adding the transtextual code to the textual model is valuable.

The first type of relationship that Genette discusses is the intertextual one, which he defines in a much more strict sense than generally conceived, i.e. as 'a relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts: that is to say, eidetically and typically as the actual presence of one text within another' (1997: 1-2). Yet, in the context of film remakes, I would argue that it becomes even more convenient when it is narrowed down to only the presence of an indirect source text in the text. Otherwise, this category would include both the indirect (to many different source texts) and the direct (to the direct, often 'acknowledged' source text(s)) relationships, which are two distinct matters in the analysis of film remakes. In a next step, Genette concretizes this type of relationship by supplying some subcategories, for which two of them are useful when analyzing film (remakes): quotation on the one hand, and allusion on the other. In the model I propose, quotation can appear as a direct insertion of one or more clips of whatever other film (except for the direct source text(s)) into the film text. An allusion could be interpreted as a more abstract form of quotation, as it 'can take the form of a verbal or visual evocation of another film' (Stam, 2005: 211).

Another type of relationship that could be found between a film remake and direct or indirect source texts is called architextual, i.e. its designation as being part of

one or more genres. For the remake model, it makes sense to broaden this category to those elements that link the film text to one or more texts of its kind. Examples of such elements could be both textual and paratextual (cf. below), such as the usage of genre-specific tropes, motifs or clichés. Think also of specific phrases, quotations, themes, and other conventions or rules. Including this type of relationship into the model answers the need to extend the comparative analysis of film remakes with source texts to other film texts that are, for example, part of the same genre.

The third type of relationships that can be found when comparatively analyzing film remakes is the hypertextual one. This one is different from the others, as it presupposes a direct and explicit relationship, instead of an indirect and possible implicit one, with its source text(s). Indeed, hypertextual markers point toward explicit references to the direct source text(s) (or, as Genette described it, the hypotext(s)) of the film remake. A hypertextual relationship can be established in many different ways: through dialogue, the use of specific props, the names of characters, or even direct insertions of clips of the source film.

Another kind of relationship that could be found between the film remake and other texts is a metatextual one, i.e. where the film on itself, or parts of it, (critically) comment on another film text, or body of texts (genres, for example). Next is the so-called intratextual relationship, which signifies references to the (status of) the text itself, or 'refer[s] to the process by which films refer to themselves through mirroring, microcosmic, and mise-en-abyme structures, while auto-citation would refer to an author's self-quotation' (Stam, 2005: 211). And then, lastly, the paratextual elements are those that directly accompany the text (e.g. the opening and end credits, post-credit scenes, ...). Important here is that the notion of paratextuality is actually defined in a much more narrow sense, which means that I clearly steer away from Genette's signification and the more general use of the word. This is, however, necessary, as this model wants to emphasize a more holistic analysis (cf. above) that also includes production and reception research (including, for example, the analysis of trailers, teasers, but also press material or even film reviews).

4.2.3 *Cultural code*

The last code that I would like to add to the textual model is the cultural code, which consists of both explicit and implicit references to a cultural context, artifact or situation. Of course, there exists a whole range of cultural references that could be found in a film text: e.g. humor; religion; language; gender; stereotypes; nudity; sexuality; specific situations; periods; and broader political, judicial, economic, and geographic circumstances. There are a few reasons why this type of elements requires a different code: first, giving these references a separate code forces scholars to not interpret every commonality or difference between source text and remake in terms of localization (cf. above). Second, and this might seem to contradict the former, it is clear that a lot of the omissions, additions, and other transformative processes in film remakes are often being done to cultural elements, which is why they deserve a separate code. Lastly, there are many different ways, with different underlying motives or incentives, of altering such cultural codes, and because of this – and for the sake of overall clarity of the model – it makes sense to integrate a distinction between the textually found codes and cultural processes of, for example, localization or delocalization (that give meaning to those codes and, therefore, form the interpretative layer).

This cultural code is theoretically informed by Hjort's concept of banal aboutness (2000, cf. section 2.2) and the study of imagology. The latter points toward 'the study of national and cultural images as represented in textual discourse, [which] is a fruitful approach for disciplines dealing with textual change' (van Doorslaer, 2019: 56) – its approach being descriptive instead of explanatory. As such, this (sub)discipline wishes to theorize national and cultural stereotypes comparatively, concentrating 'on more constructionist models, away from essentialist definitions' (van Doorslaer, 2019: 57). Lastly, according to van Doorslaer (2019), adopting imagology as a lens also marks the importance of 'diachronic viewpoints or the centrality of change and hybridity' (62), as well as the role of the mediating 'author', or in our case, the filmmakers. The concept of banal aboutness, on the other hand, follows Billig's notion of banal nationalism (1995), which contends that nationalism (in film, for example) should not be reduced to only the explicit or apparent references to, or indeed the reproductions of, the nation. Applied to the realm of film, and slightly – yet, not fully – steering away from the loaded term 'nationalism', Hjort coins the concept of banal aboutness, signaling those elements that mirror the material aspects of a specific

culture which make a film 'about' that culture (2000: 99). She, moreover, creates the essential division between banal occurrences of aboutness and the type 'that is constitutive of full-blown themes of nation' (Hjort, 2000: 101). What defines the difference between both instances is the degree to which the reference (taken broadly) is vital or fundamentally important to the narrative. As such, focal attention acts as the defining characteristic between films that are about a nation and films that have the nation as a central theme – which should not be conceived of as binary but as existing on a continuum.

Explicit and implicit cultural references are found in both banal and thematized representations of the nation, which means that one or more explicit references to a specific cultural context do not necessarily make a film nationalistic in a thematic way. To operationalize these concepts more clearly, it could be said that explicit cultural references are those elements that clearly (from the analyst's perspective) refer to an extratextual cultural reality, leaving nothing implied, which, in every case, makes a film 'about' a specific culture or nation, and in some cases, makes the nation the central theme of the film. Think, for example, of the use of (popular) television programs, known magazines or newspapers, theme parks, (local) celebrities, dishes, art, locales, etc. In contrast, implicit cultural references are those elements that are implied but not manifestly or obviously uttered. These references are mostly found in specific representations or portrayals of, for example, sexuality, nudity, religion, sports, ethnicity, cultural habits or traditions, but also in humor, stereotypes, clichés, etc. Imagology's focus on stereotypes might be of interest here. Throughout its existence as a discipline, it has pointed toward at least three recurring (overarching) findings: think of the stereotypical North-South (e.g. in Italy, Belgium, France, or even Europe as a whole) and center-periphery (a country's capital city versus the rest) oppositions, as well as the more meta-reflexive finding that 'there are contradictory stereotypes available for more or less each country, showing the relativity of typicality' (van Doorslaer, 2019: 62; cf. also Chapter 12). Obviously, there is no clear theoretical line that can be drawn between explicit and implicit cultural references, which suggests that they function more like conceptual frames or lenses which can help trace these cultural elements – which is in line with the overall goal of the proposed model: framing the discussion on the remake and systematizing its analysis.

4.3 Conclusion

The descriptive textual model that was explored and presented in the above is only a first step to grasping and understanding the film remake process. Therefore, the next step is to gather and interpret the found data while looking for specific patterns. Even though interpreting textual findings often comes in an almost natural or intuitive way, one should always try to be as reflexive as possible. Weber (1949) once wrote that it 'is not the "actual" interconnections of "things" but the conceptual interconnections of problems which define the scope of the various sciences' (cited in: Koshul 2005: 69). Hence, the outcome of one's analysis is always (at least partially) determined by the theoretical lenses one adopts when analyzing film remakes. These lenses are indirectly accompanied by specific goals as well as assumptions about the interpretation of data. Consequently, although theories never just come into being – because 'they need a leap, a wager; a hypothesis, to get started' (Moretti 2000: 55) – a self-reflexive and iterative approach seems highly justifiable. Such an approach demands to constantly repeat the whole research process circularly, instead of a linearly defined process of data selection, collection, and analysis. Hence, the proposal to more systematically analyze film remakes by introducing the above described textual model does not imply that the latter model (in its current form) has to be strictly adhered to. Indeed, I consider my textual model as a continuous work-in-progress, open for interpretation, variation, and uses. This equally implies that, if done critically, the present model could also form the basis for a comparative descriptive analysis of other serial screen formats, both inter- and intra-medial (think of, e.g. sequels, serials, franchises, series, or reboots). Aware of the fact that employing a textual model is only one measure to bring about scientific rigorousness, with this chapter, I hope to (at least) convince that finding a similar language is quintessential if one aims to forge a scientific field that is theoretically and methodologically sound, as well as empirically driven.

Chapter 5

Toward an integrative methodological approach of remake studies

Positioning

This chapter argues that, after decades of pointing toward the importance of including production and reception research into the study of film remakes, we should actually start addressing production and reception methodologies. Further, the chapter investigates why these new methodologies are necessary for the sustainability and future development of the field. I argue that a lot can be learned from the insights coming from the existing methodologies in format studies, (critical) media industry studies, (audiovisual) translation studies, and more recently the study of cultural transduction. First, the chapter mainly deals with the importance of investigating the different cultural mediators that take part in the production lifecycle of the film remake. It is contended that the analysis of film remakes should start examining the different individuals or institutions that mediate or intervene between the production of cultural artifacts and the generation of consumer preferences. Second, the chapter points toward the importance of investigating the reception, experience, and interpretation of film remakes. It is shown that crucial questions like '(why) do audiences prefer the domestic remake over the foreign film?', 'how do audiences experience, interpret, and explain differences and similarities between source films and remakes?', but also 'how do audiences define and assess film remakes?' remain to be asked. The chapter concludes that if the field of remake studies wishes to break out of its disciplinary boundaries, adopting a multi-methodological approach will help to further brush off its dusty character of mainly conducting textual analyses.

As will become clear in Chapter 6, this chapter provides the present dissertation with many of the arguments that strive for a (more holistic) multi-methodological approach in the field of remake studies. By building on methodological approaches from other closely related study fields, it supplies this dissertation with novel (and important) research questions as well as with the necessary tools that will help us to answer these questions. As such, the chapter underwrites that, even though textual analyses are crucial if we want to understand the workings of film remakes, we

should acknowledge that films always exist in a specific (production and reception) context, which is why we should equally investigate its discursive nature.

Reference

Cuelenaere, E. (2020). Towards an integrative methodological approach of film remake studies. *Adaptation*, Online First: 1-17.

5.1 Introduction

In spite of the almost synchronous birth of cinema itself and the practice of remaking films at the end of the 19th century (see, e.g. Forrest, 2002), it was only in the 1970s-1980s that systematic and coherent scholarly research on the subject of film remakes started appearing. The then small number of studies provided the young field with general overviews and filmographies, offering, for example, general information on which films were remade, while not making any substantial attempts at conceptualizing the film remake, theoretically nor methodologically. Despite the early adoption of the idea of intertextuality and approaching remakes as self-contained artistic artifacts (Horton & McDougal, 1998; Mazdon, 2000), theoretical scholarly works on the remake remained scarce in number and were mostly, if not solely, based on textual research methods in the form of 'limited comparative analyses of paired texts, carried out according to the most diverse and unsystematic criteria' (Quaresima, 2002: 78).

In 2006, however, Constantine Verevis published the highly influential book *Film Remakes*. With this important work, he proposed to approach cinematic making through a three-level framework: as an industrial category (dealing with issues of production), a textual category (looking at genres, plots, and structures), and a critical category (including reception research). Verevis convincingly argued that if one wants to understand and define the film remake, this should not only be done textually. Instead, he contended, the film remake (as a noun), or remaking film (as a process or practice), 'is created and sustained through the repeated use of terminology [which, moreover, suggests that] the very limited direct intertextual referentiality between the remake and its original is organized according to an extratextual referentiality, located in historically specific discursive formations' (Verevis, 2006: 28). This observation signaled a welcome 'discursive shift' in the field, while simultaneously spurring the idea of the remake as a kind of prism 'through which one can analy[z]e the complex nature of the film medium on both the textual and contextual levels' (Cuelenaere, Joye & Willems, 2019: 264).

In the following years, many different aspects were examined through the prismatic remake, resulting in a vast body of critical literature on the remake. However, though this discursive shift delivered a myriad of critical and more holistic conceptualizations of the remake, it did not necessarily lead to methodological innovation, nor to empirical research other than textual analyses – which explains the

field's still very limited methodological toolbox. Attempting to advance the research domain in this respect, a valuable effort at yielding a methodological model was undertaken by Iain Robert Smith in 2016. His scalable model, built on the idea of the 'meme', considers the interrelationship between production, text, and reception, 'utili[z]ing insights from across political economic, ethnographic, cultural studies and textualist approaches to media' (Smith, 2016: 22). As such, Smith pointed toward the importance of embedding a close analysis of film remakes – being hybrid cultural texts – in their socio-historical context(s) by using the meme as a theoretical metaphor – hinting at a possible 'sociology of remakes' (cf. Murray, 2012). However valuable these attempts at materializing and methodologizing the field of remake studies have been, I would argue that we might not have gone far enough in this endeavor.

During the process of remaking films, decisions are made that are founded on many different aspects, i.e. genre conventions, personal preferences, specific socio-political engagements, historical circumstances, etc. Though, as advanced by Linda Hutcheon in the context of adaptations, '[t]hese decisions are made in a creative as well as an interpretive context that is ideological, social, historical, cultural, personal, and aesthetic' (2006: 108). She continues that, when analyzing and comparing texts, contexts are actually made attainable in two different ways: first, a text always 'bears the marks of these choices, marks that betray the assumptions of the creator – at the very least insofar as those assumptions can be inferred from the text' (Hutcheon, 2006: 108-109). Second, one should also notice that 'extratextual statements of intent and motive often do exist to round out our sense of the context of creation' (Hutcheon, 2006: 109) – when embedded in the analysis, one should, therefore, confront such extratextual assertions with the textual findings. Hence, next to a contextualized interpretation, research on film remakes also necessitates a so-called 'rational interpretation', which focuses on 'the unresolved differences between the interpreter's and the actor's points of view and carefully compares and evaluates them' (Bohman, 1991: 143). In a similar vein, yet in the context of television formats, Albert Moran argues that 'it seems preferable to approach TV format remaking at a more concrete middle-range level in terms of using categories drawn from the self-understanding of some of those involved in the process of format adaptation' (2009: 43). In conclusion, contrary to the contextualized interpretation, rational interpretation draws from outsider knowledge (held by, e.g. cultural producers and audiences), which can be gathered

through production and reception research – convinced that analyzing the intersubjectively shared ideas on a specific subject creates knowledge.

Therefore, I will argue that, after decades of pointing toward the importance of including production and reception research into the study of film remakes, the time has come to *actually* address production and reception methodologies and investigate why this is necessary for the sustainability and future development of the field. It will be shown that a lot can be learned from the many insights coming from the existing methodologies that are being used in format studies, (critical) media industry studies, television (remake) studies, adaptation studies, (audiovisual) translation studies, and more recently the study of cultural transduction – which are all, except for adaptation and arguably translation studies, more heavily grounded in social sciences. As argued by Rüdiger Heinze and Lucia Krämer: ‘the greatest hermeneutic potential lies in [...] an analysis of how the levels of production, text, reception, and context are negotiated by those involved in creating, marketing, evaluating, and analyzing remakes’ (2015: 9). Therefore, the study of film remakes should commence looking into an approach that genuinely connects textual findings to a methodology that employs the analysis of the different (social and industrial) contexts, gatekeepers, cultural intermediaries, and audiences.

One might wonder whether this article’s plea – overtly aimed at the field of remake studies – is equally applicable to the field of adaptation studies. First of all, instead of clearly demarcating both study fields, I follow James Naremore in claiming that ‘[t]he study of adaptation needs to be joined with the study of recycling, remaking and every other form of retelling in the age of mechanical reproduction and electronic communication’ (2000: 15). Additionally, though academics have argued that film remakes should be seen as a specific form of adaptation (see e.g. Hutcheon, 2006) it might be more productive to regard both artifacts (and others, like reboots¹⁶⁴) as part of the same post-production and post-celluloid media culture: such an account ‘signals

¹⁶⁴ Here, William Proctor’s research on the reboot could be helpful. He argues that the film remake and reboot both share quite some commonalities (e.g., regarding the repetition of narrative units), yet ‘a film remake is a singular text bound within a self-contained narrative schema; whereas a reboot attempts to forge a series of films, to begin a franchise anew from the ashes of an old or failed property’ (2012: 4). However, as I will argue further on, though textually defining cultural artifacts might be a helpful starting point for scholarly research, it does not suffice if one wishes to grasp the phenomenon more holistically.

new media transformations of replica practices and frustrates those approaches that seek to differentiate processes of adaptation and remaking by appealing to the relationship between a new version (an adaptation or remake) and the medium of the original artifact' (Verevis, 2017: 268). Moreover, as both remakes and adaptations are part of the same streams of global media industries where both, in se, attempt to render repetition into innovation, they 'are best understood as historical varieties of [the same] serial practice' (Kelleter & Loock, 2017: 125). Hence, though this article mainly addresses the methodological myopia of remake studies, the claims and ensuing research propositions that will be made in the following are not solely applicable to the film remake as such and could provide useful insights for other, closely related fields.

This article should, however, not be considered as an end in itself, but as one of the possible means to a possible end. I decided to, for instance, mostly address qualitatively oriented research. Quantitative research is, arguably, more aimed toward descriptive methods (i.e. through surveys, questionnaires with closed answers), looking for patterns in data, and proves to be more easily replicable and generalizable, which could be highly interesting for the field as well (see, e.g. Monk's work on 'heritage film audiences', 2011b). Such research could, for example, map the flows of film remakes and prove or contest the claims made by theories such as cultural proximity (cf. Straubhaar, 2007) or cultural discount (cf. Hoskins & Mirus, 1988). It could yield network analyses, showing which institutions, studios, actors, or individuals are key factors in the remake process. It would also be able to address the quantity of film remakes throughout history, and show in which times and contexts it increases and decreases. Before embarking on such applied research, however, it seems preferable to first sketch out the advantages and hypothetical possibilities of a multi-methodological approach to the study of film remakes.

5.2 Cultural mediators and the production lifecycle of film remakes

As recently observed by Miguel Fernández Labayen and Ana Martín Morán (2019), though the vast majority of research in the field of remake studies recognizes the importance of the industrial context, actual empirical research that investigates the industrial dimensions of film remakes (e.g. financial and contractual processes or the overall business side of remakes) still hardly exists. Consequently, 'the vast majority of analyses understands film remakes as processes of narrative, aesthetic, and cultural adaptation' (Labayen & Morán, 2019). For the field of adaptation studies, Simone Murray contends that production studies have had so little impact because of its 'common institutional separation from social science-based program[s] in media studies' (2012: 15), which, I claim, could arguably also be said for the field of remake studies. As this article pleads for a multi-methodological approach, which will, in a next step, also include reception analyses, it will be shown that a thorough consideration of the producers' (taken broadly) intents, convictions, and behavior is necessary, as 'knowledge about the "maker's mind and personality" can actually affect the audience members' interpretation' (Hutcheon, 2006: 110). Therefore, if one wants to grasp the remake process better, it is essential also to question why and how film remakes are being manufactured from an industrial perspective.

When attempting to understand the production context of film remakes, the field of political economy media research is particularly relevant. Acknowledging the role and impact of structures of and (digital) evolutions in both global and local film and media industries as well as the interplay between political and economic considerations are essential when one wants to, for example, understand how cultural and industry policies become incentives for the production of specific films (O'Regan, 2008), as well as their specific content. Yet, I agree with Smith who claims that such macro perspectives on the film remake process should be combined with the micro perspectives of cultural studies¹⁶⁵, as these instead focus 'on how cultures receive and

¹⁶⁵ This reminds of Tony Bennett's (1983) work on how texts (in the broad sense) are not stable entities that pre-exist their interpretation(s), but are 'productively activated' when 'read'. Consequently, a text does not necessarily contain a meaning, as it is actively produced in

transform imported cultural forms' (2016: 13) – thereby acknowledging the important element of agency. Cultural studies crystallized the idea that 'real' or actual audiences and producers should be studied, and that they should be seen as 'consisting of socially, culturally and historically located individuals who actively negotiate hegemonic discourses in society' (Biltereyst & Meers, 2018: 25). This in-between position (shifting between political economy and cultural studies) implies that, for example, both the regimes of copyright, film policy measures, broader transnational and/or local networks, and financial structures are taken into account when analyzing a specific case, as well as how individual and institutionalized cultural mediators deal with such contextual aspects and work their way through these broader circumstances.

This is where the insights from Pierre Bourdieu's (1993) field theory of cultural production might come in handy, as he wishes to install a middle ground between the two opposite stances of, on the one hand, what he calls, 'charismatic ideology', which perceives cultural agents as individual geniuses (subjectivism), downplaying the impact of other involved agents, and, on the other hand, the more Marxist driven idea that understands artistic artifacts almost entirely as the direct (and only) result of their (economic) surroundings – i.e. excluding human agency. Murray (2012) contends that what is specifically attractive in Bourdieu's formulation, is his focus on these cultural mediators 'who maintain some degree of willed decision-making within an overall context of a given cultural field' (19). As such, it makes sense to, for example, confront the director or editor with specific changes that were found between the source text(s) and the remake, and ask what the motives or incentives behind the transformations were. Yet, one should always keep in mind that the author's intents or incentives should not be placed in some kind of higher hierarchical order – above the analyst's interpretation, for instance. The conception of meaning itself should namely be seen as an ever-changing site of struggle, embedded in many different discourses.

Hence, in order to further investigate the production context of film remakes, it is useful to implement the notion of cultural mediators into the field. Considering remakes as a form of composite translation (made by many different agents), Jonathan

'reading formations that regulate the encounters between texts and readers' (Bennett, 1983: 8), resulting in 'an interaction between the culturally activated text and the culturally activated reader, [...] that is structured by the material, social, ideological and institutional relationships in which both text and readers are inescapably inscribed' (Bennett, 1983: 12).

Evans (2014) argues that '[t]he production of a remake is the result of a complex industrial process which cannot rely on just one person' (p. 311). These cultural gatekeepers or mediators are considered as those individuals or institutions that mediate or intervene between the production of cultural artifacts and the generation of consumer preferences. Moreover, these mediators 'became vital agents to artists, not only with respect to the immediate problem of economic survival and reaching an audience, but also for the valuation of their work and the establishment of their reputations' (Janssen & Verboord, 2015: 440). They also, for instance, play an important role by scouting and selecting creative talents, deciding which works are to be developed in marketable products and which of these artifacts will finally reach (broad) audiences. On top of that, through their selection and evaluation – through the production, distribution and evaluation of cultural material – they add, or indeed, omit, symbolic value to cultural artifacts (Janssen & Verboord, 2015). Although insights from both the political economy and cultural studies have left their impression on the field of remake studies, arguably, this has not been done systematically, nor has it actually led to an adequate focus on cultural mediators.

Convinced by the idea that these cultural mediators actually perform highly distinct activities from those carried out by, for instance, artists and consumers, Susanne Janssen and Marc Verboord (2015) distinguish between seven mediating practices in the production cycle of cultural products: selection (gatekeeping), co-creation or editing, connecting or networking, selling or marketing, distributing, evaluating (classification, meaning making, and attribution of value), and finally the policy-related practices (censoring, protecting, and supporting). Applied to film remake research, the analysis of selecting practices could, for instance, investigate what the specific incentives and rationalizations are behind the decision to remake a specific film, i.e. defining its 'remake potential'. As mentioned by Janssen and Verboord, 'cultural industries [...] regularly make decisions other than choose/reject, altering or recontextualizing works at different stages of the production process' (2015: 441), which, is, naturally, highly relevant for the remake process. Important to mention here is that there may be many different driving forces at work behind such decision making processes, implying that research on film remakes should look beyond localization processes and take into account the more personal, ideological, moral, commercial, as well as the artistically or aesthetically driven motives.

A useful theoretical conceptualization that could also help frame such a study of cultural mediators is Enrique Uribe-Jongbloed and Hernán David Espinosa-Medina's (2014) categorization of the different people who are involved in the process of cultural transformation – which is part of their broader framework dubbed 'cultural transduction'. They differentiate between the allegorical figures of 'scouts', 'merchants', and 'alchemists'. In the context of international audiovisual trade markets, '[t]he scouts travel far and wide looking for new products to bring into their markets, the merchants participate in international or regional trade fairs to negotiate these contents or their copyrights, and finally the alchemists are responsible for adjusting the product, whether by modifying it superficially or altering it completely to fit in the new market' (Uribe-Jongbloed & Corredor Aristizábal, 2019: 47)¹⁶⁶. The advantage of this broadly defined typology is that it is easily transposable to other industrial and cultural contexts, which makes it, for instance, highly (but not solely) applicable to the remake industry. In conclusion, remake studies should start to acknowledge these figures more and investigate their roles, motives, and decision-making processes, acknowledging that, for instance, 'screenwriters themselves may be carrying out an act of hermeneutical interpretation as a part of their praxis' (Delgado & Avis, 2018: 3).

Because of the lack of in-depth and empirical research that investigates the roles of directors, producers, scriptwriters (and script adaptors), distributors, and others, who all act as gatekeepers in the global remake market, it remains difficult to define the different stages of the remake process, 'which gives rise to an inability to establish agreed, standard concepts in this field' (Delgado & Avis, 2018: 3). When considering agents like distributors and buyers in the analysis of the remake process, it is implied that 'their own tastes and preferences together with preconceived notions of their audiences' tastes and preferences determine the fate of any content in the international market, and especially content from unknown territories, producers and/or broadcasters' (Jensen & Jacobson, 2017: 436). Indeed, not only their tastes, but also the manners in which they perceive originality, authorship, commerciality, art, but also cultural identity, the importance of recognizability, representation, diversity, or even the definition of a film remake itself, impacts the process of creation, circulation and reception of film remakes. Recently conducted research by Labayen and Morán

¹⁶⁶ Of course, the aforementioned concepts should not be seen as mutually exclusive but rather as overlapping.

(2019) demonstrated that the specialized professional profile of remake rights representatives in the production, distribution and circulation of local-language comedy remakes has ‘interesting implications both for how remakes get done (i.e. the business model of the remake trade), but also for which kind of remakes are done’ (p. 284). Next to the latter elements, scholars must also consider the different texts these gatekeepers construct: press material, film posters, trailers, teasers, merchandising, making-ofs, festivals, special events, etc.

As mentioned above, Janssen and Verboord (2015) also regard the evaluation of cultural products as one of the important mediating practices in the production process of cultural artifacts. In a similar vein, Pia Majbritt Jensen and Ushma Chauhan Jacobsen (2017) note that one should take into account the influence and role of so-called cultural intermediaries (e.g. journalists, critics, review-aggregation websites, podcasts, influencers) who act as agenda-setters and arbiters of taste. Cultural intermediaries are defined by both their (claims to) expertise within their fields, as well as in their interpretive and transformative operations. Exemplary of the latter is Daniel Herbert’s (2017) study of the specific function(s) of film criticism in the shaping and comprehending of transnational film remakes. He showed that, from the 1930s on, critics have generally associated foreign source films and remakes with auteurs, stars and genres, and lesser in terms of their origins or nations, which, ‘might help us reflect on how and why we construct the very corpus of “transnational film remakes”’ (213). Additionally, as shown by several studies (e.g. Gemser et al., 2007; Holbrook & Addi, 2008), audience attendances of art films generally depend more on the amount of positive critical reviews, while the success of mainstream films generally relies more on the sheer quantity of media coverage – independently of the content of reviews. One can only wonder if this also counts for film remakes, which are, in many cases, catered toward large audiences.

5.3 The reception, experience, and interpretation of film remakes

Jensen and Jacobsen (2017) claim that, in the context of international TV content, ‘regular viewers’ should also be analyzed. In conjunction with Janet Staiger’s (2000) historical materialist approach, I, therefore, plead for an approach that also attempts to ‘reconstruct the viewer’s horizon of expectation’ (Biltereyst & Meers, 2018: 31), aiming to include audience research in the field of remake studies. In the context of audiovisual translation studies, Yves Gambier (2018) contends that ‘[i]t is important to set aside assumptions about audiences and conduct research with people, to make the human side of audience research cent[er] stage’ (p. 18), not in the least because ‘the perceptions, uses and readings of [...] films by their audiences are diverse in ways that cannot validly be viewed as textually determined’ (Monk, 2011b: 162). As such, both these authors (the latter in the field of adaptation studies) aim for a bottom-up process that, instead of assuming what audiences think or how they interpret texts and act, directly studies audiences – thereby investigating the subjective experiences and interpretations. Moreover, given that not only the intended viewers are taken into account in such an endeavor, but equally so the actual viewers, one also includes the alternative or oppositional interpretations of a media text – which consequently considers the polysemic nature of texts. In summary, ‘[s]tudying reception means to investigate the way(s) in which AV products/performances are processed, consumed, absorbed, accepted, appreciated, interpreted, understood and remembered by the viewers, under specific contextual/socio-cultural conditions and with their memories of their experience as cinema going’ (Gambier, 2018: 56).

Hitherto, little audience research has been conducted in the field of remake studies, which is symptomatic for the lack of audience research in other (often humanities-oriented) disciplines. Indeed, Yingjin Zhang (2006) contends that an ‘audience study does not fit the respected forms of text-based research in film, history, and literature [...], whereas communication scholars skilled in statistical analysis and industry research may not be familiar with the language and culture involved’ (p. 31). Another explanation is the inevitable complexity of audience studies, as it requires, for instance, extensive fieldwork, the organization of focus groups, archival research, etc. Zhang (2006) concludes that this apparent weakness – being the marginality of audience research – can be turned into a strength: ‘thanks to its marginali[z]ation in

academic borders, audience study can thrive on interdisciplinarity, drawing upon a variety of disciplinary methodologies from quantitative and empirical to historical and even speculative' (p. 31-32). Given that audience research is heavily underexplored in the field of remake studies, it is worthwhile to take a look at ancillary disciplines and traditions and look at how audience research could be integrated into the field of remakes and finally which results this could yield.

Laura Mee (2017) has made a first attempt at incorporating audience research in the field of remake studies by drawing on both critical and audience responses to horror remakes. An important finding was that 'while adaptation scholarship continues to distance itself from fidelity as an evaluative strategy, it is clear that an adaptation's faithfulness to its source remains a key concern for audiences' (Mee, 2017: 194). This shows that, when considering reception contexts, we are confronted with new, alternative frames, which will aid us to better understand the different cultural values that are being attributed to (film) texts. Connected to this, even though film critics (not academics) almost unanimously agree that film remakes are in almost all cases derivative or less original (cf. Verevis & Smith, 2017: 2), and therefore, 'inferior' to their source materials, it is to be questioned if audiences are likeminded. Connected to this, it is also unclear whether or not the awareness of a film's label as remake influences the judgement of the film, and whether this works similarly to, for instance, genre expectations and preconceptions. Moreover, as Mee (2017) asserts, 'it is the practice of remaking itself, rather than any resulting films, which is deemed pointless, as evidenced by the outright rejection of versions not even in production' (p. 200).

It is of equal importance to also investigate the audiences' actual experiences, interpretations, and judgements of film remakes. Here, a study of fan appreciation of the Batman film franchise (Joye & Van de Walle, 2015) could be of interest. It shows how the distinct fans' reactions to the different Batman instalments 'are as diverse as is the range of retellings of the Batman story' (p. 37). For example, these authors argue that the majority of fans deemed it more important that the different adaptations of the Batman story were faithful toward the 'essence' of the character(s), whereas the actors' physical resemblance to the 'original' representations were of less importance. This, moreover, raises the question whether or not there are significant differences to be found between knowing (e.g. fans) and unknowing audiences' (cf. Hutcheon, 2006) interpretations of, for example, fidelity and originality in film remakes. Additionally, one

could also wonder if and how the shared communities of fan bases (fully) determine the individual fans' experiences and interpretations of film remakes. It also remains to be studied if the so-called built-in audiences actually appreciate the remake of their favorite film, independently of both the critical reviews (or, indeed, the opinions of their peers) they might (not) have read and of the fact they went to actually see it or not.

One also wonders, given the digital turn, in what ways Web 2.0's seemingly metamorphic nature affects the methodological frameworks of audience research. Here, it might be illuminating to summon Claire Monk's (2011a; 2011b) insights of audience and fan activity around (mainly) heritage films and period dramas. First of all, she convincingly argues that even though the digital turn unarguably caused a proliferation of 'diverse forms of online fan activity, interactivity, (virtual) community, and productivity' (Monk, 2011a: 445), none of these are actually highly novel or unique to the new digital environment. Yet, this is not to say that there is no such thing as a digital shift, rather on the contrary: these 'new' online media and technological instruments have clearly had their impact on the "dissemination and reception, but also production, interaction and even demographics"; indeed, "technology is complicit in the generation of fan texts" (Busse & Hellekson cited in: Monk, 2011a: 446). She continues to argue that audience and fan behavior has, since the Web 2.0 era, become a convoluted field wherein differentiated, sometimes participatory, and both respectful and disrespectful types of fandom and reception exist side-by-side. Trying to get a grip on these distinct kinds of online reception activity, one of the first possible routes is perhaps to 'map the latter [...] in terms of the types of websites where film-related audience/fan activity can be observed' (Monk, 2011a: 451). In the context of film remakes, this might include, i.a. film blogs, video-sharing sites (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo), discussion and review boards such as IMDb and Letterboxd, or broader (e.g. r/movies on Reddit) and more specific forums or online groups that specifically focus on film remakes. However, as observed by Monk (2011a), it is probably more sensible to 'map this field in terms of the forms of audience/fan activity and/or user-generated content themselves' (p. 452), which could range from the discussion, appreciation, or hatred around film remakes in the form of (e.g. Twitter) comments to YouTube fan videos –

think, e.g. of some of the many homages in the form of a film remake that can be found online¹⁶⁷.

Looking beyond the study of fans¹⁶⁸ by, for example, glimpsing at research conducted in the field of audiovisual translation studies, it might prove worthwhile to investigate the similarities and differences that occur between audiences' understandings of cultural references in film tandems. There are, for instance, studies that explore how the understanding of specific textual elements seems to assume familiarity with aspects of a specific culture, presenting an audience of a different culture 'with substantial difficulties' (Desilla, 2014: 194). These research strands also look at which cultural elements specifically appear to presuppose higher degrees of familiarity or proximity (i.e., for instance, humor and eroticism). Another interesting finding is that, although, for instance, Greek respondents missed quite some cultural and intertextual references from a British film, this did not necessarily imply that they did not understand the underlying meanings (Desilla, 2014) – which, naturally, has to do with the context in which these references were used. When applied to film remakes, one could, for example, look at how such 'cultural bumps' are circumscribed in the remake process, but equally so how different audiences interpret these bumps: do audiences actually perceive these cultural references as bumps, and, do they consequently misunderstand the intended meanings? Such questions tap into theories of cultural proximity, cultural negotiation, but also look into the debates on local, national, transnational, global, or glocal cinema. Moreover, looking at the multi-methodological approach proposed in this article, audiences' interpretations could be juxtaposed with the intentions and decisions made by the producers, as well as with the analyst's viewpoints.

Tapping into recent audience research conducted in the field of format studies yields other directions, questioning, for example, the often assumed preference for

¹⁶⁷ See (especially) the third section of Kathleen Look and Verevis' (2012) volume titled *Film Remakes, Adaptations and Fan Productions: Remake/Remodel* which 'engages with non-commercial fan-made productions such as fan-films, fanvids, mash-up or recut trailers, and machinima' (p. 9).

¹⁶⁸ Though there is quite some scholarly work on fandom and fan communities in, i.a. franchises, sequels, and reboots (see, e.g. Hills, 2017; Proctor & Kies, 2018), these studies do not really consider the film remake. Apart from that, the field should definitely equally so look beyond fan practices and integrate research that analyses all sorts of audiences.

own national adaptations (Esser et al., 2016). Additionally, recent developments in online streaming platforms and services seem to have accelerated the process of 'hyperawareness', i.e. the growing consciousness 'of the existence of multiple national versions of televisual properties' (Hogg, 2016), toward global format flows. This tendency has, in some cases, resulted in hostility of audiences toward adaptations of television content, and problematizes the unproven, yet broadly acknowledged assumption that the appeal of adaptation often lies in the possibilities they offer to be localized (Waisbord, 2004). The research by Andrea Esser et al. (2016) also shows that, apparently, when audiences are asked to make comparisons between different versions of a format, they are not only inclined to think in terms of an 'us' and 'them' mindset, but also mainly mention differences instead of similarities. Additionally, they found that their respondents displayed forms of banal cosmopolitanism while simultaneously holding several stereotypical visions of their own and other national cultures when interpreting and explaining differences. This mirrors Andrew Higson's (1989) statement that analyzing film texts should look into 'how actual audiences construct their identity in relation to the various products of the national and international film and television industries, and the condition under which this is achieved' (p. 46). Finally, studies in the field of television studies demonstrate that the scholarly understanding or defining of specific genres, for instance, 'may also be all sorts of other things to people outside the realm of film and media research' (Bondebjerg et al., 2017: 155-156).

Hence, questions like '(why) do audiences prefer the domestic remake over the foreign film?', 'how do audiences experience, interpret, and explain differences and similarities between source films and remakes?', but also 'how do audiences define and assess film remakes?' remain yet to be asked – let alone answered. Concerning the latter, again, the link could be made with the findings of production research, looking into the definitions (of, for example, a film remake itself) held by those who actually produce, distribute, and evaluate film remakes. An example of such an integrative methodological approach (in the field of audiovisual translation studies) is the research conducted by Manuela Caniato (2014), who combined results from a study of gatekeepers with audience research. By merging two different methods, she was able to reveal links between Flemish audiences' interpretations and experiences of Italian films (through focus groups) on the one hand, and the judgements and decisions related to both the translation and distribution of those films (through expert

interviews) on the other: first, she found that the different selection criteria employed by the gatekeepers (here the importers and distributors of Italian cinema) were highly akin to those that viewers finally apply when selecting films, second, the study also showed how the viewers' personal interpretations of textual elements could often be explained by looking at the specific subtitling procedures (Caniato, 2014).

5.4 Conclusion

With its interdisciplinary background, it is difficult to accuse the field of remake studies of being parochial, blinkered, or theoretically narrow-sighted. Moreover, it has quickly adopted many important insights from other, closely related fields, which prevented, among other things, stepping in some of the well-known pitfalls from the earliest research conducted in adaptation studies and translation studies (see e.g. Evans, 2014). Additionally, the idea that the study of film remakes should be materialized – i.e., should always acknowledge the specific production and reception contexts – was fully acknowledged somewhere in the first decennium of the new millennium. Even though this resulted in a myriad of (comparative) textual analyses, with its specific findings analyzed through many different theoretical lenses, and often embedded in its different contexts, I argue that the field has, unfortunately, been blind toward conducting and integrating actual, empirical production and reception research. Consequently, there are still a lot of questions to be posed. Convinced that meanings are always intersubjectively and continuously constructed, it is the scholar's task to not only investigate the cultural artifact 'itself', but also its surrounding discourses, industrial mechanisms, or experiences. Therefore, this article wants to plead for a more thorough analysis of those who actively and passively participate in the remake process, who create, transform, and receive film remakes. Instead of assuming how, for example, audiences interpret and experience these serial film texts, we should start by asking them. The same goes for those who produce these films, distribute them, exploit, and comment on them.

In the concluding remarks of a paper on (audiovisual) translation studies combined with reception research, Gambier remarks that the film remake could be an intriguing case when incorporated in translation studies: 'if a film is completely recontextuali[z]ed according to the values, ideology and narrative conventions of the new target culture, do we have a translation or a local production which has sucked the lifeblood from a foreign production?' (2018: 63). The same could be said for much of the research that is being conducted in, for instance, format studies, television studies, or the recent research tradition of cultural transduction. Therefore, if the field of remake studies wishes to break out of its disciplinary boundaries, adopting a multi-methodological approach will help to further brush off its dusty character of textual analysis. The time has come to set our main object of research free and show the world what the advantages, possibilities, and challenges are of researching film

remakes. Such an endeavor will equally underscore the idea that today's modern media environment and behavior simply cannot be fully grasped without seriously reckoning with serialized texts like film remakes.

Chapter 6

Operationalization and methodical design

6.1 Introduction

The overall objective of this dissertation is to investigate the complex textual dynamics and industrial dimensions involved in the Dutch-Flemish film remake phenomenon, while taking into account the surrounding cultural discourses and reception contexts. Additionally, because of the unique cultural context of the Low Countries, particular attention is paid to the ways in which the Dutch-Flemish film remake process intersects with issues of cultural/national identity and cultural proximity, not only in terms of the texts themselves but also their production and reception contexts. These research foci are distilled into three central research questions, which, respectively, correspond to three general methodical approaches (i.e. textual, production, and reception research):

- (1) ‘How and why do the Flemish film remakes differ from or look like their Dutch source films, and vice versa?’;
- (2) ‘How do agents involved in the industrial process relate to the Dutch-Flemish film remakes?’;
- (3) ‘How do audiences receive Dutch-Flemish film remakes and their source films in the Low Countries?’

In order to provide possible answers to these overarching research questions, this dissertation employs a multi-methodological approach and multi-methodical design. As such, it inscribes itself into the approach of critical transculturalism, which, as discussed in sections 2.2.4 and 2.4.2, was put forward by Kraidy (2005). In short, Kraidy’s (2005) approach calls for textual analyses of hybrid cultural texts (i.e. in my case Dutch-Flemish film remakes) but adds that, in each case, these results need to be embedded within the specific cultural, production, and reception contexts wherein these hybrid texts were conceived. As such, critical transculturalism patches the different methodical approaches of this dissertation together. In terms of methods, Kraidy (2005) argues for a combination of textual and “empirical” approaches, which should both always be embedded within specific contexts. Though he did conduct a critical discourse analysis and a “cultural reception analysis” (by doing in-depth

interviews and field work), he did not undertake production research. Kraidy (2005) is, however, aware of this lacuna, and, therefore, calls for 'methodological experimentation and development in order effectively to integrate hybridity's historical, rhetorical, structural, textual, and empirical dimensions in concrete research studies' (2005: viii). In other words, the present study will partially answer this call by not only employing textual research methods, but also reception and production research methods. Instead of "blindly" experimenting with specific methods, this dissertation draws from other, closely related, fields. In other words, building on the insights from Chapter 5, the present dissertation is also inspired by the methods (and underlying methodologies) that are being employed in (television) format studies, (critical) media industry studies, (audiovisual) translation studies, and more recently the study of cultural transduction.

It should be noted that the methods that I will describe in the following were employed in chronological order, starting with textual analysis, followed by production analysis, and ending with reception research. This does, however, not imply that these were employed in isolation. Rather on the contrary, they clearly informed each other, given that, for instance, the results from the textual research were employed to come up with (novel) different foci in the production and reception studies. Moreover, given the existence of previously (though limited) conducted production research, as well as, for instance, existing interviews with some of the directors of Dutch-Flemish film remakes in Flemish and Dutch press outlets, most of the chapters in this empirical section combine insights from different methods. This implies that, even though the three overarching research questions generally correspond to the three different methodical approaches (textual, production, and reception research), there will be a certain degree of overlap.

Given that the overall study of this dissertation is partially comparative in nature, it is of crucial importance 'to be self-critical at every stage' (Biltreyst, Van Oort & Meers, 2019: 96). It should be noted that the study deals with a particular kind of phenomenon that is the same, yet different in both the Dutch and Flemish context, as, for instance, the motivations behind specific decisions during the different stages in the production process of film remakes might differ. In the cases where the method of analysis is truly comparative, I tried as much as possible to employ 'clearly defined (and similar) analytical levels, categories, variables, and units of observation' (Biltreyst, Van Oort & Meers, 2019: 97). This was, for instance, the case for the textual

study of the Dutch-Flemish film remakes, where I employed a model with similar analytical codes, with the aim of ultimately being able to compare the retrieved data. I applied the same tactic in both the production and reception research, where (more or less) the same questions were posed to, respectively, the (different types of) experts and focus group participants¹⁶⁹. As such, I strived to use ‘similar methods [...] in all stages of data collection, processing, and analysis’ (Biltreyst, Van Oort & Meers, 2019: 99). However, it should be noted that, because the present study solely deals with qualitative research methods (textual analysis, in-depth interviews, and focus groups), it is inevitably ‘more difficult to operationalize in terms of any meaningful comparison.’ (ibid.).

With the above in mind, the following paragraphs will enumerate the different empirical chapters and elucidate their methodical approaches. These approaches will be structured according to the chief methodology (i.e. textual, production, and reception research) that is employed. It is, however, important to note that even though every empirical chapter employs one main method, these same chapters may also use other methods that complement the main method.

¹⁶⁹ For further information, cf. section 12.4.

6.2 Textual research

Though Chapter 7, Chapter 8, Chapter 9, and Chapter 10 might differ in terms of their (theoretical) focus, they (at the minimum) share the same method: comparative textual analysis. Consequently, these first four chapters will, for the most part, provide answers to the first overarching research question, i.e. ‘How and why do the Flemish film remakes differ from or look like their Dutch source films, and vice versa?’. More specifically, the overarching research question can be subdivided in three other sub-questions to which these four chapters will provide possible answers:

(1a) ‘What are the dominant textual patterns or mechanisms that shape Dutch-Flemish film remakes and make them different from their source films?’;

(1b) ‘What do the differences and similarities between Dutch-Flemish film remakes and their source films tell us about the production, cultural, and reception contexts in which they were shaped?’;

(1c) ‘How are Dutch source films being localized into Flemish film remakes and vice versa?’.

Methodically, Chapter 7 builds on comparative textual analyses and employs the model of systematic textual analysis as proposed in Chapter 4. More particularly, it analyses a total of 18 films, consisting of five Flemish remakes and their Dutch source films, and four Flemish source films in tandem with their Dutch remakes (cf. Table 2).¹⁷⁰ The chapter mainly looks at the different textual similarities and differences between the remakes and their source films, in order to pinpoint specific textual mechanisms that are inherent to the Dutch-Flemish remake practice (cf. the above sub-question 1a [textual patterns]). It equally makes a first attempt at answering sub-question 1c (localization). The model that was employed to structure the textual findings was inspired by Moran’s format adaptation model (2009) and Genette’s categorization of textual transcendence (1997a; 1997b) (cf. Chapter 4). Yet, at first, a detailed sequence analysis of every single film was made, meaning that each film was divided into meaningful segments, which can then be clearly defined for analytical purposes (Van Kempen, 1995: 131; cf. Appendix 1). These segments were then, individually,

¹⁷⁰ That is, all Dutch-Flemish film remakes and their source films except for *Bad Trip* (and *Homies*) and *Verborgten Verlangen* (and *Het Verlangen*).

subdivided into three layers: the cinematographic, narrative, and symbolic or ideological layer.¹⁷¹

Subsequently, the model for systematic comparative analysis (cf. Chapter 4) was first employed as a lens to look at the textual findings and then to structure them. Indeed, in a next step, the study traces elements that are part of three different codes, that is, the formal, transtextual, and cultural code. As discussed in Chapter 4, the formal code consists of, among other elements, the *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, sound, editing, narrative, and characters. Next, the transtextual code is inspired by Genette's notion (and subsequent categorization) of transtextuality, which signifies 'all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts' (Genette, 1997a: 1). Finally, the cultural code encompasses explicit and implicit cultural references, including references to sexuality, humor, gender, ethnicity, ... and broader political, judicial, economic or geographic circumstances. In the last step, a separate analysis is conducted for each tandem (a source film together with its remake), in which all sequences of both films are systematically compared while taking into account the three codes. One should note that this is, of course, a multi-layered process, as the three codes overlap, interact, and connect.

Chapter 8 also mainly employs the method of systematic comparative textual analysis, but focuses on one specific case (*In Oranje/Buitenspel*). As the chapter wants to shine light on the broader context in which the Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon grew, apart from the micro perspective of textual analysis, it adopts a macro perspective that considers the cultural and industrial contexts that shape the practice. Moreover, the chapter adduces additional data gathered from Dutch and Flemish newspapers (resulting from a limited content analysis). This content analysis consisted of a search for entries in Dutch (e.g. *Algemeen Dagblad*, *De Telegraaf*, *Het Parool*, *NRC Handelsblad*, *de Volkskrant*, *Trouw*, ...) and Flemish (*De Morgen*, *De Standaard*, *Het Laatste Nieuws*, *Het Nieuwsblad*, *Het Belang van Limburg*, ...) newspapers that

¹⁷¹ This analytic subdivision is inspired by Chris Vos' (1991) model for film analysis and was, in first instance, used for its simple, though useful distinction between the filmic/cinematographic layer (i.e. film form), the narrative layer (i.e. the narrative structure of the film), and the symbolic or ideological layer (focusing on the deeper meaning(s) of the film). However, as this model is conceived for a more general analysis of film, it does not specifically consider aspects that are typical for film remakes. Therefore, I created a model that allows for a systematic comparative textual analysis (cf. Chapter 4).

have to do with the films *In Oranje* and *Buitenspel* around the time of their release (2004-2006) via Gopress Academic. The chapter mainly seeks to answer the research questions 1a (textual patterns) and 1c (localization), while also touching upon aspects of 1b (differences and similarities).

Chapter 9 and Chapter 10 are methodically highly similar, given that their main method is both a comparative textual analysis of respectively *Hasta La Vista/Adios Amigos* and *Loft/Loft/The Loft*. However, both these chapters supplement these textual analyses with production research (i.e. interviews with the involved filmmakers that were released in the press and existing semi-structured in-depth interviews). Combining both these methods enables me to confront the textual findings with the overall thought processes, motivations, and interpretations of the involved filmmakers. Whereas, in terms of production research, Chapter 9 solely builds on interviews released in the Dutch and Flemish press, Chapter 10 also builds on existing semi-structured in-depth interviews. These were conducted by Sarah Goorix¹⁷² who interviewed Flemish director Erik Van Looy, Flemish producer Hilde De Laere, and Dutch director Antoinette Beumer. The latter interviews specifically focus on the social, cultural, and economic motives behind the realization of Dutch-Flemish film remakes, while also paying attention to the motivations for making adjustments in the remakes. Next, a thematic analysis (Jensen, 2013), informed by the literature study, was performed on these interviews. As such, the data was assigned to specific themes, which were, consequently, composed inductively. The main themes that were used are the perceived differences between the Belgian (Flemish), Dutch, and American culture by the involved filmmakers and what impact these could have on specific cultural representations, with special attention to the (re-)production of cultural stereotypes and clichés. As no significant differences were found between the in-depth interviews and the interviews found in the press, the chapter considers these data as complementary.

¹⁷² In the context of her master's thesis on Dutch-Flemish film remakes (Goorix, 2012), under the supervision of prof. dr. Daniël Biltreyst and prof. dr. Gertjan Willems.

6.3 Production research

Chapter 11 differs from the previous four chapters, as it mainly focuses on production research. The eleventh chapter of this dissertation employs production research in a different manner by placing it at the center of attention. As such, it focuses on the second overarching research question of this dissertation (i.e. 'How do agents involved in the industrial process relate to the Dutch-Flemish film remakes?'). More particularly, it intends to provide answers on the following sub-questions:

(2a) 'How do cultural mediators perceive and evaluate the film remake as a cultural artifact and practice?';

(2b) 'How do cultural mediators experience and perceive the production process of remaking films?';

(2c) 'How do these experiences, perceptions, and evaluations impact the remake process and resulting films?'.

Given the chapter's specific focus on the production or, more broadly, industrial side of the Dutch-Flemish remake practice from the perspective of the people who take part in the film remake process, expert interviews were carried out. With these interviews, a detailed investigation of the perspectives of the interviewees themselves (i.e., key figures in the film remake practice of the Low Countries) was made possible (Ritchie & Ormston, 2014). More particularly, in the period 2018-2019, I conducted a total of 17 semi-structured in-depth expert interviews with both Dutch and Flemish/Belgian screenwriters (and adaptors), directors, producers, distributors, as well as the heads of both the Flemish Audiovisual Fund (VAF) and the Netherlands Film Fund (NFF) (cf. Table 8). I consider the interviewed people as experts because of their specific roles in the production process of film remakes, and more broadly in both the film industries of the Netherlands and Flanders. In order to gain more insight into the specific production contexts of both the Dutch and Flemish film remake practices, the topic list (cf. Appendix 5) concentrated mostly on the underlying motivations behind, interpretations and evaluations of, as well as the experiences with the (production of these) Dutch-Flemish film remakes. Additionally, some of the questions also focused on the broader phenomenon of film remakes in today's cinematic landscape. In a next step, a thematic analysis (Jensen, 2013) instructed by an extensive literature review was conducted on the transcriptions of the interviews. Finally, different themes

(compiled by comparing the different codes) came to the surface inductively from the data.

6.4 Reception research

Finally, Chapter 12 departs from both textual methods and production methods, and, instead, opts for reception research. As such, this chapter mainly seeks to answer the third, overarching research question ('How do audiences receive Dutch-Flemish film remakes and their source films in the Low Countries?') of this dissertation. In order to specify this research question, I subdivided it into three sub-questions:

(3a) 'How do Dutch and Flemish audiences describe and evaluate film remakes?';

(3b) 'How do Dutch and Flemish audiences experience, interpret, and explain differences and similarities between the Dutch-Flemish source films and their remakes?';

(3c) '(Why) do Dutch and Flemish audiences prefer the local version over the foreign version of a film?'

Chapter 12, therefore, presents data gathered through the organization of a total of four focus groups between February and July 2019, two of each held respectively in Flanders (Ghent) and the Netherlands (Rotterdam). The groups consisted each of four to seven participants, were organized in Dutch, lasted about 90 minutes, and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. One of the crucial advantages of focus groups lies in the fact that these supply data specifically on 'the meanings that lie behind [...] group assessments [as well as] the uncertainties, ambiguities and group processes that lead to and underlie group assessments' and finally on 'the normative understandings that groups draw upon to reach their collective judgements' (Bloor et al., 2001: 4). The decision to opt for focus groups is driven by a will to 'understand, not to generalize but to determine the range, and not to make any statements about the population but to provide insights about how people in the groups perceive a situation' (Krueger & Casey, 2015: 80).

Participants were recruited through social media (mainly Facebook groups and Twitter), a newspaper ad, and several offline flyers (cf. Appendix 6 and Appendix 7). With the aim of preventing foreknowledge that might affect value judgements of a film (or, indeed, might prime participants), the call for participation did not mention anything related to the subject of film remakes, nor to Dutch or Flemish cinema. It should be noted that, though both locations (university rooms in Ghent and Rotterdam)

are quite easily accessible, it is likely that these locations limited the study's reach of recruitment, given that mostly people living in these two cities responded to my invitation. The people who were interested to participate (a total of 170) had to fill in a form (made in Qualtrics, cf. Appendix 8) where they had to answer a few general questions related to, on a general basis, (1) how often they watch films; (2) how often they watch national films; (3) how often they watch Hollywood films; and lastly (4) how often they watch non-national and non-Hollywood films. The form also gauged their date of birth, gender, nationality, ethnic background, current residence, and highest educational degree. These parameters – that were, in a next step, employed as selection criteria – were instructed by the subject of this study and its accompanied hypotheses. As such, the reason for adopting film attendance as a selection parameter was mainly due to the hypothesis that the higher the film attendance, the higher the chance of knowing that the film fragments and trailers the respondents were about to see were actually coming from films that are remakes of Dutch or Flemish films.

As one of the goals of the study in Chapter 12 was to look at whether the knowledge of the remake label could, in turn, affect value judgements, internal homogeneity was ensured on the levels of film attendance (and, therefore, probably film knowledge) and nationality. Additionally, in order to represent the typical audiences who go and see the films of our sample (being mainstream movies aimed at broad audiences), the aim was to target a range of people that is as wide as possible, therefore differing in age, gender, ethnic background, and education. As such, I equally established internal heterogeneity on these levels, except for nationality. Though overall internal homogeneity is often seen as an essential condition when organizing focus groups (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2001), as this would facilitate the group discussion, I did not experience much issues in this regard. Even though this decision might be an explanation for the many disagreements during the discussions, the width of (dissimilar) opinions was what this study aimed for. Based on these selection criteria, I made a selection and set up four focus groups: (1) a group of Flemish people with overall high(er) film attendance; (2) a group of Flemish people with overall low(er) film attendance; (3) a group of Dutch people with overall high(er) film attendance; and lastly (4) a group of Dutch people with overall low(er) film attendance.

Finally, a protocol consisting of a list of introductory and closing questions, different film fragments as well as trailers (each followed by a group of questions)

instructed the actual group discussions. The topics of discussion were: (1) descriptions and definitions (of Dutch and Flemish/Belgian cinema as well as a film remake); (2) comparative assessments and (normative) judgements of the film fragments; (3) what constitutes “typical” Dutch/Flemish elements; (4) recognizability/identifiability (cf. Appendix 10). The first two fragments that were shown were (roughly) the two first minutes of the film pair *Alles is Liefde/Zot van A*. I chose these two films (or the fragments) because, after the textual analysis (cf. Chapter 7 and Chapter 8), they both seemed very topical (i.e. locally anchored) at first sight, while in fact, they are highly perennial (i.e. their content is quasi-universal). The following pair of video fragments were the trailers of *Hasta La Vista/Adios Amigos*. These were, in their turn, chosen on the basis of their implicit cultural codes (e.g. representation of nudity, the use of humor), which means that both these video fragments do not carry highly explicit cultural markers. The last four fragments (consisting of two trailers and two teasers of *In Oranje/Buitenspel*), contrarily, did have several explicit cultural codes (think of many Belgian/Dutch flags hanging in the background or the use of the national anthems in both versions).¹⁷³

Before moving on with the empirical inquiry, one should note that I, myself, identify (among others) as European, Belgian, Flemish, and Ghentian. This has undoubtedly influenced many of the decisions made in this dissertation. Moreover, because of my particular cultural background, I may lack an adequate comprehension of the Dutch cultural context. As such, my own cultural stereotypes and prejudices about the Netherlands, Dutch people, and Dutch cinema may have influenced my analyses (i.e., “projective appropriation”). Though there is, naturally, no perfect manner of “correctly” understanding or grasping a particular culture, this type of “projective appropriation” may have skewed my results. Conversely, my own cultural identity may have also impacted the different people I interviewed, both in the Netherlands and Flanders, whereby some may have overperformed specific aspects of their identities in order to either affirm or differentiate. Although a solution to this issue might not really exist, I have always tried to be conscious of my own cultural background and position as a researcher. Indeed, by trying to distance myself from my own cultural

¹⁷³ All data (i.e. the sequence analyses, transcripts from both the focus groups as well as the expert interviews, and analyses of these latter transcripts) can be requested by contacting the dissertation’s author.

frameworks, I have not tried to “become” the other, but to interpret the other from within my own position.

EMPIRICAL INQUIRY

Preamble

The following six empirical chapters each correspond to six separate studies that were either published as articles in peer-reviewed international journals or as chapters in edited volumes. Hence, the following chapters will administer empirical investigations that were guided by the three overarching research questions, while each employing insights and concepts from the theoretical section of this dissertation. Each of these chapters will first be positioned within the overall goal of the dissertation, while also briefly indicating the used methods, theoretical frameworks, and findings. Given the article-based format of this dissertation, overlap in terms of theory, methodology, and sometimes results is inevitable.

Chapter 7

Local flavors and regional markers in the Dutch-Flemish monolingual film remake

Positioning

This first empirical chapter provides us with a first overview of the textual analysis of the different films that are part of the Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon. More specifically, inspired by methods used in television (format) studies, this chapter conducts a systematic comparative film analysis (cf. based on the model presented in Chapter 4) of nine Dutch-Flemish remakes together with their nine source films. As was shown in the theoretical section, while the field of remake studies abounds with individual textual analyses of specific cases (cf. section 2.3), there are few studies that attempt to apply a systematic analysis to a group of cases. Considering the remake as a prism that aids in dissecting different formal, transtextual, and cultural codes, and subsequently embedding the practice in its specific socio-cultural and industrial context, we found several similarities and differences between the Dutch and Flemish film versions and showed how these can be made sense of. Building on these differences and similarities, this chapter looks at the most recurring textual elements in the source films and remakes under analysis. Consequently, we distilled two encompassing principles that administer the remake practice: even though a great deal of the remake process can be explained through the concept of localization (cf. section 2.4.3) – or, more nuanced, through the concepts of ‘manufacturing proximity’ and ‘banal aboutness’ (cf. sections 2.2.2 and 2.4.3) – we found that it should certainly not be limited to these processes – as both (trans)textual, such as the mechanism of ‘filling in the gaps’, and contextual elements were found.

Reference

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7.1 Introduction

In 2000, Flemish film director Jan Verheyen released *Team Spirit*, a mainstream (romantic) comedy about a group of friends who play football in a regional team. Although the popularity of Flemish films had strongly declined at the time, the film did very well at the domestic box office. Combined with the highly successful spin-off television series *Team Spirit* (2003-2006) and the popular sequel *Team Spirit II* (2003), Flanders saw the birth of a genuine transmedial *Team Spirit*-franchise. Interestingly enough, the apparent “original” *Team Spirit* film was a film remake of an equally popular Dutch film released in 1997, called *All Stars*, directed by Jean van de Velde. Almost two decades later, it seems that this series of interrelated media products set a precedent for a remake practice that became structurally embedded in the Flemish film industry: no less than seven Dutch films were remade in Flanders in a time span of only 18 years. Moreover, this Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon is not unidirectional. The first Dutch remake of a Flemish film was released in 2010: *Loft*, a remake of Belgium’s biggest domestic popular hit ever, also called *Loft* (2008). In the period of 2013-2016, three more Dutch film remakes followed. In sum, 11 Dutch-Flemish film remakes (a total of 22 films) were released in the period 2000-2018, occasionally spurring other intra-European and even American remakes. Acknowledging that these remakes are temporally immediate (on average, they are released only 2,8 years after the source films) and monolingual (both the source movies and their remakes are in Dutch), this phenomenon appears to be highly peculiar within the European and even the global film (remake) industry.

In this article, we inquire into the process of film remaking generally, and into the practice of remaking films in two small to medium-sized European film regions specifically. More precisely, we examine which textual and contextual mechanisms are at the fundament of the practice. By textually comparing Dutch-Flemish remakes in tandem with their source films, a theoretical prism is conceived that helps us understand the workings and rationales behind (the making of) the film remake, and the contexts in which these are realized. We will demonstrate this by applying the prism to the context of Flanders and the Netherlands, which not only helps to elucidate the socio-cultural differences and similarities that may exist between these particular cultural contexts, but also how these variations can affect many types of differences between the Dutch and Flemish film versions.

7.2 The film remake as a prism

As many scholars (e.g. Forrest & Koos, 2002; Mazdon, 2000; Verevis, 2006) have demonstrated, the film remake can be used to answer, or equally raise, all sorts of essential (audience-related, industrial, socio-political, textual, etc.) queries that surround, and in a sense also challenge, cinema. Therefore, one can approach the film remake as a kind of prism, a lens capable of refracting light rays, through which one can analyze the complex nature of the film medium on both the textual and contextual level. Diverging from the still prevailing critical *dédain* toward the remake practice in popular discourses and adopting a non-normative standpoint, a plethora of possibilities is laid bare to acknowledge the film remake as both product and 'agent' of cultural practices and forces. Although any relation between film and culture is 'complex, mediated and decentered' (Staiger, 2004: 128), one can argue that the (analysis of the) film remake reveals something about the cultural context in which the film is produced.

We argue that the use of the film remake as a prism holds the potential to 'defamiliarize' the familiar, the banal, or the elements that often go unnoticed when watching or analyzing film. As Thompson (1998: 11) makes clear, cinema can bear a 'defamiliarizing force', namely the capacity to exhibit familiar things, the everyday world and ideology in a deviating, unfamiliar or remarkable way, thereby providing opportunities for deeper insight. We claim that the use of the film remake as a prism holds an even bigger potential to 'defamiliarize'. Horton and McDougal (1998: 6) already hinted at the analogy between this defamiliarizing force and the film remake by stating that remakes 'provoke a double pleasure in that they offer what we have known previously, but with novel or at least different interpretations, representations, twists, developments, resolutions'. This assertion, however, assumes that the audience has seen (or at least is aware of) both (or more) versions of the film, which does not apply to, for example, the case Dutch-Flemish film remakes (Cuelenaere, Joye & Willems, 2016: 5). Having said that, we claim that the film remake is particularly well-suited for scholarly analysis as it is able to disentangle, locate or 'defamiliarize' the familiar, the banal, the unattainable and often invisible and render it more visible. The central element that makes this possible is the remake's inherent potential to compare it with its predecessor(s), which helps to illuminate the (at first sight) banal interventions that were made to (re)create these films. As source films and remakes often have a more or less identical narrative and dialogic structure, the underlying,

latent and ideologically informed meanings become more tangible when juxtaposing their different cinematic manifestations. By comparing a film remake with its source text(s), and looking into the re-contextualization of a specific narrative, the opportunity arises to acquire insights into the actual process of meaning-making in and by films.

Livingstone (2003: 491-492) rightly asserts that 'comparative research is challenging because one must balance and interpret similarities and differences while avoiding banalities and stereotypes' and points to an important conflict 'between the apparent impossibility and the urgent necessity of comparison'. As we will show, our findings underwrite the claim that the nature of the remake helps a lot in this process of comparison, but it is of absolute importance to embed our results in their specific socio-cultural context, not in the least to avoid the pitfall of reaffirming stereotypes. Therefore, in the following, we will briefly contextualize the Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon.

7.3 The monolingual Dutch-Flemish remake and its (production) context

The neighboring regions of the Netherlands and Flanders, also referred to as the Low Countries, share the same language and partially have a shared history. Moreover, the Dutch and Flemish film markets are quite similar, both being relatively small (Willems, 2017: 92). Nevertheless, both regions have many difficulties in finding an audience for each other's films. Apart from economic explanations (e.g. the lack of proper distribution networks and promotional opportunities), this indifference toward each other's films is symptomatic for a wider cultural shift.¹⁷⁴ From the 1990s on, the interregional contact and cultural exchange between Flanders and the Netherlands have severely declined, which is echoed in sharing fewer cultural products, including literature, radio, newspapers, television, and cinema (Cajot, 2012: 53). Rather than distributing each other's popular films, both regions opted for a commercially more interesting way to disseminate their stories beyond the domestic market, i.e., by remaking them. This nuances the seemingly 'indifference' between the Flemish and Dutch film markets: while audiences are not interested in films from the other region, filmmakers, in their search for stories to adapt, show a particular interest for these films.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ For a more in-depth analysis of this "cinematic indifference" in the Low Countries, see Cuelenaere, Willems & Joye (2019b).

¹⁷⁵ This article focuses on mainstream popular films. In terms of successful releases across the Dutch-Flemish border, there is an interesting contrast between art house films on the one hand and mainstream films on the other. In the broader context of Europe, mainstream films that perform well on the national level often experience several issues when released outside their national borders (Higson, 2015: 138). European art films, however, at least in comparison to mainstream films, generally perform 'better' (considering the more modest box office expectations) (Jones, 2019). This partially explains the relative 'popularity' of the recent trend of Belgian art films (think of films by directors such as Michaël Roskam, Fien Troch, Patrice Toye, and Felix Van Groeningen) which perform pretty well in the art house circuit in the Netherlands. For instance, the prominent art-house theatre Louis Hartlooper Complex in Utrecht started a yearly film festival in 2013, devoted to Flemish (art-house) cinema. In 2015, it was retitled 'Belgian Film Festival'. The Netherlands are currently less internationally recognized for their art house films, which clarifies why there is no similar trend of watching Dutch art films in the Flemish art house circuit.

Meir argues that 'one of the most important recent developments in European cinema has been the formation of several companies that distribute films in some European and international territories simultaneously and who are capable of using this business model to finance internationally oriented films' (2018: 1). Drawing from the exemplary case of the pan-European studio *Studio Canal*, he adds that '[r]emakes and readaptations are at the heart of its creative strategies' (Meir, 2018: 4). Although these film remakes are in need of localization strategies and thus tap into cultural specificity (to cross geographical, cultural and linguistic boundaries within a specific European context), they simultaneously seem to draw from well-known and established Hollywood industrial practices and creative tropes. This finding takes us back to the concept of "glocalization" (e.g. Robertson, 1995), which, in short, points toward the practice wherein global corporations localize their products to meet the preferences and tastes of local cultures. Even though this theory might be illuminating for the broader local-language remake phenomenon¹⁷⁶, we claim that the Dutch-Flemish (or intra-European) remake phenomenon is of a different nature, albeit the same goal is shared: to attract local audiences. The difference lies in the fact that the film remakes in the Low Countries are not produced by large transnational corporations, but by small local production companies.

In this respect, the Dutch-Flemish phenomenon can be linked to another concept, called "delocalization", which is defined as a form of globalization (Straubhaar, 2007: 169) – there are other terms that denote the same idea, think of 'internationalization' and 'interlocalization' (Pym, 2017: 123-124). This notion indicates the same phenomenon where, for instance, filmmakers produce movies both for their own and for other non-domestic markets. The crucial element of this idea is that filmmakers, before or while producing a film, not only prepare for the dissemination of that film in one's own market, but also anticipate the foreign export – and in some cases only aim for the latter. This (double) anticipation often implies that local models are avoided in order to make them exportable (Straubhaar, 2007: 169). The problem

¹⁷⁶ Think of companies like Globalgate Entertainment and Sony Pictures International Productions that are respectively divisions of the large transnational companies Lions Gate Entertainment Corporation and Sony Pictures Entertainment. They are made up of (or work closely together with) several locally oriented subdivisions (or national/local production companies) that localize/remake specific films, which are therefore called local-language remakes (see Labayen & Morán, 2019).

with this concept is that it places too much emphasis on the aspect of anticipation of exportability during the process of film production. Although there are indeed many quasi-universal elements to be found in the Dutch-Flemish source films, almost all of them were exclusively produced for a domestic audience. This is also reflected in the marketing and distribution strategies of the films. Moreover, if these films would be deliberately stripped off of most local elements, then a remake would make little sense, as it would probably be less complicated to successfully release them elsewhere. Considering these issues, we might call this ambiguous phenomenon 'manufacturing (cultural) proximity' (see also Labayen & Morán in this special issue), as it takes into account both processes: cultural proximity, by which Straubhaar (2007) means that audiences usually prefer cultural products that are as close as possible to their local 'language, ethnic appearance, dress, style, humor, historical reference, and shared topical knowledge' (26), and the more commercially driven strategies, such as remaking and relying on, for instance, genre logic.

Building on this notion, and linking it to our concept of 'the remake as a prism', this article emphasizes the often conscious and active decisions made by filmmakers that want to make their filmic creations (in this case remakes) recognizable or familiar, and, therefore, balance between local and global cultural aspects. However, as we will claim, the study of film remakes should deal with issues of localization, but equally with more formal and (trans)textual matters, which are, for example, often related to filmmakers' personal preferences and motivations.

7.4 Method

At the time of our analysis, a total of 18 films was released, consisting of five Flemish remakes and their Dutch source films, and four Flemish source films in tandem with their Dutch remakes (cf. Table 2). We created a model that operationalizes the concept of the remake as a prism by systematically comparing the nine film remakes with their nine source films. By looking at the different textual similarities and differences, the model helps to pinpoint specific textual mechanisms that are inherent to the remake practice. The model is inspired by Moran's format adaptation model (2009) and Genette's categorization of textual transcendence (1997a; 1997b). First, a detailed sequence analysis of every single film was made, meaning that each film was divided into meaningful segments, which can then be clearly defined for analytical purposes (Van Kempen, 1995: 131). Subsequently, drawing on Moran's model for the analysis of television formats, we traced elements that are part of three different codes, i.e., the formal, transtextual and cultural code. The formal code consists of, i.a., the *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, sound, editing, narrative, characters, etc. The transtextual code is inspired by Genette's notion (and subsequent categorization) of transtextuality, which signifies 'all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts' (Genette, 1997a: 1). Lastly, the cultural code encompasses all explicit and implicit cultural references, including references to sexuality, humor, gender, ethnicity, ... and broader political, judicial, economic or geographic circumstances. In the last step, a separate analysis is conducted for each tandem (a source film together with its remake), in which all sequences of both films are systematically compared while taking into account the three codes. This is, of course, a multi-layered process, as the three codes overlap, interact, and connect. By comparing a source text with its remake along these three codes, a prism is conceived that helps us to locate or structure the elements that impact or create the meaning(s) of a text (in relation to other texts).

7.5 Results

7.5.1 Formal code

Overall, our results show that filmmakers try to keep a balance between a more or less *quasi-universal* framework (i.a. dialogic structures, themes, narratives, spaces, characters, even production tactics) and a *local* interpretation or “reality”. This is, for example, reflected in how spaces remain the same, but (geographical) locations almost always change. While the Dutch *Alles is Liefde* is set in the modern city of Amsterdam, the Flemish remake is set in a similar trendy city, Antwerp. It is also interesting that both films clearly want their audiences to know that the narratives take place in these respective cities. Indeed, it looks as if the Flemish remake copied the (overt) city marketing strategy of the Dutch source film. This points to the fact that film remakes not only reuse narratives and other formal or stylistic decisions but even so appropriate production strategies. Another example of this mix between quasi-universalism and localism relates to the characters who were employed in the narratives of source films and remakes: many of the remakes (more or less) kept the same personalities and characteristics of the source story’s characters, but the actors were changed to (sometimes very similar looking) popular local-language actors.

Notwithstanding the uniqueness and complexity of each film tandem, on a general level all of the films are stylistically quite conventional. One could argue that, in most cases, the cinematography and editing serve the continuity or clarity of the story: the shots are graphically, spatially and temporally continuous. The latter probably has to do with the fact that all movies were, in fact, mainstream genre films (cf. transtextual code), clearly inspired by Hollywood conventions. However, when looking at individual cases, we found a few compelling differences between films in tandem that may help us to understand the (textual) mechanisms of films, as well as the production and cultural context surrounding it.

Although there are a few exceptions, we discovered that – in comparison to the Flemish versions – many of the Dutch films were stylized more according to mainstream Hollywood aesthetics. Looking at the romantic comedies in our sample (10 films in total), most of the Dutch versions could be considered as more “clean” (i.e., more use of high key lighting and vivid colors), while the Flemish films were darker, using less expressive lights and colors. This may have to do with higher production

values in Dutch cinema, as well as with the general Dutch film production culture (also policy-wise) that seems to be more focused on mainstream films. Another argument that confirms the thesis of higher production values in the Dutch cinema is that generally speaking, more Anglophone popular music is used in the Dutch versions, while the Flemish films make more use of – less expensive – popular Flemish songs.

For both Flemish and Dutch remakes, there were quite some instances where small formal (often visual) changes had a significant impact on how narratives are conceived and, consequently, might influence how audiences interpret these narratives. An example of this was found in *Loft*: in both versions of this whodunit, there is a crucial scene in which the villain meets his victim for the first time. In the source film, the character who first looks at the victim is not the villain. In the Dutch version, however, the character who first stares at the victim is the villain of the story. This is made explicit cinematographically by placing the villain's face in the center of the frame and putting him into medium close-up, therefore making his actions more noticeable. By changing this small formal detail, the filmmakers of the Dutch remake might have indirectly made it easier for the audience to trace the "bad guy".

Related to the latter is a mechanism that we uncovered in our analysis of formal codes, which could be dubbed as 'filling in the gaps'. This concept points toward the rendering explicit, obvious or clear of previously ambiguous or implicit narrative elements or meanings in the source film. Known as a concept in the field of adaptation studies, filling in gaps is generally defined as an active process by audiences of completing, or rather interpreting, specific lacunas that are inherent to all texts (Iser, 1972: 284-285). Our results, however, show another – but related – mechanism, wherein gaps (or blanks) in the source film are filled in by the filmmakers themselves in the remake they produced. We found many types of gaps in our analysis, ranging from ambiguous, illogical or unexplained narrative elements to little narrative or visual "mistakes" and other unfinished elements in the source films. When looking for those gaps in the remakes, we found that many of them were "solved", which might point to a compulsion of these mainstream filmmakers to optimize or improve an existing story or the visual representation of that story. Clear examples of this can be found in the

Dutch remake *Smooverliefd*¹⁷⁷: when Bob, a male side character, calls Judith “elysian”, the word is explained on-screen via paratextual markers, whereas the Flemish source film does not provide the audience with an explanation. Somewhat later in the Dutch remake, there is a scene that shows (and explains) how Judith gets the central role in a play. In the Flemish source film, however, there is no such explanation as we suddenly see her play the lead of a play. This latter gap, however, is not only rendered explicit in the remake through visual elements, but equally through the dialogue of these characters and more narrative aspects of the film.

We also found instances where seemingly unimportant ambiguous, unexplained or implicit narrative elements in the source film were made explicit in the film remake, which led to big narrative changes or adjustments. One illuminating example can be found at the end of the Flemish source film *Brasserie Romantiek*. It is shown how the female lead, the owner of a restaurant, finds it weird that during that evening there was one reserved table in the restaurant that was left untouched because the people did not show up. Eventually, at the end of the movie, there is no explanation whatsoever as to why this might have been of importance to the narrative. In the Dutch remake (*Brasserie Valentijn*), however, the same happens, but right after this particular scene, the restaurant owner receives a call of a couple who say they are sorry because they could not make it that evening. In fact, the two people who call her are two new characters who were added to the plot, and whom we followed throughout the whole film. This added plot line did not only fill in a gap (of the empty table) of the source film, but simultaneously gave the film a more positive ending, as these two characters fell in love. This type of gap might indicate how filmmakers of mainstream films want to streamline, clarify, and in some instances simplify their films, ultimately in order to make them more digestible and to reach larger audiences.

The abovementioned types of gaps could be called “intertextual gaps”, as these are ‘exposed, constituted, and displayed [...] by both translations and adaptations’ (Leitch, 2017: 58). Comparing Dutch-Flemish film tandems allows us to

¹⁷⁷ *Smooverliefd* is actually an auto-remake, which means that the director in charge of the remake is the same as for the source film. Even though this might naturally facilitate the “solving” of gaps (since the director gets a second take), we found ample instances of very similar processes in non-auto-remakes. This proves that this process is not confined to auto-remakes only.

observe filmmakers filling gaps of source films, thus rendering this process quite explicit. Therefore, in our case, and in comparison to intertextual gaps generally discussed by adaptation scholars, it could be argued that the filmmakers of the remake indirectly create the gaps of the source film – by filling them in the remake.¹⁷⁸ As Flemish and Dutch audiences seem unaware of each other's films, and consequently do not know that the remake they watch is, in fact, a remake, these gaps are not constituted (and filled) in their minds, but in the minds (and films) of the filmmakers and the scholars that analyze these texts. Hence, these gaps only exist in the intertextual relationship between a source film and its remake, which brings us to another type of codes, including the intertextual ties between film tandems.

7.5.2 *Transtextual code*

Genette's idea of transtextuality covers those textual elements that link (directly and indirectly) a film text to other (film) texts, which not only comprises the relationships between source films and remakes but also, for instance, a film text and similar films of the same genre (cf. architextuality). Moreover, it encompasses those elements that accompany or surround the main text (think of titles, intertitles, credits, etc.), called paratexts. By analyzing the paratextual aspects in our Dutch-Flemish films, we found that filmmakers avoid using the term remake when referencing the source text in the film credits. In contrast, they preferred terms like adaptation, inspiration, even format, and in one case, the production team of the Dutch remake of *Smoorverliefd* did not mention anything hinting at it being an adaptation or remake. This finding is also reflected in the marketing of the films where the (textual) status of these films (being remakes) is never mentioned. This might indicate the pejorative connotation of the film remake, which, in turn, illustrates a broader negative discourse surrounding the phenomenon, and as a result, the unwillingness of filmmakers to label their works as film remakes. Such observations are in line with the recent shift in communication strategies of most Hollywood studios who avoid 'the negative aura of the remake practice by promoting the films using different language' (Cuelenaere, Joye & Willems, 2016: 5). At the same time, the rationale behind these strategies is also of a distinct

¹⁷⁸We do not intend to suggest that the source film is deliberately kept vague so that there is an extra reason to produce a remake, i.e., as an improved version. Rather, we argue that when filmmakers of a remake decide to fill in what they consider to be a gap in the source film, this may not have been perceived as such by the filmmaker of the source text.

nature because the Dutch-Flemish audiences who watch these film remakes are what Linda Hutcheon would call “unknowing audiences”: people who are unaware that these films are in fact adaptations (in this case remakes), perceiving them as “original” films. Even though Flanders and the Netherlands might be considered culturally, geographically, and linguistically proximate, they do not seem to be aware of each other’s films.¹⁷⁹ As a result, these Dutch-Flemish film remakes ‘have a way of upending sacrosanct elements like priority and originality’ (Hutcheon, 2006: 122). Moreover, it seems that Hutcheon’s (2006: 121) statement that ‘[f]or an adaptation to be successful in its own right, it must be so for both knowing and unknowing audiences’ does not apply to the successful Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon. Except for some film buffs, critics, and scholars, there is hardly a knowing audience, and if there are people that do know that the Dutch-Flemish film remake they watch is actually a remake, most of them have not seen the source text and are therefore unable to compare both versions. Consequently, and according to Druxman’s (1975) typology, the Dutch-Flemish remakes could be labelled as “disguised remakes”, which denote those film remakes that do not draw attention to their source text(s), or the “unacknowledged disguised remake”, whereby the audience ‘is deliberately uninformed about the switches’ (Greenberg, 1998: 126), and, in our case, about its status as a remake.

Connected to the latter, it is remarkable to see that – although the Dutch-Flemish filmmakers of remakes seem to be well aware that the current public opinion toward the film remake is rather negative – some of them incorporate (often ironically) intratextual references to the process of remaking in their film remakes, or to the source films on which their remake is based. Such playful references can be found in rather small details, as, for instance, a pub in *Team Spirit* is named after the title of its Dutch source film, *All Stars*. Another example of such a small detail is that the real name of one of the actors in *All Stars* became the equivalent character’s name in the Flemish remake. There are, however, also more apparent illustrations of this practice. In the Flemish remake, *Allemaal Familie*, the profession of one of the male main characters was changed from a song producer to a film director. More specifically, this director wanted not only to make a sequel of one of his own films, but also an American

¹⁷⁹ Which, by extension, also helps to explain why distributors decide not to mention the existence of the source films in the marketing of these remakes, as the Dutch and Flemish audiences are generally unaware of each other’s films.

remake. This narrative element in *Allemaal Familie* is thus both an intratextual reference to its own textual status (being a remake) and a metatextual reference, which ‘unites a given text to another, of which it speaks without necessarily citing it’ (Genette, 1997a: 4). This “speaking of” is, in the case of our sample, often in the form of critique on another film or film genre. Indeed, the previously mentioned film director in *Allemaal Familie* suddenly makes a joke to his cameraman when talking about a loft in America: ‘this would, by the way, be the first successful loft in America’. What he is referring to is the unsuccessful release of the American remake of the Flemish film *Loft*, which was quite a big media event in Flanders in 2014 (see also Cuelenaere, Willems & Joye, 2018). Hence, even though all of the Dutch-Flemish remakes avoid the use of the remake label, many of them do not flinch from introducing a playful self-reflexive attitude toward the remake phenomenon.

The most abstract category of transtextual ties is called architextuality, pointing to ‘the relationship of inclusion linking each text to the various kinds of discourse of which it is a representative’ (Genette, 1997b: 19). Genre is one of the important aspects of this category. Analyzing these films, it quickly became clear that all of the 18 films were genre films, with 10 out of 18 being romantic comedies. The latter confirms the hypothesis that Hollywood’s focus on high-budget blockbuster films opened up a gap for mid-budget, local-language genre films like rom-coms (Roxborough & Brzeski, 16 February 2018). This is in line with European studios like *Studio Canal*, who heavily rely on generic (Hollywood) models and favor ‘a number of genres, particularly those of the romantic comedy, the action film and family films’ (Meir, 2018: 4). This hints at an ambiguous imbrication of the Dutch-Flemish filmmakers and the mainstream Anglo-Saxon film industry, which is characterized by both differences and clear overlap.

Concerning the latter, we found apparent resemblances between, among others, the popular romantic comedy *Love Actually* (Curtis, 2003) and most of the Dutch-Flemish rom-coms that were remade. Not only on the level of narrative, themes, and style, but also in terms of promotional material and other marketing tools, there are many similarities to be found. Interestingly enough, according to the quantitative research of Follows (2015), the percentage of Hollywood remakes being romantic comedies is only 3%, while the broader genre of comedy amounts to 7%. When comparing the latter percentages with, for example, the horror genre (29%) or the musical genre (27%), there appears to be a huge difference with the Dutch-Flemish

remake phenomenon¹⁸⁰. Moreover, according to Mazdon (2000), when looking more closely at Hollywood remakes of (romantic) comedies, ‘plots and many of their jokes and gags undergo little change during the remake process’ (92). In this context, our analysis again points to the thesis of a quasi-universal structure with a local interpretation: it confirms the claim that plots generally undergo little adjustments, but it contradicts that jokes and gags are often not altered in the remake as we found many instances of small and big changes. An example of the former is when in the Dutch version of *Smooverliefd* one of the jokes of the source text is slightly adjusted. Whereas the main character of the Flemish film, Judith, all of a sudden says: ‘[...] he was also a sex animal, and as far as I know, he was the first guy who took out his dentures while eating pussy’, the Dutch equivalent of the same character says: ‘He was a sex animal! He was the only man who, while eating pussy...’, but does not finish her sentence as someone else stops her from saying out loud what she thinks. The director herself mentioned in an interview that she changed this joke because of two reasons: first, because the actors on stage found it too dirty, and second, because of the Dutch context, as, according to her, dentures do not exist anymore in the Netherlands (Vermeersch, 2013: 57). An example of a bigger change to humor can be found in *Alles is Familie*: the scene wherein the parents of the main characters communicate to their children that they want a divorce is done in quite a serious way. The aim is clearly that the spectator takes this serious and empathizes with the main characters. In the Flemish remake, however, this moment is brought in a very humorous way: when, during a game of Pictionary, the father wants to tell their children about the divorce, they force him to draw his message on a big board. At first, he refuses to do so, but after being put under pressure, he eventually tries to draw the whole situation. The children start to guess, and eventually when Steve guesses the right answer, he happily shouts: ‘Yes!’. The others now know what is going on (their parents are getting a divorce), but Steve does not, which makes the whole situation tragically funny. Our results thus endorse the idea that humor is an element that impedes border crossing (Palmer, 1995; Lee, 2008), which, indirectly, means that the

¹⁸⁰ Ten out of 18 films from our sample are romantic comedies, four are tragicomedies, two are family films, and two are thrillers. These are the main genres of the films but many of them could be categorized into several subgenres.

Low Countries do not always share the same humor. The latter element, which is often related to differences in culture, brings us to the last code.

7.5.3 *Cultural code*

As mentioned, the cultural codes of a film indicate implicit and explicit references to specific cultural elements or contexts. Therefore, these codes often denote what we previously called a process of localization, i.e., adjusting filmic aspects to a particular socio-cultural context, often with the aim of recreating a recognizable reality and national identity. As Billig (1995) claims, nationalism is not to be reduced to the palpable or visible (e.g. propagandist) appearances or articulations of nationalism. Likewise, Billig (1995) coined the concept “banal nationalism” which refers to the ‘ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced’ (6). Applying Billig’s concept to film, Hjort (2000) coined another term, “banal aboutness”, pointing toward banal reproductions of national identities in a film, while not being explicitly national regarding its central themes. The concept is grounded in features such as language and *mise-en-scène*, which are often overlooked by both domestic and international audiences. Our analysis, however, shows that the prism of the remake helps us to trace such banal reproductions of national identities. By looking at the changes made to the cultural codes in film remakes, mechanisms are laid bare that may help explain how filmmakers localize their cultural products. According to Hall (1997: 15), cultural (and national) identities are constructed within specific representations, broader discourses, and concrete practices. Moreover, these identities have less to do with who we are or where we were born, and more with how one is presented and how that might influence how we present ourselves (Hall, 1996, p. 4). The abovementioned mechanisms were shared in all of the films we analyzed, which shows that there are patterns to be found in how national identities are represented and recreated in these popular films. As Dhoest (2004: 35) argued in the context of popular national television, fiction is an excellent way to penetrate the collective consciousness, and therefore, there is, at the very least, a minimal connection between fiction and cultural identity. Moreover, he adds that the specific content also plays a significant role, i.e., as a source of explicit or implicit cultural representations.

There is a plethora of representational themes that is structurally changed in almost all of our films: sexuality, nudity, ethnicity, religion, sports, and specific cultural

habits and traditions. These aspects were, as we will explain, mostly referenced implicitly, while the more explicit references were mostly concerned with, among others, television programs, magazines or newspapers, theme parks, or even local actors and celebrities. An example of such explicit references is found in *Alles is Familie* when Charlie takes the teenage son of one of his friends to the *Efteling*, a famous Dutch theme park. Moreover, when visiting the park, there is a cameo of Gers Pardoel, a famous Dutch singer, selling waffles. In the Flemish remake, the plot did not change, but the theme park and cameo did: they visited *Plopsaland* instead, and met Gert Verhulst, a famous Flemish entertainment figure, who in this case played himself, being the CEO of the entertainment company *Studio 100*, which owns the theme park. As said, there were a lot of adjustments on the level of implicit cultural references as well. The most striking and obvious one is the representation of sexuality and nudity. For almost all of our cases, the Dutch versions were (a lot) more explicit in terms of (mostly female) nudity and sexual contact or conversations. We claim that these banal adjustments are made due to the involved filmmakers wanting to shape their films according to their specific realities, which is in line with the concept of banal aboutness. The Dutch culture is indeed known for its permissiveness and general tolerance, not only toward sexuality but also gender, ethnicity, etc. Although many academics nuance this so-called Dutch tolerance (see i.a. Buruma, 2006; Verstraten, 2018), almost all of the Dutch filmmakers in our sample seem to have employed the idea that the Dutch film industry, and more broadly its society, is known for its tolerance, which ultimately resulted in more nudity.

Ethnicity, or multiculturalism, in combination with religion, are also aspects that were structurally altered in the selected remakes. Although there are some counter-examples, the Dutch versions included more non-white actors than the Flemish versions. This occurred in both directions, by changing white actors in the Flemish version to non-white actors in the Dutch versions, or by changing non-white characters in the Dutch source film to white ones in the Flemish remake. For instance, in the Dutch remake of *Loft*, several characters that were originally played by white actors were changed into non-white actors. More specifically, the villain *par excellence*, played by the white actor Matthias Schoenaerts in the Flemish *Loft*, is, in the Dutch version, played by Marwan Chico Kenzari, a non-white actor from Tunisian descent. Van Looy, the director of the Flemish source film, asserted that he did not dare to let that specific character play by a non-white actor as he was afraid of being criticized

(Cuelenaere, Willems & Joye, 2018: 273-274). Again, this can be linked to the Dutch ideal of being a highly tolerant society, which would be, at least according to Van Looy, different in Flanders (for more information, cf. Cuelenaere, Willems & Joye, 2018). It is also notable to see that, in some cases, together with ethnicity, the religious background of specific characters changed in the remake process. While in the Dutch source film *In Oranje* there is a family of Surinamese descent, this is altered to a Congolese family in the Flemish *Buitenspel*. Indeed, even colonial histories are remade in these films. Moreover, the “corresponding” religions and related rites are remade as well: whereas the grandmother of the Surinamese family practices “Winti” (a traditional Afro-Surinamese religion) to talk with the dead in the Dutch version, the Flemish equivalent of the grandmother practices something called “Orun-rere”. This is the concept of the hereafter in the Yoruba religion (Balogun, 2013: 113). However, the Yoruba people are geographically situated in Nigeria, Benin, and in lesser amounts in Ghana, Togo, and Ivory Coast – not in Congo. It is unclear why the Flemish filmmakers made this obvious “mistake”, as the most prominent religion in Congo is Christianity, which has its own idea of the afterlife. Most probably, this is because in Christianity, there is no real way of communicating with the dead, which is why the filmmakers searched for a random African religion that does include this means of contact. This confirms the notion of banal aboutness, but at the same time reveals an essentialist conception of Africa as a homogenous entity, resulting in an incorrect and stereotyped depiction of Congo. It, therefore, seems to be of less importance that this recreated banal reality is actually embedded in an existing reality. Hence, how a (filmic) world is (re)created is of secondary concern, as long as it is recognizable to the target audience. However banal some of the aforementioned adjustments might appear at first sight, they actually indicate the importance of evoking a specific national identity. All of these films are basically quasi-universal genre films, but they are still in need of localized elements that induce an identifiable realism.

7.6 Conclusion and discussion

The primary objective of this article was to inquire into the process of film remaking, which, in the past decades, has shown to be of great importance in the film industries of the Low Countries, and of Europe by extension. By conducting a comparative film analysis of nine Dutch-Flemish remakes in tandem with their nine source films, we discovered which textual and contextual mechanisms are at the fundament of this phenomenon. After arguing that the film remake can be considered as a prism that helps to deconstruct a myriad of elements that are related to cinema, and embedding the practice in its socio-cultural and industrial context, we showed which similarities and differences were found between the Dutch and Flemish film versions and how these can be interpreted.

Our results were structured along three different codes that are central to our model of comparison, i.e., the formal, transtextual, and cultural code. Although these codes intersect and overlap, they help a lot in discovering the different mechanisms that are at play in the remake process. On a more abstract level, we distilled two overarching principles that govern the Dutch-Flemish remake practice. The first important element that defines a great deal of the remake process points toward the concept of localization. Many of the changes made to the formal, transtextual, and cultural codes of our films suggest differences in (film) culture between the Netherlands and Flanders. However, instead of claiming that these differences indicate clear-cut cultural differences, we argue that they are rather symptomatic of the processes of “manufacturing proximity” and “banal aboutness”. Both suggest that these localized elements are the result of the perceptions of cultural differences and stereotypes, held by filmmakers. Indeed, these films do not ‘simply represent or express the stable features of a national culture, but are themselves one of the loci of debates about a nation’s governing principles, goals, heritage and history’ (Hjort & MacKenzie, 2000: 3-4). When, for instance, employing the ideal of Dutch tolerance, or connecting a random religion to a country, these filmmakers want to recreate a world that is banally connected to the reality of their audience. This “aboutness” is therefore not only ideologically informed, but just as well (if not mainly) commercially driven. Next to such local interpretations of filmic elements, we also found several quasi-universal aspects included in these films. Such quasi-universalities were located in similar dialogic structures, spaces, characters, themes, or even production tactics. Hence, the films put under analysis showed a mix of both quasi-universalism and localism.

The second important encompassing finding was that there are also quite some elements that are not related to the strategy of localization. While much of the literature in the field of remake studies focuses on the issues of localization and cross-cultural adaptation, other, equally important textual and contextual elements might be neglected. This article, therefore, intends to start a trend wherein a more holistic approach to the film remake is adopted. One feature that we, for instance, discovered is what might be called the mechanism of “filling in the gaps”, whereby filmmakers render elements that were unclear, ambiguous or (too) complex in the source film more explicit, unambiguous or simplified in the remake they produce. These changes may point to many different rationales, ranging from financial incentives and personal opinions to filmic “corrections”. We also found that filmmakers in Europe might also be aware of the negative connotation of the film remake, which is why they avoid the use of the label “film remake” in the credits (and promotion) of their films. However, these same filmmakers did not shy away from employing a self-reflexive attitude toward the remake phenomenon in their films. When looking beyond the processes of localization, researching film remakes can tell us a lot about how film texts are constructed and how these are able to create and transform meanings.

This article demonstrated the analytical value of the prism of the film remake by focusing on the significant textual similarities and differences between two versions of one (almost indistinguishable) narrative. By addressing the complicated embedment of the Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon in a European context, while pointing toward the hyper-relevant links but also differences with Hollywood practices, this argument was also extended to the contextual level. The prismatic film remake helped us reveal and better understand not only contextual but just as well formal and (trans)textual mechanisms that are part of the filmic and cinematic medium.

Chapter 8

A “double take” on the nation(al) in the Dutch-Flemish monolingual film remake

Positioning

While this second empirical chapter builds on some of the insights that were gathered through the method of systematic comparative textual analysis, it focuses on one specific case, i.e. on the Dutch source film *In Oranje* and its Flemish remake *Buitenspel*. This chapter aims to elucidate some of the crucial questions that deal with the issues of localization, (cultural) proximity on the one hand, and national identity (and how the dynamic of transnationalism further complicates this notion) as well as banal aboutness on the other. More specifically, it considers how and why (Dutch-Flemish) film remakes are national, and emanate, or indeed echo, the nation, national specificity or national sentiments. To do so, it applies Mette Hjort's framework (cf. sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3) to the Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon. Hence, it employs the intricate case of Dutch-Flemish film remakes to look at how robust these concepts are, as well as to find out whether or not they are (still) applicable in a contemporary setting. Additionally, the chapter wants to investigate the broader context in which the Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon came into being. It, therefore, aims to further find out what the phenomenon of intra-European remakes might tell us about the cultural and industrial contexts wherein they were shaped. It argues that the new phenomenon of European film remakes, and more specifically, Dutch-Flemish film remakes, should be taken into consideration if we want to better grasp today's interplay between film, its cultural and national context, and the audiences. In order to investigate these complex questions (which start from many different assumptions), the present chapter argues that, building on existing theories from both the (trans)national cinema debate (cf. sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3) and the field of remake studies (cf. Chapter 2), a similarly multi-faceted approach is mandatory.

Reference

Cuelenaere, E. (2020). A “double take” on the nation(al) in the Dutch-Flemish monolingual film remake. In M. Stewart & R. Munro (Eds.), *Intercultural screen adaptation: British and global case studies* (pp. 222–240). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

8.1 Introduction

Known for its fragmentation and diverse languages and cultures, the European film industry still experiences difficulties in competing with the dominance of Hollywood. While roughly 1.9 million cinema tickets are sold annually for American films – both studio and independent – in Europe, non-national European (NNE) films¹⁸¹ only sell an average of 185,000. NNE films account for 12 percent of total European cinema admissions, while national films (those made for a domestic audience) account for 21 percent of admissions. This is in stark contrast to the figure for American films, which stands at 65 percent (Jones 2018). What is clear from these figures is that, from an audience standpoint, Hollywood is still at the heart of European film culture, and European films still encounter major obstacles in crossing their national borders (Higson, 2015: 138). When European audiences are drawn to NNE films, it is because they offer an alternative (in terms of narrative, genre, casting, etc.) to popular Hollywood cinema, not (necessarily) because of their (foreign) nationality or opportunity to encounter a different culture or place (Jones, 2017: 479). In sum, European films are unlikely to travel in Europe unless they are

‘(a) a big-budget Hollywood-style action/adventure blockbuster or animation; (b) a medium-budget middlebrow quality drama based on a best-selling book and an Oscar-winning Hollywood star attached; or (c) a low-budget MEDIA-supported arthouse film made by a Palme-d’Or-winning auteur’ (Jones, 2019).

Looking at recent developments, one could also add ‘or a remake of a popular, commercial European film’ to the above enumeration. In Europe, nationally produced films supply increasingly universal themes and subject matter for border-crossing (translation) purposes (Verevis, 2017: 153). Because of these opportunities, several pan-European enterprises have been formed in the past two decades. These enterprises simultaneously distribute films in European and international areas, with remakes and readaptations ‘at the heart of [their] creative strategies’ (Meir, 2018: 4). Looking at box-office revenues, such intra-European remakes generally turn out to be quite successful. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, the practice might present a potential solution to the inability of popular European films to cross borders. Even

¹⁸¹ These are films ‘produced or primarily co-produced in one European country, but released in another’ (e.g. a French film released in Germany) (Jones, 2019).

European film industries that are part of the same geo-linguistic region (e.g. Scandinavia) are dealing with these barriers. It therefore seems that alongside strategies such as transnational co-production, remaking films might offer a new and viable way to circumvent the aforementioned issues.

The film industries of Flanders (the Dutch-speaking region of northern Belgium) and the Netherlands – together forming the Low Countries – deal with the aforementioned issues. Indeed, both film industries have always experienced problems in releasing their films across their mutual border. Besides obvious commercial reasons – think of the shortcomings in distribution and promotional strategies – this disinterest in their respective film culture and products is indicative of a bigger intercultural context between both regions. Cajot (2012: 53) argues that since the 1990s, the intercultural contact between the Netherlands and Flanders has sharply deteriorated, which is reflected in a reduction in the exchange of various cultural products – not only cinema but also newspapers, literature, radio, and television. However, the new millennium marked an essential shift in the Low Countries when a new film practice was established: instead of (unsuccessfully) releasing each other's films, multiple Flemish filmmakers began to domestically remake Dutch films, and vice versa (Cuelenaere, Joye & Willems, 2016). In the context of European cinema (and even within a broader global context), the case of Dutch-Flemish film remakes is quite exceptional when one considers that the 23 million inhabitants of both regions essentially speak the same language (with some minor differences in accent and vocabulary), have a partially shared history, are neighboring regions, and could be considered culturally proximate. Paradoxically, it is also because of these elements that both film industries show a mutual interest in producing remakes of each other's films. Dealing with the same issues – having a small domestic market and experiencing difficulties in finding broader audiences, while enjoying more substantial revenues for their domestically produced films – several filmmakers saw opportunities in remaking already existing and commercially viable films and scripts.

Considering the above, this chapter will explore the Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon, which generated no less than 22 films in a period of 18 years (cf. Table 2), as a relatively new yet highly significant industrial practice in the Low Countries' film industries, and in a broader sense, those of Europe. Beginning with the particular nature of this unique remake phenomenon, the tensions between sameness and difference, quasi-universalism and particularity, and the transnational and national will

be explored, as well as the strategies that filmmakers apply to bypass these tensions. This chapter criticizes the clear-cut demarcation between these tensions and argues for a more interactive and interwoven take on the film remake. Adopting both macro and micro perspectives, it will first consider the Dutch-Flemish film remake practice from a broader industrial perspective and will then address the textual properties of the films under consideration. In doing so, this chapter asserts that the remake cycle in the Low Countries is both a nationally and transnationally oriented phenomenon. Moreover, it provides new insights into the ways film and cinema are connected to or are part of – or rather, are made part of – a specific local, national, or transnational context.

8.2 The (trans)national cinema debate: enter the film remake

Notwithstanding the varying perspectives of scholars working in the fields of remake, adaptation, translation, or intercultural studies, most seem to agree that the film remake is characterized by an inherently hybrid status. Whether or not one is convinced that every text is *in se* an inter-text, it is clear that film remakes are directly linked to one or more preceding (film) texts – rendering their status inherently hybrid. This relationship complicates assumptions of originality, imitation, imperialism, ownership, high versus low culture, and identity. Indeed, the film remake, both as process and product, impedes fixed or essential notions of identity, not only on the level of on-screen identities (characters' ethnicities, genders, cultures, etc.), but also on the level of the film *an sich*. Connecting this to the concept of nation and national identity, one might think of Homi K. Bhabha, who coined the concept of hybrid nation, arguing that:

'What is at issue is the performative nature of differential identities: the regulation and negotiation of those spaces that are continually, *contingently*, 'opening out', remaking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference' (1994: 219).

Thus, the film remake's inherent hybridity mirrors the performative, negotiating, and contingent nature of nations and their subsequent national identities. In the context of Hollywood remakes of French films in the 1980s, Lucy Mazdon states that the 'very act of moving a film across cultures calls into question its own identity as "national" product' (2000: 65). Here, she raises the critical question of whether these Hollywood remakes of French films are by definition less (or not) French when compared to their source texts. If yes, then what are the constitutive elements that make us believe they carry a (different) national label? By pointing out this ambiguity, Mazdon touches on debates in film studies, where the idea of national cinema, and more recently of transnational cinema, is challenged.

Keeping recent political events in mind – think of Brexit or the sustained wave of nationalist and protectionist movements throughout Europe – it seems that since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the nation as an imagined community (cf. below) has grown in significance. Symptomatic of this trend are the statistics of the Eurobarometer, which show that up to the present day, most Europeans still feel

principally national and less European (Standard Eurobarometer, 2018). In an era 'of mounting tensions and increasing hostilities to difference, understanding the ways in which cultural artifacts and artistic texts respond will provide a vital perspective on the contemporary moment' (Harvey, 2018: 2). This growing antipathy to, or at least disinterest in, difference, the unknown, the foreign, or the exotic, could also be linked to the practice of Dutch-Flemish film remakes, which – coincidentally or not – also originated in the new millennium. Indeed, although possibly far-fetched, one could interpret the practice as a form of unwillingness to watch films of other cultures – even those that are very closely related, as in the case of Flanders and the Netherlands. In that sense, the remake phenomenon in the Low Countries reads as a confirmation of the prominence of nationalist sentiments. Explained by concepts such as cultural proximity (Straubhaar, 2007), in the age of globalisation, audiences apparently continue to prefer those cultural products that feel familiar or are at least as close as possible to their own cultural, local, or national background. Looking specifically at the context of television in Europe, Milly Buonanno (2002) asserts that most European nations generate an increasing amount of domestically produced prime-time programmes (such as drama) whereby (national) cultural proximity appears to be a crucial factor. This should, however, also be nuanced. According to Buonanno, it is true that people are prone to watch their own national culture on television – and, as Jones' statistics show, albeit to a lesser extent, on cinema as well – but they are also highly familiarized with (and seem to heavily enjoy) cultural artifacts from the USA.

If one wants to theorize the nation in film studies today, it seems necessary to adopt a dialectical approach, whereby both the notion of transnational cinema and the more traditional frame of national cinema are taken into account (Harvey, 2018: 8). Although it is undoubtedly important to acknowledge that the transnational notion is essential to understand cinema's history, current status, and future, one should not neglect the still-significant notion of the nation(al). In this context, Berry (2006) calls for a paradigm shift, wherein the various relationships between national and transnational concepts are studied. As a way of combining both the national and transnational lenses to study the remake phenomenon in the Low Countries, it might be elucidatory to approach the subject by employing Mette Hjort and Duncan Petrie's (2007) concept of 'small nations.' They believe that an analysis of the relations between film and various national elements should be part of present and future film studies, claiming that research on cinema can benefit from a consideration of small national cinemas and

industries, provided that these are seen as small but permeable aspects of a transnational network. According to both authors, in the context of such interconnected networks, small nations often choose to emphasize the uniqueness of their national identity in order to sustain their existence. By examining the relations between cinema and the nation, one can understand 'the specificity of various contemporary and historical conjunctures' (Hjort & Petrie, 2007: 13). Moreover, analyzing small nations can uncover 'the emergence of regional networks and alliances that are providing transnational alternatives to the neo-liberal model of globalization driving contemporary Hollywood' (Hjort & Petrie, 2007: 17). The Dutch-Flemish remake practice could indeed be regarded as such: A commercially driven international collaboration, whereby scripts and films are shared for remake purposes, with the ultimate goal of countering Hollywood's dominance and bringing audiences back to domestic cinema. This adds an importance nuance to the seemingly pure national status of the phenomenon, suggesting the involvement of a broader perspective that includes a transnational aspect.

8.3 Understanding the film remake: transnational localization or national echo chamber?

These allegedly – or indeed, false – oppositional stances between the national and transnational are illustrative of the paradox of film remakes. Although many of these films are inherently hybrid (both textually and contextually), their reason for existence is often the need for localization and the staging of distinct national elements. Localization is then used as a way to sidestep the aforementioned tension between the particular and the quasi-universal. When, for instance, European movies are remade in Hollywood, different formal, narrative, and cultural elements are localized – the ‘different’ can be transformed into the ‘quasi-universally applicable’ – and they then have to ‘undergo considerable change as they cross the Atlantic – despite a seeming similarity of plot’ (Vincendeau, 1993: 23). When considering its production context, the practice of remaking films in the Low Countries could almost be perceived as a purely national affair. First, the directors of the remakes originate from the country of production in almost all cases, except for one.¹⁸² This is also true for the main actors who have a part in the films. Then, on the level of promotion and distribution, it quickly becomes clear that these Dutch-Flemish film remakes only aim for their domestic markets and are, therefore, exclusively released in the country of production, again, except for one¹⁸³. Lastly, interestingly enough, it appears that many of the remakes are co-productions between Flanders and the Netherlands (see also Chapter 11). Therefore, even though the practice of Dutch-Flemish remakes appears to be predominantly national at first sight, on a production level, the phenomenon appears to transcend national borders. Moreover, both these Dutch and Flemish filmmakers constantly decide to remake Flemish and Dutch films, and not, for instance, Italian, Korean, or Mexican films. Therefore, on a more structural level, there seems to be an incentive that motivates filmmakers from both sides of the border to remake each

¹⁸² The Dutch remake of *Smoorverliefd* is actually directed by the same Flemish director (Hilde Van Mieghem) who directed the source film, also called *Smoorverliefd*, which makes it an auto-remake.

¹⁸³ The Dutch and American remakes of the Flemish film *Loft* were both (limitedly) released in Flanders.

other's films – pointing again to the aforementioned paradox of the practice. In this context, Daniel Herbert argues the following:

‘for all that it is clear that “transnational remakes” constitute an important aspect of transnational cinema, we need to attend always to the multiple ways in which any given remake, like any other film or collection of films, is “transnational” (2017: 221).

When applied to Dutch-Flemish remakes, a combination of what Hjort (2009) calls affinitive, milieu-building, and opportunistic transnationalism seems most suitable. Affinitive transnationalism centers on the inclination of people (in this case, filmmakers) to connect with those who are similar to them, ‘typically being understood in terms of ethnicity, partially overlapping or mutually intelligible languages, and a history of interaction giving rise to shared core values, common practices, and comparable institutions’ (Hjort, 2009: 17). Next to cultural affinity, this type of transnationalism can also ‘arise in connection with shared problems or commitments in a punctual now, or with the discovery of features of other national contexts that are deemed to be potentially relevant to key problems experienced within a home context’ (Hjort, 2009: 17). Indeed, the decision to remake films from across the border in the Low Countries can be seen as being driven by a sort of transcultural affinity and shared problems that both industries are dealing with. Milieu-building transnationalism points to ‘a model of transnational collaboration aimed at jointly developing solutions to particular problems that hamper the development of thriving film milieus’ (Hjort, 2009: 19). This form of transnationalism is closely related to the former, although its goal is partially different – and possibly more far-reaching and radical – namely, the development of a transnational model of cooperation that proposes a solution to the aforementioned obstacles that European productions have to deal with. Lastly, opportunistic transnationalism ‘involves giving priority to economic issues to the point where monetary factors actually dictate the selection of partners beyond national borders’ (Hjort, 2009: 19). This type of transnationalism focuses on the often-commercial incentives behind transnationalism. Illustrative of the latter are production companies such as the Ghent-based Marmalade – which focuses mainly on producing commercial, mainstream films and uses the process of remaking films as one of their principal strategies – and the Amsterdam-based Fabiola – a venture of three independent production companies based in Belgium who work together to sell their formats to the Dutch television market.

In light of commercially motivated transnationalism, one might also think of the production and distribution of television formats. Indeed, one of the crucial components of the European transnational television industry is the use of such television formats (Bondebjerg et al., 2017: 6), of which the aforementioned *Fabiola* is an exponent. This use is also relevant to the context of the Low Countries, where many television programs are remade or formats exchanged. Even though such television formats offer novel ways of exchanging media products, it is claimed that the process of localization in format trading in Europe (indirectly) complicates or impairs 'real transnational encounters' (Bondebjerg et al., 2017: 6). As film remakes generally localize the foreign, the same could be said of intra-European (and, thus, Dutch-Flemish) film remakes, which indirectly complicate the creation of a shared and strong pan-European (cinema) culture. In other words, remaking films in Europe could equally be regarded as a process that prevents mediated cultural encounters in a kind of national echo chamber. These encounters might result in a scenario wherein European audiences mainly perceive their culture as being national or local, 'despite its obvious global and European dimensions' (Bondebjerg et al., 2017: 4). However, one should be cautious in equating the process of remaking with localization. Think, for example, of the Swedish film adaptation of the Millennium book trilogy by Stieg Larsson. Analyzing the film trilogy, Mazdon writes:

'In their mobile[z]ation of elements of the action/crime thriller genres[,] the films are arguably far more 'American' than the slow-paced, broody dramas stereotypically associated with Scandinavian production by Anglophone audiences. The films were marketed in the English-speaking market so as to deliberately disguise their 'foreign' origins and position them as a Hollywood-style product' (2017: 22).

The first film of the trilogy, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (Oplev, 2009), a Swedish/Danish co-production, wanted to circumvent the problems associated with cultural discount by disguising its 'foreign' status and opting for the opposite of localization by delocalizing its content. However, the film proved unpopular and 'was faced with the usual resistance of the mainstream audience' (Mazdon, 2017: 24). This is probably in part related to the fact that the language of the film was not English. Two years later, in 2011, an English-spoken Hollywood remake, directed by David Fincher, was released. Wanting the film to be as authentic as possible, the American director found it of essential importance to work with a Swedish crew and included textual elements that are typical of Scandinavia and its Nordic Noir genre. Aware of its

European embedment, Fincher did the exact opposite with his remake when he opted to 'foreignize' the Hollywood-inspired source film. Thus, this example shows that a Hollywood remake of a European source text may be more "European" than the preceding film that was produced in Europe. This, in turn, although being an American remake, may facilitate a mediated cultural encounter with European culture.

8.4 Making sense of national themes and sentiments in the film remake

Central to the above discussion is how the relationship between cinema and culture (or nation) should be understood. Although cinema is never a mirror of 'an already fully formed and homogeneous national culture and identity' (Higson, 2002: 63), in most cases, it does privilege specific subject positions of the national subject. According to Higson, these subject positions are, consequently, reproduced, making it increasingly difficult to leave open the possibility of alternative positions. This idea is reminiscent of Benedict Anderson's (1991) well-known concept of 'imagined community,' which argues that the nation (and, therefore, also a supra-nation like Europe) only exists in the minds of people. Although the social construction of notions such as nation and national identity is agreed upon by many scholars, one should not underestimate the materialized outcomes of such imaginations. Like many other cultural artifacts, cinema can convey political or even nationalist messages, and 'if we are to understand the relationship between cinema and nationalism, we must engage with its capacity both to represent and construct a people' (Harvey, 2018: 8).

In the context of the Low Countries, Jaap Verheul explores the growing success of Flemish cinema since the 2000s and articulates that 'a certain notion of Flemishness should [...] be seen as a political barometer for the intensified assertion of Flemish sovereignty' (2016: 327-328). He also expresses (implicitly) that the Flemish nationalist movement was an important matrix for the development of the Dutch-Flemish remake cycle, and it should, therefore, be considered when analyzing the phenomenon. If these Flemish film remakes express a clear sentiment of Flemishness, it seems quite manageable to perceive these film remakes as national echo chambers (i.e., archetypical examples of quasi-all-encompassing localized products that previously emanated a certain amount of Dutchness). Consequently, such a stance presumes that their source films were clearly national or that the filmmakers of the remake added new national-specific traits to the film. However, how can one make sense of or describe national cinemas and their defining content(s) in a textual manner? Hjort (2000: 95) argues that, in academic literature, national cinemas are often characterized as dealing with national theme(s) but little research has been done on what specifically establishes themes of a nation. Building on Peter Lamarque and Stein H. Olsen's (1994) theory, Hjort differentiates between topical themes on one

hand – namely, those that ‘involve only concepts that arise within, and remain relevant to, a highly specific historical or cultural formation’ (2000: 97), and perennial themes on the other hand – namely, those that ‘bring into focus subject matter that resonates across historical and cultural boundaries’ which is why they ‘are universal or quasi-universal in their thrust’ (2000: 97). A theme implies thematization and can, therefore, only arise when, during the viewing of the film, the audience’s attention is drawn to the features that signify the theme(s) by flagging, foregrounding, or focusing on specific elements. Hjort advances that, naturally, thematic hybridity (e.g., combining perennial with topical themes) can also occur, and a topical theme may often function as a secondary background, providing ‘the necessary means of anchoring perennial themes within specific cultural formations’ (2002: 309).

Since the notion of nation indicates the particularity of a community and its cultural context, ‘the theme of nation is a likely candidate for topical theme par excellence’ (Hjort, 2000: 98). Starting from such a rigid description of the theme of nation, Hjort (2002: 308) contends that not many filmmakers would agree that their films have the nation as a primary theme. However, many would concur that their films are about a specific reality in which they (and their audiences) find themselves (e.g., Flanders). To explain the latter, she puts forward the concept of ‘banal aboutness,’ arguing that

‘all films that make use, for example, of recogni[z]ably Danish locations, the Danish language, Danish actors and props that mirror the material culture of Danes, qualify as being about Denmark [and] that such elements can provide the basis for a given film’s national quality, but that they cannot, in and of themselves, constitute a theme’ (Hjort, 2000: 99).

Hjort’s concept is, of course, inspired by Michael Billig’s notion of ‘banal nationalism’ (1995), whereby it is illustrated that one should be wary of reducing nationalism to only the obvious or explicit utterances, as in propagandist cinema. Billig’s notion of banal nationalism refers to those banal – but ideological – messages, ‘which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced’ (1995: 6). Applying this to cinema and the national cinema debate, Hjort argues that the most important characteristic that differentiates banal instances of aboutness and ‘the kind of aboutness that is constitutive of full-blown themes of nation’ (2000: 101) is focal attention and the degree to which it is constitutive of (or of elementary importance to) the story.

8.5 Banal aboutness in Dutch-Flemish film remakes

As the narratives of Dutch-Flemish film remakes and their source films are very similar, small, quasi-invisible, or often banal, textual changes are magnified when compared; potentially added or changed themes also become more apparent. Indeed, when textually comparing a source text with its remake, a prism is conceived that aids us in pinpointing the perennial and topical themes of the two versions, or the transformations that occurred during the remake process. Moreover, the prism of the remake makes it easier to trace instances of banal aboutness, as such habitual elements are defamiliarized through the remake process and become highly legible when juxtaposing two similar texts (Cuelenaere, Willems & Joye, 2019a: 14). It is, however, important to note that such a textual analysis does not (and cannot) disclose the essential properties of a particular nation, nor does it intend to claim that national sentiment is the constitutional element of people's multi-layered identity – two known pitfalls of dogmatic essentialism and rigid constructivism.

Examining the entire sample of Dutch-Flemish film remakes and their source films (cf. Table 2), it becomes clear that they are all commercial genre films intended for mainstream domestic audiences. In total, 14 out of 22 films are romantic comedies; two are tragicomedies; two are family films; two are of the thriller genre; and one film couple switches during the remake process – *Brasserie Romantiek* can be considered a drama (with comedy accents), while its remake, *Brasserie Valentijn*, is more of a romantic comedy. The fact that the majority of films being remade in the Low Countries are comedies is indicative of the 'apparent inability of much comedy to transcend national boundaries [which] explain[s] the frequency of the comic remake' (Mazdon, 2000: 92) – which is why they are in need of a remake. This confirms that, compared to other genres, comedy is generally more defined by its surrounding culture (i.e., its specific sense of humor).¹⁸⁴ Here, the notion of banal aboutness seems elucidatory. Although the perennial comedic aspect is maintained in the different Flemish and Dutch versions, the specific humor (i.e., gags and jokes) is transformed in order to

¹⁸⁴ However, one should note that another reason for this is because the genre of romantic comedy has been very popular in the Low Countries in the past decennium. Many mainstream romantic comedies are produced for a domestic audience, especially in the Netherlands. As these films prove to be attractive and commercially viable, filmmakers from across the border want to reproduce these successes in their own market.

create a feeling of proximity, taking into account the different socio-cultural contexts (Cuelenaere, Willems & Joye, 2019b). In addition, the (often small) adjustments made to humorous aspects in both Dutch and Flemish versions certainly do not constitute the theme of a specific nation; at most, they could be perceived as banal re-enactments of real-life situations. Hence, although these changes made during the remake process tell us how these films intend to create a feeling of (national) familiarity, audiences will most probably not perceive them as such.

The exact same procedure (i.e., banal aboutness) can be found in many other elements of these 22 films. As argued in earlier work (Cuelenaere, Willems & Joye, 2018; Cuelenaere, Willems & Joye, 2019b), generally, the use of space (i.e., rural space versus urban landscape) was not transformed during the remake process, but the locations were (almost always) changed, which, again, adds a national quality to these films. Think also of the dialogue: The structure and purpose of the dialogue between the films' characters are generally not altered substantially. However, the speech itself (i.e., jokes, tone, and cultural references in the dialogue, as well as the actors' accents) is transformed in consideration of the different linguistic and cultural contexts. The same counts for the characters (and their role in the overarching narrative) in these films, as they are generally kept the same after being remade. Nevertheless, small adjustments are made to their personalities and names, and, of course, the actors playing them are also changed. In terms of representation, one can also find compelling differences in relation to the portrayal of, for instance, nudity, sexuality, gender, and ethnicity. To a certain extent, these are all changed because of various differences in the socio-cultural contexts, or, more rightly, because of perceived differences in these contexts (Cuelenaere, Willems & Joye, 2018). Therefore, if one looks from a distance, patterns of quasi-universality versus locality keep returning in every pair (i.e., source film and remake), proving that there might be some kind of dialectic balancing mechanism between the quasi-universal and the particular – or between transnational aspects and banal national recognizability – at play in these films. Even though all of the remakes that came out of this practice seem to present themselves as unique and 'new' Dutch or Flemish films, they all share the same mechanisms and underlying frameworks – regardless of the small and banal changes made to it, aiming to recreate a Dutch or Flemish aboutness.

Looking at all of the Dutch-Flemish film remakes and their previous source films, none can be regarded as positing the nation as a primary theme. Indeed, the

primary themes of these films are clearly perennial, including friendship, love, sexuality, adultery, growing up, death, and murder. Given that the films under consideration are produced only for national domestic audiences, these themes show that there are indeed many shared dimensions and ‘commonalities behind what often seem to be strong national, cultural identities’ (Bondebjerg et al., 2017: 27). As mentioned above, Hjort contends that thematic hybridity might occur, giving the example of the Danish *Let’s Get Lost* (1997). According to Hjort, this is an apt example of a film that uses the theme of nation, albeit of a secondary nature (2002: 309). In this light, the following section will delve deeper into the dynamics between primary and secondary themes on the one hand, perennial and topical themes on the other, and how these relate to the nation(al), by building on an illuminating case study that came out of the Dutch-Flemish remake practice.

8.6 Textually dissecting the national in film remakes: a case study

The case study that will be used to further elucidate the aforementioned theoretical statements is the Dutch source film *In Oranje* and its Belgian remake *Buitenspel*. Both are about a young boy who wants to become a professional player in the national football teams of respectively the Netherlands (the Dutch Eleven) and Belgium (the Belgian Red Devils). This case is particularly characteristic for most of the other films that are included in the sample because, on many different levels, it shares those features – i.a. domestically oriented and recognizable popular genre films directed by famous national directors including famous national actors – that almost all films in the Dutch-Flemish remake practice use. Another reason for focusing on this case is because, at first sight, *In Oranje* and *Buitenspel* seem to clearly concentrate on the nation – for instance, by focusing on the national sport of football –, which appears to be more explicitized in comparison to the other films from the sample. This is obvious from the first sequence of both films, which is symptomatic of the rest of the films: When the young boy appears on screen for the first time, we can see that his room is filled with posters of the national football team and covered in the national color (i.e., orange in the Dutch version and red in the Belgian version). This focus on the nation becomes even more apparent when the boy starts to sing the national anthem, with the music of the ‘Wilhelmus’ (in the Dutch version) and the ‘Brabançonne’ (in the Belgian version) playing in the background. Although of secondary importance to the story, this hyper-saturation of national elements appears to point toward the existence of the theme of nation in both films. The principal themes of both versions are, however, the difficulties that arise when having to say farewell to one’s childhood (closely related to coming-of-age narratives); the emotional suffering and mourning of the main character, brought on by the death of his father; and the oftentimes harsh differences between people’s dreams, hopes, expectations, and reality.

Another argument, that at first glance may speak in favor of the theme of nation in both versions, is that the young boy, Remco van Leeuwen (the main protagonist in the Dutch version), is clearly inspired by two Dutch football legends: Marco van Basten and Johan Crujff. In the first sequence of the Dutch source film, the camera sweeps across Remco’s bed, which shows a leaky football at its head. Remco is such a fanatic that he prefers to sleep on a leaky ball instead of a soft pillow.

However, this striking detail is not coincidental: It is actually a cultural reference to Marco van Basten's youth, who used a deflated ball as a cushion when he was a teenager. Moreover, Remco's stubborn and wilful personality, which becomes apparent when he refuses to accept the doctor's advice to rest (and stop playing football) after being tackled during a match, is also based on van Basten, who is known to be a stickler and, similarly, did not listen to his doctor as a young boy. Moreover, in *In Oranje*, the father of the twelve-year-old Remco is a greengrocer who owns a small grocery in town. Quite early in the film, he dies of a heart attack. Both these elements show striking similarities with the life of Johan Crujff, whose father was also a greengrocer and died young because of cardiac arrest. One might contend that both these elements are only small details in a much bigger story. But looking at the press articles that circulated during the film's release, many do mention that the character of Remco, played by Yannick van de Velde, is based on the two Dutch football legends. This finding suggests that the use of van Basten and Crujff's biographies as a frame of reference plays a significant role in understanding and interpreting the film's main protagonist.

Conceptualizing the theme of nation, Hjort argues that '[t]hemati[z]ations of nation, particularly in the case of hyper-saturation, have a tendency to promote opacity in international contexts, for local, topical[,] and nation-specific thematic elements are likely to be only partially comprehensible in other national contexts' (2000: 108). Linking this to the theory presented above, one should consider that film remakes are generally – though certainly not always, as argued above – characterized by their localization of culturally or nationally specific elements. This localization circumvents cultural opacity and maintains a socio-cultural verisimilitude for the targeted domestic audience. But, remarkably, the aforementioned culturally specific (and therefore topical) elements in the Dutch *In Oranje* were neither omitted nor changed in the Belgian remake *Buitenspel*. Apparently, the filmmakers of the Belgian remake did not find these elements too closely entwined with the Dutch context, which would make them less comprehensible for a Belgian or Flemish audience. Interestingly, when looking at all of the articles regarding the film that were released in Flemish newspapers, only one small article (aptly titled 'The Original of *Buitenspel*') mentioned Marco van Basten and Johan Crujff. Furthermore, this article was released as a promotion for the Dutch source film, which played that week on Flemish television (Rvg 2006: 40). Hence, neither film critics nor journalists mentioned the link between the

background of Gilles's character (the Belgian equivalent of Remco) and van Basten and Crujff. Indeed, although both names might be familiar to some Belgian people, both names are clearly more known in the Dutch context. Consequently, it might be the case that when in the process of remaking *In Oranje*, the Flemish filmmakers did not notice the cultural references in the main protagonist's background.

The fact that these at-first-sight 'topical elements' remained unchanged despite the different context (i.e., the remake process) suggests two things: They are perennial and, therefore, not firmly connected to a specific cultural or national context; or, they, as Hjort would say, instead qualify as being 'about' the Netherlands. As the surrounding discourse found, the use of two famous Dutch football players in the Dutch source film *In Oranje* is indeed highly culturally defined. Thus, it would be incorrect to assert that these elements are part of a perennial theme. Hence, it makes more sense to state that they provide the basis for the film's national quality and do not, 'in and of themselves, constitute a theme' (Hjort, 2000: 99). The fact that the biographical background of the main protagonist in the Belgian remake *Buitenspel* was not changed, as well as the finding that Flemish news articles did not mention anything related to the underlying cultural references, indicate that these aspects cannot really be defined as topical themes. These culturally defined features may be recognized and recalled by Dutch audiences and elicit national sentiments, but they do not, in and of themselves, form an indispensable, central theme of the film. This could, therefore, be seen as an archetypical example of thematic hybridity, whereby the perennial theme of 'dream versus reality' is locally anchored by covering it with national flavor. However, as shown above, it is quite challenging to claim that these nationally specific elements form a separate and self-contained theme.

This finding demonstrates that, when dealing with thematic hybridity, Hjort's theory may be too rigid. Although it is quite reasonable to state that a film can be constituted of different themes, both topical and perennial, it becomes more challenging when the boundaries between topicality and perennality, and thematization and 'aboutness,' become blurred. This is precisely where the comparative textual analysis of the film remake can be illuminating, given that the defining feature of the remake is its hybrid nature and blurred boundaries. Using the Dutch-Flemish remakes as a frame of reference, it shows that, at first sight, some topical themes were only local interpretations of perennial themes. Moreover, the transformations – or, indeed, the lack of – in *In Oranje/Buitenspel*, barely affected the

general story or the themes of both films. This shows that what is being transformed can hardly be called a theme. Instead, these findings are the perfect example of Hjort's banal aboutness. Consequently, these elements may appear to be inseparable from a specific cultural context, but they are actually quite redeemable and are mainly used to make the film recognizable for a domestic audience. Remco's room, filled with props that refer to the Dutch national football team, the singing of the 'Wilhelmus,' and his culturally inspired biographical background aim to create a feeling of familiarity for a Dutch audience. This clearly differs from the full-fledged theme of a particular nation.

8.7 Conclusion

Going back to the question of whether the Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon can be considered a kind of national echo chamber, i.e. including cultural artifacts that are being presented as being inherently national – while actually being hybrid – it seems that there is no simple answer. In order to prove such a fundamentally complex statement (that, as shown, starts from many different assumptions), this chapter argues that, building on existing theories from both the (trans)national cinema debate and the field of remake studies, a similarly multi-faceted approach is mandatory. Therefore, this chapter first zoomed in on the cultural and production context in which these Dutch-Flemish film remakes were produced – acknowledging that many different agents function as intermediaries or gatekeepers standing in between the product and its context. Although these films are largely produced nationally and targeted at domestic audiences in most cases, there are different transnational mechanisms operating simultaneously in the creation of these film remakes. Indeed, a combination of affinitive (because of the cultural affinity and comparable industry), opportunistic (because of the commercial incentives) and even milieu-building (because collaborating structurally may alleviate common obstacles) transnationalism appears to be in play when these film remakes were produced. Hence, on the level of production, the Dutch-Flemish remake practice is, in its core, transnationally defined, but on the surface nationally oriented.

Second, this chapter looked at how film remakes are textually linked with the concept of the nation and the national. More specifically, it considered how and why (Dutch-Flemish) film remakes are national, and emanate, or indeed echo, the nation, national specificity or national sentiments. Applying Hjort's framework to the sample of 11 Dutch-Flemish film remakes, it seemed that most film pairs are characterized by a shared or quasi-universal framework (narrative, themes, characters, spaces, etc.) with differing interpretations of these same structures that turn them into (banal) Flemish or Dutch realities. Contrary to the film remake as a national echo chamber thesis, one could assert that the employment of perennial themes in these films might result in mediated cultural encounters with quasi-universal norms and values, resulting in a type of banal cosmopolitanism. However, as argued above, these transnationally shared schemas were, at every turn, dipped in a national (Flemish or Dutch) sauce, which complicates these mediated quasi-universal encounters. Hence, from a textual standpoint, the films that came out of the Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon wish to

recreate familiar realities for mainstream audiences but also to build on perennial themes and quasi-universal values. Indeed, holding the example of *In Oranje/Buitenspel* in mind, although at first glance it appeared that both films were clearly national, after the analysis, it proved difficult to claim that the films under analysis truly deal with themes of the nation.

As well as analyzing the film texts and their surrounding contexts, it is, however, equally necessary to take into account the audiences that eventually watch and interpret these films – reminiscent of Anderson’s claim that the nation (but also Europe) only exists in the people’s minds. In the case of Dutch-Flemish remakes, one must note that all of these film remakes are actually perceived as ‘originally’ Flemish or Dutch films, because the audiences are generally unaware of the fact that they are watching a remake of a different source film embedded in a different socio-cultural context. Consequently, even though these films are balanced between the transnational and national, or the quasi-universal and the particular, audiences may perceive them to be mainly national and not something coming from a neighboring nation. In other words, although some of the films’ elements are, in fact, transtextually connected to foreign cultures, they may generally not be perceived as such. The comparative analysis shows that even if the Dutch and Flemish are clearly different in some (banal) aspects, they might not be as different as these films want them to believe they are, again pointing to some sort of cosmopolitan potential. Yet from an (implied) audience perspective, one could draw the opposite conclusions, which speak in favor of the argument of the remake as a national echo chamber. Indeed, because of the dual hegemony between the dominant cultural proximity of the USA, and the second dominant cultural proximity of the national context, alternative modes of conceivable proximity (linguistic, socio-cultural, or historical ties with other geographically close European nations) are being downplayed or, indeed, diminished. Hence, coincidental with Billig’s thesis, what might appear to be banal or superficial on the surface, could, therefore, at its core, be highly ideological.

Chapter 9

Remaking identities and stereotypes

Positioning

In line with the previous two chapters, this chapter mainly builds on a comparative textual analysis (complemented by some production research) of one particular case. Indeed, by drawing on the case of the Flemish film *Hasta La Vista* and its Dutch remake *Adios Amigos*, this chapter critically investigates the (dis)similarities in terms of (the representation of) nationality, disability, and gender identities through the prism of the film remake. Both films are popular road trip movies dealing with the adventure of three friends with disabilities who overcome boundaries in multiple ways; not only by figuratively (and almost literally) escaping their parents and their disabilities, but also through traveling, exploring sexuality, and eventually, by dying. Although the films deal with almost exactly the same themes, their interpretation and contextualization differ considerably. The findings show that, as a consequence of the localizing processes that are at work in this film remake, subtexts which were 'originally' ingrained in the source text were ignored or even withheld in the newer version. As the involved filmmakers built on particular stereotypical visions and myths about these specific cultures and national identities, often with the purpose of recreating a socio-cultural context, such narrowed perceptions were occasionally subverted but also reconsolidated. Lastly, the chapter argues that, through the remake process, some ableist and patronizing representations of respectively disability and gender identities were subverted, while others were kept or even reinforced. The results show that such transformations simultaneously point toward specific socio-culturally defined disability and gender identities but also toward a partially shared and almost quasi-universally shaped disability and gender culture. As such, this chapter connects the concept of banal aboutness and localization to the concepts of national, gender, and disability identities. Finally, this chapter argues that the transformative processes that are at work in the remake process almost directly disapprove fixed or essentializing notions of e.g. gender, national, and disability identities – underscoring the highly performative aspect of such identities.

Reference

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9.1 Introduction

In 2006, Asta Philpot, a 24-year-old American living in Leeds (UK) made a trip to Spain, totally unaware of the impact this journey would have on his future life and, perhaps more importantly, on the lives of many others. Philpot was born with arthrogryposis, a disease which causes muscle shortening, resulting in impairment of physical abilities. This disease, as he explains, has a considerable effect on his sex life, since it is very difficult to find a partner to be intimate with. To cope with this, he decided to travel to a brothel on the Costa Brava with the goal of losing his virginity. This trip eventually ended up being a life-changing experience, not only because it involved his first sexual experience with another person but also because Philpot became a famous international advocate for the human right to have a sexual life. In the aftermath of his journey, the BBC approached Philpot to collaborate on a documentary, *For One Night Only* (2007), (re)telling (and in a sense re-enacting) his story of travelling to Spain, together with two other people with disabilities, all sharing the same goal of having their first sexual experience. The documentary quickly gained international acclaim. After having seen the documentary, Flemish film producer Mariano Vanhoof decided to adapt the story into a road movie.

The resulting film, directed by Geoffrey Enthoven, and entitled *Hasta La Vista* (English title *Come as You Are*) was released in 2011. The film follows three young men with a disability who travel to Spain with the goal of losing their virginity. *Hasta La Vista* won several prizes at international film festivals and was, overall, critically acclaimed. This led to theatrical releases in Russia, Brazil, Ireland and Hong Kong, hinting at the story's international appeal. Yet, a few years later, Dutch director Albert Jan van Rees remade the film into the Dutch *Adios Amigos* (2016). One might question the need for a remake, given the apparent international appeal of the source text. Moreover, the Dutch remake is particularly remarkable since it is a 'monolingual remake'; both films adopt the same language, Dutch. This seemingly paradoxical situation illustrates the film remake's intrinsic tension between quasi-universality and locality, or sameness and difference.

This article aims to unravel cross-cultural adaptations and interrogate the various dynamics and aspects involved in the making of different film versions¹⁸⁵ that vary in terms of culture, language, and aesthetics. Livingstone (2003: 491) asserts that such 'comparative research is challenging because one must balance and interpret similarities and differences while avoiding banalities and stereotypes' (2003: 492). The nature of the remake helps a lot in this process of comparison. It is, nonetheless, of paramount importance to embed our findings in a specific socio-cultural context, not least to avoid the pitfall of reaffirming stereotypes. Furthermore, we draw on the idea that film remakes can offer an exclusive insight into films both as cultural artifacts, nourished with a myriad of meanings and preceding intertexts, and the cultures in which these films were produced (e.g., Forrest and Koos, 2002; Mazdon, 2000a; Verevis, 2005). Here, we have a particular interest in identity issues, (particularly related to gender and disability) which are at play in both versions, and the way these are interconnected with the spatial and thus socio-cultural and national context in which they came about.

We will mainly focus on the representation of nation, gender, and disability identities in both films, and how these relate to cultural stereotypes. By applying the concept of nation to popular films, we also answer the pertinent calls for the study of nationalism within popular cinema (Hayward, 2005; Dyer and Vincendeau, 1992). The power of nationalism lies in its seemingly natural or essential nature, giving the false impression that national identity is intrinsically connected to the human being. This essentialist notion of national identity is strikingly similar to the fixed assertions of both gender identities and (disabled) bodies. In line with the postmodern notion of gender identity (see Butler, 2007: 191), and the social model of disability (Mogk, 2013)¹⁸⁶ – which articulate both identities as hybrid, non-essential and socially constructed – the film remake, being an inherent hybrid text, could be considered as an antidote to fixed notions of nationality, gender and disability. Indeed, the narrative and formal explorations and modifications that are inherent in the film remake reflect the instability, performativity and non-essential nature of all sorts of identities (Mazdon, 2000a). Hence, the notion of identity (construction) is not only central to the narratives of both

¹⁸⁵ The BBC documentary will, therefore, not be analyzed. This article mainly focuses on the Dutch-Flemish context and on the process of remaking fiction films.

¹⁸⁶ The social model contradicts the medical or moral model of disability, which 'understands disability as an ontological "fact" in the world' (Elcissor & Kirkpatrick, 2017: 5).

Hasta La Vista and *Adios Amigos*, but also to the transformations the remake underwent through cultural adaptation. In this paper, we adopt the film remake as a prism through which to analyze, and consequently elucidate, notions of national identity, gender, and disability by focusing on the differences and similarities in *Hasta La Vista* and *Adios Amigos*. More particularly, through comparative film analysis, we will explore how filmmakers from different regions represent a more or less identical narrative through the use of specific cultural stereotypes. Before focusing on the comparative textual aspect, it is important to discuss the broader social, cultural and political context in which these films emerged.

9.2 Monolingual remakes in the Low Countries

The official language in both the Netherlands and Flanders is Dutch, with minor regional differences in dialect and vocabulary. As such, most Dutch and Flemish people perfectly understand each other, and 'do not need to switch to another language variety to be understood' (Impe, Geeraerts & Speelman, 2008: 102). Additionally, the neighboring regions partially share a cultural and political history (De Cuyper, Jannes & Rubens, 1995: 183). The linguistic and cultural proximity, in combination with the fact that both film industries are known for their small scale (as well as for their limited domestic market – together, the Netherlands and Flanders have 23 million inhabitants), resulted in, among other things, a structural collaboration between the Dutch and Flemish film funds. Albeit limited in scale, the Dutch-Flemish film policy collaboration that came into being at the end of the 1960s can actually be considered as one of the most durable culturally motivated co-production partnerships in Europe (Willems, 2016: 5). Even so, Dutch films find it hard to find an audience in Flanders, and vice versa, which explains why the Flemish critical and popular success *Hasta La Vista* was remade instead of being released in the Netherlands.

In this context, Verheul (2016: 329) argues that 'if popular Flemish films fail to find an audience in the Netherlands, and vice versa, it is predominantly due to the language barrier and the negligible transnational appeal of Flemish and Dutch film stars'. The author claims that the accents (or dialects) in Flanders and the Netherlands differ so much that they are seen as 'incommensurable' (Verheul, 2016: 329). As there have been some films in the 1970s and 1980s that did well in both regions, it is improbable that not understanding each other, or indeed, the existence of a linguistic barrier, is the sole (or primary) source of this alienation. We argue that it is instead a combination of many different factors (i.e., commercial, media-related, and perceived identity issues) that is at the heart of this cultural indifference, of which the linguistic barrier forms only one aspect. We partially agree with Deprez (2012: 412), who relates the disinterest between both regions with differences in identity and mentality, which are (historically) shaped by differences in religious background: a largely Calvinist (or Protestant) Netherlands and a Catholic Flanders (see also De Cuyper, Jannes & Rubens, 1995: 183). This contrast 'between a Catholic South and Protestant North is probably the best-known and most deeply-rooted distinction between the two halves of the Low Countries' (Frijhoff, 2011: 47).

Historically, the Netherlands never had one dominant group and was therefore characterized by a 'pillarized' society comprising of Catholic, Protestant, liberal, and socialist pillars. As a result, the Netherlands is known for its 'politically quiescent society, with a live-and-let-live mentality' (Kennedy and Zwemer 2010: 261), which resulted in a high degree of tolerance toward a diversity of groups and subcultures, 'ranging from tiny religious groups to homosexuals' (Verstraten, 2018: 127) and people with disabilities. All of this stimulated the famous 'myth of Dutch tolerance' (Verstraten, 2018: 127), i.e., the Dutch 'air of satisfaction [...] of living in the finest, freest, most progressive, most decent, most perfectly evolved playground of multicultural utopianism' (Buruma, 2006: 11). Belgium (and thus Flanders) has known a similar pillarization process, but around the 1960s followed a distinctly different path; while the Netherlands broke down the religious and sociopolitical barriers, Belgium was characterized by its intact Catholic organizational network. The latter resulted in a more bipolar structure (Catholics on the one hand, socialists and liberals on the other) in Belgium, which contrasts with the multipolar and pluralist arrangement in the Netherlands (Hellemans, 1988: 49-50). Deprez (2012: 412) adds that the history of the Flemish struggle for cultural autonomy caused Flemish people to experience difficulty identifying with the Dutch language variant spoken in the Netherlands. Furthermore, Willems (2014: 51) argues that, in the context of Flemish identity construction, the Netherlands (or the Dutch) have always been an important 'other' to distance oneself from and thus create one's own (Flemish) identity: being Flemish is not being Dutch.

Apart from commercial explanations, such as the lack of good distribution networks and promotional opportunities, cinematic alienation can also be explained through a broader cultural shift. Indeed, as another consequence of this perceived and constructed difference in identities, the Netherlands and Flanders simply stopped sharing the same cultural space, including the mediascape.¹⁸⁷ This contention also qualifies Verheul's claim that Dutch film stars are not appealing to Flemish audiences, and vice versa, simply because the respective audiences have probably never heard of them. Since the 1990s, the relationship between both regions has been

¹⁸⁷ It should be noted, however, that in the context of the Flemish televisual media, the sudden and drastic decrease in watching Dutch television programs around the year of 1989 was heavily influenced by the coming of the first Flemish commercial broadcaster, VTM, which caused a greater diversity in television content. One could argue that this important event might have also impacted the broader dismemberment of a shared Dutch-Flemish mediascape.

characterized by a drastic decline in interregional contact and cultural exchange, as well as by an extensive decrease in accepting and recognizing each other. This is reflected in sharing less and less cultural products: not only cinema, but also literature, radio, newspapers, and television (Cajot, 2012: 53). In addition, the undeniable indifference toward each other's films is also in line with the broader context of European cinema. European films experience many difficulties in crossing national borders (Higson, 2015: 138), regardless of a film's popular domestic success. Remaking European films is, therefore, an answer to this deadlock, as is shown by our example of *Hasta La Vista* and *Adios Amigos*. Both films are in fact part of a larger phenomenon that we call the Dutch-Flemish remake practice (Cuelenaere, Joye & Willems, 2016: 1). Since the turn of the 21st century, film production in the Low Countries has witnessed popular Dutch films being remade in Flanders and vice versa. From 2000 to 2018, 11 Dutch-Flemish remakes were released – a high number, considering the small size of the Dutch and Flemish film industries.

It appears that it is not only a linguistic barrier that stands between both regions but also a constructed difference in identity that impedes cross-cultural contact. We argue that it is precisely the experience of this identity barrier that results in, among other things, a different judgment of each other's accents and dialects, and by extension each other's films. In the following analysis of *Hasta La Vista* and *Adios Amigos*, we will focus on perceptions of differences in national identity, show how these relate to other identities of gender and disability, and elucidate how such identities are defined by the reaffirmation and creation of specific stereotypes and myths.

9.3 Films 'about' (crossing) nations while crossing cultures

9.3.1 *Hasta La Vista and Adios Amigos* as wheelchair road movies

Our cases of study are films of the road movie genre, or, more specifically, of the 'wheelchair road movie' genre. They both deal with three friends with disabilities who overcome boundaries in multiple ways; not only by figuratively and almost literally escaping their parents and their disabilities, but also by means of traveling, sexual exploration, use of humor, and eventually, by dying. This is an often-used trope that typifies the genre. As such, the crossing of national and linguistic borders represents a kind of escapism or liberation from the banal everydayness of their lives, while also symbolizing the wish for an 'ordinary life', free from any kind of disability.

Both *Hasta La Vista* and *Adios Amigos* set forth a combination of disabled bodies and the desire of loss of virginity of the three main male protagonists, Philip, Lars, and Jozef/Joost, as the premise of the narrative. The fact that they are male and young is not striking since disabled characters in coming-of-age narratives are rarely female (Waltz, 2016: 105). All three still live with their families; paraplegic and electric wheelchair user Philip is a coarse young man who is the only child of his parents. Lars, the most handsome of the three, is terminally ill because of a cancerous tumor in his head and is therefore not only dependent on his parents and little sister, but also on his wheelchair. Jozef/Joost is almost fully blind, still lives with his loving mother, and walks with a cane. Although they live outside the 'classic' institutions of monasteries, hospitals, and other caring facilities, their everyday life takes place within an imposed organization where 'their social function as "son", combined with their respective disabilities, does not enable them to rebel against their parents' (Grebe, 2016: 176). The film centers on the three men experiencing great difficulties in finding (physical) contact with women, due to their disabilities. Indeed, disability is presented here as 'necessarily creating a barrier to sexuality and romance' (Waltz, 2016: 97). In *Hasta La Vista*, the protagonists feel that the solution is to make a trip to Spain to go to a brothel staffed by women who specialize in assisting people with disabilities to having sex. In *Adios Amigos*, on the contrary, they want to find 'drunken chicks' in a club who are 'very willing' to have sex and are convinced that they will find this in Salou, Spain. In conclusion, both films tell a rather progressive story about sexual experience of people with disabilities, while simultaneously recounting a very traditional and even patronizing story of men who want to 'conquer' women.

Eager to escape the confines of care and 'total institution' of their families, the Flemish friends in *Hasta La Vista* decide to disguise their journey to a brothel as a wine trip through France, while the Dutch friends do not have to hide anything. As they cannot leave on their own, they arrange for a specialized camper, as well as for an experienced male assistant who is also chauffeur. This happy arrangement is, however, quickly canceled when Lars receives the bad news that his tumor is steadily growing, reducing his lifespan to only a few weeks. Lars' parents do not want to let him go, but he is determined, and convinces his buddies not to follow the rules and find another assistant. In the Dutch version, they contact a sketchy mentor, Lub, via a secondhand web shop, while in the Flemish version they call their previous assistant who redirects them to an ex-colleague of his, Claude. As such, their escape transgresses many different boundaries; first because they are about to lose their virginity, and second, because they decide, contrary to the insistence of their parents, to go on a road trip to Punta del Mar. Philip, Lars, and Jozef/Joost can never fully surmount their disabilities but deal with them by accepting assistance. In both narratives, the parents symbolize the moral model of concern and patronization, but the boys refuse to accept their 'limitations' and are willing to fight them. Therefore, both versions represent the social model of disability studies (which argues that disabilities are not ontologically but socially and discursively defined (Kama, 2004)), instead of the prevailing medical or moral model. The latter considers disability as a deficiency or health issue (Elcessor and Kirkpatrick, 2017: 5), which would mean that a person with a disability is always fully dependent on the care of those in one's close environment or assistants.

On the day that the three friends secretly leave their houses and wait for their assistant to arrive, it turns out that the hired assistant is actually a woman, which was not only unexpected but apparently also unwished for. The gender issue fits in with the overall sexist thoughts that the three protagonists share. The fact that their assistant is a woman (who, incidentally, does not fit the stereotypical standards of beauty) might jeopardize their male adventure – that of finding sexually exciting, exotic and beautiful women to have sex with. Eventually, the female assistant (Claude/Lub) will evolve from initially being set apart to eventually being part of the gang, and even to being the love interest of Jozef/Joost. The story therefore both subverts and reaffirms the films' conservative take on gender. Initially, Claude/Lub is finally accepted as a member of the all-male group, but later on in the films, it is specifically Jozef/Joost, the character

with blindness, who falls in love with her, which is probably not coincidental given that she is defined as physically unattractive by the others.

Both films can be labeled as 'quest road movies' (Grebe, 2016: 179), in which the three main characters leave their socially appointed, thus semi-confined, spaces to start an adventure which strongly deviates from societal guidelines and beliefs. This quest is not only literally but also figuratively the 'transgression of visible and invisible boundaries' (Grebe, 2016: 179). Gott and Schilt (2013) claim that the road movie is an ideal genre to explore themes of identity issues in a specific cultural context, given 'the border-crossing inclinations of the genre [that] generate an often polyglot battery of films that tackle identity questions from a transnational perspective' (3). In accordance with Fraser, this article aims to answer questions like:

'Should we be wary of a tendency to compartmentalize disability as definable only within the boundaries of certain national, cultural and/or linguistic contexts? Or should we be suspicious of approaches to disability that take cross-cultural similarities for granted and tend to ignore the specificities of embodied space/place? Are there, in fact, commonalities in how disabilities are conceived, perceived and lived cross-culturally? Is there evidence of a universal disability culture?' (Fraser, 2016: 1).

We claim that these questions about identity, cultural significance, and ideology are even more pertinent when studying different versions of a single road movie narrative, as the practice of remakes generally involves an alteration of the cultural context. Hence, although *Hasta la Vista* and *Adios Amigos* deal with the same themes, their interpretation, and contextualization differ considerably.

9.3.2 "Universal" framework with a local interpretation

As Billig (1995) claims, nationalism is not to be reduced to the palpable or obvious (e.g., propagandist) appearances or articulations of nationalism. With his concept of 'banal nationalism', he refers to the 'ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced' (Billig, 1995: 6). Applying the latter concept to film, Hjort (2000) coined the term 'banal aboutness' to describe banal reproductions of national identities in a film, without the film being explicitly nationalist regarding its central themes. This banal aboutness is grounded in features such as language and *mise-en-scène*, which are often overlooked by both domestic and international

audiences. Instead of filmmakers making use of certain national symbols to produce a specific (national) identity, they 'choose' (whether consciously or not) to embed their stories in a certain cultural or national context to produce a socio-cultural reality or verisimilitude. Hence, decisions are made to produce films that resemble a certain reality (Hjort, 2000: 108), with which audiences can identify.

When comparing two film versions of an almost identical narrative, one of the first things that immediately catches the eye is the changing of the cast. Indeed, both film versions starred different local actors, although the filmmakers of the Dutch remake looked for actors who physically resembled the original actors. This finding suggests an interesting balance between quasi-universal structures, in this case, the similar visual appearance of the characters, and a 'local interpretation', i.e., using famous local actors. When confronted with the question as to why the directors did not cast actors with disabilities, both argued that they tried, but that this was too difficult of a task (Cinevox, 2011; Rook, 2016). One has to add that all actors were also white, whereas the BBC documentary of Asta Philpot starred a non-white protagonist. This reaffirms the findings of previous research that the role diversity of actors with disabilities is still very limited (Erevelles, 2011). A combination of practical, commercial and identification issues is therefore at play here. As mentioned, there are almost no film stars that are appealing to both regions, which explains why the cast in both versions is different. On top of that, given that both films are targeting a mainstream audience who highly value a recognizable verisimilitude, the use of famous local actors instead of less famous actors with disabilities was clearly commercially driven.

Second, our attention is drawn toward the change in spaces and specific locations. Although this might seem very logical and even pragmatic, one should not underestimate the power of (re)defining spaces, which is laid bare through the remake as a prism. Moreover, for road movies, locations are a quintessential element since they generally symbolize a (mental) state (Aitken and Lukinbeal, 2002: 351-352). One of the established tropes of the genre is the idea that the protagonists leave their initial home or place (representing the current negative situation they wish to escape) for the countryside (as a metaphor for liberty, potential change, and optimism). Dargis (1991) argues that in the road movie, the road 'defines the space between town and country. It is an empty expanse, a tabula rasa, the last true frontier' (16). In the cases of *Hasta La Vista* and *Adios Amigos*, it is surprising to see how these (in-between) spaces are defined. Indeed, these roads or spaces have been changed in the different adaptations

of Philpot's initial journey. As there are no explicit titles displayed on the screen that state 'Belgium', 'Flanders', 'the Netherlands' or other paratextual location markers, and as there are no well-known cityscapes or landmarks shown, we do not know exactly where the story takes place. As a result, a quasi-universal structure (now in the form of spaces) is put into place. This quasi-universality is, however, again accompanied with a specific local interpretation. In this case, the directors preferred to 'localize' their stories more implicitly using a variety of cultural markers that can be linked to Flanders/the Netherlands. These markers become very legible when comparing the remake with its source text. Take, for example, the trip's destination: in the Dutch version, the three friends want to go to Salou (Spain), instead of going to Punta del Mar. Youth holidays to Salou are a cliché within Dutch youth culture, and, according to Pisters (2011: 227), one of the characteristic elements that define the national cinema of the Netherlands. Hence, not only do the protagonists' own spaces define who they are (or want to be) but also the spaces they frequent. The typical vacation to Salou (known for its 24/7 party scene, young people, and binge-drinking activities) makes the road trip easily recognizable.

Another example of the balance between quasi-universality and localization is found when the three friends are awaiting their mentor to pick them up and start their adventure. In the Flemish version, we can see them waiting in front of a typical Flemish house, while the Dutch version shows them waiting in front of a classic (modern) protestant church. The latter is typical of the Netherlands, known for its reformist religious background (Fokkema and Grijzenhout, 2004: 26). This also explains the difference in depicting the outcome of both films, namely the death of one of the protagonists, Lars. In *Hasta La Vista*, there is a scene that shows a small-scale funeral. *Adios Amigos* does not have a funeral scene but shows the two other friends, together with their mentor Lub, next to Lars in front of the sea. An important distinction is that in the Dutch version, there is a frontal shot of Lars' corpse. This representational difference can be linked to the specificities in Catholic/Protestant funerals (being used to respectively closed/open coffins), or even to a difference in law between Belgium and the Netherlands, since the latter demands the funeral to be a minimum 36 hours after death, while Belgian law allows the organization of an earlier funeral. These examples are symptomatic of banal appearances or articulations of nationalism.

9.3.3 (Stereotyped) national identities and 'others'

The idea of perpetuating one's own national identity by creating a contrast with locations that are clearly foreign and 'exotic' is magnified in a specific scene in *Hasta La Vista* when the three Flemish friends visit a vineyard in France. Shortly after arriving and still optimistic and cheerful, a group of older Dutch people shows up and sits down at a table close to the three friends. They greet the Flemish protagonists by shouting 'bonjour' in a very bad French accent. The Flemish friends do not seem to be delighted with their presence, as Philip, for example, says 'Fuck, Dutchmen'. Lars starts making fun of them in quite an arrogant way by mocking their Dutch accent and vocabulary. Moreover, he makes a sexist joke about one of the Dutch women. This antagonistic behavior toward the Dutch group is enhanced by their obvious stereotypical representation; a coarse accent, very loud in their speech, eventually quite upfront, and even aggressive. We contend that this intercultural contrast – on the levels of iconography, narrative, and dialogue – between the characters' 'Flemishness' and the others' 'Dutchness' accentuates the former's Flemish identity. This reflects both the ideas that identities can only be defined by referring to the differences with 'others', which is why they depend on the creation and conservation of boundaries (Dhoest, 2002: 6-7), and that the Dutch might still be important 'others' in the Flemish identity construction.

Another important 'other' in *Hasta La Vista* is the accompanying mentor, Claude, who is French-speaking instead of Dutch-speaking. The first time Philip, Lars and Jozef meet Claude, they all (except for Jozef) do not seem very pleased that first, she is a woman, and second, she speaks French and not Dutch. Although this animosity toward her changes over the course of the film, the way she is treated and represented speaks volumes. Again, Philip is the first one to make a hostile comment on her origin: 'Hey, don't you speak Flemish?! Clappez Flamance?! [sic]', to which Claude responds: 'No. No Flemish' Philip responds harshly in Dutch (thinking that she does not understand): 'Always the same, they want our money, but speaking Flemish is too much to ask!'. What we do not know at this point is the fact that Claude actually does speak a bit of Dutch, but that she is annoyed by Philip's behavior and decides to act ignorant. This crude assertion by Philip (which does not align him with the stereotypical image of the 'good cripple' (see also Grebe, 2016: 180)), about Walloon people only wanting money without wanting to work for it, fits into a stereotypical

Flemish discourse about French-speaking Belgians (Willems, 2014: 65).¹⁸⁸ Wils (2005: 292) claims that stereotyped representations of the Walloon and Flemish regions have a polarizing effect. This, in turn, can consolidate one's own national identity. What is striking about this scene is that, for a Flemish audience, such stereotypical assertions of Walloons are highly recognizable, and generally fit in with a humorous discourse. However, in an interview, the director of *Hasta La Vista* acknowledges the existence of a cultural barrier by saying that 'there is still a towering [mental or cultural] wall between Flanders and Wallonia. It does not matter how hard we try to deny it' (Cinevox, 2011). Hence, what the Flemish director indirectly does is building on specific stereotypes of Flemish and Walloon people for identification purposes, but while doing so, a specific and *in se* essentialist (and highly stereotyped) notion of national identity is reestablished. However, as the film progresses, a more united Belgian discourse that strives for solidarity with Wallonia surfaces. *Hasta La Vista* suggests that Flanders and Wallonia should communicate with each other, get to know each other better, assess their different opinions and get rid of their mutual prejudices. While at first Claude and the three friends seem to despise each other, it becomes clear that they are in fact interdependent. The story of three Flemish friends gradually getting along with a Walloon mentor thus also acts as a microcosm, symbolically representing a unitary vision of Belgium, which culminates in the relationship between Jozef and Claude at the end of the film.

In *Adios Amigos* the 'other' is changed from a French-speaking 'other' to an Eastern-European 'other'. However, this alteration does not explicitly carry a political motivation. The decision to opt for a Croatian woman is related to the pragmatic fact that they wanted to change the film locations from Spain to Croatia (this Balkan country is known for its studio facilities allowing high-end film production at lower costs).¹⁸⁹ Even so, the representation of this character is less stereotypical and does not carry overt political connotations, at least not in Dutch society. These observations, however, do not mean *per se* that there is less 'othering' occurring in the Dutch remake. From

¹⁸⁸ It should, however, be noted that Claude is actually from Brussels (and not from Wallonia), which is, next to the capital of Belgium itself, the capital of the 'Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles' or the French Community, which is one of the constitutional linguistic communities of Belgium.

¹⁸⁹ Dutch director Van Rees confirms this thesis in an interview in the Dutch journal *Leeuwarder Courant* (Van der Burg, 2016) by stating that they changed filming locations from Spain to Croatia because of pragmatic reasons (read: financial reasons).

the first sequence of *Adios Amigos* on, it is obvious that the 'new' other is, on an abstract level, the 'caretaker', in all its figures and forms. Different examples confirm this argument: first, there is a man (all dressed up in white) who mocks Philip, Lars, and Joost, and treats them like children: 'Come on boys, let's have a drink at the aqua bar! Hey, maybe you will find some hot chicks there!' (laughs in a derogatory way). The same man also drives the bus that is designed to transport people with disabilities. Again, he speaks to his passengers in quite a patronizing way as if they are infantile human beings and annoys them by endlessly singing the same song, clearly causing irritation. At the end of the film, the friends make a toast and univocally say: 'To Lars, and fuck all doctors!'. It should, however, be noted that both the Flemish and Dutch version do share another (more universal) 'other', i.e., the parents of both groups of three friends. This is a common element in disability road movies: parents (and sometimes staff from the clinic or asylum) taking up the role of the 'other' while, for instance, trying 'to bring the escaped characters back into the institution [...] reaffirming the medical model of disability that sees disabled characters as a problem to be fixed or contained' (Grebe, 2016: 181). In both films, it is only Jozef/Joost who is able to escape this 'total institution', as Lars dies and Philip joins his parents back home.

9.3.4 *Less politics is more sex?*

It is interesting to note that *Hasta La Vista* was overtly promoted as being non-political. During an interview for a French festival about cinema and disability, Enthoven claimed that his film embodies absolutely no political idea, ideal or project (Vimeo, 2012). However, we argue that there is a political dimension involved, especially when compared to *Adios Amigos*. As the Dutch film critic Broeren (2016) asserted, in *Adios Amigos* the political subtexts of the 'original' story (by Philpot) disappeared more into the background, in exchange for 'extra (vulgar) humor and emotion' (1). The political dimension that was inherently connected to the Flemish story is, as we argue, socio-culturally defined. While creating a socio-cultural verisimilitude or making this Dutch film remake 'about' a specific social reality, the political subtext was omitted and, one could claim, had to be excluded.

First of all, the aforementioned scene in the vineyard has been deleted in its entirety in *Adios Amigos*. Although the three Dutch friends travel through Belgium, there is no clear representation of Belgium or Flanders itself, nor is there a contrasting scene of identity-building to be found. Also, the fact that in the Dutch version the

'original' French-speaking supervisor is changed to a Croatian woman called Lub is significant. Moreover, it is important to note that, in comparison to the Flemish counterpart, she speaks both Dutch (with a small accent) and Croatian, and that the three friends are mostly disappointed because of her gender, and not her origin. Another important (but less obvious) element that makes the Dutch remake less political than both the original BBC documentary and the Flemish feature film has to do with the reason why the group of friends wants to make a trip to Spain. In both the documentary and the Flemish feature film, they make the journey because they want to visit a brothel in Spain that is 'specialized' in offering sexual experiences for people with disabilities. In the case of the documentary, they are obliged to do so because owning or managing a brothel is illegal in the United Kingdom. In an interview, director Enthoven states that there is a different situation in Belgium, where prostitution is actually legal (Vimeo, 2012). This is true, but the act of prostitution is also legal in the UK, although it is an offense 'to cause or incite prostitution or control it for personal gain' (Casciani, 2008). The latter law is actually quite similar to the Belgian prostitution law: the act is legal, but exploiting the activity, managing, keeping or renting a brothel (gross procuring) is illegal. In summary, prostitution itself is legal, but pimping is illegal, which may be the reason why these three friends are inclined to make a trip to Spain and visit a brothel there. However, the rules in Spain show a similar policy to those in Belgium and the UK; prostitution itself is considered legal, but some activities surrounding it, and mostly pimping, is *de iure* illegal.

Why then did Asta Philpot, and consequently the group of Flemish men with disabilities, travel abroad for sexual services? Most likely, this has to do with the taboo that still exists in both countries (UK and Belgium), but also with the fact that organizations that offer sexual services for people with disabilities are not officially recognized or licensed by the governments in Belgium and the UK. The last few years, however, things are changing. In Flanders, there is one organization, called *Aditi VZW*, that acts as a mediator between sex workers and people with disabilities, but is not yet licensed by the Flemish or Belgian government. As this phenomenon is not established, this is most probably the main reason as to why the Flemish friends in *Hasta La Vista* decided to travel abroad to find a brothel and lose their virginity.

When compared to *Adios Amigos*, there is another big difference, as the three friends want to go to Salou not to visit a brothel, but to find 'real girls' to have sex with. Again, by applying the concept of 'banal aboutness' and by looking at the Dutch

regulatory and socio-cultural context, this change becomes natural: not only is prostitution legal there but also brothels are recognized and licensed by the Dutch government, which confirms the so-called Dutch tolerant attitude. Moreover, there are a myriad of different organizations¹⁹⁰ that offer sexual services for people with disabilities, and these services are for the most part state-subsidized. The three friends of *Adios Amigos* thus do not have to cross national borders to be able to enjoy these services, which explains the change in narrative. This element, however, makes the Dutch version less political since there is hardly an underlying call for more openness toward these subjects. Even more, this indirectly contradicts the famous myth of Dutch tolerance: indeed, the fact that the three friends in *Adios Amigos* are obliged to leave their society because they are unable to find sexual contact with girls there does not really represent the ideal of a highly tolerant Dutch society.

As 'narratives of disability – filmed or otherwise – rarely incorporate sexuality' (Fraser, 2016: 6), combined with the fact that 'disabled people are often constructed as asexual and unattractive objects, rather than subjects who have private desires and full sexual relationships' (Vertoont, 2017: 5), both *Hasta La Vista* and *Adios Amigos* could be praised for their efforts. Nevertheless, the directors' decision to not include explicit sex scenes was met with quite some criticism (GRIPvzw, 2012). Instead, the Flemish director of *Hasta La Vista* preferred to show the protagonists immediately after they had sex. Oddly enough, this is depicted in a very ableist manner: both Philip and Lars suddenly walk out of the brothel, while there are no wheelchairs to be spotted. This is all visually presented in a surreal, dream-like fashion, in slow-motion and highly overexposed. By doing so, it is posited or assumed that people with disabilities, in this case, the protagonists, often dream of being, or even aim to be able-bodied, which both fits in the dominant cultural ableism (Ellicessor and Kirkpatrick, 2017: 13), and may be potentially harmful to people with disabilities.

In the 'making-of' of *Hasta La Vista*, the Flemish director argues that many people with a disability actually loved that particular scene. He adds that, because of that scene, they feel that this film is really about them. He even claims that when people with disabilities dream about themselves, they always see themselves without their

¹⁹⁰ Think of SAR (1982), Flekszorg and De Ultieme Zorg, Stichting Handicap & Seksualiteit (1997), sociaal erotische bemiddeling (SEB), intimiteit, seksualiteit, informatie en scholing in de zorg (ISISZ), and so on.

specific disability; for example, 'when they dream, they never sit in their wheelchair'. According to him, this is why this scene is so recognizable for them. Such contradictions between the director's discourse and the critical interpretations of academics can be linked to Darke's (1999) findings that explain that specific representations of disability held by disabled people may be read in different ways by non-disabled people. Indeed, apparent positive 'depictions may actually serve to "other" disabled people or may retail potentially harmful stereotypes' (Waltz, 2016: 98). In this case, however, if the Flemish director's statements are correct, different readings, or value judgments of such representations may also differ between different disabled people (which nuances Darke's contention, making it less binary). This specific element is omitted in the Dutch version, which is why it would seem that *Adios Amigos* is less ableist in these terms. Yet, a few scenes earlier, when the three Dutch friends go to a party in Croatia, before going to the brothel, Lars gets out of his wheelchair to dance with a girl. By doing so, he wants to hide the fact that he is actually disabled. What this scene communicates is that the only way to attract non-disabled women is to 'become' abled. The Flemish version did not include such a scene. On the contrary, even though he never really quits his wheelchair in *Hasta La Vista*, the Flemish Lars is able to date a non-disabled girl in the streets of Punta del Mar. In conclusion, it seems that the Dutch version tries to reverse the often ableist discourse of its source text, but while doing so, it sometimes achieves the opposite.

Although the Dutch film text itself is less politically connoted, the promotion of the film was accompanied by the launch of a campaign called *Seks voor Iedereen* ('Sex for Everyone'), with the idea of removing the taboo resting on sex for people with disabilities (Spijkerman, 2016). To organize this, distributor *Dutch FilmWorks* worked together with the foundation *Intermobiel*. By doing so, the political subtext is actually being added *ex post*, and extra-textually. The political message should, however, be caveated, as there were critical voices that questioned the campaign and doubted whether it was meant to help people with disabilities in finding sex, or rather to promote the Dutch film *Adios Amigos* (Spijkerman, 2016), which, again, nuances the idea of 'Dutch tolerance'. While the Dutch version was given an extra-textual political dimension, the Flemish filmmakers, as mentioned earlier, aimed to divest themselves from such political connotations. At the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2018, however, Flemish newspapers reported that the Flemish liberal political party *Open VLD*, the socialist public health service *Bond Moyson* and eventually the Belgian

Advisory Committee on Bioethics were putting high pressure on the government to alter the law and exclude sexual assistance from the domain of prostitution (De Standaard, 2017; Mayeur 2017; Rdc, 2018). It is striking to see how these newspaper articles are directly linked to the film *Hasta La Vista* (both visually and content-wise), reaffirming the political potential of the film.

9.4 Conclusion

Our analysis confirms the notion that the remake process is imbued with complexity and hybridity, and that reworkings are not simply copies of texts in other contexts (see for example, Mazdon, 2000a: 179). It was shown that, as a result of the re-contextualization processes, subtexts that were 'originally' intrinsically embedded in the source text are sometimes ignored or even consciously withheld in the newer version(s). While crossing borders and translating (con)texts, 'original' connotations often get appropriated or even divested and replaced by new significations intrinsically linked to the (perception of a) new context. Inquiry into these processes of (re)producing, appropriating and localizing texts discloses a lot about different cultures and how and why filmmakers perceive, (re)brand or even (re)fetishize them.

Pinpointing such changes tells us a lot about the significations that are being ascribed to images and the cultures in which these meanings are embedded. Moreover, it unravels the construction of meaning itself: as these filmmakers build on particular stereotypical visions about specific cultures with the purpose of recreating a socio-cultural context (films 'about' a nation), they indirectly reaffirm, and in a way reconsolidate, such narrowed perceptions. Indeed, by representing the 'other' one solidifies one's own (perception of) identity, by exoticizing other spaces one re-fetishizes one's space, and by creating a socio-cultural verisimilitude one sometimes divests a story of its former (and other) connotations. Moreover, our results show that disability and gender identities are at times cross-culturally shared, while in other instances these are defined by specific national or cultural contexts. While some patronizing and ableist representations of respectively gender and disability identities were subverted in the remake, others were kept or even reinforced. This points toward the existence of a partially universal and partially culturally specific disability and/or gender culture, which is, again, in consonance with the remake's hybrid status.

In conclusion, this article proves that meaning always exists (or emerges) in relation to the other(s). Indeed, difference-in-sameness and sameness-in-difference are, by extension, the signifying element of film remakes in particular and cultural artifacts in general. This is precisely what makes the analysis of the remake as a prism so valuable: it enables us to locate the locality in the quasi-universal, and vice versa. By fusing different horizons of (textual and contextual) meaning, the film remake helps us to defamiliarize the banal, the unattainable, or the at first sight unnoted.

Chapter 10

A comparative film analysis of the Flemish, Dutch, and American Loft

Positioning

This chapter concludes this dissertation's empirical focus on textual research. Whereas the previous chapters focused solely on cases that were produced in the Low Countries, this chapter investigates the Flemish film *Loft* that was first remade in the Netherlands (equally titled *Loft*) and later on in the USA (*The Loft*). By analyzing the American remake, this chapter broadens the geographical, linguistic, and cultural scope of the Low Countries. As such, it looks at whether the same textual, cultural, and industrial dynamics are at play in the American version. To better understand these film remakes' textual, cultural, and industrial dynamics, the present chapter employs the concept of 'karaoke-Americanism'. Several (dis)similarities in the representation of sexuality, female characters, and ethnicity, as well as some formal changes, are observed. Though at first glance, the taken approach looks highly similar to the previous chapter, the present chapter combines these results with self-conducted and press interviews with the filmmakers. It is ascertained that, although the three versions share a similar use of specific Hollywood conventions, the changes in representation were motivated by perceived cultural differences. In addition, the article argues that, building on known cultural stereotypes and clichés, filmmakers reinforce specific cultural (and national) identities, with the aim of enhancing the recognizability for their local audiences. The most commonly used stereotypes were that the Netherlands, unlike Flanders, is characterized by a very tolerant attitude toward nudity, sexuality, multiculturalism, and gender identities. Moreover, as a result of such essentialist views on one's own or other cultural identity, nudity and racist humor were also avoided in the American version, probably out of fear to offend American audiences. In most cases, these filmmakers seem to be inspired by well-known, quasi-fetishized constructs to equip their films with a "typical locality". In conclusion, the Dutch and Flemish filmmakers, in an attempt of localizing the quasi-universal, realized a hyperreal version of their own or another culture.

Reference

Cuelenaere, E., Willems, G., & Joye, S. (2018). Drie keer hetzelfde, maar anders: Een vergelijkende filmanalyse van de Belgische, Nederlandse en Amerikaanse Loft. *Tijdschrift voor Communicatiewetenschap*, 46(4): 263–279.

10.1 Inleiding

In 2008 verscheen *Loft* (Van Looy), een *whodunit* over de moord op een jonge vrouw in een loft waar vijf vrienden in het geheim hun minnaressen ontvangen. Met bijna 1,2 miljoen binnenlandse bioscoopbezoekers voert de film de lijst van grootste Belgische box office hits aan. Dit enorme succes leidde niet alleen tot een Nederlandse remake (*Loft*, Beumer, 2010), maar ook tot een Amerikaanse remake (*The Loft*, Van Looy, 2014). Vanwege hun specifieke en hybride formele en narratieve aspecten fungeren filmremakes als een unieke invalshoek om de relatie tussen films en culturen te onderzoeken. Remakes zijn immers '*evidence of the historically and culturally specific contexts in which they were produced and distributed*' (Herbert, 2006: 29), maar tegelijkertijd worden ze gekenmerkt door een verhaal, vertelling en dialogische structuur die quasi identiek zijn aan de voorgaande bronfilm(s). Hierdoor zijn de onderlinge verschillen tussen de filmteksten veelal miniem, doch vaak des te opvallend en betekenisvol vanuit een comparatief perspectief (Smith & Verevis, 2017: 3). Dit artikel onderzoekt waar de grootste verschillen en gelijkenissen tussen de drie filmversies van *Loft* zich bevinden, en wat deze ons zeggen over de relatie tussen films, filmmakers, en de (nationale) cultuur waartoe zij behoren. In onze analyse belichten we de interculturele mediapraktijken en productionele context waarbinnen deze films tot stand kwamen, de visies op (de eigen of een andere) cultuur die filmmakers erop nahouden en welke rol dit kan spelen voor representaties van culturele en nationale identiteiten, met bijzondere aandacht voor de (re)productie van aanverwante stereotypen en clichés. In het bijzonder onderzoeken we via kwalitatieve tekstuele analyse, diepte-interviews met de filmmakers, aangevuld met in de pers verschenen interviews met deze laatsten, de relaties tussen culturele (en nationale) identiteit en de representatie van vrouwelijke personages, seksualiteit en etniciteit en de vormelijke conceptualisering van de films.

10.2 De (Vlaams-Nederlandse) filmremake doorheen de lens van het karaoke-Amerikanisme

Hoewel filmremakes soms erg gelijkaardig zijn aan hun "origineel", worden ze gekenmerkt door een intrinsiek hybride natuur omdat ze voortkomen uit '*different cinematic, cultural and temporal contexts, so their reworking of genre conventions, of formal features and of cultural codes will alter [...] [and] they are also made for different audiences*' (Mazdon, 2000: 105). Eleftheriotis (2002: 100) geeft daarbij aan dat het cruciaal is om aandacht te besteden aan de contextuele omstandigheden waarbinnen deze vormen van culturele uitwisseling plaatsvinden ten einde het hybride karakter van de films te kunnen vatten. De Vlaams-Nederlandse remakepraktijk kent, vanuit een internationaal perspectief, een unieke dynamiek in dit verband. Enerzijds omdat men zowel in Nederland als in Vlaanderen Nederlands spreekt, waardoor het niet nodig is om van taal te veranderen om elkaar te begrijpen (Impe, Geeraerts & Speelman, 2008: 102) of elkaars mediaproducten te consumeren en anderzijds omdat beide regio's lang eenzelfde culturele en politieke geschiedenis deelden. Net wegens de linguïstische, culturele en geografische nabijheid zou het niet onlogisch zijn (cf. o.a. de '*proximity theory*' van Straubhaar, 2007) dat beide regio's op structurele wijze films uitwisselden. Er zijn echter opvallend weinig voorbeelden te vinden van films die in beide regio's goed presteerden, met uitzondering van enkele films in de jaren 1970 en 1980. Dit past binnen een meer algemene tendens waarbij beide regio's de laatste decennia steeds minder elkaars cultuurproducten, gaande van literatuur tot radio, televisie en dus film, delen (Cajot, 2012: 53). '*De verhouding [van Vlaanderen] tegenover Nederland wordt gekenmerkt door drastische achteruitgang van contact en communicatie, en door verstrekkende afname van aanvaarding en erkenning*', aldus Cajot (2012: 53). Daarenboven is het zo dat zowel Vlaanderen als Nederland worden gekenmerkt door een erg kleine afzetmarkt voor films (Willems, 2014: 197). Bijgevolg is het paradoxaal genoeg wel net door die nabijheid niet vreemd dat filmmakers toch manieren zochten om deze quasi onbestaande uitwisseling van films tussen beide regio's (nieuw) leven in te blazen. Zo zien we dat sinds 2000 de filmproductie in de Lage Landen wordt gekenmerkt door een Vlaams-Nederlandse remakepraktijk (Cuelenaere, Joye & Willems, 2016), waarvan o.a. de Vlaamse en Nederlandse *Loff* deel uitmaken. In de periode 2000-2018 werden maar liefst elf filmremakes geproduceerd in beide regio's, resulterend in een totaal van 22 films. Deze intussen structurele trend bleek bovendien commercieel erg succesvol, wat duidt op een

merkwaardige paradox, daar beide markten niet geïnteresseerd lijken om elkaars films te programmeren, maar er dus wel voor opteren om elkaars films opnieuw te maken.

De beperkte afzetmarkt in de Lage Landen en het succes van de Vlaamse *Lof* leidden bovendien tot een niet-Nederlandstalige versie. Door ook onderzoek te doen naar de Amerikaanse remake voorzien we de analyse van interculturele adaptaties tussen Vlaanderen en Nederland van een extra betekenislaag. Erik Van Looy regisseerde zowel de Vlaamse als de Amerikaanse versie waardoor we kunnen spreken van een auto-remake (Mazdon, 2000: 2), hetgeen – zoals we zullen aantonen – deze casus bijkomend relevant maakt. Bijkomend betreft het hier een transnationale auto-remake, '[which] raises further issues surrounding national and/or ethnic identity and questions of cultural power' (Smith & Verevis, 2017: 2). Hierdoor krijgen we namelijk ook inzicht in hoe filmmakers een cultuur waar zij zelf geen deel van uitmaken (*in casu* de VSA) percipiëren en representeren. We trachten dit inzichtelijk te maken door middel van het concept 'karaoke-Americanism'¹⁹¹, geïntroduceerd door Elsaesser (2005) en verder uitgewerkt door voornamelijk Kooijman (o.a. 2008a; 2008b). Voor die eerste is het een concept dat de typische anti- en counter-Amerikaanse discoursen overstijgt, doelend op 'that double coded space of identity as overlap and deferral, as compliment and camouflage' (Elsaesser, 2005: 317). Elsaesser benadrukt dat de identiteitspolitiek van de Europese cinema tegenover Hollywood (en *vice versa*) niet enkel bestaat uit het markeren van grenzen en een zich afzetten tegen, maar ook uit culturele mimiek. Kooijman (2008a: 191) bouwt hierop verder en omschrijft karaoke-Amerikanisme als 'both faithful imitation and playful parody, both mimicry and mockery, enabling an appropriation of Hollywood which leaves room for ambiguity'. Hiermee wijst hij op de mogelijkheden die het karaoke-Amerikanisme biedt om als Vlaamse dan wel Nederlandse filmmaker de identiteit van een film vorm te geven door zich Amerikaanse culturele (pop)tradities toe te eigenen binnen een andere context. Zo weet het concept de balans te bewaren tussen bewuste nabootsing, aanpassing, actieve *performance*, en tegelijk het niet minachten of negeren van een "eigen" (culturele) identiteit.

¹⁹¹ Hoewel het concept karaoke-Amerikanisme wordt gehanteerd doorheen dit gehele hoofdstuk, gaat mijn voorkeur ondertussen uit naar het erg gelijkaardige, maar meer neutrale concept van "Hollywood-like" films. Voor meer informatie hieromtrent, zie sectie 3.3.1 en voetnoot 140.

In zekere zin schuilt echter ook een gevaar in de toepassing van dit concept, omdat op vrij directe wijze de VSA (meer specifiek Hollywood) centraal wordt gesteld, terwijl de niet-Amerikaanse aspecten “maar” een karaoke-versie betreffen. Hier claimen we echter dat Hollywood wel degelijk het middelpunt van de “globale filmproductie” is (cf. o.a. Crane, 2014), maar nuanceren we dat de relatie met andere nationale cinema’s niet zomaar in één richting verloopt. Smith (2016) verwoordt dit als volgt: *‘Hollywood is a dominant force within global film production and has had a major impact on filmmaking traditions around the world, and [...] despite this, the impact of Hollywood on world cinema is in fact an understudied phenomenon’* (Smith, 2016: 5). Verder stelt hij dat, door Hollywood steeds te plaatsen tegenover niet-Amerikaanse filmmarkten en -culturen, men de overlap tussen beide te veel uit het oog is verloren (Smith, 2016: 5). Het begrip karaoke-Amerikanisme legt terecht de focus op die overlap, intersectie en hybridisering, en bewaart zo de balans tussen lokale eigenheid en Amerikaanse invloed. Hoewel we niet ontkennen dat de filmremake een unieke inkijk biedt in de specifieke lokale context waarbinnen deze is geproduceerd, argumenteren we dat te vaak de nadruk wordt gelegd op de eigen nationale context. Via het concept karaoke-Amerikanisme verleggen we de focus naar hoe bepaalde “dominante” (film)culturen (vaak, en ook in ons geval, Hollywood) eveneens betekenisvol kunnen zijn voor de (re)constructie van een “eigen” culturele identiteit, alsook voor een “eigen” filmcultuur¹⁹².

Vele filmmakers hebben de voor Hollywood typische genreconventies en algemene beeldtaal namelijk zo onder de knie dat een soort hyper-reële kopie ontstaat van het Amerikaanse “origineel” (zie o.a. Baudrillard, 1994), hetgeen Kooijman benoemt als *‘hyper-Americanness’* (2008b: 99). Het gaat hier om specifieke representaties van de Amerikaanse cultuur, die veelal getuigen van gestereotypeerde en clichématige vooroordelen over de cultuur. Dit laatste is echter vaak zo Amerikaans dat *‘Dutch people may recognize it as “really American,” while Americans may not recognize it as “American” at all’* (Kooijman, 2008b: 99). Op deze manier is “typisch Nederlands” of “typisch Vlaams” in vele gevallen niet een *‘explicit local or national form of self-depiction but rather [...] a pastiche based on how [...] [these are] believed to be globally perceived’* (Kooijman, 2008b: 122). Dit geldt eveneens voor wat als

¹⁹² Waarmee we duiden op de films zelf, de omringende productionele context en de receptie van de filmtteksten.

“Amerikaans” wordt bestempeld, hetgeen op geografisch vlak de Verenigde Staten duidelijk overstijgt (of reduceert). In plaats van een lineair proces van cultureel imperialisme, schetst karaoke-Amerikanisme dus veeleer een beeld van culturele uitwisseling en mutatie.

Naast deze transnationale kijk op remakes is het essentieel om de productionele context waarbinnen filmremakes tot stand komen te onderzoeken. Zo wordt de filmremake als een cultureel bepaald artefact evengoed gekenmerkt door zijn geïndustrialiseerde vorm van repetitie (Verevis, 2006: 1), namelijk het exploiteren van een voorverkocht en commercieel reeds bewezen product. Het begrip karaoke-Amerikanisme wijst ons terecht op het actieve, creatieve en soms bewust performatieve aspect, waardoor het belang van de filmmaker, en bij uitbreiding de productiecontext, centraler wordt gesteld. Belangrijk hierbij is ook de persoonlijke voorkeur of smaak van sleutelactoren die deel uitmaken van de productiecontext van films, zoals onderzoek van Kuipers (2012) in de context van het opkopen van transnationale televisieprogramma's aantoonde. Door ook rekening te houden met een (bewust) performatief aspect, biedt het concept van karaoke-Amerikanisme inzicht in de relatie tussen de filmmakers, die zich positioneren binnen een bepaalde socio-culturele en productionele context, en de (re)constructie van bepaalde identiteiten in representaties enerzijds, en hun visie op (de al dan niet essentialistische natuur van) die identiteiten anderzijds.

10.3 Methode

In functie van onze onderzoeksvraag en analysemethodes vertrekken we vanuit het sociaal-constructivistische paradigma. Door onderzoek te doen naar sociaal geconstrueerde betekenissen krijgen we een beter zicht op hoe mensen zich verhouden tot die omringende werkelijkheid. Ons onderzoek impliceert verder een transnationaal comparatieve focus, wat, zoals Livingstone (2003: 491) opmerkt, uitdagend kan zijn *'because one must balance and interpret similarities and differences while avoiding banalities and stereotypes'*. In navolging van Durham (1998: 14) trachten we bijgevolg een antwoord te bieden op dit probleem door (nationale) culturen te benaderen vanuit concrete praktijken en casussen. In het bijzonder onderzoeken we hier de relatie tussen de drie versies van *Loft* en de cultuur waarin zij tot stand kwamen aan de hand van een kwalitatieve tekstuele filmanalyse en diepte-interviews met de filmmakers, aangevuld met interviews met andere betrokken filmmakers die verschenen in de pers.

De tekstuele filmanalyse is ons vertrekpunt en stelt de vraag naar hoe de Vlaamse, Nederlandse en Amerikaanse filmversies zich tot elkaar verhouden. Om de systematiek van het onderzoek te verhogen voerden we een gedetailleerde sequentieanalyse uit voor alle drie de films. Dit houdt in dat we iedere film opdeelden in betekenisvolle onderdelen waarin een *'afgeronde gebeurtenis plaatsvindt en dat je voor analysedoeleinden duidelijk kunt afbakenen'* (Van Kempen, 1995: 131). In navolging van Vos (1991: 14) verdeelden we de filmanalyse vervolgens op in drie niveaus, m.n. de cinematografische, narratieve en symbolische of ideologische laag, hetgeen we vervolgens toepasten op iedere sequentie. Dit stelde ons in staat een algemene beschouwing van de esthetische, narratieve, thematische, linguïstische en culturele aanpassingen te maken, waarbij we focusten op de representatie van culturele (en nationale) identiteit. Omdat enerzijds de meest opvallende verschillen tussen de drie versies zich situeren op het niveau van (de representatie van) naaktheid en seksualiteit, vrouwelijke personages en etniciteit (cf. below), en anderzijds omdat deze elementen algemeen van belang zijn voor het genre van de erotische thriller (cf. o.a. Leitch, 2004: 147-164), gingen we hier tijdens de interviews dieper op in.

Om dieper inzicht te krijgen in de relatie tussen films en de cultuur waarin ze tot stand komen is het, zoals aangehaald, essentieel om de productiecontext mee te onderzoeken en te peilen naar de achterliggende motivaties en beweegredenen bij de

productie van films. Vandaar dat we de tekstuele analyse van de drie films aanvullen met een productieanalyse, door middel van zowel diepte-interviews als in de pers verschenen interviews met de betrokken filmmakers. De semigestructureerde interviews met Erik Van Looy (regisseur van zowel de Vlaamse als de Amerikaanse versie, en oorspronkelijk ook van de Nederlandse versie, waarvan hij uiteindelijk slechts een aantal scènes inblikte), Antoinette Beumer (regisseur van de Nederlandse versie) en Hilde De Laere (producente van de drie filmversies) focussen op de sociale, culturele en economische beweegredenen bij het realiseren van de verschillende films, alsook de motivaties voor specifieke aanpassingen in de remakes.¹⁹³ Er werd specifiek gekozen om de filmregisseurs en -producent te interviewen omdat deze actoren in grote mate bepalen hoe de film er uiteindelijk zal uitzien, aangezien zij betrokken zijn in iedere schakel van de productie (zowel ervoor, tijdens als erna). Daarenboven wordt tijdens de opnames vaak afgeweken van het script en worden sommige scènes in de montage eruit gehaald (alsook toegevoegd). De belangrijkste verschillen die werden gedetecteerd tijdens de tekstuele analyse vormden de leidraad tijdens deze interviews. Vervolgens werd een door de literatuurstudie geïnformeerde thematische analyse uitgevoerd op deze interviews. Zo werd de data aan specifieke thema's toegekend, die bijgevolg inductief werden samengesteld. De belangrijkste thema's waren de door de filmmakers gepercipieerde verschillen tussen de Vlaamse, de Nederlandse en de Amerikaanse cultuur, en wat voor impact dit kan hebben op representaties, met bijzondere aandacht voor de (re)productie van stereotypen en clichés. Er werden geen noemenswaardige verschillen ontdekt tussen de diepte-interviews en de interviews die we in de pers vonden, waardoor we deze als complementair beschouwen. De interviews die specifiek uit de pers komen worden steeds vermeld door middel van een referentie in de tekst.

¹⁹³ De interviews werden onder supervisie van de auteurs afgenomen door Sarah Goorix in het kader van haar masterproefonderzoek, zie Goorix (2012), onder supervisie van prof. dr. Daniël Biltreyst en prof. dr. Gertjan Willems.

10.4 Resultaten

In de films staan vijf getrouwde vrienden centraal die samen een loft delen om hun minnaressen te ontvangen. Het vertrekpunt van de plot is de ontdekking van een voor de kijker onherkenbaar vrouwelijk lijk in de loft. Wanneer later blijkt dat enkel de vijf vrienden toegang hebben tot de loft, begint de zoektocht naar de dader. Ieder van de vijf vrienden ontkent initieel betrokken te zijn bij de doodslag, maar naarmate de plot vordert komt de oorspronkelijk hechte vertrouwensband steeds wankeler te staan. Via ondervragingscènes, *flashbacks*, en andere soms onopvallende details of aanwijzingen komt de kijker gaandeweg te weten wie deze moord op zijn geweten heeft. Aangezien de drie films erg plot-gedreven zijn, en bovendien getuigen van een behoorlijk complexe, maar vooral erg strakke plot, was er op het vlak van narratie en personages betrekkelijk weinig ruimte voor aanpassingen. De drie films zijn bovendien genrefilms, namelijk erotische thrillers, wat de ruimte om aanpassingen door te voeren alleen maar bemoeilijkt, ook op andere dan narratieve dimensies. Dit leidt ertoe dat bijna iedere wijziging als weloverwogen en dus betekenisvol kan worden aanzien.

10.4.1 *Double Dutch: Loft en seksualiteit*

Leitch (2004: 147) merkt op dat het genre van de erotische thriller wordt gekenmerkt door ‘*the indispensable importance of female nudity*’. Dit geldt voor de drie filmversies, maar toch is er een duidelijk verschil in het al dan niet expliciet tonen van (frontaal) naakt en het portretteren van seksuele betrekkingen. Waar de Vlaamse versie nog een zekere balans bewaart tussen het verhullen en onthullen van (voornamelijk) vrouwelijk naakt, gaat de Nederlandse *Loft* voor quasi volledig ontblote taferelen, terwijl de Amerikaanse versie dan weer kiest voor meer heimelijke representaties van naakt in sleutelscènes. Dit contrast wordt erg treffend in beeld gebracht in een van de belangrijkste scènes van de films, met name “de zwembadscène”, waarin een vrouwelijk personage zich uitkleedt. In de Vlaamse versie krijgen we enkel haar achterwerk te zien. Iets later, wanneer de vrouw het zwembad in glijdt, vangen we een glimp op van haar borsten. In de Nederlandse versie wordt deze scène een stuk explicieter opgevat. Zo krijgen we bijvoorbeeld een duidelijk frontaal shot te zien van de vrouw haar naakte bovenlichaam. In de Amerikaanse versie zien we in deze scène, op een achterwerk na, dan weer geen expliciet vrouwelijk naakt. Ook wanneer de vrouw iets later het zwembad induikt met een van de mannelijke hoofdpersonages, hebben zij in de Nederlandse *Loft* openlijk seks, terwijl ze in de Vlaamse en

Amerikaanse versie enkel passievol kussen. Volgens Van Looy bevat de Amerikaanse versie evenwel *meer* shots van naakte vrouwen dan de Vlaamse versie (Supercalifragilistic, 14 oktober 2014), hetgeen wordt bevestigd in onze analyse (41 shots in de Amerikaanse versie versus 28 shots in de Vlaamse). De manier waarop de naaktheid in beeld wordt gebracht verschilt echter enorm tussen de drie versies. Zoals gezegd schuwt de Nederlandse versie geen expliciet naakt, en wordt het naakte vrouwelijke lichaam erg centraal in beeld gebracht, alsook lang aangehouden. In *The Loft* daarentegen wordt vrouwelijk naakt vooral in flitsende, korte scènes getoond (veelal in *flashbacks* en flou in beeld gebracht), terwijl dit in de Vlaamse versie duidelijk (doch veel minder dan in de Nederlandse versie) centraler en in sleutelscènes wordt geplaatst. Opvallend is bovendien dat er amper tot geen mannelijk naakt is te vinden in de drie filmversies. De vrouwelijke personages daarentegen worden in de Nederlandse en (in mindere mate) in de Vlaamse versie sterker geobjectiveerd (zowel narratief als cinematografisch) en veelal gereduceerd tot passieve, doch lustopwekkende prooien. Hoewel dit zeker niet afwezig is in de Amerikaanse versie, wordt er omzichtiger mee omgegaan, waardoor ook een evenwichtigere genderbalans werd bewaard op vlak van naaktheid: zowel de mannen als vrouwen worden suggestief naakt in beeld gebracht.

Zelf motiveren de filmmakers hun keuzes hieromtrent aan de hand van ruwweg twee beweegredenen, met als onderliggend doel het inspelen op een eigen cultuur. Hilde De Laere duidt zo in eerste instantie op culturele verschillen op het vlak van seksualiteit en naaktheid: *'wij Belgen zijn meer ingetogen'*. Van Looy's uitleg is gelijkaardig aan die van De Laere. Hij voegt eraan toe dat deze aanpassing zelfs noodzakelijk was: *'In Nederland was het iets meer 'bonk erop', maar ik denk dat dat daar ook moest. Ik denk dat de Nederlanders het anders niet anders zouden hebben gepikt'*. De gepercipieerde culturele verschillen waaraan deze filmmakers refereren getuigen van eerder stereotiepe en clichématige opvattingen van de eigen of andere cultuur. Zo gaan ze bijvoorbeeld prat op het welbekende idee dat Nederland zou getuigen van een meer open, tolerante en ruimdenkende blik op thema's als seks, drugs en andere zaken die in andere culturen (zoals de Vlaamse en Amerikaanse) veelal worden aanzien als taboe (Fokkema & Grijzenhout, 2004: 107-108; Hofstede, 2000: 142). Die tolerante blik wordt vaak verklaard aan de hand van Nederlands multiconfessionele geschiedenis: sinds het einde van de 19^e eeuw heeft Nederland nooit echt één dominante levensbeschouwelijke groep gekend en bestonden de

katholieke, protestantse, liberale en socialistische zuilen naast elkaar in een vrije samenleving. Als gevolg hiervan werd de Nederlandse samenleving lang gekarakteriseerd door een hoge tolerantie ten aanzien van allerlei sociale groepen en subculturen, gaande van *'tiny religious groups to homosexuals'* (Verstraten, 2018: 127). Hierdoor ontstond al snel de mythe van Nederland als hypertolerant land, getypeerd door een zelfvoldaan gevoel *'of living in the finest, freest, most progressive, most decent, most perfectly evolved playground of multicultural utopianism'* (Buruma, 2006: 11). Hoewel België (en Vlaanderen) een soortgelijk verzuilingsproces heeft meegemaakt, zorgde een verschillend ontzuilingsproces voor een eerder bipolaire structuur in België, met katholieken enerzijds en sociale en liberalen anderzijds, hetgeen sterk contrasteert met het multipolaire en pluralistische Nederland (Hellemans, 1988: 49-50). Ondanks de kritiek op (en relativering van) deze zogenaamde tolerantie lijkt de Nederlandse filmcultuur nog steeds doordrongen van dit ideaal (Verstraten, 2016: 147-148), hetgeen we dus ook sterk zien terugkeren in deze Nederlandse remake. Waarom de VSA dan weer erg weigerachtig zou staan tegenover openlijke seksualiteit en naaktheid zou onder meer te maken hebben met de late (en minder diepgaande) secularisering van het land. Dit kan op zijn beurt worden gelinkt aan *'America's unique cultural heritage as a nation founded, to a significant degree, by Puritan-Protestants fleeing religious persecution'* (Uhlmann et al., 2011: 313), hetgeen een verklaring kan zijn voor de erg traditionele waarden omtrent seksualiteit.

Enigszins symptomatisch voor de Amerikaanse visie op seksualiteit, en in overeenstemming met het gegeven van karaoke-Amerikanisme, zijn de gesprekken die Van Looy aanvankelijk voerde met de grote Hollywoodstudio Paramount die erg geïnteresseerd was in de productie van de Amerikaanse remake. Zo werd er geopperd dat het verhaal over het algemeen goed zat, maar dat de mannelijke hoofdpersonages niet mochten vreemdgaan. Paramount stelde daarenboven voor om de loft als een soort mannelijke *clubhouse* wel te bewaren, maar het doel ervan te veranderen: de vijf mannen zouden de loft delen om samen naar ijshockey of *American football* te kijken, en dus niet om er hun minnaressen te ontvangen (Ringoot, februari 2015). Dit was echter een brug te ver voor Van Looy, die duidelijk een andere visie had op het verhaal, en bij uitbreiding op de "typisch" Amerikaanse modaliteiten en al snel besloot om de stekker uit de besprekingen te trekken.

In ons interview linkt Van Looy het verschil tussen de Vlaamse en Nederlandse versie verder aan een wezenlijk andere filmcultuur. Zo zou niet enkel de Nederlandse cultuur opener zijn, maar ook de Nederlandse films in en na de jaren 1970. Daarnaast zou Van Looy het voor de Vlaamse versie gewoon niet hebben durven vragen aan zijn acteurs en actrices om zich volledig uit te kleden en hun naaktheid frontaal in beeld te brengen, hetgeen enerzijds persoonlijk is, maar anderzijds ook in overeenstemming is met de zogenaamde ingetogen Belgisch-Vlaamse cultuur. Antoinette Beumer bevestigt dit verband tussen de verschillende representaties en een verschil in persoonlijkheid: '*Erik zei ook altijd al dat hij veel preutser is dan ik*'. Aangezien Van Looy ook de Amerikaanse versie regisseerde is zijn zogenaamde preutsheid een mogelijke verklaring voor het reduceren van de naaktheid t.o.v. de Nederlandse versie. Het grote verschil in naakte beelden tussen de Vlaamse en Nederlandse versie enerzijds en de Amerikaanse anderzijds kan dan weer worden verklaard door de andere houding van Hollywood ten aanzien van naaktheid. Dit wordt enigszins bevestigd door het feit dat wat precies naakt zou worden getoond in de Amerikaanse versie ook contractueel werd vastgelegd (Supercalifragilistic, 14 oktober 2014), hetgeen duidt op het grotere belang dat hieraan wordt gehecht. In overeenstemming met het karaoke-Amerikanisme mogen we echter de gepercipieerde en sterk stereotiepe opvattingen van de Vlaamse filmmakers (in Hollywood) ten aanzien van Hollywood niet onderschatten. Uit angst voor een commerciële flop is het inderdaad waarschijnlijk dat Van Looy en andere al dan niet Amerikaanse betrokkenen, op basis van hun eigen verwachtingen en percepties ten aanzien van de Amerikaanse cultuur, hun film zo veel mogelijk hebben gemodelleerd naar het Amerikaanse "ideaal".

10.4.2 *Double trouble: Loft en de representatie van vrouwen*

Leitch (2004: 164) claimt dat erotische thrillers, in tegenstelling tot *film noirs*, vaak verdeeld zijn tussen '*their critique of patriarchy and their complicit invitation to voyeurism to resolve this dilemma by killing off the licentious heroine*'. Al respecteren de drie filmversies dit gegeven, toch leveren ze ieder een eigen karaoke-versie af. Terwijl de Vlaamse en Amerikaanse versie worden gekenmerkt door eerder passieve vrouwelijke personages, tracht de Nederlandse *Loft* iets dynamischere vrouwelijke personages neer te zetten. Zo getuigen de vrouwen van de vijf mannelijke hoofdrollen in de Nederlandse *Loft* niet enkel van meer diepgang, maar eveneens van meer warmte, humor en liefde. Dit komt vooral tot uiting in de Nederlandse dinerscène

waarin de vrouwen meer dialoog kregen, zich duidelijker lijken te amuseren, minder afstandelijk waren ten opzichte van elkaar en hun mannen, alsook minder afkeurend stonden ten aanzien van buitenechtelijke seks. Wanneer in de Vlaamse en Amerikaanse versie een vrouw aan een van de mannen vraagt of *hij* eventueel geïnteresseerd zou zijn in het kopen van een appartement, antwoordt de man dat *hij* zoiets nooit kan betalen. Hierop repliceert de vrouw in de Vlaamse versie op ironische wijze (let op het bezittelijk voornaamwoord): '*Dat is waar. Met jouw loon. Jij bent een sukkelaar*'. In de Amerikaanse *The Loft* zegt ze iets gelijkaardigs: '*Right, you and your puny psychiatrist's salary*', terwijl ze in de Nederlandse versie zegt: '*Met jullie salaris? Dat is onmogelijk*' (met 'jullie' doelt ze hier dus niet enkel op de man, maar ook op zijn vrouw die naast hem staat). Een ander voorbeeld dat dit bevestigt is dat de vrouwen van de vijf mannen in de Vlaamse en Amerikaanse versie eerder fungeren als "aanhangers". Zo neemt een van de echtgenotes het haar man kwalijk dat hij op een gegeven avond *zijn* vrienden uitnodigde voor een groot diner, maar niet op tijd thuis was. In de Nederlandse *Loft* spreekt de vrouw niet over *zijn* vrienden, maar over *hun* vrienden.

Ook komen de vrouwen meer op voor zichzelf in de Nederlandse *Loft*, en zijn ze duidelijk assertiever. Wanneer in de Vlaamse versie een van de mannen wordt afgewezen door een vrouw, zegt deze hem dat ze nooit iets voor hem zou kunnen voelen. In de Amerikaanse versie verontschuldigt ze zich hier zelfs voor. In de Nederlandse *Loft* daarentegen zegt de vrouw het volgende: '[...] *omdat ik nooit iets voor je zou kunnen voelen. Hoe vind je die? Omdat je een slappe zak bent*'. Dit sluit duidelijk aan bij het vorige, maar wordt door de filmmakers vooral gekoppeld aan de zogenaamd typische "directheid" of assertiviteit van Nederlanders. Wederom wordt vertrokken van stereotiepe visies op een verschil in cultuur: '*De grootste verschillen zijn dat de Nederlanders assertiever en mondiger met elkaar omgaan [...] De volksaard treedt naar binnen*', aldus Van Looy. Ook Beumer bevestigt dit vooroordeel: '*Dat Nederlanders harder overkomen zit in onze cultuur gebakken (sic)*'.

Een andere factor die mogelijk speelt in de verschillende representaties van vrouwen is het verschil in gender tussen de regisseur van de Vlaamse en Amerikaanse versie en de regisseur van de Nederlandse versie, en dit in combinatie met het feit dat Saskia Noort samen met Kim van Kooten het Nederlandse scenario hebben

aangepakt.¹⁹⁴ Het zou nogal controversieel en te kort door de bocht zijn om te stellen dat een film per direct (en enkel) wordt beïnvloed door het biologische geslacht van een filmmaker. Eerder claimen we dat iedere context, en bij uitbreiding ieder leven, in zekere zin uniek is, hetgeen eveneens geldt voor iedere filmmaker en zijn of haar praktijk van filmproductie. Toch wijst onderzoek uit dat gender (en dus niet biologisch geslacht) een van de belangrijke factoren is die een impact kan hebben op de inhoud en vorm van films (French, 2014: 188-189). Dit laatste wordt bovendien bevestigd in de interviews. Zo claimt Beumer dat ze de vrouwelijke personages bewust heeft aangepast omwille van twee redenen. Enerzijds wilde ze zich persoonlijk, als vrouw, kunnen herkennen in deze personages, en anderzijds vond ze het ook belangrijk '*dat het leuke vrouwen waren*'. Daarenboven stelde ze vast dat de vrouwen in de Vlaamse versie te veel worden '*neergezet als een soort van excuus waarom de mannen vreemdgaan*'. Inspelend op die "typische" lokaliteit wilde ze namelijk vooral '*de personages herkenbaarder maken voor de kijker*'.

10.4.3 *Repeating the same joke: Loft en etniciteit*

In de Vlaamse en Nederlandse filmversies worden verschillende racistisch getinte grappen gemaakt. Zo maakt een van de mannen in de Vlaamse versie een nogal twijfelachtige opmerking over een zwarte vrouw die tijdens een tentoonstellingsfeestje passeert: '*Kijk, kijk, dat zwartje... Dat lijkt me een hete stoot. Daar wil ik wel 's achter lopen in de brousse*'. In de Nederlandse versie maakt de man geen talige opmerking, maar doet hij wel iets heel gelijkaardigs: wanneer hij in dezelfde scène verwijst naar een zwarte dame die danst doet hij een niet mis te verstane, erg neerbuigende en bovendien objectiverende beweging waarbij hij lijkt te doelen op een Afrikaans-achtige dans. In *The Loft* is duidelijk geknipt in deze scène: de man maakt wel een objectiverend grapje over de aanwezige vrouwen, maar duidt daarbij op vrouwen in het algemeen. Zodoende wordt in de Amerikaanse versie racistische humor gemeden, terwijl dit in de Nederlandse en Vlaamse versie niet het geval is.

Wanneer we vervolgens kijken naar de casting in de drie films komen er een aantal zaken aan het licht. Het is bijvoorbeeld opvallend dat in zowel de Nederlandse

¹⁹⁴ Het scenario van de Vlaamse versie werd daarentegen geschreven door een man, Bart De Pauw, terwijl voor de Amerikaanse versie een andere man werd aangesteld om aanpassingen door te voeren aan het scenario, m.n. Wesley Strick.

als de Amerikaanse versie de rol van de mannelijke politiecommissaris of -onderzoeker wordt vertolkt door een niet-witte acteur, terwijl dit niet geldt voor de Vlaamse versie. Dit lijkt erop te wijzen dat, in tegenstelling tot de Vlaamse versie, voor de Nederlandse en Amerikaanse versies meer belang werd gehecht aan diversiteit op het scherm. Nederland (met Amsterdam als summum) en haar inwoners hebben, zoals aangehaald, de naam vooruitstrevend, tolerant en liberaal-progressief te zijn. Ook hier zien we dergelijke stereotiepe opvattingen terugkeren in de interviews met de betrokken filmmakers. Met het oog op herkenning en lokaliteit claimt Beumer bijvoorbeeld dat zij hiervoor koos omdat mensen van alle huidskleuren in Nederland op alle niveaus zijn geïntegreerd, waardoor het 'een afspiegeling is van onze [Nederlandse] maatschappij'. Producente Hilde De Laere voegt hieraan toe dat ze door Beumer is gaan beseffen dat de integratie in België veel minder is gelukt, waarbij ze bijvoorbeeld duidt op de diversiteit van de Nederlandse filmploeg, terwijl dat niet gold voor de Vlaamse versie. Deze zogenaamde tolerantie en navenante diversiteit wordt echter een stuk ambiguër wanneer we inzoomen op de wijziging die werd doorgevoerd voor de rol van Filip (BE)/Tom (NL)/Philip (VSA). Het is namelijk zo dat dit personage een moeilijke jeugd kende, drugsverslaafd is, zich vaak erg agressief gedraagt, een vrouw heeft verkracht, en finaal de vrouw vermoordt in de loft (al was dit niet zijn intentie). In de Vlaamse en Amerikaanse versie wordt deze rol van "slechterik" vertolkt door dezelfde witte acteur, Matthias Schoenaerts. In de Nederlandse *Loff* daarentegen speelt de niet-witte Nederlandse acteur van Tunesische afkomst Marwan Chico Kenzari deze rol. De keuze om net het "slechte" personage *par excellence* te laten spelen door een acteur van Tunesische afkomst kan uiteraard een stigmatiserend effect als gevolg hebben. Het systematisch opvoeren van bepaalde etnische minderheidsgroepen in dergelijke rollen, 'results in the consistent portrayal of many of these same "outsider" interest groups in a negative or stereotypical manner' (Cones, 2012: 146). Zodoende kan deze op het eerste gezicht positieve diversiteitsbeslissing in de Nederlandse versie evengoed een ongewenst effect met zich meedragen, m.n. negatieve stereotypering.

De reden waarom in de Amerikaanse versie werd gekozen voor een meer diverse cast heeft volgens Van Looy dan weer te maken met commerciële imperatieven: 'omdat dat sowieso goed is [...] [en] je daar een groot segment van het publiek mee winst'. Bovendien lag het voor de Amerikaanse versie mogelijk te moeilijk om het personage van Philip te laten spelen door een niet-witte acteur. Zoals Pollock

(2009: 1) stelt, gebruiken mensen afkomstig uit de Verenigde Staten etnisch-culturele labels sneller dan vele niet-Amerikaanse volkeren, maar paradoxaal genoeg bestaat hier in de VSA ook een grotere gevoeligheid over dan elders. Sterker nog, volgens Van Den Berghe (geciteerd in Pollock, 2009: 2) is de angst om als racist te worden gelabeld '*perhaps one of the most effective behavioral and verbal restraints in the United States today*'. Uit onze interviews blijkt dat Van Looy dit dan weer niet zou hebben aangedurfd in België, uit angst voor kritiek.

10.4.4 *Twice as nice: Loft en de vormelijke keuzes*

Het meest opvallende vormelijke verschil tussen de drie films is het kleur- en lichtgebruik. Zo zet de Vlaamse *Loft* erg in op de typische *film noir*-look: duister, veel donkerblauwe en -groene tinten, erg koel en somber van aard. Daarbij wordt meteen duidelijk dat Van Looy, die bekend staat voor zijn liefde voor Hollywoodfilms, zich liet inspireren door erotische thrillers met een neo-noir *vibe* (zie ook De Morgen, 15 september 2009). Zo wordt er een karaoke-hommage gemaakt aan *Body Heat* (Kasdan, 1981), waarover Leitch (2004: 147) het volgende stelt: '[although] *shot in color, its desaturated monochrome visuals [...] pay constant homage to film noir's black-and-white visual style*'. De Vlaamse regisseur liet zich bovendien inspireren door De Palma's *Dressed to Kill* (1980), *Blow Out* (1981) en *Body Double* (1984) en Verhoevens *Basic Instinct* (1992). De Nederlandse versie neigt meer naar gele en warmere tinten, hetgeen een eerder gezellig en vertrouwd gevoel weet op te wekken. Bovendien diende dit kleurgebruik de warme relaties tussen de "gezelligere vrouwen" en de mannen te weerspiegelen. *The Loft* daarentegen kan eerder worden gekaderd binnen een moderne Hollywoodstijl, allemaal erg strak en glad, of, zoals de Vlaamse cameraman Nicolas Karakatsanis het zelf verwoordt: '*zo'n Amerikaanse glossy*' (De Morgen, 11 oktober 2014). Waarom in de Amerikaanse versie werd gekozen voor de *glossy look* heeft vooral te maken met het feit dat Van Looy er alles wilde aan doen om de film een "typisch Hollywoodesthetiek" te geven. Zo wordt de Amerikaanse versie inderdaad bijna hyper-Amerikaans, hetgeen zich reflecteert in het feit dat, aangezien het budget dat ook toeliet, alles net iets meer mocht zijn: de mise-en-scène, de acteurs, hun kledij en make-up, enzovoort. Bovendien is de Amerikaanse versie volgens Van Looy meer schatplichtig aan '90's-thrillers - *'Indecent Proposal', 'Fatal Attraction'* [...] *Geen echte erotische thrillers, maar meer de sensuele, romantische thrillers over relatiestrubbelingen*' (Vanden Bossche, oktober 2014).

Hieraan gekoppeld is het gebruik van de drie steden waarin het verhaal plaatsvindt. In de Vlaamse *Loft* vindt alles plaats in Antwerpen, terwijl in de Amerikaanse versie het verhaal zich hoofdzakelijk afspeelt in New Orleans. De parallellen tussen beide steden worden meteen duidelijk bij de eerste shots: we hebben telkens te maken met een grote havenstad die wordt gekenmerkt door een erg drukke en mondaine stedelijke cultuur. Dit lijkt in groot contrast te staan met het beeld dat we hebben van Amsterdam, de stad waarin het verhaal van de Nederlandse *Loft* zich afspeelt. Zo wordt de hoofdstad van Nederland vaak afgebeeld als een pittoreske omgeving, gekend door de gezellige grachten en de eerder smalle gevelhuizen die overal terug te vinden zijn in de stad. Antoinette Beumer haalt zelf aan dat het *'behoorlijk lastig [is] om Amsterdam als een grootstedelijke stad filmisch neer te zetten [...] in tegenstelling tot Rotterdam dat daarin veel filmischer is'*. Toch werd, ook onder invloed van de distributeur Rachel van Bommel, gekozen voor Amsterdam. Beumer vond het herkenbare van de hoofdstad namelijk meer passen bij haar persoonlijke visie op het verhaal en bij uitbreiding de film: het getoonde moest niet enkel herkenbaarder maar ook geloofwaardiger overkomen, hetgeen bijvoorbeeld wordt bewerkstelligd door het karakteristieke van Amsterdam, dit in combinatie met het gebruik van warme gele kleuren en de hartelijke vrouwelijke personages. De Laere vertelde hierover dat de *look* die werd gekozen voor de Nederlandse versie moest passen bij de typische Amsterdamse interieurs. Daarenboven wilde Beumer een nieuwe kant van Amsterdam laten zien, namelijk door niet het historische centrum te verkennen, maar de nieuwe, moderne kant van de stad te belichten. Zelf vertelt ze: *'door Amsterdam op zo'n manier te laten zien, denk ik dat Amsterdam een soort van New York-achtige uitstraling heeft, die de Nederlanders ook wel tof vonden om zien'*. Beumer tracht hier met andere woorden een soort hyper-Amerikaanse vertolking van Amsterdam te laten zien, zonder de herkenbaarheid, of het "typisch" Amsterdamse te verliezen. Door Amsterdam de *vibe* te geven van een heuse Noord-Amerikaanse grootstad, krijg je volgens de regisseur ook meer het gevoel dat de personages van het verhaal "onaantastbaarder" zijn. Met deze bewuste keuze benadrukt ze het nationaal-overstijgende, bijna globale, karakter van de stad, hetgeen opnieuw volledig past bij *'the commodification of its identity as a tolerant place'* (Nijman, 1999: 155).

10.5 Conclusie

Uitgaand van een theoretisch kader rond het concept karaoke-Amerikanisme toegepast op de praktijk van filmremakes werden de Vlaamse, Nederlandse en Amerikaanse versie van *Loft* geanalyseerd als zijnde lokaal ingevulde Hollywoodfilms. Door middel van een comparatieve filmanalyse werd zo duidelijk dat er, ondanks het gesloten karakter van de drie genrefilms, een aantal opvallende aanpassingen werden doorgevoerd. De drie filmversies deelden verschillende door Hollywood geïnspireerde genrepatronen, maar verschilden sterk op vlak van de representatie van elementen en thema's als seksualiteit, naaktheid, genderrollen, etniciteit, alsook qua keuzes in cinematografie. In eerste instantie getuigt de Nederlandse *Loft* enerzijds van een sterk expliciete houding ten aanzien van seksualiteit en naaktheid, en anderzijds van het niet schuwen om racistische grapjes te integreren, alsook de slechterik *par excellence* te laten spelen door een niet-witte acteur. Terwijl de Amerikaanse versie zich op vlak van naaktheid en seksualiteit geheel aan de andere kant van het continuüm bevindt, zweeft de Vlaamse *Loft* daar ergens tussenin. Qua etnische diversiteit scoort de Vlaamse versie heel wat minder, terwijl de Amerikaanse *The Loft* zich ergens bevindt tussen de meest diverse versie van Nederland en de minst diverse versie van België. Ook werden de genderrollen, meer specifiek de vrouwelijke personages, anders ingevuld. Terwijl de Vlaamse en Amerikaanse versie worden gekenmerkt door eerder conservatief en licht-patriarchale genderrollen, met name passieve, zelfs saaie vrouwen in tegenstelling tot actieve aanwezige mannen, is de Nederlandse versie een stuk vooruitstrevender op dit vlak. Dit heeft ons inziens deels te maken met het verschil in gender tussen beide regisseurs en scenaristen, alsook met de persoonlijke voorkeuren en overtuiging van deze regisseurs.

Zo komen we bij de resultaten uit de eigen en geanalyseerde interviews. Om meer te weten te komen over waarom en hoe deze verschillen tot stand kwamen, werd gepeild naar de geëxpliciteerde intenties en motivaties van de betrokken filmmakers. Uit onze analyse bleek dat de filmmakers verschillende strategieën hanteren om *in se* Amerikaanse genrefilms van "typische" lokale eigenheden te voorzien. Zo duiden de filmmakers verschillen in representaties door stevast te refereren aan vaak gestereotypeerde visies op de eigen (of andere) culturele identiteit. Zo lijken deze filmmakers zich in vele gevallen te inspireren op alom bekende, quasi-gefetisjeerde constructen om hun films uit te rusten met een "typische lokaliteit". Dergelijke aanpassingen werden, aldus de filmmakers, noodzakelijk geacht om de

herkenbaarheid voor het nationale publiek te vrijwaren. De meest gehanteerde stereotypen zijn dat Nederland, in tegenstelling tot Vlaanderen, wordt gekenmerkt door een erg tolerante houding ten aanzien van naaktheid, seksualiteit, multiculturalisme en genderidentiteiten. Als gevolg van dergelijke essentialistische opvattingen van de eigen of andere culturele identiteit werd ook naaktheid vermeden in de Amerikaanse versie, alsook racistisch getinte humor, waarschijnlijk uit vrees om het Amerikaanse publiek tegen de borst te stuiten.

Door een evenwicht te bewaren tussen eerder dominant-Amerikaanse filmconventies en genre-elementen enerzijds en de injectie van lokale, vaak stereotiepe aspecten anderzijds, bieden de drie films succesvolle karaokeversies van de typische "Amerikaanse film". Zoals aangehaald is dit "Amerikaanse" echter in vele gevallen een geconstrueerde, sterk artificiële en algemeen reducerende versie van "Amerikaansheid". Zodoende is de kans groot dat dit karaoke-Amerikanisme als een flauw afkooksel, of althans als hyper-artificieel, wordt aanzien in de VSA zelf. Dit lijkt alleszins het geval te zijn geweest bij het onsuccesvol uitbrengen van de Amerikaanse versie van *Loft*. Amerikaans recensent Alonso Duralde (*TheWrap*, januari 2015) vatte het als volgt samen: '*Whether this thriller worked any better in its native tongue, I cannot say, but this American version is like eating a Belgian waffle made entirely out of hot dog buns*'. De Vlaamse en Nederlandse versies zijn zo het resultaat van een verlangen naar een *echte* Vlaamse/Nederlandse Hollywoodfilm, met een groot succes als gevolg, terwijl de Amerikaanse versie, vanuit een Amerikaans oogpunt welteverstaan, als *hyper-echt* werd ervaren, namelijk *fake*, overbodig, zelfs mislukt.

Ondanks de opvallende culturele dynamiek van de Lage Landen, waarvan de Vlaams-Nederlandse filmremakes een uiting zijn, werd tot nog toe amper empirisch onderzoek verricht naar dergelijke culturele producten. Dit artikel stelde daarom het inherent transnationale aspect van film(remakes) centraal. Door het concept van de filmremake te koppelen aan het concept van karaoke-Amerikanisme werden we bovendien in staat gesteld om – in plaats van de Vlaams-Nederlandse filmremake praktijk los te koppelen van een bredere transnationale, en in se Hollywood geïnspireerde industriële praktijk – beide fenomenen als wederzijds afhankelijk te beschouwen. Hoewel cross-culturele adaptaties en de thematiek van lokalisering en culturele identiteit al meermaals werden onderzocht in de context van televisiewetenschappen (cf. o.a. Moran 2009a; 2009b), biedt dit onderzoek een belangrijke aanvulling op de (bovendien hoofdzakelijk Angelsaksisch gerichte)

literatuur omtrent transnationale remakes in de filmstudies dat vooralsnog amper empirisch gefundeerd productieonderzoek verrichte.

Chapter 11

The remake industry and the perspective of industrial actors

Positioning

With this chapter, this dissertation proceeds to the industrial process of the remake practice. Though current research on the film remake phenomenon acknowledges an underlying industrial process (cf. section 2.5), it rarely analyzes it empirically. Therefore, building on expert interviews with people working in the remake industries of the Low Countries, this chapter places the production aspect of the film remake process central. The findings suggest that the manner in which these cultural mediators describe and evaluate the film remake mirrors popular discourses and seems to affect the production process of film remakes themselves. It was found that the phenomenon is generally seen as the result of a lack of originality, and is, moreover, highly commercially driven – making it seen as less authentic. Interestingly, these latter aspects were found to sometimes function as a license for initiating remake projects. However, next to the financial benefits, other personal and creative rationales were advanced. Additionally, the element of localization was deemed as one of the most essential tactics in the creative process of producing film remakes. Finally, next to the role of the producers, distributors appear to be crucial figures in the emergence of film remakes in small geo-linguistic film markets.

I will first specify some of the technical details on the production and distribution companies of the remake phenomenon in the Low Countries (cf. Table 5). While Chapter 8 already briefly touched upon the co-production strategy behind the Dutch-Flemish film remakes, Table 5 more specifically indicates which Dutch-Flemish film remakes are also Dutch-Flemish co-productions. Because the general use of the term co-production in scholarly debate is highly inconsistent (Hammett-Jamart, Mitric & Redvall, 2018), I employ a strict definition of what co-productions consist of: ‘International co-production implies the involvement of two or more producers from

different countries collaborating creatively and financially on a project' (Hammett-Jamart, Mitric, Redvall, 2018: 11).¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ It should be noted that it is still quite difficult to pinpoint if and how the involved foreign producers were involved creatively in the remake project. However, as will become clear in the following, this was part of the in-depth interviews I conducted with some of the Dutch-Flemish film producers.

Table 5: Production and distribution companies of the Dutch-Flemish source films and remakes, indicating which films are Dutch-Flemish co-productions.

Source film and remake	Production company	Distribution company (theatrical)	Dutch-Flemish co-production
All Stars (NL)	M&B FILM3 BV	Polygram Filmed Entertainment Distribution (UK/NL)	
Team Spirit (BE)	Menuet (BE)	Kinepolis Film Distribution (BE)	
In Oranje (NL)	Motel Films (NL) & Fu Works (NL)	A-Film Distribution (NL)	
Buitenspel (BE)	Menuet (BE) & SCOPE Invest (BE)	Kinepolis Film Distribution (BE)	
Alles is Liefde (NL)	Fu Works (NL) & Motel Films (NL)	A-Film Distribution (NL)	
Zot van A. (BE)	Eyeworks (BE)	Kinepolis Film Distribution (BE)	
Loft (BE)	Woestijnvis (BE)	Independent Films (BE/NL)	
Loft (NL)	Woestijnvis (BE), Millstreet Films (NL), Pupkin Film (NL)	Independent Films (BE/NL)	√
Smoorverliefd (BE)	Caviar (BE) & JWP Scholte Beheer (NL)	Kinepolis Film Distribution (BE)	√
Smoorverliefd (NL)	Caviar (BE), Incredible Film (NL), Mountain Road (NL)	Dutch Filmworks (NL)	√
Mannenharten (NL)	NL Film (NL) & Mollywood (BE)	Dutch Filmworks (NL)	√
Wat Mannen Willen (BE)	Marmalade Film (BE), Lion Film Productions (NL) ^a	Kinepolis Film Distribution (BE)	√
Hasta La Vista (BE)	Fobic Films (BE), K2 (BE), Mollywood (BE), VRT (FL)	Kinepolis Film Distribution (BE) & Dutch Filmworks (NL) ^b	
Adios Amigos (NL)	BosBros (NL), Fobic Films (BE)	Dutch Filmworks (NL)	√
Brasserie Romantiek (BE)	A Private View (BE), Artemis (BE), VTM (BE), Belgacom (BE)	Kinepolis Film Distribution (BE)	
Brasserie Valentijn (NL)	Tom de Mol Productions (NL), RTL Entertainment (NL), Lion Film Productions (NL), A Private View (BE)	Dutch Filmworks (NL)	√
Alles is Familie (NL)	Topkapi Films (NL), VARA (NL)	A Film Distribution (NL) & A Film Distribution (BE)	

Source film and remake	Production company	Distribution company (theatrical)	Dutch-Flemish co-production
Allemaal Familie (BE)	Marmalade (BE), Lion Film Productions (NL)	Kinepolis Film Distribution (BE)	√
Homies (NL)	Just Productions (NL), Johnnywood Productions (NL), RTL (NL)	Just Film Distribution (NL)	
Bad Trip (BE)	Marmalade (BE)	Entertainment One Benelux (CA)	
Het Verlangen (NL)	Topkapi Films (NL), VARA (NL)	September Film (NL)	
Verborgen Verlangen (BE)	Menuet (BE), Kinepolis Film Distribution (BE)	Kinepolis Film Distribution (BE)	

^a This is a production company that is initiated by Willem Pruijssers (who is also affiliated with the distribution company Dutch Filmworks).

^b As this remake's source film, *Hasta La Vista*, had a highly limited release in the Netherlands (distributed by DFW).

In total, six out of 11 Dutch-Flemish remake projects were Dutch-Flemish co-productions. This is rather striking, given that only two out of 11 source films were Dutch-Flemish co-productions. It seems that, at least for the above cases, both Flemish and Dutch producers are more interested in investing (both creatively and financially) in remake projects than in non-remake projects. In other words, this finding might point toward the fact that producers in the Low Countries are convinced that remake projects are generally profitable. However, the latter should be nuanced, given that three out of six Flemish remake projects were (partially) co-produced by the same Dutch co-production partner, i.e. Lion Film Productions – a Dutch company run by Willem Pruijssers and Marcel De Block, who are respectively CEO and co-CEO of the Dutch distribution company Dutch Film Works. The fact that many of these remake projects were co-produced indicates that distributors play a chief role in the Low Countries remake practice (cf. section 11.3.6). In a similar vein, it is also striking that, with the exception of *Bad Trip*, 10 out of 11 remake projects were distributed by either Kinepolis Film Distribution (KFD) or by Dutch Filmworks (DFW). As mentioned in section 3.3.2, KFD and DFW have a structural agreement and cooperation when it comes down to the acquisition of Benelux rights of international films (Smits, 2019). In this context, it is clear that, whereas none of the film remakes were released across the border, two of the source films were, though highly limited. Moreover, in the cases of *Loft/Loft*, *Smoorverliefd/Smoorverliefd*, *Mannenharten/Wat Mannen Willen*, *Hasta La Vista/Adios Amigos*, and *Brasserie Romantiek/Brasserie Valentijn*, some of the producers (instead of production companies) of the source films also acted as producers of their remakes. What is more, the same goes for the distributors of *Loft/Loft* and *Hasta La Vista/Adios Amigos* who did not only distribute the source film but also its remake (in two different territories).

To obtain a better picture of whether (and which of) these films received governmental¹⁹⁶ support, Table 6 (cf. below) indicates which source films and respective remakes received support from either the European MEDIA/Eurimages fund, the Flemish VAF, the Flemish Screen Flanders, the Dutch NFF, as well as the

¹⁹⁶ I consider both the Belgian tax shelter system and the film production incentive (cash rebate) (cf. section 3.3.1) as governmental financial support, as they respectively provide private investors with a tax exemption and film producers with a 30% cash rebate (which comes from tax payers' money).

Belgian tax shelter measurement and the Dutch cash rebate system (Film Production Incentive).

Table 6: Source films/film remakes that were supported by MEDIA/Eurimages, VAF, Screen Flanders, Tax Shelter, NFF or the Film Production Incentive (cash rebate)^a

Source film & remake	MEDIA/Eurimages	VAF	Screen Flanders	Tax Shelter	NFF	Film Production Incentive
All Stars (NL)			N/A	N/A	√ (select.)	N/A
Team Spirit (BE)		√				
In Oranje (NL)			N/A		√ (select.)	N/A
Buitenspel (BE)		√		√		
Alles is Liefde (NL)			N/A		√ (select.)	N/A
Zot van A. (BE)	√ (MEDIA)	√ ^b	N/A	√		N/A
Loft (BE)		√	N/A	√		N/A
Loft (NL)	√ (MEDIA)		N/A	√	√ (autom.)	N/A
Smoorverliefd (BE)		√ ^c	N/A	√		N/A
Smoorverliefd (NL)			N/A	√	√ (autom.)	N/A
Mannenharten (NL)			N/A	√	√ (autom.)	N/A
Wat Mannen Willen (BE)			√	√		
Hasta La Vista (BE)		√		√		N/A
Adios Amigos (NL)			N/A	√	√ (select. ^d & autom.)	√
Brasserie Romantiek (BE)	√ (EURIMAGES)	√		√		N/A
Brasserie Valentijn (NL)			N/A	√	√ (autom.)	√
Alles is Familie (NL)	√ (MEDIA)		N/A		√ (select. ^e & autom.)	√
Allemaal Familie (BE)			√	√		N/A
Homies (NL)			N/A			
Bad Trip (BE)				√		
Het Verlangen (NL)			N/A		√ (select. ^f & autom.)	√
Verborgten Verlangen (BE)		√	√ ^g	√		N/A

^a As discussed in section 3.3.1, the Flemish institution Screen Flanders was initiated in 2012, the Belgian Tax Shelter in 2002, and the Film Production Incentive (or the cash rebate system) in 2014. Eurimages and MEDIA are supranational programs 'offered by the European Commission and the Council of Europe [that] aim at promoting the European film industry by encouraging the production and distribution of films and fostering

cooperation between professionals' (Raats, Schooneknaep & Pauwels, 2018: 193). All subsidies by the European Eurimages (cultural fund) and MEDIA fund are selective (awarded through an assessment committee or jury). All subsidies by VAF are also selective, except in the case of Verborgen Verlangen. All subsidies by Screen Flanders are equally selective ones. In the case of the subsidies by NFF, Table 6 indicates if the subsidy was selective or semi-automatic.

^b This project received support from Bruxellimage.

^c *ibidem*.

^d € 10.000 for the scenario and € 22.500 for production.

^e € 13.714 for production, € 578.570 for realization.

^f € 10.000 for treatment, € 15.000 and € 7.500 for scenario, € 386.000 for realization.

^g This subsidy that was provided by VAF was not selective but automatic ('impulspremie'). More particularly, the production company (i.e. Menuet) that produced Verborgen Verlangen had already "received" this subsidy via "recoupment" before initiating the remake project and used it for Verborgen Verlangen. The process works as follows: the amounts that a producer (the applicant who received support for another, previous audiovisual work) paid back to the Fund (which come from exploitation incomings), shall be reserved for the producer for the purpose of investing it in a new creation that is produced by the same producer.

In terms of the selective funds on a European level (MEDIA or Eurimages), only two remake projects received support. This should not strike as odd, given that these projects are mainly to solely aimed at domestic audiences, while these European institutions want to strengthen the circulation of European films within Europe. Whereas the Flemish VAF supported the first three Flemish remake projects (until 2007), it decided to quit supporting remake projects altogether. Ever since, only one remake project received an automatic subsidy (*Verborgen Verlangen*) in Flanders. Interestingly, in the case of *Team Spirit*, for instance, the commission highly disliked the project but still decided to fund the project because of purely commercial reasons (supporting the production company) (Willems, 2017). The Dutch film fund, on the other hand, only selectively supported (a small amount of money to) one remake project, whereas it supported four remake projects with its automatic measure. The Flemish economic fund (Screen Flanders) supported all Flemish remake projects that were produced since the fund's inception in 2012. None of the remake projects received support from the specific co-production agreement between VAF and NFF.

Though the General Rules of the NFF (2019) do not explicitly state that film remakes are not supported by the institution¹⁹⁷, it declares that more original, authentic or urgent projects are preferred. The current Terms and Conditions of the VAF, on the other hand, clearly state that film remakes (with remaking defined as “adapting an already existing film while keeping the same storylines and characters as close to the original”) are not eligible for support. The decision to stop supporting Flemish remake projects probably has to do with the fact that, from October 2005 on, Pierre Druout became the new intendant of VAF. It was under Druout that the Terms and Conditions of the film fund explicitly mentioned that remakes could not receive any form of support. On the first of January 2018, Erwin Provoost became the new intendant of VAF and did not alter the measure that opposes remakes. When confronting both the Dutch and Flemish heads of the film funds with this “anti-remake strategy” (or “non-priority”, according to the Dutch intendant, Doreen Boonekamp) of the selective supporting measures, it seems that the motivation behind this decision is both financially and

¹⁹⁷ The NFF does explicitly state that remakes are not eligible for the Dutch crossover supportive measure, which is meant for artistically oriented Dutch crossover (focusing on a domestic and international audience) films. The reason that is given for this decision is that “originality” is preferred.

culturally motivated. Indeed, both intendants mainly refer to the lack of financial resources and a resulting preference for “original” and “more authentic” content. They also argue that film funds should equally pay attention to the “cultural” or “artistic” aspects of films. Additionally, they argue that there are other, more economically oriented, non-selective (automatic or semi-automatic) measures that support these projects. Indeed, the Belgian tax shelter is, from its initiation, highly popular with both the source film and remake projects, both produced in Flanders (Belgium) and in the Netherlands. Additionally, it appears that many Dutch remake productions also make use of the Belgian tax shelter. Furthermore, the Dutch cash rebate system was employed in all Dutch remake projects that were produced since its inception (2014). What is more, oftentimes, producers accumulate measures from both regions: Dutch producer Sjef Scholte, for example, stated that he could combine the Dutch suppletion measure with the Belgian tax shelter easily – acquiring the remake rights of a Flemish film already counts as an investment in the Flemish film industry, granting the producer the right to enjoy the financial benefit of the Belgian tax shelter, according to Scholte¹⁹⁸. Hence, although the selective support measures of both film funds do not back the Dutch-Flemish remake practice, other more economically oriented funding systems fill in this gap.

In sum, it appears that both the Dutch and Flemish selective, cultural funds have not really been supportive of Dutch-Flemish film remakes, even when their source films did receive such support. Conversely, the Dutch-Flemish remake projects received much support from the automatic and semi-automatic economic funds. This is in line with the general understanding of film remakes as a purely economic undertaking with little to no cultural value (cf. Chapter 2 and section 2.6). In addition to the above support, Table 7 looks at some of the most recurring private investors (with the exception of the public broadcasters which are also included in the table) that have financed both the Dutch-Flemish remake projects and their respective source films.

¹⁹⁸ This mirrors what Hjort (2009) dubbed “opportunistic transnationalism”, i.e., the situation whereby “monetary factors dictate the selection of partners beyond national borders” (p. 19).

Table 7: List of support for the Dutch-Flemish source films and remakes by public broadcasters, commercial broadcasters, the CoBo Fund or the Abraham Tuschinski Fund.

Source film & remake	Public broadcaster	Commercial broadcaster	CoBo Fund	Abraham Tuschinski Fund (2009)
All Stars (NL)	VARA (NL)		√	N/A
Team Spirit (BE)		VTM (FL)		
In Oranje (NL)	AVRO (NL)		√	N/A
Buitenspel (BE)	VRT (FL)			
Alles is Liefde (NL)	VARA (NL)		√	N/A
Zot van A. (BE)		VTM (FL)		
Loft (BE)	VRT (FL)			N/A
Loft (NL)	BNN (NL)		√	
Smoorverliefd (BE)			√	N/A
Smoorverliefd (NL)	NTR (NL)	RTL (NL)	√	
Mannenharten (NL)		RTL (NL)		
Wat Mannen Willen (BE)		VTM (FL)		N/A
Hasta La Vista (BE)	VRT (FL)			N/A
Adios Amigos (NL)		RTL (NL)		√
Brasserie Romantiek (BE)		VTM (BE)		N/A
Brasserie Valentijn (NL)		RTL (NL)		√
Alles is Familie (NL)	VARA (NL) NPO (NL)		√	√
Allemaal Familie (BE)		VTM (FL)		N/A
Homies (NL)		RTL (NL)		
Bad Trip (BE)				N/A
Het Verlangen (NL)	VARA (NL) BNN (NL)		√	√
Verborgten Verlangen (BE)				N/A

In terms of the broadcasters' cooperation or financial support, it appears that commercial broadcasters (VTM on the Flemish side and RTL on the Dutch side) are more likely to support Dutch-Flemish film remake projects than public broadcasters. However, there are a few cases where public broadcasters did support remake projects, which might again point toward – though indirect – governmental support for these projects. In a similar vein, the Dutch and Flemish public broadcasters are more likely to support a Dutch or Flemish source film instead of a remake, which is probably again due to the fact that these projects are seen as purely commercial vehicles without little cultural value. The fact that seven out of 11 remake projects were financially supported by a commercial broadcaster¹⁹⁹ partially compensates the lack of support of the regional film funds. In return, commercial broadcasters often have a say in the creative aspect of these projects (e.g. in terms of the casting), acquire the unique broadcasting rights, and receive a return on investment when the film is profitable. It further appears that both the public and commercial broadcasters never supported a film (remake) project from across the border. Finally, the private CoBo (in cooperation with a Dutch public broadcaster) and Abraham Tuschinski funds (cf. section 3.3.1) supported only a handful of Dutch remake projects.

Reference

Cuelenaere, E. (2020). The remake industry: The practice of remaking films from the perspective of industrial actors. *Adaptation*, Online First: 1–21.

¹⁹⁹ It should be noted that some of the Flemish remake projects were also financially supported by Telenet, which is a cable provider in Belgium.

11.1 Introduction

In 2000, James Naremore noted that the field of adaptation studies required 'a broader definition of adaptation and a sociology that takes into account the commercial apparatus, the audience, and the academic culture industry' (p. 10). Twelve years later, Simone Murray again contended that the analysis of adaptations still necessitated 'an approach [that] takes us well beyond textual specifics and enables us to ask how the mechanisms by which adaptations are produced influence the kinds of adaptations released, how certain audiences become aware of adapted properties, and how the success of an adaptation may impact differently upon various industry stakeholders' (2012: 4). Even though the study of film remakes might (but not necessarily has to) be considered as a separate – but related – field with different theoretical and methodological focuses²⁰⁰, it shows many of the same flaws pointed out by Naremore and Murray which govern the field of adaptation studies: a persisting lack of audience and production research. Focusing mainly on the textual aspects of film remakes does not help us understand how these remakes become accessible for (and are understood by) both audiences and critical reception, nor does it aid us in grasping the complex production process through which these remakes are produced and finally find their way to the outside world. Therefore, this article intends to initiate a strand of research that specifically looks into the production or industrial aspects of the film remake (process)²⁰¹ – being in line with the increasing interest of media industries studies with the managerial and production aspects of media (see, e.g., Havens, Lotz & Tinic, 2009). While most of the research conducted in remake studies acknowledges the relevance of analyzing the surrounding production context, actual

²⁰⁰ In a previous article, I argued (building on Verevis' [2006] work) that it is most productive to consider both adaptations and remakes (as well as reboots and other forms of media serialities) as 'part of the same post-production and post-celluloid media culture' (Cuelenaere, 2020d). Hence, I think the findings in this work also provide insights for other closely affiliated fields (such as adaptation studies).

²⁰¹ Though this article chooses to only investigate the production or industrial side of the remake process, I assert that 'the study of film remakes should commence looking into an approach that genuinely connects textual findings to a methodology that employs the analysis of the different (social and industrial) contexts, gatekeepers, cultural intermediaries, and audiences' (Cuelenaere, 2020d: 3). The present article, therefore, wants to demonstrate which insights we might get from analyzing the production side of film remakes, without claiming that a combination of production, textual, and reception analysis is not the final goal.

empirical analyses that scrutinize the industrial aspects still barely exist (Labayen & Morán, 2019). This article, therefore, argues for a more holistic approach toward the study of film remakes, pointing out that a juxtaposition of textual insights with extra-textual ones – such as the production process or industrial context of film remakes – is imperative for the field's further development and scientific maturing. As argued by Linda Hutcheon (2006), if there is no room to scrutinize the creative process, we will never be able to 'fully understand the urge to adapt and therefore perhaps the very process of adaptation' (p. 107).

Next to the abovementioned methodological and methodical myopia, one could also point to the field's limited geographical focus. Though the study of remake studies has been increasingly expanding, the common association – not only in terms of research focus – of film remakes with Hollywood's film industry still seems to triumph in academic circles (Smith & Verevis, 2017). Despite recent advancements, sustained research probing into, for example, the particular context(s) of European film remakes is still lacking, profoundly limiting the scope and application of its scholarly output. Yet, following Iain Robert Smith, I do not wish to place Hollywood directly *vis-à-vis* European cinema, as this risks losing sight of the clear crossover and overlap between the two (film) contexts. Next to issues regarding scope, this geographical confinement makes it hard to evaluate the possible cultural idiosyncrasy or specificity of the current academic findings and discourses surrounding film remakes. Hence, next to demonstrating the value of production research in the field, this article also shifts its focus beyond Hollywood – without ignoring its influence. It, moreover, analyses two cases which enables to surpass possible cultural-specific or nationally defined discourses and seek for possibly concealed similarities.

Consequently, this paper focuses on the highly peculiar film remake phenomenon of the Low Countries, consisting of the Netherlands and Belgium or, more specifically, Flanders. In line with existing research, it considers the film remake (as practice, process, and artifact) as highly discursive. Given this social constructive nature, it proves useful to employ Pierre Bourdieu's (1993) observations coming from his field theory of cultural production. This theory balances between a romantic discourse on cultural mediators or agents as singular geniuses and a Marxist economic determinist stance that understands cultural artifacts as the linear outcome of their (economic) context on the other – i.e., excluding human agency. As suggested by Murray (2012), Bourdieu's 'focus on the role of various cultural agents (individuals,

groups or institutions) who maintain some degree of willed decision-making within an overall context of a given cultural field' (p. 19) is particularly interesting for the field of adaptation (and remake) studies. Though both the political economy and cultural studies have inspired theoretical frameworks of remake studies (see, e.g., Smith, 2016), this has had little effect on the field's empirical output, nor has it actually led to an adequate focus on cultural agents or mediators.

By concentrating on cultural mediators, this article places the process of remaking films itself at the forefront, focusing on those decisions that are founded on i.a., personal preferences, genre conventions, particular cultural or socio-political engagements, historical circumstances, and others²⁰². According to Cuelenaere (2020d), 'not only their tastes, but also the manners in which [cultural mediators] perceive originality, authorship, commerciality, art, but also cultural identity, the importance of recognizability, representation, diversity, or even the definition of a film remake itself, impacts the process of creation, circulation and reception of film remakes'. Furthermore, these inherently extra-textual assumptions and intentions of the producers, as well as the knowledge about their minds and personalities, (can) affect the audience's impression of the contextual background of creation and general interpretation of the (film)text (Hutcheon, 2006), which make them all the more relevant to integrate in the analysis. Because of the critical lack of substantial empirical research that inquires into the specific roles of i.a., producers, scriptwriters (and adaptors), directors, distributors, who all take part in the remake industry, it is difficult to, e.g., define the different phases of the remake process, making it even tougher to 'establish agreed, standard concepts in this field' (Delgado and Avis, 2018: 3). Therefore, for this study, a more general categorization of the production cycle of cultural artifacts will be employed, informed by Susanne Janssen and Marc Verboord (2015) who differentiate between seven specific mediating practices: selection (gatekeeping), co-creation or editing, connecting or networking, selling or marketing, distributing, and evaluating. Based on the aforementioned, this article will focus on the following questions: (1) How do cultural mediators perceive and evaluate the film remake as a cultural artifact and practice? (2) How do cultural mediators experience

²⁰² These aspects (on which decisions are based in the remake process) align with Stam's (2000) so-called 'filters of transformation', i.e., 'studio style, ideological fashion, political constraints, auteurist predilections, charismatic stars, economic advantage or disadvantage, and evolving technology' (p. 69).

and perceive the production process of remaking films? (3) How do these experiences, perceptions, and evaluations impact the remake process and resulting films?

11.2 Research contexts and method

Even though Christopher Meir's (2019a; 2019b) recent work on pan-European studios as well as Miguel Fernández Labayen and Ana Martín Morán's (2019) analysis of remake rights representatives provide some crucial insights into the remake strategies of larger (pan-)European film companies, there are no industrial studies that look at smaller national European production and distribution companies that primarily (or only) concentrate on remakes aimed at domestic audiences – nor have studies attempted to integrate the varying perspectives of the different people and roles that partake in the remake process. To fill this gap, this paper focuses on the remake practice in the small geo-linguistic context of the Low Countries (consisting of the Netherlands and Belgium), where the Belgian (or, indeed, Flemish) film industry started remaking Dutch films and vice versa. With the first Dutch-Flemish film remake being released in 2000, and the most recent one in 2018, totaling in 11 released film remakes²⁰³ in this period, this practice proves to be quite significant, especially given the size of both markets. On average, there are only 2.8 years in between the release of a Dutch-Flemish film remake and a preceding source film, which makes these particular film remakes 'temporally immediate'. Given that they are also monolingual (both the remakes and their source films are spoken in Dutch), 'this phenomenon appears to be highly peculiar within the European and even the global film (remake) industry' (Cuelenaere, Joye & Willems, 2019a: 263). Finally, the films that are part of this phenomenon are (almost) all high concept²⁰⁴, mainstream genre films targeted at (mainly) domestic audiences.

²⁰³ Given the difficulty to define the film remake (cf. below), for the scope of this study, these 11 Dutch-Flemish film remake tandems were determined by employing the following criteria: (1) it concerns films that are produced and released in the Low Countries; (2) it concerns Dutch-spoken films; (3) it concerns films that are based on (among other things) an already existing Dutch or Flemish film from across the Dutch-Flemish border; (4) the intertextual connection between the film remake and its source film is legally (or contractually) typified as a film remake.

²⁰⁴ A high concept film production, discussed by James Wyatt in the context of Hollywood, focuses on often one sentence-long pitches or summaries of the creative and commercial core of a project. According to Meir (2019b: 185), '[...] reboots/remakes [...] are familiar variations on the production and marketing formula popularly and academically known as 'high concept' film and television production'.

The context of these two small European regions is particularly interesting, not only because they are geographically neighboring, but also because they share the same Dutch language (with, according to Johan De Caluwe (2013), minor differences in vocabulary and accent) and partially share a common history. There are more striking resemblances to be found, for example concerning the size of their film industries and markets, which are both considered as relatively small (Willems, 2017) and highly dependent on governmental support – mainly in the form of film subsidies organized by two different film funds and tax incentives. In Belgium, the film policy is organized on a regional level: while Flanders has its own autonomous film fund, the French Community of Belgium has another non-autonomous fund that is part of the ministry of culture. The Dutch counterpart is under auspices of the Dutch Government. Both the Flemish and Dutch funds are known for their history of (structural) collaboration, starting in the mid-1960s. In the early days, apart from the common economic motivation, this cooperation was built on cultural-ideological incentives, i.e., the idealist pursuit of one encompassing Dutch culture (Willems, 2017).

Despite the noteworthy commonalities, both regions suffer from the European stalemate where most films seem to be unable to cross national borders (Higson, 2018). Besides this, the apparent mutual indifference toward each other's films also fits in with a broader cultural evolution in the Low Countries: since the 1990s, the cultural transfer and interregional contact between the Netherlands and Flanders has significantly lessened, which resulted in sharing increasingly fewer cultural artifacts (i.a., newspapers, magazines, radio, literature, television, and films) (Cajot, 2012). With the rather disappointing numbers of both national and non-national European films in mind (Jones, 2020), people working in European film industries are always looking for novel ways to 'fight' the dominance of Hollywood. The most conventional of these strategies is co-production between two or more European (or non-European) partners. This strategy seems to be viable, as, compared to a fully nationally produced film, a co-produced European film 'circulate[s] twice as widely [...] [and] generate[s] three times as many admissions' (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2019: 10). In the context of the Low Countries, the decision to co-produce films is often prompted by commercial motivations: it offers the possibility to set up bigger productions (with larger budgets), which improves the chances of better circulation of the film and, consequently, its international competitiveness. Next to these financial benefits, co-productions can also lead to the international exchange of knowledge and expertise,

a reciprocal professionalization, and creative challenges that confront the international partners with their own and other cultural (and other kinds of) frames of reference (Willems, 2017).

The present study is part of a larger research project that investigates the Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon multi-methodologically. As such, the project combines in-depth textual, industrial (i.e., production and distribution), and reception analyses, aiming to scrutinize the various cultural and economic dynamics and dimensions involved in the practice. Hence, before the industrial research was carried out, a systematic comparative textual analysis was conducted in order to understand the textual dynamics at play in the film remakes that are part of the phenomenon (cf. Cuelenaere, Willems & Joye, 2019a). Combining textual and industrial research enabled me to confront many of the intentions-claims²⁰⁵ of the interviewed cultural mediators with textual evidence, and vice versa. Given the article's particular focus on the production or industrial side of the Dutch-Flemish remake practice from the perspective of the people who take part in the film remake process, expert interviews were carried out. With said interviews, a detailed investigation of the perspectives of the interviewees themselves (i.e., key figures in the film remake practice of the Low Countries) was made possible (Ritchie & Ormston, 2014). More specifically, in the period 2018-2019 a total of 17 semi-structured in-depth expert interviews were performed (by the author) with both Dutch and Flemish/Belgian screenwriters (and adaptors), directors, producers, distributors, as well as the heads of both the Flemish Audiovisual Fund (VAF) and the Netherlands Film Fund (NFF) (cf. Table 8). The

²⁰⁵ Even though this article will not explicitly touch upon the aspects of the author (or producer/creator) and intentionality, it is undeniably at the very core of its arguments. One might then wonder how my findings relate to the question if the intentions of the producers behind a film remake are required to better grasp the interpretation of meaning and attribution of symbolic value? I would argue that, in the first place, in order to more fully answer such a question, we would have to (finally) analyze actual audiences and look at how they deal with these artifacts (see also Cuelenaere, 2020d). Additionally, and independently from the interpretation of meaning, the findings in this article will show that many of the authors' intentions and value attributions surely do influence the creative and industrial processes of the remake practice itself – which, moreover, might in turn affect the audiences' interpretations of the resulting films. In other words, it makes sense to declare the author dead if one solely analyses the text in itself, but if one wishes to understand the text in a broader social context (as an inter-subjective realm), embedded in all sorts of discourses, one should investigate not only the creators' intentions and the actual texts, but also the audiences' interpretations.

people that were interviewed are considered as experts because of their specific roles in the production process of film remakes, and more broadly in both the film industries of the Netherlands and Flanders. In order to gain more insight into the specific production contexts of both the Dutch and Flemish film remake practices, the topic list concentrated mostly on the underlying motivations behind, interpretations and evaluations of, as well as the experiences with the (production of these) Dutch-Flemish film remakes. Additionally, some of the questions also focused on the broader phenomenon of film remakes in today's cinematic landscape. In a next step, a thematic analysis (see, e.g., Jensen, 2013) instructed by an extensive literature review was conducted on the transcriptions of the interviews. Finally, different themes (compiled by comparing the different codes) came to the surface inductively from the data.

Table 8: Interviewed experts

Name (nationality)	Remake project role(s)	Dutch-Flemish remake project(s)
Albert Jan van Rees (NL)	Director	<i>Adios Amigos</i> (2016, NL)
Antoinette Beumer (NL)	Director	<i>Loft</i> (2010, NL)
Burny Bos (NL)	Producer	<i>Adios Amigos</i> (2016, NL)
Dirk Impens (BE)	Producer	<i>Team Spirit</i> (2000, BE) <i>Gilles (Buitenspel)</i> , 2003, BE) <i>Hidden Desire (Verborgen Verlengen)</i> , 2017, BE)
Doreen Boonekamp (NL)	Director Netherlands Film Fund (NFF)	N/A
Dries Vos (BE)	Director/ screenwriter/ adaptor	<i>The Family Way (Allemaal Familie)</i> , 2017, BE) <i>Bad Trip</i> (2017, BE)
Erwin Provoost (BE)	Director Flemish Film Fund (VAF)	N/A
Hans Van Acker (BE)	General Manager Kinopolis Film Distribution (KFD)	N/A
Hilde De Laere (BE)	Producer	<i>Loft</i> (2010, NL) <i>The Loft</i> (2014, VS)
Hilde Van Mieghem (BE)	Director	<i>Madly in Love (Smoorverliefd)</i> , 2010, NL)
Jan Verheyen (BE)	Director/ screenwriter	<i>Team Spirit</i> (2000, BE) <i>Gilles (Buitenspel)</i> , 2005, BE) <i>Crazy About Ya (Zot van A.)</i> , 2010, BE)
Martin Ruttenberg (NL)	General Manager Theatrical Dutch Film Works (DFW)	N/A
Peter Lories (BE)	Screenwriter/ adaptor	<i>Crazy About Ya (Zot van A.)</i> , 2010, BE)

Name (nationality)	Remake project role(s)	Dutch-Flemish remake project(s)
Rachel Van Bommel (NL)	Producer	<i>Loft</i> (2010, NL)
Sjef Scholte (NL)	Producer	<i>Madly in Love</i> (<i>Smooverliefd</i> , 2013, NL)
Tom de Mol (NL)	Producer	<i>Brasserie Valentine</i> (<i>Brasserie Valentijn</i> , 2016, NL)
Willem Wallyn (BE)	Screenwriter/ adaptor	<i>What Men Want</i> (<i>Wat Mannen Willen</i> , 2015, BE) <i>The Family Way</i> (<i>Allemaal Familie</i> , 2017, BE)

11.3 The Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon from a production perspective

In line with the '[a]daptation studies' habitual checking of its own academic pulse' (Murray, 2012: 21), a similar compulsion can be found in the field of remake studies where 'most critical work [...] typically begins with a gesture that is equally defensive and corrective' (Heinze & Krämer, 2015: 7): it is stated that remakes are (unfairly) negatively treated, and, partially as a consequence, have therefore received very little serious or critical consideration. Though much of the popular discourse on film remakes keeps on repeating the same old debasing prejudices, current scholarly research has a much more nuanced image of the remake, which resulted in a plethora of intriguing studies. As research in the field has proven (e.g., Forrest and Koos, 2002; Mazdon, 2000; Verevis, 2006), studying (the practice of) film remakes is not only crucial if one wants to better grasp today's media environment that is known for its high amount of serialized (film)texts, but it also aids in better understanding some of the essential (textual, ideological, socio-cultural, industrial, and audience-related) aspects when studying film and cinema. In the following, I will touch upon several important insights and theoretical findings that were developed throughout the almost five decades of research that started in the 1970s-1980s and confront these with my own findings.

11.3.1 *Describing and defining the film remake (label)*

Constantine Verevis (2006) claims that 'remakes do not consist simply of bodies of films but, like genres, are located too in "expectations and audience knowledge" and in "the institutions that govern and support specific reading strategies"' (p. 23). Indeed, one could argue that the film remake as a label/etiquette (a category employed by distributors and exhibitors) or contract (being a sort of mental contract between producer and consumer) (see e.g., Altman, 1999) works similarly to film genres, which always come with specific audience expectations and preconceptions. In order to understand how the mental contract between producer and consumer is created by the etiquette of the film remake, this section will briefly sketch out the perspectives and discourses from actors within the film remake industry itself.

The first finding that should be addressed is that, generally, when our experts were asked how they would describe, define, and evaluate the film remake, many of

them spontaneously started contextualizing it by using examples from Hollywood. Not only does this call for an important distinction between the film remake as a concrete practice (*in* context), and the more abstract notion of remaking a film (*beyond* context) and what that entails, it also confirms the ubiquitous association of film remakes with the Hollywood film industry (and, indeed, its commercial imperatives). Concerning the first implication of that finding, one is reminded of Hutcheon's (2006) double categorization of adaptation as a formal identity or product – an 'announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works' (p. 7) –, and adaptation as a process of creation – i.e., the act of adaptation itself, always involving 'both (re-)interpretation and then (re-)creation' (8) – and reception – being a form of intertextuality, experienced 'as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation' (8). On the other hand, Voigt's distinction between the noun 'remake' – being a matter of film – and the practice of 'remaking' – which can also be applied to other media (cited in: Heinze & Krämer, 2015) was also echoed in the experts' discourses. Though both these categorizations were (indirectly) reflected, they were equally so criticized – some experts assigned the practice of 'remaking' solely to the cinematic category and used different terminologies for other media – which points toward the advantage of employing theoretical distinctions if one wants to understand the film remake better. Regarding the association between film remakes and the Hollywood film industry, Dutch producer De Mol asserted that '[i]n Hollywood, remaking films is an actual business model, while in Europe, this is less the case. There are a few small companies that are trying to do the same in Europe, but I don't think that it should be considered as a big industry here'²⁰⁶. This contradicts recent research in the field claiming that European (film and television) companies increasingly invest in the practice of remaking or rebooting properties (see, e.g., Verevis, 2017; Meir, 2019a). Yet, even though many of the experts made this mental connection, almost all of them advanced the element of 'commercially driven mainstream films' as one of the most important aspects of the (Dutch-Flemish) film remake practice – thereby contradicting the binary notion of commercial Hollywood and artistic European cinema.

²⁰⁶ All quotes from the self-conducted interviews were translated from Dutch to English by the author himself.

Textually defining and taxonomizing the film remake, and, consequently, differentiating it from other (similar but different) types of adaptation, has long been a concern of academics. Generally, the film remake is confined to those films that are (clearly) reworks of other films. Yet, 'any easy categorization of the remake is frustrated [...] by a number of factors' (Verevis, 2006: 22), including those film remakes that are uncredited, based on a common source text (e.g., 'readaptations'), or the fact that originals are never pure singularities. Consequently, defining the film remake too broadly – if every film is an intertext, one could argue that every film remakes (parts of) other films, making every film a film remake – runs the risk of the term becoming too opaque and therefore scientifically useless. If one, on the contrary, defines the term too tightly (aiming to be conceptually hygienic) – e.g., film remakes are credited, acknowledged, intramedial intertexts – a lot of films that might be considered as remakes fall outside the set theoretical boundaries and are, per definition, to be considered as non-remakes. Nicola Dusi (2011), moreover, argued that 'taxonomizing' the film remake does not aid us in elucidating the remake phenomenon or grasping its repetitive configuration. Taking these statements into account, one could come to the conclusion that, given the complexities, specifying the film remake might indeed be unhelpful or even unnecessary. Though it proves difficult to a-historically define the film remake, from the viewpoint of the audience, critical reception, but also the production side, the term of the film remake is widely adopted. Hence, convinced by the idea that the term itself is 'created and sustained through the repeated use of terminology' (Verevis, 2006: 28), it is vital to inquire into the existing discourses that surround the film remake. As Leo Braudy (1998) claimed, the term 'film remake' itself was imported into scholarly debate from both movie journalism and the movie business, which is why the analysis of such industrial discourses on the film remake is highly necessary. Therefore, if one wants to take the film remake seriously, it is important to not consider how specific cultural objects are remakes *in essence*, but rather to determine which artifacts are *interpreted or conceived* as film remakes (Moine, 2007).

When asking the Dutch-Flemish industrials to describe the film remake, some of the most frequently recurring aspects or defining elements were, next to the abovementioned element of being mainstream films, the following: film remakes are films 'that are based on already made films' (Verheyen, Flemish director) – echoing most scholarly definitions (Heinze & Krämer, 2015) –, are intramedial, 'rewrite the

scenario while preserving the pitch or basis from the [preceding] scenario' (Van Acker, Flemish distributor), localize the basic idea of the source film – 'in order to match it with the local market', dicit Van Bommel (Dutch producer) –, and can broadly be taxonomized in two groups (i.e., literal and loose remakes). Less frequently mentioned features of the film remake were, for example, that the term itself is 'not standardized' (Verheyen) or that film remakes are often (mainstream) genre films – and, according to Flemish producer Impens, 'often romantic comedies' in the context of the Low Countries –, based on other stories, and taking over the idea or 'repeating the content' (Van Mieghem, Flemish director) of the source film. Others suggest that film remakes depart from a quasi-universal story, are inherently transnational, exist because of cultural differences and inversely prove that cultural differences are real, and finally should not be equated with so-called copies – which Flemish screenwriter and adaptor Wallyn illustrates with the following quote: 'No one compares two films and says: "Let's make exactly the same film"'. It does exist, though: *Psycho* was remade by Gus Van Sant, and the same could be said of *Diabolique*, but these aren't remakes, these are copies'. The myriad of enumerated, often contrasting elements exemplify the difficulty of describing such cultural phenomena a-historically and in abstract terms.

Hence, a first conclusion that can be drawn is that experts do not agree upon a single definition of the film remake. While there were several aspects that were agreed upon by most, it became clear that analyzing the industrial discourses will not provide us with a clear-cut definition. Though it is difficult to make a definite verdict without looking at other contexts, I think this finding gives extra weight to Dusi's (2011) argument that defining or 'taxonomizing' the film remake might not aid us in clarifying the practice of remaking or understanding its repetitive structure – next to approving the idea that the artifact and practice is intrinsically contingent and hybrid. Moreover, after quickly defining or describing the film remake in a seemingly neutral way, many experts uttered more ideological, often highly evaluative and normative statements. Consequently, it might be more fruitful to instead investigate 'which categories, evaluations, procedures, and so on, of filmic iteration are invented, identified, or performed by whom (or what) at which point' (Kelleter & Loock, 2017: 131), i.e., what this article calls for and attempts to inquire (for the first time) in the following.

11.3.2 Evaluating or judging film remakes

There are two overarching normative or evaluative statements or principles that can be distilled from the expert interviews. On the one hand, most of them do not want to judge or *a priori* reject the practice of remaking films, while on the other, several (of the same) experts do spontaneously advance many contra-arguments and in a way condemn the phenomenon (to which they contributed). The arguments that were used to support or defend the practice vary from the fact that film remakes make stories travel, attract new (young) audiences, are commercially interesting, or revamp forgotten or 'outdated' films. Dutch distributor Ruttenberg said the following: 'We are still quite positive about film remakes. Why not? If it turns out that a film with the same humor as ours worked very well in Spain and we're convinced that it could work in the Netherlands... then the producer can consider remaking it. [...] Apparently these films do travel on all fronts'. Some of the experts also (indirectly) attach different conditions to what a good, interesting or viable film remake is: 'I'm positive toward film remakes as long as they have a clear function and if you can reach new audiences with them' (Van Bommel). In that same context, Flemish film director Van Mieghem asserted: '*An sich*, I don't have an issue with film remakes, as it is often fascinating to see what the new creators did to the film on which the remake is based. Yet, the latter is especially the case when there is a gap of 20 or 30 years between both films, when there's a different mentality or spirit of time. *Smooverliefd* [Madly in Love 2010, i.e. her own remake] was made only two to three years later, which makes it less interesting'. In other words, this director claims that her own remake, which is illustrative of the practice of synchronic remaking – 'the production of remakes that takes place at roughly the same point in time as the production of the predecessors' (Loock, 2019: 327) – is less viable than diachronic remaking – being the type of remaking spanning decades of time.

Other conditions that were brought up during the interviews were, for example, that remakes should not be based on films that are perceived as of high quality – often linking the latter to arthouse cinema, as, for example, asserted by Van Acker: 'I think that arthouse films are too original, too creative or too qualitative to be remade' – or that they should not aspire to be totally different from their source film. The latter touches upon the old 'fidelity debate' in the field of adaptation studies which, in fact, 'continues to distance itself from fidelity as an evaluative strategy, [while] it is clear that an adaptation's faithfulness to its source remains a key concern for

audiences' (Mee, 2017: 194). From the perspective of cultural mediators active in the film remake process, however, it appears that fidelity is less framed within an evaluative context and more in economic terms. Illustrative of the latter is a quote by Flemish scriptwriter/adaptor Lories: 'At a certain moment, the remake can evolve or differ so much from the original that you start asking yourself: "Why did I ever acquire the expensive remake rights to the original if the original creators would not even recognize it as a remake of their film?"'. Indeed, while the experts did not really suggest that the remake should be loyal to the source film because of a 'respect' or 'admiration' for the source film, many of them argued that the basic premise of the source film should be preserved because the baseline of a script ensures the commercial viability of the project. This finding, again, confirms the primary commercial focus of these projects. Interestingly, existing literature claims that the common disdain for film remakes is actually 'rooted in the neoromantic belief that art should somehow not be concerned with making money' (Klein & Palmer, 2016: 12). The Dutch-Flemish industrials, however, consider the commerciality of these film remakes to be beneficial rather than negative, while some even see the commercial underpinnings as intrinsically connected to the film remake's existence.

Even though Impens explicitly said that he does not want to judge film remakes, and other experts claimed that judgments are unnecessary as only commercial interests count, most people in the industry did carry or utter (often negative) normative judgments. This echoes the centuries-old adverse discourses in the public and critical (as well as academic) opinion (Mazdon, 2000). What is more, many of the widespread assumptions and prejudices toward the practice of remaking films – e.g., the typical hierarchies between high/low culture, and the well-known fallacy that 'source texts are more original than adaptations' (Leitch, 2003: 162) – were also shared by the experts: Impens, for example, describes film remakes as 'legal theft', while Dutch director Beumer typifies them as 'creatively poor'. Words like 'unfortunate', 'weird', 'superfluous', and 'sad' were also used to describe the (broader and specific Dutch-Flemish) phenomenon.

Next to the aforementioned elements, the aspect that was discussed most during the interviews was the idea of originality. Lories, for instance, linked originality to fidelity when claiming that 'the modifications that one has to apply to the remake have to be financially feasible and should not discount or detract from the power and potential of the original'. There were only two experts who thought that the film remake

is not per definition less original than its source film, while almost all other people were convinced that film remakes are indeed always less original – echoing the common romantic understanding of the concept, i.e., seeing it as of a vegetable nature, rising ‘spontaneously from the vital root of genius; it grows, it is not made’ (Young, cited in: Macfarlane, 2007: 18). The latter confirms existing literature which argues that today’s discourses on originality mirror the neoromantic idea of art. Such a stance considers the filmmaker as ‘a heroic, visionary, and idiosyncratic artist [...] [which] conflict[s] with the apparent lack of “originality” in remakes’ (Herbert, 2008: 189). Originality was also commonly associated and sometimes even equated with ‘good’, ‘qualitative’, ‘surprising’, and ‘charming’. Yet, some of them did nuance the above by asserting that such statements depend on how one defines the concept itself. Verheyen even critiqued the notion of originality by employing intertextual insights. Most of the experts also preferred ‘original’ over remake projects but stated that one can always add ‘original elements’ to a film remake.

Bringing the above together, one could argue that, although the film remake practice or phenomenon was often associated with – and explained or contextualized by – the allegedly purely commercially driven Hollywood industry, the European (or, more specifically, Dutch-Flemish) film remake practice is seen as being for the most part commercial in nature. This self-awareness or belief has several implications: on the one hand, it is employed as a means to criticize or condemn the practice or to underscore its little artistic ambitions, while on the other, it is used as a legitimation for the alleged ‘unoriginal approach’ of these projects. It might also explain why most of the Dutch-Flemish remakes are commercial genre films aimed at broad audiences. The above statements were, moreover, often followed by negative judgements about the phenomenon. Additionally, the experts also advanced that, while one can add original elements to film remakes, they are nonetheless inherently less original than non-remakes – thereby reflecting the (neo-)romantic notion of originality. Contrarily to these comments, remakes were, at times, simultaneously put in a favorable light as they would be commercially interesting, can make stories travel, attract other or new audiences, or can revive forgotten or ‘outmoded’ films. Finally, the experts’ perceptions and subsequent judgements of film remakes and their surrounding practice seemed to spur precise conditions which instruct the types of remakes that are actually ‘legitimate’ and those that are not.

11.3.3 *Selecting and motivating film remakes*

Verevis (2006) argues that film producers perceive film remakes as financial opportunities highly adjusted to the needs of standardized studio projects. In that sense, producers might see these films as pre-sold because of two reasons: first, the source films (upon which the remakes are based) have (generally) been tested in another context and proved themselves to be commercially viable, and second because in some cases, 'viewers are assumed to have some prior experience, or at least possess a 'narrative image', of the original story – an earlier film, literary or other property – before engaging in its particular retelling' (p. 3). According to Michael Druxman (1975), the incentive to opt for a film remake is mainly voluntary, in the sense that the involved people are convinced that there is (still) potential in continuing or repeating an existing story or film. Yet, he continues, it is equally a result of industrial pragmatism, based on, e.g., risk-averse logics and the above-mentioned benefits of the pre-sold nature of film remakes. Indeed, '[s]ince the decision to invest in a certain film involves such a high degree of risk, individuals or companies seeking funding for a film need to present convincing arguments for its income-earning potential' (Ross, 2017: 138). Another important motivation to opt for a remake project is the tactic of 'purchasing the rights to novels, plays and stories in perpetuity [which] meant that a company was able to produce multiple versions of a particular property without making additional payments to the copyright holder' (Verevis, 2006: 6) – mirroring the phenomenon in the literary realm where 'the end of the copyright period for canonical works tends to push commercially-oriented publishers to put out reprints' (Ross, 2017: 137). Finally, another remake benefit is its potential to exploit new screen technologies or film stars, of which the latter is, according to Jonathan Ross a commonly employed strategy, whereby 'elements such as the plot, characterization, dialogue and camerawork are subordinated to the goal of foregrounding one or more budding or famous actors' (p. 139). In order to complement these commercially driven motivations, Robert Eberwein (1998) asserts that directors with sufficient funds may also want to remake films because of personal reasons, for example with the aim of improving (e.g., technologically, culturally, or historically) or modifying the source film (e.g., because of differences in artistic stances).

Several of the interviewed experts emphasized the importance of the role of producers in the remake process: not only do they often initiate these projects (e.g., by acquiring the remake rights directly from other producers), thereby being the first

gatekeepers in the process, they are usually also involved in the creative process, making smaller to more significant changes to the content of the film remakes. Such creative involvement of film producers confirms the aforementioned commercial underpinnings of these projects, which led Beumer to label the remake she directed as 'a producer's film'. The main incentive for initiating a film remake project addressed during the interviews is related to the above-mentioned risk-averse or -minimizing aspect of filmmaking, and is, therefore, again, commercially motivated. Linked to this is the idea that – at least in the context of the Low Countries – acquiring remake rights for a film is, according to Wallyn, not that expensive (also when compared to remake rights of e.g., French films) and often cheaper than paying people to write a fully new script. For many of the interviewees, it made perfect sense to opt for a remake of a successful film from across the border, as the script already 'proved' (cf. Verevis, 2006) itself in a highly similar market or industry. Other arguments that were given also fit within a clear commercial stance: they opted for a remake project because the production cycle of a film remake is, on average, a lot shorter than other film projects, or because a distributor initiated and co-financed the project (cf. below). Connected to the advantage of quick production is that these remakes were sometimes even used to fill in a gap in the film program of a Flemish cinema chain: the idea to remake *Het Verlangen* (*The Longing*) '[...] was positively received by the cinema operators because, somewhere mid-November, they had to deal with an opening in their program. Therefore, it [i.e., the remake project] was, as it were, market-driven', according to Impens.

An important nuance to the abovementioned risk-averse motivations and literature is that these should not only be interpreted in commercial terms: many experts mentioned that the risk-averseness also applies to the creative aspect of producing films. Illustrative of the latter is Dutch director van Rees' statement: 'The fact that this film was a remake made me feel more at ease because I knew that the basis was good and if necessary I could add things and change stuff. That way, I could really focus on the actors, their performances, and their chemistry'. This comment harmonizes with the many other incentives behind remake projects that are not commercially motivated (cf. Eberwein, 1998). Beumer, Van Bommel, and Bos suggested that they wanted to make a remake of a specific film because they had seen the 'original' and really loved it. Van Mieghem and Vos, moreover, said that they decided to remake *Smooverliefd* and *Alles is Familie* (Family Way) because good

romantic comedies are highly rare. Other rationales related to the content of films were that the source film was a high concept film, contained quasi-universal themes, was a great vehicle to star a celebrity (cf. Ross, 2017), or contained a good story that was not worked out well in the source film. This reminds of what Marijke De Valck (2014) once described as the 'mix and match [of] art for art's sake values with the new ideal of cultural entrepreneurship' (p. 40): i.e., how people from the film industry (or, in her case, the film festival circuit) often (are obliged to) balance in between a clear passion for cinema on the one hand, and an awareness 'of contemporary global market demands and the necessity to comply with certain trends' (p. 40).

11.3.4 *The importance of connection or networking*

Next to the commercially motivated incentives, as well as those related to the subject-matter of the films (positioned more as a personal motive), I should address the more, what one could call, social factors that affect the decision to produce a remake project (or at least provide the fertile ground in which it can prosper). In this context, Lories declared the following: 'With the experience I have of more than 25 years, I think I can now claim with quite some certainty that this business is almost always driven by coincidence and personal contacts. It is almost always based on networks of personal contacts. There's simply no other way to better explain it'.

This brings us to another essential phase of the remake process, i.e., the connecting or networking aspect of these projects. As the concept of 'small nations' (Hjort & Petrie, 2007) dictates, cinemas of such small nations should not be analyzed in silos, but rather as smaller parts of one or more broader transnational network(s). Having a personal network appeared of quintessential importance in the remake industry, especially in the small geo-linguistic context of the Low Countries. One of the consequences of these informal contacts between producers, directors, distributors, screenwriters, and even actors across the border is that people from both regions are highly aware of each other's projects. Therefore, in contrast to the Dutch and Flemish audiences, the people working in the industries themselves do watch films from across the border or recommend them to each other. As a result, the role of so-called remake rights representatives seems of less, or indeed, no importance in a small context like the Low Countries – as producers, distributors, directors or even screenwriters directly acquire the remake rights of their partners from across the border.

This finding contradicts, or at least nuances Labayen and Morán's (2019) claim that remake rights representatives are central to the production of (comedy) remakes in local-language markets and function '[...] as new institutional media modalities, [...] intervening in transnational media businesses by forging a new industrial character, which rests mostly on the construction of film remaking as culturally proximate for different territories' (p. 284) – nevertheless, the important role of such representatives in a broader European context was confirmed by both Impens and De Mol. On the other hand, it confirms Roderik Smits' (2019) argument that, in the Netherlands, distribution companies 'become attached to international films through formal distribution arrangements with sales agents at international sales markets, while Dutch films are often acquired through informal networks with producers in the Dutch market' (p. 124–125) but expands it to the Belgian or Flemish market – implying that this informal network should apparently not be confined to only national borders, which is, again, symptomatic for cinemas of small nations. In conclusion, the remake process is more affected by interpersonal connections between people from the Dutch and Flemish film industries or contingent transnational networks than being the outcome of structural contexts or agreements. Indeed, it turned out that the interpersonal networks are of significant importance to the remake practices in small geo-linguistic film markets – in the case of the Low Countries both within and across both the Flemish and Dutch film industries.

11.3.5 *Creating or producing film remakes*

The abovementioned idea of understanding European film remakes as 'foreign' mainstream films that are localized, or indeed, manufactured in such way that they feel culturally proximate, is one of the crucial aspects of the creation phase of the remake process. Though it is problematic to equate the remake process with localization (Cuelenaere, 2020a), in the context of Dutch-Flemish film remakes, a great deal of the experts claimed that film remakes localize the content of the source film and make them feel locally or nationally proximate. The experts used many different terms to nominate the process of localization: (cultural) translation, *vernederlandsen* (to Dutch-ify), *vervlaamsen* (to Flemish-ify), adjusting to the cultural context, etc. When asked what this process entails, the most frequently recurring elements were concerned with 'adapting' the dialogues (vocabulary, accent, pitch, use of dialect), actors (their performances, characters, behavior, and names), locations, humor, decors, costumes,

soundtracks, cultural references, etc.²⁰⁷ Other elements that were mentioned were ethnicity, religious and colonial background, minority groups, and even nudity. Asking the interviewees what the specific goal is of this process of translation, the most frequently recurring objective is to create so-called recognizability for domestic audiences²⁰⁸, while others mentioned they wanted to improve the source film or ensure that 'one is not reminded of the original, or of the fact that there exists another version' (Impens). These two elements each touch upon two known categories of remakes that are part of two different typologies: the idea of improvement connects to the 'true remake', which announces to be better than its predecessor while simultaneously wanting to cement the classic status of its earlier cinematic rendition (Leitch, 1990). The difference here is that, in the case of Dutch-Flemish film remakes, there is no tendency whatsoever to solidify the status of its source film – which also connects to the experts' 'lack' of respect toward the source material. The idea voiced by Impens is in line with the 'disguised remake', which typifies a new version of a film that does not aim or wish to call attention to the source film (Druxman, 1975). Moreover, Impens' quote might also signal the aspiration to make the audience 'forget' about the source film by improving it, finally wishing to supplant it, which summons the true remake more. Another aim that was frequently referred to is related to the idea of wanting to 'enhance' the source film, namely by making the 'unclear' more clear, to simplify, or, indeed, to 'fix' narrative or other 'errors'.²⁰⁹ Some went even as far to claim that this idea of simplifying stories was actually culturally motivated: 'I think that every Dutch spectator perfectly understood those two scenes, without the need for those Flemish

²⁰⁷ Which confirms one of the hypotheses that came out of the textual analysis I made of these films: 'filmmakers try to keep a balance between a more or less universal framework (i. e., dialogic structures, themes, narratives, spaces, characters, even production tactics) and a local interpretation or "reality"' (Cuelenaere, Joye & Willems, 2019a: 269).

²⁰⁸ Which taps into the concept of 'cultural proximity', referring to the idea that audiences generally favour cultural artifacts that are as proximate as possible to their local [...] language, ethnic appearance, dress, style, humor, historical reference, and shared topical knowledge' (Straubhaar, 2007: 26).

²⁰⁹ In a textual analysis of these Dutch-Flemish remakes, I conceptualized 'the rendering explicit, obvious or clear previously ambiguous or implicit narrative elements or meanings in the source film' (Cuelenaere, Joye & Willems, 2019a: 270) as 'filling in the gaps'. As I argued before, this concept 'indicate[s] how filmmakers of mainstream films want to streamline, clarify, and in some instances simplify their films, ultimately in order to make them more digestible and to reach larger audiences' (Cuelenaere, Joye & Willems, 2019a: 271).

clarifications. In Flanders, there still exists a clear underestimation of the audiences and a conviction that it has to be ensured that audiences understand everything clearly' (Lories).

The interviews made clear that the experts did not really acknowledge the discursive instead of essentialist nature of 'Flemishness' or 'Dutchness', or, indeed, national/cultural identity – which, of course, has implications on the films they produce²¹⁰. In a similar vein, a great deal of the interviewees motivated creative changes made during the remake process by employing cultural stereotypes and prejudices. An example of the latter is when De Laere explained why several scenes (including the ending scene) in the Dutch remake she produced were changed: 'You can feel a clear difference between the Flemish catholic and Dutch protestant background and how that difference is reflected in what we [Flemish people] perceive as daring or risky, what triggers us or what we deem interesting. In the Netherlands, those things are less of an issue, also because people are more open and have the heart on their sleeve'²¹¹. Additionally, some of the experts also assured that the creative process behind the production of a remake should not be reduced to localization only: Impens, Vos, and De Mol made clear that, even though the film they were producing was a film remake, they wanted to make a film of 'their own', and not simply produce a 'copy' of the source film. Indeed, many of the decisions made in the creative process were the result of personal preferences or taste differences.

Overall, it became quickly clear that the process of remaking a film itself generally happens in a non-systematic, *ad hoc* manner. There is no such thing as a remake bible²¹² or manufactured product that rolls from a production line, nor is there a simple manual that 'enables an idea to cross boundaries, cultures, and so on, and

²¹⁰ It was indeed found that these Dutch-Flemish film remakes 'build on particular stereotypical visions about specific cultures with the purpose of recreating a socio-cultural context (films 'about' a nation)', which indirectly 'reaffirm[s], and in a way reconsolidate[s], such narrowed perceptions' (Cuelenaere, Willems & Joye, 2019b: 14).

²¹¹ In another study (Cuelenaere, Willems & Joye, 2018) in which a comparative textual analysis was conducted of both these films, it was indeed found that the Dutch version was more explicit when it comes down to, e.g., the representation of nudity and sexuality in comparison to the Flemish version.

²¹² Referring to what is called the 'format bible' or 'production bible'. This is a document 'which teaches local teams everything they need to know in order to produce the [local version of a formatted] show' (Chalaby, 2016: 12) and that licensees of television formats receive.

to be localized in every place where it stops' (Chalaby, 2016: 11). In the context of the Low Countries, what the acquirer of remake rights actually receives is, in most cases, only the script of the source film (cf. below). Impens and De Mol declared that the contract they signed did not impose any requirements related to the content. The latter, however, nuanced this: 'I think there was something in the contract that said that the people that worked on the original film could read along, and that, if the remake got out of hand, they could distance themselves from the remake project'. Most producers, but also directors, claimed that they were granted a lot of creative freedom in the remake project. There was only one case where a director claimed that the original director and producer were also involved in the screenwriting and editing stage of the remake project, but this mainly had to do with the fact that they were co-producing the film remake. Van Mieghem, on the other hand, told that she received little freedom while directing the remake²¹³ because of the requirements and (creative) demands of the distributors and producers she worked with. Beumer said something along the same lines, claiming to have less freedom because the producers wanted to stick very closely to the original – yet, again, the producer of the source film was also involved in the remake project.

11.3.6 *Marketing and distributing film remakes*

Labayen and Moràn (2019) argue that quite some parallels can be drawn between the TV format market and the film remake trade. As the field of format studies is a lot more embedded in production or industry research, it proves interesting to juxtapose some of their concepts and insights with the insights from my production analysis. Jean Chalaby (2016), for instance, coined a concept to designate how licensees of a television format generally benefit from local knowledge or expertise that comes with the format package and dubbed it 'accumulated knowledge': '[this] is part of the format package and a licensing agreement [which] leads to a significant transfer of expertise [...] [containing] information about run-throughs, budgets, scripts, set designs, graphics, casting procedures, host profile, the selection of contestants, and every other possible aspect associated with the show's production' (p. 12).

²¹³ The fact that Van Mieghem's remake is actually an auto-remake (i.e., she directed both the source film and the film remake) makes this lack of freedom even more striking.

Though there were two producers and one director who explicitly suggested that acquiring the remake rights for a film does not come with accumulated knowledge, the two distributors that were interviewed alleged the opposite. Indeed, Van Acker stated: '[t]hat is indeed something we do consider, because productionally, you shouldn't reinvent the wheel if you already have a firm base to build on. [...] Producers might, for example, make use of the same camera crew, or look at how the Dutch post-production was applied. They could tailor the trailer in the same way, as the [source] film has already been marketed before, so they know how their predecessors did it'. Ruttenberg confirmed that the promotion campaign of *Wat Mannen Willen* was indeed based on one of its source film (*Mannenhart* [Men's Hearts] 2013): 'We did, more or less, look at how the trailer performed in our region. The same for the movie poster [of the Flemish remake]. So regarding that matter, we did give quite some direction'. However, it should be noted here that the Dutch distribution company DFW co-produced this Flemish remake project (*Wat Mannen Willen*). They were, moreover, also responsible for the distribution of the Dutch source film, *Mannenhart*. Therefore, it is likely that this 'accumulated knowledge' does not apply to the other cases that were not co-produced by one of the distributors involved in the source film project – which would also explain why some of the experts explicitly mentioned that the purchase of remake rights does not come with other production or distribution benefits. In that sense, this 'accumulated knowledge' might simply be the internal expertise of a distribution company that is shared between different projects they manage (i.e., in this case, a source film and remake) – again pointing out how much these processes are affected by contingent transnational networks or interpersonal connections and, therefore, less the result of structural contexts.

Smits (2019) asserts that '[d]istributors are important gatekeepers because they make a selection from several thousands of films on offer in the global marketplace every year' (p. 123). Moreover, as mentioned above, in some of the Dutch-Flemish film remake projects, distributors actually acted as co-producers, investing extra money next to the usual acquisition of exhibition rights in the preproduction stage²¹⁴. Creative involvement appeared to be part of the deal, whereby

²¹⁴ Smits argues that the competition between major independents (such as DFW) in the Netherlands is so strong that distributors generally already acquire the exhibition rights in the

elements such as the film title, use of humor, localization, and the basic premise were decided by the distributor (Van Acker). Moreover, many of the experts suggested that it was actually the distribution company that initiated the whole idea of remaking a film from across the border. According to De Laere, they are highly aware of what is going on in the neighboring country and try to find gaps in the market that can be filled with (possibly) successful projects from across the border. Next to the geographical, cultural, and linguistic proximity, this mutual awareness exists simply because some of the distribution companies in the Low Countries have offices in both the Netherlands and Belgium, 'while others [i.e., Dutch distribution companies] work with partners in Belgium [and vice versa] to acquire films for the Benelux countries' (Smits, 2019: 129). Indeed, nine out of 11 film remake projects were distributed by KFD for the Flemish part and by DFW for the Dutch part, while both these companies have a structural agreement in which they, for example, acquire exhibition rights together for the Benelux territory.

This Dutch-Flemish cooperation between two distribution companies taps into one of the core aspects of small national cinemas, i.e., the idea that these small industries work together in broader transnational networks, thereby uniting against other powerful industries from outside Europe. According to the interviewed experts, the advantages that come with co-productions also come with the production of Dutch-Flemish film remakes, as '[r]emakes are co-productions, if only because you have to acquire the remake rights which are owned by someone from across the border' (De Mol)²¹⁵. Additionally, Vos claims that Dutch-Flemish '[film remakes] emerge from the distribution side and the will to maximize profits [...] By doing so, both Dutch Film Works and E-One try to get a foot here in Belgium'. Indeed, through the co-production of these remakes, distributors also aim to expand outside of their domestic market and,

preproduction stage, thereby directly investing money in the film project. My interviews did not only confirm this, but showed that this also counts for the Belgian or Flemish film major independents (such as KFD).

²¹⁵ Though employing such a broad definition of cinematic co-production is naturally highly questionable – 'a project is not an "international co-production" merely by virtue of the fact that investment emanates from several territories [...] [it rather] implies the involvement of two or more producers from different countries collaborating creatively and financially on a project' (Hammett-Jamart, Mitric, & Redvall, 2018: 11) –, it does not take away that the (aforementioned) benefits of co-productions apparently also come with the production of these Dutch-Flemish film remakes.

consequently, penetrate other similar film markets. Furthermore, Dutch-Flemish film remakes, and by extension, other intra-European film remakes could be interpreted as a new form of circulation that permits films (or film scripts) to travel across national boundaries. Apart from the commercial repercussions, the following quote summarizes the ambiguous cultural consequences of this form of circulation²¹⁶ quite well: 'I think it's quite positive that people that come from other cultural contexts, countries, and language areas encounter Flemish, Dutch or French stories, as it challenges provincialism. Remakes are positive in that sense. Or, let's say, not remakes but distribution, the dissemination of these kinds of stories is positive' (Lories).

The latter touches upon the concept of 'mediated cultural encounters', which emphasizes '[t]he role of media narratives, the central role of everyday life, and therefore the identity and perspectives we derive from living within a particular local and national reality [which] is crucial also for our perception of a transnational reality and of European others' (Bondebjerg et al., 2017: 3). What Lories, therefore, seems to suggest is that through the disguise of film remakes, stories are finally able to cross borders where they could not before. Yet, simultaneously, this kind of circulation might equally so undermine real transnational encounters, as remakes are known for localizing the foreign (cf. above), thereby indirectly complicating 'the creation of a shared and strong pan-European (cinema) culture' (Cuelenaere, 2020a). This, in turn, might possibly contribute to European audiences mainly perceiving their cultures as local or national, in spite of their 'obvious global and European dimensions' (Bondebjerg et al., 2017: 4). In this vein, Van Rees asserts that '[i]f you look at it from a purely cultural angle, it is quite strange that the Netherlands Film Fund finances remakes of Belgian films [...] for example, from the perspective of cultural identity'. It, therefore, appears that, though all of them were, naturally, involved in remake projects, some of the experts are aware of the possible negative cultural consequences of opting for these. Again, this connects to the abovementioned position that many of these mediators seem to hold: they balance in between a love for the medium or genuine engagement with creativity and cultural diversification, and an understanding

²¹⁶ Hjort (2010) asserted that 'there is nothing inherently virtuous about transnationalism' (p. 15), and that we should be resistant to 'globalization as cultural homogenization' (ibid.). It could be argued that the same goes for this new tendency of transnational cooperation, in this case in the form of film remakes.

of the current precarious state of the film industry (cf. De Valck, 2014) – with its particular challenges and market requirements in order to keep it alive.

Chapter 12

Originality versus proximity: audience reactions to monolingual film remakes

Positioning

This chapter concludes the empirical section by focusing on the reception context of Dutch-Flemish film remakes. In line with the overall aim of this dissertation, it strives for a more holistic approach of the field that studies film remakes: next to analyzing the textual and production aspect of remakes, one should not neglect the analysis of audiences (cf. section 2.6). Indeed, instead of assuming how audiences define, perceive, experience, and evaluate Dutch-Flemish film remakes, this chapter explores these aspects empirically by analyzing data from two Flemish and two Dutch focus groups. Therefore, I tested some of the hypotheses (e.g. the preference for originality and the overall negativity toward remakes) that were deduced from the theoretical section of this dissertation. Given the assumed cultural proximity between the Netherlands and Flanders (cf. sections 2.4.3, 3.2.2, and 3.3.2), the study equally inquires if (and why) Dutch and Flemish audiences prefer their local film versions. In a similar vein, the chapter also looks at how Dutch-Flemish audiences distinguish between the source films and their remakes, as well as how they relate this to (differences in) national identity. Additionally, it is found that participants do not share a common definition of the artifact and understand the label differently from scholars (cf. section 1.5.2) or people working in the industry (cf. Chapter 11). They mainly adduced differences between the film pairs, while downplaying the similarities. Moreover, these differences were mostly related to “essential” differences in national identity, which are explained through several cultural stereotypes. Finally, participants were highly critical of film remakes and generally preferred the local version. However, it appeared that the latter depended on whether they knew which version was the ‘original’.

Reference

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12.1 Introduction

Though several ancillary study fields such as adaptation studies, audiovisual translation studies, or TV format studies have now slowly started to adopt audience research as part of their methodological toolbox, the field that studies film remakes lags behind (Cuelenaere, 2020d). Analyzing the data obtained by conducting focus groups, this article will address this crucial blind spot and demonstrate the relevance of such bottom-up research. Doing so, the objective is to not only assume why and how reception contexts may impact (and help us understand) the film remake as product and process, but to actually study these contexts by setting aside assumptions in order to reconstruct 'the viewer's horizon of expectation' (Biltereyst & Meers, 2018: 31). This article, therefore, wants to strengthen the plea for a more holistic approach on the study of film remakes, convinced that juxtaposing the analysis of textual aspects with an investigation into the extra-textual elements of the film remake is crucial for the field's advancement. On top of its profoundly restricted methodological toolbox, the limited geographical frame of the field is also a point of concern. While remake studies have positively expanded their boundaries in the past decades, Hollywood film remakes are still the dominant objects of research (Smith and Verevis, 2017). Therefore, parallel to the aim of proving the possible benefits of integrating audience research in the field, I equally deviate from the ubiquitous geographical focus on Hollywood by looking into the context of Europe, more specifically the Low Countries – consisting of both the Netherlands and the northern Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, Flanders.

The study I present in this article is part of a larger research project that takes a multi-methodological, cultural studies inspired approach on the highly peculiar film remake practice of the Low Countries (see e.g. Cuelenaere, 2020a). Central to this study is the idea of cultural proximity and how local audiences experience and deal with highly similar, yet localized, versions of roughly the same film. As such, it is part of a broader body of research in cultural studies that deals with questions of why and how local contexts, references, and aspects are employed, represented (e.g. transformed or localized), and interpreted in different media (cf. Castelló, 2010; Mikos & Perrotta, 2011; Van Keulen & Krijnen, 2014; Cuelenaere, Joye & Willems, 2019a; 2019b). After a short introduction to the Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon, I will take inspiration from and build on findings of audience research coming from closely related fields to finally come up with three overarching research questions: (1) how do Dutch

and Flemish audiences describe and evaluate film remakes?; (2) how do Dutch and Flemish audiences experience, interpret, and explain differences and similarities between the Dutch-Flemish source films and their remakes?; and (3) (why) do Dutch and Flemish audiences prefer the local version over the foreign version of a film?

12.2 The monolingual remake phenomenon in the Low Countries

This article's object of research is located in the small geo-linguistic context of the Low Countries, where a total of 11 Dutch-Flemish film remakes was released in the period between 2000 and 2018 (cf. Table 2). Considering the modest size of both film industries in the Low Countries, the remarkably short time period in between the release of the source films and their remakes, and the popularity of these films, the practice appears to be reasonably significant. The particular linguistic aspect underscores the uniqueness (even on a global scale) of this case even more: as the source films and remakes are both spoken in Dutch (naturally except for minor differences in terms of vocabulary and accent), these Dutch-Flemish film remakes are to be considered as monolingual (Cuelenaere, Joye & Willems, 2019a). In sum, this phenomenon is exceptional, not in the least because one of the crucial reasons of existence for transnational film remakes is the cultural proximity it wishes to (re-)establish with its target audience through the process of localization (in terms of i.a. linguistic and cultural aspects).

The Netherlands and Flanders not only share the same language, but also a great deal of their pasts, which makes them (arguably) even more culturally proximate. Next to their comparable size, both Dutch and Flemish film industries are also (akin to most other European film markets) vastly reliant on governmental subsidies as well as on tax incentives. Furthermore, both film industries are known for their tradition of co-producing each other's films. Indeed, both regions suffer from the European impasse where local films are almost without exception incapable of having a successful release outside of their local borders (Higson, 2018). Aiming to bypass this seemingly hopeless situation, and fighting the hegemonic position of Hollywood, European film industries co-produce with other (mainly) European partners. In addition to the latter European situation, from the 1990s on, a growing mutual alienation, disinterest or indifference has defined the Dutch and Flemish cultures. This led to a situation where the two markets shared less and less cultural artifacts (Cajot, 2012). Indeed, based on a report of the period 2004-2012 on Dutch and Flemish newspapers, magazines, radio, literature, dance performances, (music) theatre productions, and television, it can be said that there is hardly any substantial cross-border traffic (Van Baelen, 2013; Raats & Donders, 2020). As well as some recent successes in co-productions of television

programs and fiction, from the 1990s on, the Netherlands and Flanders have started to adapt each other's television formats (van Keulen, 2020) and remade each other's television fiction. In a similar vein, the film industries in the Low Countries have, next to the co-production strategy, started to invest in the remaking of each other's films which became a novel, economically viable way to circumvent the aforementioned deadlock.

A previous textual analysis indicated that most of these film tandems are mainstream genre films (often romantic comedies) targeted at local audiences that 'simultaneously seem to draw from well-known and established Hollywood industrial practices and creative tropes' (Cuelenaere, Joye & Willems, 2019a: 266). Moreover, it was shown that the process of localization was central to the adaptation process (i.e. changing textual elements to make the film remake more recognizable and identifiable for the target culture). Yet, instead of arguing that this idea of localization – and the differences it generates between the source films and remakes – directly reflects clear-cut cultural differences between both regions, it was found that they are rather 'the result of the perceptions of cultural differences and stereotypes held by filmmakers' (Cuelenaere, Joye & Willems, 2019a: 278). Apart from these local(ized) elements, the Dutch-Flemish film remakes show many quasi-universal aspects (displayed in similar characters, themes, spaces, or dialogic structures).

12.3 Integrating audience research in the field of remake studies

Resulting from the absence of audience research in the field of remake studies, this article deliberately chooses to draw on research questions, methods, and findings of closely related fields and disciplines. Inspired by Kuipers and De Kloet (2009: 104), this study, therefore, builds on cultural studies 'theories on encoding and decoding, on parasocial interaction and identification [or recognition], and on cultural repertoires [which] provide different frameworks for the interpretation and explanation of national differences in media reception'. In short, the first refers to Hall's (1980) model that argues that audiences are active and can interpret texts in dominant, negotiated, and oppositional manners. The second, which is grounded in media psychology (e.g. Livingstone, 1998), asserts that cultural differences are expected to influence processes of identification and parasocial interaction (e.g. individuals' mediated experiences with someone on screen). The third, which in its turn sits in with the field of cultural sociology (e.g. Lamont and Thévenot, 2000), argues that audiences from different national contexts possess different "repertoires of evaluation" which are employed to evaluate and judge, which can eventually result in dissimilar preferences.

In the context of film studies, Jones (2017) showed that audiences in different European countries demonstrated remarkable commonalities in how they respond to the same movies. Consequently, he found that specific films with a strong transnational attraction were understood in roughly the same ways, 'regardless of national context' (Jones, 2017: 480). The results from Bondebjerg et al. (2017), contrarily, tell us that audiences carry more powerful feelings about their particular national TV content, and, moreover, show more profound and spontaneous associations with stories from their own national surroundings. Their findings, therefore, indicate that '[t]here is a proximity that goes deep between stories where locations, characters and details of a recognizable reality are experienced and felt directly' (Bondebjerg et al., 2017: 11). The authors add that, at times, audiences liked narratives conceived in other European countries than their own (or co-produced stories), yet, a feeling of otherness or distance appears to persist. Here, the concept of cultural proximity provides us with an explanatory framework. According to its founders, cultural proximity should be understood as 'the desire for cultural products as similar as possible to one's own language, culture, history, and values' (Straubhaar, LaRose & Davenport, 2013: 504).

In other words, Buonanno (2008) argues that cultural proximity is not the only, but definitely

‘a primary factor in orienting cultural demand and consumption, according to the need for and pleasure derived from recognition, familiarity and identity. Among the symbolic material that competes for the public’s time and attention, people expect and are pleased to recognize themselves, their own social, individual and collective world, their customs and lifestyles, accents, faces, landscapes and everything else that they perceive as close and familiar’ (96).

In the realm of audiovisual translation studies, Desilla (2014), for instance, found that even though audiences did not understand all the cultural specifics of foreign film fragments, apparently, they did understand much of the latent or implied meanings of many of the references. Studying cultural bumps and how these are circumvented by adapting cultural artifacts is part of the broader study of localization. Even though the research of localization is also highly in need of the perspective of the audience (Esser, Bernal-Merino, & Smith, 2016), its small but existing body of research provides us with some interesting research questions and findings.

Localization refers to the utilization and reworking of characters, plots, locations, and other textual forms from cultural imports for particular socio-historic contexts. Hence, when cultural products are remade in other local contexts, they generally ‘requir[e] local cultural adaptation, [so] the actors involved in the production process aim to produce a connectivity [...] in the sense of a perceived local cultural proximity on the side of the audience’ (Suna, 2018: 31). In the realm of television studies, research by Turnbull (2015), for instance, showed that the 2014 USA remake of *Broadchurch* (UK, 2013-2017) was unsuccessfully released because it failed to establish a sense of cultural specificity, which made it less recognizable and identifiable for the target audience. Indeed, as Kuipers and De Kloet (2009: 103) have argued ‘[g]reat cultural distance may make identification simply impossible’, which might ‘make meaningful or pleasurable decoding’ difficult.

Additionally, Esser et al. (2016b) found that when people were invited to compare various versions of a television format, many of the comments and analyses they made were done in terms of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ and were highly normative. On top of that, when these participants made interpretations after comparing the different versions, they, above all, noted differences, and to a much lesser extent

commonalities. Esser et al. (2016b) also discovered that many of the respondents in their study showed signs of a growing global awareness and relatedness. Conversely, and in line with Bondebjerg et al. (2017) their research, when addressing the differences between format adaptations, many participants held a myriad of stereotypes of own and foreign national cultures. A final, yet highly interesting observation is that the groups of participants from two different national contexts 'defined what is special about their particular national versions in exactly the same way' (Esser et al., 2016b: 305), which brings us back to the aforementioned dialectic relationship between the local/national and quasi-universal.

A last strand of research questions emerges from the understanding that scholars do not necessarily define film labels or categories (e.g. genres) in the same way as 'people outside the realm of film and media research' (Bondebjerg et al., 2017: 155–56). Related to the latter is the discrepancy that exists between today's scholarly tradition in adaptation (and remake) studies which problematize notions of hierarchy, originality, and fidelity – so-called 'originals' are often *a priori* preferred to (and, therefore, ranked higher) their adaptations –, while research shows that they are still prevalent in audience responses (Mee, 2017). Indeed, '[a]udiences and fans frequently frame their reactions to new versions, or even to rumours of mooted productions, within discussions of taste, respect for the original texts, and, especially, of value and quality' (Mee, 2017: 193). Connected to the latter finding of Bondebjerg et al. (2017) is Mee's (rather hypothetical) statement that the audiences' awareness of the remake label of a particular film directly affects their expectations, acceptance or rejection of the remake in question. What is more, in comparison to adaptations from book to film, where fidelity is generally ascribed value, a film remake's faithfulness toward its source film(s) is often seen as highly uncreative (Mee, 2017). In his study of the American remake of the Japanese horror *Ringu* (Nakata, 1998), Hills (2005) argues that many of the knowing audiences (those who are aware or have seen both the source film and its remake) preferred the 'original' because they like to present themselves as early adopters (in this case, cultists), claiming that they have seen the source film first – even before it achieved more widespread acclaim. Mee (2017) adds that, in comparison to, for example, intra-national film remakes, transnational remakes are granted an extra reason for existence, because of the 'additional cross-cultural aspect to their appeal [that is] the lack of subtitles, recognizable actors, changes to familiar

locations or customs and practices' (200), which also guarantees them a new audience.

12.4 Method

Building on these insights, the research presented in this article is intended to serve as a preliminary glance at the audience perspective. I gathered the data for this study through the organization of a total of four focus groups between February and July 2019, two of each held respectively in Flanders (Ghent) and the Netherlands (Rotterdam). The groups consisted each of four to seven participants, were organized in Dutch, lasted about 90 minutes, and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. As asserted by Frith (1996: 4): '[p]art of the pleasure of popular culture is talking about it; part of its meaning is this talk, talk which is run th[r]ough with value judgments'. The latter connects with one of the crucial advantages of focus groups, namely the fact that these supply data specifically on 'the meanings that lie behind [...] group assessments [as well as] the uncertainties, ambiguities and group processes that lead to and underlie group assessments' and finally on 'the normative understandings that groups draw upon to reach their collective judgements' (Bloor et al., 2001: 4). Finally, the aim of this article is to further fuel a new strand of research in the field of remake studies, with its main goal being to 'understand, not to generalize but to determine the range, and not to make any statements about the population but to provide insights about how people in the groups perceive a situation' (Krueger & Casey, 2015: 80).

Due to financial limitations, I recruited the participants through social media (mainly Facebook groups and Twitter), a newspaper ad, and offline flyers. With the aim of preventing foreknowledge that might affect value judgements of a film²¹⁷ (or, indeed, might prime participants), the call for participation did not mention anything related to the subject of film remakes, nor to Dutch or Flemish cinema. Moreover, though both locations (university rooms in Ghent and Rotterdam) are quite easily accessible, it is likely that these locations limited the study's reach of recruitment, given that mostly people living in these two cities responded to my invitation.

Finally, the people who were interested to participate (a total of 170) had to fill in a form where they had to answer a few general questions related to, on a general basis, (1) how many films they watch; (2) how many national films they watch; (3) how many Hollywood films they watch; and lastly (4) how many non-national and non-

²¹⁷ Cf. Mee's (2017) claims that state that an individual's awareness of the remake label might influence her/his opinion of the film in question.

Hollywood films they watch. The form also required their date of birth, gender, nationality, ethnic background, current residence, and highest degree. These parameters – that were, in a next step, employed as selection criteria – were informed by the subject of this study and its accompanied hypotheses. As such, the reason for adopting film attendance as a selection parameter was mainly due to the hypothesis that the higher the film attendance, the higher the chance of knowing that the film fragments and trailers the respondents were about to see were actually coming from films that are remakes of Dutch or Flemish films.

As one of the goals of the study was to look at whether the knowledge of the remake label could, in turn, affect value judgements, I ensured internal homogeneity on the levels of film attendance (and, therefore, probably film knowledge) and nationality²¹⁸. Additionally, in order to reflect the typical audiences that go and see the films of our sample (being mainstream movies aimed at broad audiences), the aim was to target a range of people that is as wide as possible, therefore differing in age, gender, ethnic background, and education. As such, I equally established internal heterogeneity on these levels, except for nationality. Though overall internal homogeneity is often seen as an essential condition when organizing focus groups, as this would facilitate the group discussion, I did not experience much issues in this regard. Even though this decision might be an explanation for the many disagreements during the discussions, the breadth of (dissimilar) opinions was what this study aimed for. Based on these selection criteria, I made a selection and set up four focus groups: (1) a group of Flemish people with overall high(er) film attendance; (2) a group of Flemish people with overall low(er) film attendance; (3) a group of Dutch people with overall high(er) film attendance; and lastly (4) a group of Dutch people with overall low(er) film attendance.

A protocol consisting of a list of introductory and closing questions, different film fragments as well as trailers (each followed by a group of questions) informed the actual group discussions. The topics of groups were: (1) descriptions and definitions (of Dutch and Flemish/Belgian cinema as well as a film remake); (2) comparative assessments and normative judgements of the film fragments; (3) what constitutes

²¹⁸ As, for example, a Dutch participant might, during the discussion, recognize and signal that the film fragment of a Flemish remake that was showed is highly similar to a Dutch film she/he saw.

“typical” Dutch/Flemish elements; (4) recognizability/identifiability. The first two fragments that were shown were (roughly) the two first minutes of the film pair *Alles is Liefde* (Dutch source film, Lürsen, 2007) and *Zot Van A*. (Flemish remake, Verheyen, 2010). I chose these two films (or the fragments) because, after a textual analysis, they both seemed very topical (i.e., locally anchored) at first sight, while in fact, they are highly perennial (i.e., their content is quasi-universal) – which becomes clear after seeing both versions and finding out that the differences between them are actually very small. The following pair of video fragments were the trailers of *Come as You Are* (Flemish source film, Enthoven, 2011) and *Adios Amigos* (Dutch remake, van Rees, 2016). These were chosen on the basis of their implicit cultural codes (e.g. representation of nudity, the use of humor), which means that both these video fragments do not carry highly explicit cultural markers. The last four fragments that I showed, contrarily, do have several explicit cultural codes (think of many Belgian/Dutch flags hanging in the background or the use of the national anthems in both versions).²¹⁹ The latter four fragments (consisting of both two trailers and two teasers) come from the films *In Oranje* (Dutch source film, Lürsen, 2004) and *Buitenspel* (Flemish remake, Verheyen, 2005).

²¹⁹ Here I build on Dhoest’s (2004) work in the context of television studies. An example of an implicit reference could be the use of local songs, whereas an explicit reference could be a zoom on a national flag. In other words, explicit cultural references are those elements that clearly (from the analyst’s perspective) refer to an extratextual cultural reality, leaving nothing implied, whereas implicit cultural references are those elements that are implied but not manifestly or obviously uttered. These are mostly found in specific representations or portrayals of, for instance, sexuality, nudity, religion, sports, ethnicity, cultural habits or traditions, but also in humor, stereotypes, or clichés.

12.5 Results

12.5.1 Describing and evaluating the film remake

When asking the participants to describe the film remake, many spontaneously gave several examples. In line with Bondebjerg et al. (2017) their findings, some of these diverged from the definitions of the distributors, filmmakers, or trade press: whereas *Mary Poppins Returns* (Marshall, 2018) is commonly categorized as a sequel, one of the respondents used it as an illustration of the film remake. Additionally, there was no consensus amongst the participants regarding the definition of the film remake, as they mentioned a myriad of (often contradicting) aspects. Nevertheless, most participants agreed that the film remake balances in between repetition and novelty: in one way or another, a core element of the source film (often the narrative or 'concept') should be repeated in the new version, while other aspects should be altered (often the style or aesthetics, the geographical or temporal setting, the rendition [e.g. animated versus live-action], or the actors). An example of the latter is Flemish participant, Tom's²²⁰ statement: 'A film could even have exactly the same title and be roughly about the same, if it is not the same story it is not a film remake to me'²²¹. Symptomatic of the latter is that many of the participants suggested that film remakes are, for instance, new, (technologically) updated, modernized, reworked, or contemporary versions of other films. Additionally, across most of the sessions, participants mentioned the idea or process of localization – which was, moreover, (implicitly) connected to transnational remakes. The Dutch participant Ruben summarized it accurately:

'I think it mainly has to do with a difference in cultures. Think of a Swedish film that is translated for an American audience such as *Let Me In*. Or *Alles is Liefde* that was translated for a Flemish audience in *Zot Van A*. The character of the prince in the Dutch version was changed to a tennis player in the Flemish version because, in Flanders, this is more recognizable [*herkenbaar*]'²²²

²²⁰ All the participants' real names were changed to fictitious ones.

²²¹ All the quotes of the respondents were translated from Dutch to English by the author.

²²² During the focus groups, it became clear that most participants interchangeably use *herkennen* (to recognize) or *herkenbaar* (recognizable), and *kennen* (to know). Yet, in Dutch, *herkennen* can also refer to the idea of identification. Because of these ambiguities, I decided to add the Dutch word used between brackets.

However, the latter was contested in another group, where Axelle, one of the Flemish participants, stated that an American version of a Swedish, Danish or Norwegian film is not a remake, because, she states, 'only the language changes'. Hence, many of the participants had their own, highly particular interpretation of what remakes are, as well as what they are definitely not. The findings of this study point toward the idea that the search for an overarching, common definition of the film remake is not only impossible (at least, when considering the extra-textual discourses), it is probably not particularly helpful if one wants to better understand the practice of remaking.

Describing what the participants thought was a film remake regularly came spontaneously with value judgements, more often in negative terms than in positive ones. This confirms that, independently of their overall popularity, film remakes elicit strong, often critical, and derogatory opinions. In line with Mee's (2017) findings, the participants framed their descriptions of film remakes within discourses of taste, utilizing romantic notions of originality – i.e., 'films [...] are original creative conceptions and reflections of a "genius auteur or artist" [and] cannot, or should not, be remade' (Cuelenaere, Joye & Willems, 2016: 2) –, and determining which types of film remakes are worthy of existence. Most of the participants seemed to agree that film remakes are per definition less original than the films on which they were based. Only one participant in one of the Flemish focus groups reflected upon the latter, suggesting the following:

'[*A Star Is Born* (Cooper, 2018)] is, I think, quite different from the original film, and because of that, I don't know if a remake is per definition less original. I'm not entirely sure though, as that film tells a highly typical story of course' (Silke).

Additionally, it was often asserted that film remakes are highly commercially driven, less creative and authentic, demand less thinking, and are overall worse than non-remakes or the 'original films' – which is why, as many participants claim, the latter deserve more respect. While these rather negatively laden statements confirm Mee's (2017) observations in terms of how audiences generally judge film remakes, some of the participants in this study also uttered more nuanced and at times even positive judgements of film remakes. Brecht (Flemish participant), for instance, said that he likes remakes because comparing them with their source films is fun. In the same vein, Lotte (Dutch participant) asserted that

'the remake can often be a stepping stone towards the original. If you like a remake a lot, and you're aware of the fact that it's a remake, then there's a chance that you'd want to see the first version'.

Tom suggested that remakes are fine, mainly because they offer contemporary audiences the opportunity to experience up-to-date renditions of older stories or films. An (Dutch participant) agrees with the latter, claiming that she really liked the latest version of *Aladdin*, mainly because the film is 'really readjusted to the times we live in'. Two other more positive readings of film remakes were that they do justice to the 'original' film, and that they are fine as long as they stay as close as possible to the preceding version. The latter finding touches upon the idea of fidelity, or, more specifically, it contests Mee's (2017) finding that, generally, in comparison to book adaptations, film remakes are seen as less valuable when they are faithful toward the source film.

12.5.2 *Experiencing, interpreting, and explaining differences and similarities*

After showing the participants two versions of a film pair, it was common in most groups that everyone automatically compared the two versions and framed their statements in terms of 'better' or 'worse'. These judgements, or indeed, hierarchical orders of two versions, were predominantly constituted through mentioning differences (thereby neglecting the obvious commonalities), confirming Esser et al. (2016b) their findings. In terms of content, the participants' assessments were based on many different parameters, with the most frequent ones being actors or acting styles; aesthetics (mainly colors, editing, and camera-use) and soundtrack; image or sound quality; humor; language or dialect; authenticity or realism; use of clichés and stereotypes; drama; recognizability; identifiability; thematics (topicality, inclusiveness, representation of gender or ethnicity, etc.); and originality. An excerpt that illustrates the importance of actors (here linked to recognizability) is the comment by Dutch participant, Chantal:

'I do like it when there are actors that I know. Not every single one of them has to be famous [...] For me it is less appealing when I do not recognize [*kennen*] anyone, though I don't know why that is the case'.

It was, moreover, expected that the participants would also compare the remakes with their source films in terms of faithfulness, mainly because this appeared to be an

important aspect in their descriptions and evaluations of the film remake. Yet, when actually being confronted with the video fragments and when assessing them, both the Dutch and Flemish participants almost never brought up the notion of fidelity. This is probably partially due to the fact that the audiences often did not know which of the versions was the 'original' – what is more, some of the participants in different sessions wanted to know which of the versions was first and asked the interviewer. This may, moreover, have to do with the fact that all of the films that are part of this phenomenon are mainstream genre films, which are known for 'carrying' less symbolic or cultural value – plus the fact that, arguably, none of these films have garnered cult status –, especially in comparison to so-called 'art films'.

The fact that many participants were concerned with (or, at times, even suspicious of) knowing which version was the 'first' and which one was the 'remake' confirms their romantic attitude toward originality (i.e. being derivative is bad). Indicative of the latter was a moment after one of the Flemish focus groups where one of the participants asked whether *Come as You Are* was the 'original' film, and when confirmed by the interviewer, several participants cheered and felt relief. This suggests that they would feel 'betrayed' if the (often local) version that they saw was not the 'first' or, indeed, the 'original'. In the Dutch focus group with low(er) film knowledge, the teaser and trailer of *Buitenspel* (Flemish remake) was shown before those of *In Oranje* (Dutch source film). Because of the order of showing the remake first (without them knowing it was actually a remake), these participants spontaneously presumed that the fragments they saw first came from the 'original' film. This not only resulted in a clear preference for a non-local version, but also for the remake (i.e. *Buitenspel*). When the interviewer confronted them with the fact that the version they preferred could actually be the remake, one of the participants (Stan) responded:

'That would be astonishing. Oh well, maybe not even... If that is true, then they really wanted to try something different. If Belgium saw the Dutch version first and then made this version, than I'd say that they did very well and succeeded in adding a lot of realism to it'.

In the latter case, the participant's valuing of originality seems to be at odds with his preference for something that now appears to be clearly unoriginal. Because of this, he experiences some kind of cognitive dissonance, which he then tries to adjust by looking for other (external) explanations (i.e. referring to the filmmakers' creative

approach to the film remake) as to why he preferred an “unoriginal” remake. This “clash” between the romantic attitude of many of the participants with their actual preferences occurred in most of the other focus groups too. In an attempt to explain the process of ‘first viewing’, one of the Dutch participants, Annie, makes an analogy with music covers:

‘That is exactly the same as with music of course. Sometimes, my son sings old songs, and I wonder how he knows these. Then I realize that the song he was singing is actually a contemporary cover of an old song, which he himself doesn’t realize. Hence, if you only know the new film, then maybe you think it is not that bad. But if you’ve seen the older film, then you probably won’t like the new one’.

This reminds of Hills’ (2005) finding that some audience members (often fans) prefer “original” versions to remakes because they want to be seen as early adopters. Annie’s statements might equally indicate an inclination toward films that one has “discovered”. As such, seeing a remake of that same film could be experienced as something that retroactively devaluates that first cultural discovery. Similarly, Stan, another Dutch participant, talks about this retroactive devaluation, but links it to the remake label: ‘Well, the film is what it is, but knowing that it is a remake would definitely change my opinion of that film. I would look at it differently, I think’.

12.5.3 *Understanding the audiences’ preference for the local*

In line with the idea of cultural proximity, most participants preferred their local variant, especially with regard to the actors and use of humor, language or dialect, as well as clichés and stereotypes. When asking the participants why they prefer the local adaptation, most of them referred to the aspect of recognition, identification, or, indeed, proximity: ‘Being a Dutchman, I did not really like it [i.e., the Flemish version of *Alles is Liefde*]. Mainly because there is so little that appeals. I also don’t know [*kennen*] the actors’ (Stan). Indeed, most participants derived pleasure from the familiarity, recognition, and identification with elements of their local version. The few exceptions to this rule were found in the sessions of participants with high(er) levels of film knowledge. Ruben, for instance, one of the Dutch participants who introduced himself as a cinephile, was one of the few who also liked the Flemish version of the first film pair:

'I thought [*Zot Van A.*] was funny. I know [*ken*] the actors [...] I see these actors, you know, Kürt Rogiers or Barbara Sarafian. I've seen enough Flemish films to recognize [*herkennen*] them. To me, they are equally recognizable [*herkenbaar*] as Dutch actors'.

Remarkably, the overall preference for the local version of a film pair, at times, clashed with the participants' favoring of originality. Lennert, one of the Flemish participants who generally preferred the Flemish versions of the film pairs, stated that, for him, localizing is unnecessary, while originality is more important. Furthermore, when participants sought to find explanations or interpretations of differences in, for example, humor, cultural clichés and stereotypes or even acting styles, they usually referred to (essential) distinctions between cultural (or national) contexts – instead of, for example, explaining differences in terms of a distinct artist's vision. The following discussion in the Flemish session with participants who indicated to have less(er) film knowledge illustrates this:

Silke: I think that the things that are different in this version Flemish-ify the film. Though it is still not a typical Flemish film, the accents and things that are different are...

Interviewer: ... Could you specify those things?

Silke: Yes, the fact that Flemish films are less loud or restless, are different in their images, and are better acted, ...

Sanne: ... Yes, the fact that they are more cynical is typically Flemish. Flemish films are more dark, think of *Bullhead* [Roskam, 2011], *Don't Shoot* [Coninx, 2018], *Black* [El Arbi & Fallah, 2015] and others'.

Additionally, as hypothesized, many participants perceived the fragments they saw as particularly or typically Flemish or Dutch. Even when the participants were confronted with the other version of the film pair, most of them still perceived both versions – which were often highly similar – as typical Flemish or Dutch films. Interestingly, some participants of the Dutch focus groups went as far to claim that the Flemish remake of *Alles is Liefde* still felt highly Dutch, or, indeed, un-Flemish, because the theme of Saint Nicholas would be more culturally ingrained in the Netherlands than in Flanders. Most of the participants of the Flemish focus groups, however, did perceive *Zot Van A.* as typically Flemish, and suggested that they found the film highly recognizable (a.o.,

because of the Saint Nicholas element). The most recurring elements (across the Dutch and Flemish groups) that made a film typically Flemish or Dutch were aspects such as language, humor, the representation of nudity, locations, acting style, colors, specific characters or themes, etc. Many of these could be related to the concept of banal aboutness (Cuelenaere, Joye & Willems, 2019a), which points toward 'banal reproductions of national identities in a film while not being explicitly national regarding its central themes' (275). Characteristic for elements that are indicative of the idea of banal aboutness is that they are highly interchangeable, while at first sight they appear to be highly topical. Yet, it appears that most of the participants do not perceive these elements as interchangeable.

Throughout the different group sessions, however, it became apparent that some of the participants, after comparing and assessing the different versions of the film pairs, finally came to realize that the at first sight highly local or national character of the film versions is actually quite 'transposable'. This happened on different occasions, and was related to different aspects of the film texts which, according to our participants, give a local or national character to the film (version). In one of the Flemish groups, for instance, Tom announced after seeing the first fragment that, because he had already seen the Dutch source film of *Zot Van A.*, the location of the fragment (being Antwerp, in Belgium) was actually interchangeable. The participant seemed to suggest that the location of the story is not inseparable from the story or film: 'I have seen the Dutch version, and the location could be both the Netherlands or Antwerp, it doesn't make a lot of difference, I think'. This reminds of Goldsmith, Ward, and O'Regan (2010: 207) their finding in the context of Hollywood's production strategy of using stand-in locations: 'Locations often stand in for somewhere else not just because of common place elements, but because these elements are functioning iconographically to mark out, simultaneously, narrative meanings that are understood through genre'. Another illustration of this comes from the other Flemish session in which one of the participants, Luna, remarked that it is odd that the perception of what is typically Dutch or Flemish seems to be quite similar. During the discussion of the first fragment, most of the participants named several "Dutch clichés or stereotypes" and suggested that the film is "typically Dutch", while, after seeing the Flemish version afterwards, all of a sudden these elements that were first "typically Dutch" now become "typically Flemish":

Brecht: 'This was the typical Flemish cliché. The Dutch version felt a bit outdated, which fits better in that semi-nostalgic idea of...

Luna: I find it weird that you say "Flemish cliché", while just now, it was a "Dutch cliché". I think that, in itself, it is a cliché, but euh... I don't know'.

After seeing both versions of a film pair, another Flemish participant even suggested that: 'You could actually just show the Dutch version, because both versions are practically the same. The new [Flemish] version is, therefore, not really necessary' (Jan). During these discussions, some of the participants seemed to become aware of the constructive, or indeed discursive nature of a film's national or local identity. Indeed, being confronted with two versions of the same film, the remake functioned as a prism (Cuelenaere, Joye & Willems, 2019b) which made the often implicit or difficult to trace differences and similarities more explicit.

12.6 Conclusion

This research found that the audiences do not agree upon a single definition of the remake and do not always share the same understanding of the label with scholars or film professionals. Yet, one of the aspects that most of our Dutch and Flemish participants seemed to allocate to the film remake is its balance between repetition and novelty: a film is, therefore, a remake if it reiterates a particular 'essence' of the source film, without copying the latter. Given the difficulty in finding a common understanding of the film remake, the article gives further weight to shift the attention to the identification, or indeed performance of (industrial) procedures, categories (types of remakes), and evaluations of film remakes, as well as the people who are in charge of this. Concerning the participants' evaluations of the film remake, apart from a few positive judgements, it turned out that many of them carried negative ones. Not only did most participants think that film remakes are per definition less original than non-remakes, they also found them to be deeply commercially driven, less creative or authentic, and worse.

Looking at the participants' experiences, interpretations, and explanations of differences and similarities of the different shown film versions, it emerged that, mostly, differences were mentioned, while the often obvious commonalities were generally overlooked. Apart from the more common differences (e.g. actors, aesthetics, humor, or language) and contrary to previous findings (Mee, 2017), during the comparative assessments, the audiences did not seem to care about the remakes' fidelity toward the source films. Yet, this is probably related to the fact that the participants did not know which version was the source film or remake and because the shown films carry less symbolic value. Whereas fidelity appeared to be of less importance, the romantic interpretation of originality and the (arguably intertwined) urge to know which version came first were all the more significant: many participants would feel deceived if the film they saw was actually a remake without them knowing. As such, most of them clearly preferred 'originals' over remakes, while our findings also suggest that many of the participants were affected by a 'first viewing' effect.

When the audiences were asked to explain or interpret the differences they mentioned in, for instance, the use of humor, this was usually done by framing it in terms of clear-cut differences between the Dutch or Flemish national identities or contexts. In line with the latter, the participants perceived the different film versions as

typically Dutch or Flemish, referring to among others, language, the representation of sexuality, and the use of locations. However, during the comparative assessments and discussions, some participants became aware of and detected the discursive nature of a film's national or local identity by recognizing the interchangeability of many of the seemingly locally anchored aspects. In some cases, this resulted in an explicit aversion toward the existence of the Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon, as some of the participants remarked that apart from some small differences in terms of language and little cultural references, these film versions are actually highly similar, and, therefore, superfluous. Finally, a central finding of the article focused on the relation between the Dutch-Flemish film remakes and cultural proximity. The study revealed that, in line with the latter concept, the lion's share of the participants preferred the local variants of the film tandems shown, which mainly had to do with the fact that they could recognize more of themselves (identification) as well as their surroundings (recognition) in these. However, this preference for the local version was in some cases contested because of the participants' overall desire for 'originality'. The results from my focus groups indeed indicate that the inclination toward the proximate is limited, and, in some cases, might diminish or even disappear in favor of a preference for the 'original'.

CONCLUSION

Reinvigorating the field of remake studies

The general objective of this research project was to investigate the complex textual dynamics and industrial dimensions involved in the Dutch-Flemish film remake phenomenon, while taking into account the surrounding cultural discourses which define this practice in a specific context. Even though it may seem as logical, approaching film remakes by also empirically investigating their industrial, cultural, and reception contexts is actually quite innovative. Given its main object of inquiry, this dissertation explicitly inscribed itself in the field of film remakes, which is known for its focus on textual analysis and its highly interdisciplinary background. Whereas the existing literature on film remakes often implicitly builds on many of the insights from (mainly) intertextual, adaptation, and translation studies, I explicitly pinpointed which particular insights have been fundamental to the field that studies remakes. This provided the dissertation with some of the crucial, overarching lenses and/or theoretical concepts to critically analyze film remakes.

First of all, building on the intertextual idea that every (filmic) text is, *in se*, an intertext linked to other texts, the (Romantic) notion of “pure” originality – which has often been employed to talk negatively about remakes – is complicated. Additionally, this insight tells us that film remakes are more than their relationship with their direct source texts, pointing toward their connections with many other preceding or co-existing texts. Further, informed mainly by insights from adaptation studies, investigating the textual relationship between a source film and its remake should not be done by presupposing an extractable “core” or transferable “essence”. Conversely, (filmic) texts have no core meaning or closed structure but are highly instable and marked by traces of innumerable earlier texts which are embedded in a myriad of different contexts. Taken together, rather than understanding remakes as secondary replicas that are void of originality and that should be judged in terms of fidelity, we should consider them as acts of interpretation that unavoidably express differences from their source text(s). If we consider film remakes to be intertextual artifacts, not only their relationship with their direct source film is of interest, but also, for instance, the genre in which they are embedded, the newspaper article on which they were based, the Hollywood film they attempt to mimic, etc.

Second, due to the cultural turn in translation studies, we know that the process of remaking is influenced by its broader socio-cultural, economic, and political

contexts on the one hand, as well as by the different mediating agents who are involved in the remake process on the other. This insight thus calls for a more holistic approach to the inquiry of remade film texts, combining contextual inquiry with textual analysis. In line with this thinking, I argued that, by taking a meta-perspective on the existing literature in remake studies, film remakes tell us about the workings of films themselves, but also about their surrounding production, reception, and cultural contexts. As such, this dissertation accepts the inherent contingency of film remakes, both as a term and practice. Or in other words, instead of trying to grasp the film remake in a cultural vacuum, this research gives further weight to the argument that one should investigate film remakes within their specific contexts.

The intertextual insight, non-normative approach, and acknowledgement of the discursive nature of the film remake are now widely accepted in the field of remake studies. While I embraced these observations in this dissertation, I also highlighted other emphases (e.g. through the lenses of localization and cultural proximity) and departed from the traditional Hollywood-centric stance that dominates the field. Before further exploring these specific emphases, I investigated the traditional method of comparative textual research in the field of remake studies and argued that a new framework is needed that helps with a more systematic (comparative) analysis. For that purpose, I developed a descriptive model that consists of three different codes that interact and overlap; the formal, transtextual and the cultural code – signifying a multi-layered and complex process of remaking. The formal code looks at what is being told on screen (e.g. narrative, themes, focalization points, ...) and how that is being done (e.g. *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, sound, editing). The transtextual code looks at all textual elements that set the text in a (whether or not concealing) relationship with other (film) texts (e.g. paratextual elements, quotations or allusions to other films, etc.). Finally, I redefined the existing term ‘cultural code’, which indicates both explicit (e.g. referencing popular television programs, local celebrities, etc.) and implicit (e.g. portrayal of sexuality, humor, etc.) references to a cultural context, artifact or situation. The idea behind this model is that when comparative textual analyses are streamlined across the field, the empirical results will be more comparable, which might eventually lead to a deeper understanding of the textual mechanisms that are at work in the remake process.

Though this model enables us to conduct comparative analyses more systematically, a mere description of the different types of textual adjustments is

insufficient. Therefore, while the aforementioned model is a step in the right direction, a more elaborate framework is still required that enables us to understand why these textual adjustments are there, as well as how they were performed. Yet, we first need a more profound comprehension of who plays which roles in the production process of the remake. Because of this lacuna in the literature of remake studies, it remains difficult to define the different significant stages of the remake process itself. In a similar vein, I have argued that the intentions of filmmakers are highly relevant if we want to grasp how film remakes are discursively created. Similarly, we need to better understand how filmmakers themselves give meaning to the status or label of the remake: much of the literature in remake studies, for instance, assumes that remakes are especially vulnerable to criticism and negative prejudices in terms of a lack of originality. This also signals the chief importance of integrating the perspective of the audience, which might confront us with new insights that could complicate the current approaches in the field. Think, for example, of how, from the perspective of the audience and opposite to film scholars, remakes are still mainly interpreted through the lens of fidelity (toward the source film), signaling the lingering effects of the Romantic idea of originality.

Finally, taking a meta-perspective on the vast literature of remake studies, I revealed that, despite its recognition of the existence of a production and reception context wherein remakes are created and interpreted, the field has failed to systematically and empirically analyze these contexts. In order to fill this lacuna, I investigated how production and reception methodologies from closely related research fields might provide us with possible answers. I first asserted that the field of remake studies, building on the methods, research questions, and findings from mainly format studies, (critical) media studies, and (audiovisual) translation studies, needs to start focusing on the different cultural mediators that are active in the production cycle of remakes. My assertion was that if the field actually wants to capture film remakes in their respective discursive contexts, it finally needs to empirically address the reception aspect of these films. In that sense, the field needs to start posing questions that, for instance, check whether audiences actually prefer domestic remakes over their foreign source films, and if so, why that is the case. Finally, then, I argued that we need studies that find out how actual audiences experience, interpret, and explain differences and similarities between source films and remakes, but also how audiences define (or label) and assess film remakes.

The case of the Low Countries

In choosing the intricate context of the Low Countries as the core case study of this dissertation – aside from actually applying and empirically testing the above claims, insights, and (methodological) suggestions – it responds to the lack of research into the subject of film remakes that are made and received outside of Hollywood. The field of remake studies is indeed known for having a saturated focus on Hollywood films and its industry. As such, my research criticizes this limited geographical focus of the field, which, I claim, ultimately leads to a narrow outlook and a restricted academic output. Moreover, addressing the uncharted grounds of remaking films in two small, European film industries at a time when recycling developments are gaining an increasingly central position in said industries, enables us to further deconstruct the faulty binary of Hollywood and commercialism versus Europe and artistic filmmaking. Traditionally, forms of recycled filmmaking and especially the transnational remake practice are understood as the expression of omnipotent power of influential industries (read: Hollywood) vampirizing smaller ones. The corporate trend of the Dutch-Flemish remake is, therefore, not only a phenomenon reflective of changing global media trends, it equally gives insight into how, slowly but steadily, the global film market is being restructured, whilst questioning or challenging the dominant position of Hollywood therein.

Apart from being able to test many of the theoretical concepts and methodological suggestions mentioned in above, studying film remakes in the context of the Low Countries also assisted in grasping this complex cultural context itself. Before applying film remakes to the Low Countries, it was vital to note that the Netherlands and Belgium (and Flanders) share a long political, socio-cultural, economic, and linguistic history. Indeed, though the area of the present-day Netherlands and Belgium cannot be treated separately before the political separation in 1650, from that moment on, both regions have had their own distinct (though at times overlapping) socio-cultural, political, and religious developments. Since the Low Countries' North (today's the Netherlands) was always able to retain its political independence and never had its language pressured, the construction of a Dutch national identity was never really questioned. The Low Countries' South, conversely, long remained under foreign rule, after which the French speaking part of today's Belgium became hegemonic. These developments have, throughout history, complicated the construction of a Flemish identity, a project that only started after

Belgium was established in 1830. While during the 20th century several movements strived for a Great Dutch culture, these have had no nation-forming effects. Moreover, these movements were, in general, more directed from Flanders toward the Netherlands, rather than the other way around, which is reflective of a general attitude.

The latter finding is mirrored in the literary translations of Flemish novels into Netherlandic Dutch, as well as in the fact that Flemings watched a significant amount of Dutch television until 1989 (with the coming of VTM). In terms of language, even though the same Dutch language is spoken, written, and understood in both Flanders and the Netherlands, there are many different regional varieties within and between both these regions, and people tend to prefer their national (Dutch or Flemish) varieties. With this in mind, I looked at which media products are able to cross the Dutch-Flemish border. Despite the overall lack of (systematic) research into the cooperation and exchange between the Flemish and Dutch media markets, I outlined the history and current situation of the media markets in the Low Countries. It appears that, amongst other things, the newspaper, magazine, radio, television, music, and literature markets are parallel (or independent), meaning that there is barely any cross-border traffic, despite increasing organizational ties and take-overs. An interesting exception is the phenomenon of formats and remakes in television, where both the Dutch and Flemish region are more attracted to each other.

In sum, it appears difficult to make the far-reaching statement that the Netherlands and Flanders are highly culturally proximate because of their shared history and shared language. Though there might be some truth in this statement, upon closer inspection, the proximity between Flanders and the Netherlands is complicated²²³ because of several reasons, among which the most important are (1) less positive attitudes toward the national and regional Dutch language variants from across the Dutch-Flemish border; (2) a media landscape that is defined by parallel and separate markets; (3) diverging political, socio-cultural, and religious developments

²²³ This arguably depends on the perspective that is taken: if one compares Flanders with the Netherlands in detail, differences will probably stand out. However, if one compares the Netherlands with Flanders and with China, one will probably assert that Flanders and the Netherlands are known for their high degree of cultural proximity compared to their relationship with China, thereby focusing more on the similarities between Flanders and the Netherlands.

since the 17th century; (4) the implications of these latter developments on a different identity construction process in both regions.

Next, again despite the shortage of (systematic) research in the field, I conducted a study of the (histories of the) Dutch and Flemish cinemas, while also looking into the cross-border traffic of Dutch or Flemish films. While national cinema should be understood as a pluralistic concept, I asserted that one can get a hold of what the “national” means for a specific national cinema by (systematically) investigating how it is imagined, both textually and contextually, as well as in terms of its production and reception. Finally, though the idea of transnationalism has greatly influenced the study of cinema, this dissertation agrees that we should not neglect the still highly significant notion of the nation(al). Whereas both the Dutch and Flemish (first Belgian) cinemas have had similar industrial developments throughout time, one can hardly speak of a (united) cinema of the Low Countries. Indeed, while both industries show similarities in terms of structure, policy, production traditions, international competition, and output, one could equally point toward a myriad of differences which make both cinemas “unique”. Additionally, literature has shown that the Netherlands and Flanders have a long tradition in co-producing each other’s films. Nevertheless, a few exceptions aside, throughout history, most films have been unable to cross the Dutch-Flemish border, already providing us with one possible answer to why remakes are being made between the Netherlands and Flanders (cf. below).

Chief empirical findings

Starting from the abovementioned lacunas in the field of remake studies and applying these to the context of the Low Countries, I derived three central research questions: (1) How and why do the Flemish film remakes differ from or look like the Dutch source films, and vice versa; (2) How do agents involved in the industrial process relate to the Dutch-Flemish film remakes; and (3) How do audiences receive Dutch-Flemish film remakes and their source films in the Low Countries? Driven by the complex context of the Low Countries, particular attention was paid to the ways in which the Dutch-Flemish film remake process intersects with issues of national identity and cultural proximity, not only in terms of the texts themselves but also their production and reception contexts. In order to answer these three research questions, I adopted a multi-methodological approach which combines textual (a systematic comparative textual analysis of the films), production (expert interviews with the different agents

involved in the remake process), and reception (focus groups with Dutch and Flemish respondents) research. Aside from the previous theoretical and methodological sections, which prove (in)valuable contributions to the field of remake studies, the main contribution of this dissertation is situated in its innovative empirical inquiry.

On textual differences and similarities

To answer the first research question, a comparative textual analysis was conducted of nine film remakes (released between 2000 and 2017) together with their source films, resulting in the analysis of a total of 18 films. I found that, in line with much of the existing literature, a great deal of the remake process can be explained through the practice of localization. Indeed, many of the transformations made to the formal, transtextual, and cultural codes of the source films seem to point toward differences in (film) culture between the Netherlands and Flanders (or, between a Dutch and Flemish identity). However, rather than claiming that these differences indicate clear-cut cultural differences, I asserted that these are the result of a process where filmmakers “manufacture” a feeling of proximity through the recreation of banal Flemish or Dutch realities. The textual research, therefore, suggested that this process of localization is the result of the perceptions of cultural differences and stereotypes, held by filmmakers (cf. below, production research). In line with these findings, I showed that while most film pairs are characterized by a shared framework (mostly in terms of narrative, themes, characters, spaces, etc.), each version shows distinct interpretations of these same structures, turning these films into interchangeable banal Flemish or Dutch realities. Additionally, as a result of the re-contextualization processes, subtexts that were ‘originally’ intrinsically embedded in the Dutch-Flemish source texts were sometimes ignored or even consciously withheld in the newer version(s). While crossing borders and remaking (con)texts, “original” connotations got appropriated or even divested and replaced by new significations intrinsically linked to the (perception of a) new context.

By looking at the changes made to the cultural codes in film remakes, I found that a plethora of representational themes was structurally changed in almost all of the films: sexuality, nudity, ethnicity, religion, sports, as well as specific cultural habits and traditions. These aspects were mostly referenced implicitly, while the more explicit references were mostly concerned with, among others, television programs, magazines or newspapers, theme parks, or even local actors and celebrities.

Moreover, some of the cases showed that it seems to be of less importance that the recreated banal realities are actually embedded in an existing reality. Hence, how a (filmic) world is (re)created is of secondary concern, as long as it is recognizable to the target audience. A more critical analysis of how this feeling of recognition is conceived in these particular Dutch and Flemish films signals quite homogenous constructions of Flemish and Dutch identities. Indeed, apart from a few exceptions, most of the main characters are white, middle-class, and heterosexual. Yet, however banal some of the adjustments found in the different versions might appear at first sight, they actually indicate the still paramount importance of evoking a specific national identity. Finally, I have argued that investigating these processes of (re)producing, appropriating, and localizing texts discloses significant insight in different cultures and how and why filmmakers perceive, (re)brand or even (re)fetishize them.

On the basis of these latter insights, I deduced a hypothesis that needs further empirical foundation: from the observation that all Dutch-Flemish film remakes are characterized by the process of localization, the same is probably true for other intra-European film remakes. What localization – as part of the remake process – essentially does, is presenting an intrinsically hybrid text as being national. Therefore, remaking films in Europe could be regarded as a process that prevents mediated cultural encounters in a kind of national echo chamber that masks the transnational, while turning it into the national. Such encounters might result in a scenario where European audiences mainly perceive their culture as being national or local, ignoring the obvious commonalities and European or even global dimensions. In other words, the national echo chambers that these film remakes essentially are, might not only (further) limit audiences' openness toward the unknown or foreign, they might also propel a focus on cultural differences instead of showing what unites us as human beings.

Furthermore, I also uncovered a mechanism that could be dubbed as 'filling in the gaps', pointing toward the rendering explicit, obvious or clear of previously ambiguous or implicit narrative elements or meanings in the source film. This process fits in perfectly with the overall focus of these films; that is, to be entertaining and easy to digest. Yet, one could also argue that, in one specific sense, the process equally fits in with the aforesaid idea that it does not really matter to what extent the worlds that these films (re-)construct (that is, a world without many ambiguities) align with an external reality. Additionally, it was found that filmmakers avoid using the term remake when referencing the source text in the film credits. This might indicate the pejorative

connotation of the film remake, which, in turn, illustrates a broader negative discourse surrounding the phenomenon, and as a result, the unwillingness of filmmakers to label their works as film remakes. Connected to the latter, it was remarkable to see that – although the Dutch-Flemish filmmakers of remakes seem to be well aware that the current public opinion toward the film remake is rather negative (cf. production analysis) – some of them incorporate (often ironically) intratextual references to the process of remaking in their film remakes, or to the source films on which their remake is based. Finally, analyzing these films, it quickly became clear that all of the 18 films were genre films, with 10 out of 18 being romantic comedies. This is in line with pan-European studios, who heavily rely on generic (Hollywood) models and favor specific genres. It also hinted at an ambiguous imbrication of the Dutch-Flemish filmmakers and the mainstream Anglo-Saxon film industry, which is characterized by both differences and clear overlap.

On the production process of remakes

In order to answer the second research question, I introduced the perspective of cultural mediators (those who are active in the production process) to the study of film remakes, thereby paving the way for actual industrial analyses of remakes and other forms of serialities. In a move to better grasp this production, distribution, and promotion context, 17 expert interviews (nine Flemish, eight Dutch) were conducted with different directors, screenwriters, producers, and distributors that worked on these film remake projects, as well as the heads of both the Dutch and Flemish film fund. A first conclusion that can be drawn is that experts do not agree upon a single definition of the film remake. While there were several aspects that were agreed upon by most, it became clear that analyzing the industrial discourses will not provide us with a clear-cut, or indeed a-historical, definition. Next, I found that, although the film remake practice or phenomenon is often associated with – and explained or contextualized by – the allegedly purely commercially driven Hollywood industry, the European (or, more specifically, Dutch-Flemish) film remake practice is seen as being for the most part commercial in nature. This self-awareness or belief has several implications: on the one hand, it is employed as a means to criticize or condemn the practice or to underscore its limited artistic ambitions, while on the other, it is used as a legitimation for the alleged “unoriginal approach” of these projects.

The latter shows how the agents that are active in the film industries of the Low Countries (have to) balance between a clear passion for cinema and today's market demands that necessitates them to adhere to such commercially driven trends. Indeed, some of them even explicitly signaled that they opted for a remake project because their production company needed a financial injection. In other words, they pointed out that one should understand film remakes as a necessary evil of sorts. Such statements were often followed by negative judgements about the phenomenon, echoing the decades old adverse discourses in the public and critical opinion. Additionally, the experts also advanced that, while one can add original elements to film remakes, they are nonetheless inherently less original compared to non-remakes – thereby reflecting the Romantic notion of originality.

Contrarily to these negative comments, remakes were, at times, simultaneously put in a favorable light as they would be commercially interesting, allow stories to travel, attract other or new audiences, or can revive forgotten or 'outmoded' films. The experts' perceptions and subsequent judgements of film remakes and their surrounding practice seemed to spur precise conditions which instruct the types of remakes that are actually 'legitimate' and those that are not. According to the cultural mediators, for instance, synchronic remakes (i.e. produced almost simultaneously with their source films) are less justifiable than diachronic remakes (i.e. those that span decades of time), or, remakes should not be based on films of 'high quality' (e.g. art films). And lastly, because of their commercial underpinnings, remakes should not be too dissimilar from their predecessors as this might weaken their financial potential.

Connected to the latter are the main motivations for opting for a film remake, which are, again, in compliance with the so-called commercial nature of the practice: they minimize the financial risk, are cheaper, and can be made in a shorter amount of time. In addition to these mostly commercially motivated statements, many of the experts simultaneously mentioned several "creatively" driven arguments for opting for a remake practice. This confirms the findings in the literature that remakes are usually heavily commercially driven, but simultaneously nuances this by also pointing toward the creatively-driven motivations. It should be noted that given the nature of the film industry, films are always both commercial and artistic artifacts, implying that remakes are not necessarily that different from non-remakes in that sense. Furthermore, this insight confirms the aforementioned position that many of these mediators seem to hold, that is, one of balancing in between a love for the medium or genuine

engagement with creativity and cultural diversification and an understanding of the current precarious state of the film industry – with its particular challenges and market requirements in order to keep it alive.

A third overarching conclusion of the production research is that the production process of film remakes is *ad hoc* and, therefore, highly non-systematic. One of the core aspects of the remake process appeared to be the mechanism of localization (which confirms the textual findings), which was employed mainly with the aim of making the film remake feel more culturally and linguistically proximate. This operation of adapting textual elements to the local cultural context was, however, also linked to less obvious goals: that is, to erase the traces of the source film as well as to ‘enhance’ the latter by making the implicit explicit or simplify narrative elements (cf. the idea of ‘filling in the gaps’) – as people from the Flemish industry would still ‘underestimate’ their audiences, therefore ensuring that everything is made as simple as possible. When asked to describe this process of localization, many different elements were mentioned, which are all in line with the concept of cultural proximity: e.g. the dialogues, actors, locations, humor, cultural references, etc. It quickly became clear that the mediators were not critical about their essentialist take on cultural or national identity, as most of them did not steer away from equating ‘the Dutch/Flemish identity’ with specific fixed elements. In accordance with the findings of the textual analysis, localizing a source film, in many cases, meant making changes built on a rather limited amount of cultural stereotypes about the Netherlands and Belgium/Flanders.

The non-systematic nature of the remake process is also due to the fact that when producers acquire the remake rights of a film, they only obtain the script of the source film. There was, therefore, generally no mention of transferring extra ‘accumulated knowledge’ or expertise (think of budgets, set designs, locations, casting procedures, use of lighting, etc.) – except for the few cases in which the distribution company released and co-produced both the source film and its remake. This finding is connected to the fourth and final conclusion of the production research, i.e. that the remake process is more affected by interpersonal connections between people from the Dutch and Flemish film industries or contingent transnational networks than being the outcome of structural contexts or agreements. Indeed, it turned out that the interpersonal networks are of significant importance to the remake practices in small geo-linguistic film markets – in the case of the Low Countries, both within and across

the Flemish and Dutch film industries. This finding points toward the existence of a 'production proximity' or 'industrial proximity' between the Dutch and Flemish film industries. Because of their similar markets and budget sizes, in combination with their geographical proximity, similar language, and policy measures that promote co-productions, Dutch and Flemish filmmakers are not only aware of each other's film projects, but are also incited to cooperate.

Moreover, this transnational network in the film industry of the Low Countries is important because of at least two reasons: first, such a close network can be seen as a means to merge resources in a shared battle against the dominance of Hollywood cinema. As such, the Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon may, at first sight, be interpreted as a practice that mainly helps in reinforcing the national film industry, but, when considering this broader network, it could equally be seen as a possible way to enforce the stability of more than one national film industry – or, indeed, when extrapolated more broadly, the broader context of European cinema. Second, this transnational network between the Dutch and Flemish film industry could be understood as a new form of distribution which enables the circulation of films (or, in this case, the film scripts) across national borders in Europe. Finally, as expected, the chief initiators of these remake projects are mainly producers, yet, it quickly became clear that the role of film distributors should not be underestimated. Not only did they often act as co-producer of these films, they were often creatively involved. This can partially be explained through the fact that most of these distribution companies have offices in both the Netherlands and Belgium. By co-producing these projects, these companies are finally able to cross their national borders (cf. the abovementioned stalemate of European film industries) and successfully make films (or stories) travel.

On the reception of remakes

Finally, to answer the third and last research question, four focus groups were organized in Flanders and the Netherlands. The aim was to get a hold of the discourses and discursive strategies that give meaning to the remake in general and the Dutch-Flemish film remake phenomenon in particular. First, I indicated that, on the one hand, similar to the film professionals (cf. above), the audiences also do not agree upon a single definition of the remake, and, on the other, do not always share the same understanding of the label with both scholars and film professionals. Though it is difficult to make a definite verdict without also considering other contexts, this finding

gives extra weight to the argument that defining or 'taxonomizing' the film remake might not aid us in clarifying the practice of remaking or grasping its repetitive configuration – next to approving the idea that the artifact and practice is intrinsically contingent and hybrid. Consequently, I argue that it is more fruitful to further investigate and identify the distinct categories, evaluations, and procedures of film remakes, as well as by whom these are performed (and why).

Next, in line with the existing literature, the audiences' evaluations of the film remake were, overall, quite negative. Most participants were convinced that film remakes are in any case less original than non-remakes and found them to be deeply commercially driven and less creative. Interestingly, it appears that both the cultural mediators and audiences generally dislike film remakes for the same reasons. When looking at the domestic admissions of Dutch-Flemish films, however, the audiences' critical attitude toward film remakes does not translate directly in unsuccessful releases. Hence, though people generally dislike the idea or practice of Dutch-Flemish film remakes, many still go and see them in the cinema. This may have to do with the fact that most people are unaware that these Dutch-Flemish film remakes are actually remakes, because they are marketed as 'normal' local films – which can, in its turn, be linked to the finding that cultural mediators are aware of the negative connotation of film remakes.

The reception research also indicated that, while asking the respondents about the differences and similarities of the different shown film versions, they mostly mentioned differences (between, e.g. the use of humor), neglecting the obvious commonalities. This could be explained by the particular perspective held by these respondents – indeed, as mentioned in the above, given their overall closeness, Dutch and Flemish people may perceive their cultures as hugely different, while in fact they are quite similar compared to, for instance, a country like China. Moreover, the explanation or interpretation of these differences was usually done in terms of clear-cut differences between the Dutch or Flemish culture or respective national identities – indicating homogenous, fixed, and essential interpretations of national identities. In a similar vein, the respondents perceived the different film versions as either typically Dutch or Flemish, referring to aspects such as language, the use of locations, or even the portrayal of nudity. Such findings give further weight to the national echo chamber hypothesis, as it confirms that these audiences show difficulties in acknowledging

European or global dimensions while emphasizing the “typical” national character of these films.

Similarly, most participants seemed to prefer the local variants of the shown film pairs because they could recognize more of themselves (identification) as well as their surroundings (recognition) in them. This preference for the local version was, however, in some cases contested by the respondents’ overall attraction to “originality”. Indeed, in some cases, the respondents’ Romantic stance toward originality and the (arguably intertwined) urge to know which version came first seemed to overrule the preference for the proximate. Additionally, the study found that, contrary to previous findings in the field, audiences did not seem to care about the remakes’ fidelity toward the source films. However, this is likely due to the fact that the respondents did not know which version was the remake, and because the shown films carry less symbolic value. The latter seems to confirm that film, or popular film at least, is (still) not considered of equal symbolic value as literature or theatre – where many different forms of recycling processes seem to be widely accepted.

On a final note, it became clear that during some of the focus group sessions, several respondents became aware of the constructive nature of a film’s national or local identity. Apparently, seeing that the film versions actually do not differ that much, or at least not structurally, these participants started to recognize and finally acknowledge the interchangeability of many of the seemingly “typically” Dutch or Flemish aspects. Some of them remarked that these remakes’ stories are similar to their source films. Moreover, they indicated that the ways in which they are made to feel local or national are also similar. In some of the cases, this resulted in an explicit aversion toward the existence of the Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon, as some participants remarked that apart from some minor differences in terms of language and little cultural references, these film versions are actually highly similar, and, therefore, superfluous. This reminds us of the growing “hyperawareness” of the recycle practice, which might, eventually, not only deconstruct the national echo chambers that these localized film remakes are, but also result in an increasing critique toward localization practices active in the remake process.

Nevertheless, the findings of this dissertation indicate that Dutch and Flemish people seem to be focused on what differentiates them, pointing toward what they perceive as “clear-cut cultural aspects” that demarcate their national identities.

Moreover, the focus group respondents seemed to be convinced that the “irreconcilable” cultural differences found between the different film versions are a direct result of fixed cultural differences, unaware of the fact that films are, naturally, creations that are mediated by many different people. As such, these films were perceived as direct mirrors of the cultures in which they were conceived. What is more, whereas most scholars seem to agree upon the constructive nature of national (or more broadly, cultural) identities, this thought process appears to have little impact outside the academic world. Both the filmmakers and spectators of Dutch-Flemish film remakes agreed that these “cultural aspects” – that are inevitably part of every film – complicate the export potential of these local films. However, as the textual results of this dissertation have shown, not only do the different Dutch and Flemish versions of the same film share many aspects, the traced differences were found to be rather banal cultural references and small adjustments. In other words, instead of remaking each other’s films, the Dutch and Flemish film industries could try to integrate banal cultural references of both regions into these popular films, cast famous actors and/or celebrities from both regions, invest more in cross-border marketing, and actually distribute them across the border. Not only might such an endeavor enable them to more successfully release their films across the border, it could also have positive consequences on how their audiences perceive both their own as well as other cultural identities.

On the “why” of Dutch-Flemish film remakes

The latter brings us to a final, overarching, and important question of this dissertation: why do Dutch and Flemish film remakes exist? Taking into account all of the information above, the following will provide us with a non-exhaustive list of the most important (at times overlapping, and definitely interrelated) factors that, together, may have brought forth the Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon:

- (1) Data (Jones, 2020) show that European popular domestic films tend to circulate poorly within Europe. The Low Countries form no exception in this regard, as the Dutch or Flemish films that are able to cross the Dutch-Flemish border are scarce. As illustrated, there are a myriad of factors that cause this indifference between the Netherlands and Flanders in terms of cross-border film traffic. More specifically, the indifference should be placed within the broader context (as described in section 3.2) of the growing indifference (or declining attraction) of

Flanders toward the Netherlands since the end of the 1980s, on top of the fact that the Netherlands has never really directed its attention toward Flanders. Though the Netherlands and Flanders may both share the “same” Dutch language, research shows that, in terms of intelligibility and language attitudes, both the Dutch and Flemings are significantly fonder of their own national or regional variants. Additionally, as almost all media markets are parallel (that is, they operate mainly or only within their domestic markets), the actors who star in popular Dutch or Flemish films are unknown across the Dutch-Flemish – acknowledging that these celebrities are, naturally, one of the crucial assets of these popular films. Next, given that most of these popular films tap into the strategy of recreating banal local realities in order to make them feel recognizable, they suffer from “cultural discount” when released across the border (cf. below). In sum, it appears that the Netherlands and Flanders might be less culturally proximate than generally thought. In that sense, the situation of the Low Countries is (though perhaps to a lesser extent) comparable to the general situation in Europe.

- (2) Both the Dutch and Flemish film industries are threatened by the dominance of Hollywood films. Because of their staggering budgets (in terms of production, marketing, ...), Hollywood films are able to attract audiences all over the world, including the European markets. Consequently, the market shares for domestic films in the Netherlands and Flanders are, in general, much lower than those for Hollywood films. Additionally, whereas large(r) European film industries (like Germany, France, the UK, Italy, or Spain) can benefit from ‘economies of scale and larger businesses with access to more substantial funds for production, distribution and marketing’ (Higson, 2018: 308), small European film industries are generally highly dependent on governmental support and have to deal with low admission rates as well as with issues of ‘domination, [a] struggle for autonomy, spheres of influence, and a balance of power’ (Hjort & Petrie, 2007: 6). Accordingly, their production companies have difficulties in competing with the production budgets of both Hollywood and the bigger European film industries. The enduring prospect of low admission rates and limited budgets have forced these small film industries in Europe to increasingly resort to (among other strategies) recycle film production as a (novel) way to overcome this apparent deadlock.

- (3) Data (Pestieau, Ginsburgh & Weyers, 2007) show that even though remakes are, in general, less financially successful (and less critically acclaimed) than their source films, they are still highly lucrative. Indeed, because of their pre-sold and low-risk nature, they have been popular throughout history.
- (4) Yearly market shares for domestic films in the Low Countries are often dependent on one or two big successes that year. Consequently, Dutch and Flemish production and distribution companies are always on the lookout for the next big domestic success.
- (5) Because of the production or industrial proximity (cf. section 3.2.2 and 3.3.2) between the Dutch and Flemish film industries (in terms of similar markets and budgets as well as the interpersonal connections between the people who are active in the industry), the people who are active in these film industries are aware of each other's domestic box office hits. The Dutch and Flemish audiences however, have not seen or are not aware of these box office hits from across the border. Additionally, because of this production or industrial proximity (and the similar budgets of their film projects), it is easier to project both the possibility of production and the eventual box office success in the other context. In a similar vein, the costs for acquiring the remake rights are affordable, given the overall similar production budgets in both industries.
- (6) Most of these Dutch-Flemish film remakes are not dependent on selective governmental support and can be fully financed through a combination of economic funding measures, indirect governmental support (i.e. tax shelters or cash rebates), and private money (coming from e.g. public broadcasters, cable providers, ...).
- (7) By remaking (and, therefore also localizing) these Dutch or Flemish box office hits from across the border, they are able to circumvent the negative consequences of the process of "cultural discount". In other words, whereas a Dutch source film's "value" is normally reduced when released in Flanders (because the film is "rooted" in a different (film) culture, making it less identifiable and recognizable for a non-domestic audience), a remake helps in retaining this value. Hence, it appears that this strategy of remaking domestic successes from across the border enables a market to circumvent the difficulties of cross-border traffic in Europe. In sum, on the one hand, they 'cater to tastes shaped by global [read: Hollywood] cinema' (Mueller, 2019: 2), while on the other hand, they capitalize on the

audiences' desire for cultural proximity by localizing cultural specific aspects that otherwise make it difficult for these films to travel outside of their national borders.

Limitations and suggestions for further research

This brings us to some of the limitations of this dissertation, which simultaneously indicate suggestions for further research. Apart from the more obvious limitations such as the rather limited amount of focus groups, the fact that nine instead of 11 Dutch-Flemish remakes were systematically analyzed, and the lack of interviews with remake right representatives, there are other limitations that deserve further investigation. Because of the methodical chronology of the research project, where a great deal of time first went to the systematic textual analysis of 18 films, which was then followed by the in-depth interviews with cultural mediators, and only then by the focus groups, the emphasis of published material lays on textual analysis. Indeed, even though the four textual chapters (that are based on articles and book chapters) also apply insights from production research, a significant part of this dissertation clearly focuses on the textual aspect of Dutch-Flemish film remakes. Consequently, there was less time and space for further investigating the production and reception aspects of the Low Countries' remake practice, which is, arguably, more innovative in the field of remake studies. Because of the specific focus of this dissertation, a particular perspective was taken on the available data, leaving several other perspectives which deserve further investigation somewhat underexplored.

Given that the main interest of this dissertation was to unravel the workings of the Dutch-Flemish remake phenomenon, and, therefore, the industrial and cultural dynamics that are at work in the practice, a systematic study of the critical reception of these films would have been beneficial. Moreover, not only would this have benefitted the overall understanding of the phenomenon, it would be a first attempt at filling another lacuna in the field of remake studies. Another consequence of the focus on the Dutch-Flemish lens is the fact that the other European (and two Hollywood) remakes that were made of the Dutch-Flemish source films in this dissertation's corpus were not systematically analyzed, providing another interesting opportunity for further research. Though Chapter 10 (which includes an analysis of a Hollywood remake of a Flemish film) indicates that many of the same mechanisms are at work in such remakes, a more systematic analysis is necessary to empirically support such a statement. Another interesting and probably crucial research path that was not taken

in this dissertation is the different but similar Dutch-Flemish phenomenon of exchanging and adapting each other's television content (both fiction and non-fiction). If we want to more fully understand the overarching Dutch-Flemish paradoxical dynamic of attraction versus disinterest, understanding why Flemish or Dutch broadcasters decide which Dutch or Flemish programs or series should be either distributed on their channels or remade into a local version is of interest. More specifically, it could be interesting to see whether the same mechanisms that were traced in this study – which are, therefore, seen as part of the remake process in filmmaking – also apply to the television industry and market.

The latter brings us to the last suggestion: not only should we acknowledge the interdisciplinary background of the field of remake studies, we should embrace it. As this dissertation has hopefully proved, remake studies can learn a lot from ancillary fields which study similar but different forms of serial texts (as well as the other way around). However, if the field of remake studies really wishes to break out of its disciplinary boundaries, it should first start adopting a multi-methodological approach. The time has come to set our main object of research free and show what the advantages, possibilities, and challenges are of researching film remakes. Such an endeavor will equally underscore the idea that today's modern media environment and behavior simply cannot be fully grasped without seriously reckoning with serialized texts like film remakes. Moreover, in a time of sustained nationalist and protectionist movements throughout Europe and more globally, where the nation as an imagined community might have grown in significance, folding back on one's own national context through the remaking of one's own material, and the remaking of foreign films might be indicative of a new political context. Hence, an understanding of these renewed forms of recycled filmmaking, as well as of the audiences' perceptions and readings of these film texts might shed a new light on current societal changes, and the role played by national identity therein. Apart from illuminating that we might, after all, not be living in a post-national era, the rise of remake cultures globally might also be symptomatic of a spreading industrial as well as artistic conservatism. Not only might this endanger different film cultures in terms of diversity, but it might equally result in a national echo chamber wherein people perceive their culture as mainly national or local, despite its transnational or even global aspects. Given that mediated narratives are of chief importance for people's perception of a transnational reality, film

cultures that increasingly recycle domestically produced artifacts, while indigenizing material from other cultures, might eventually impair mediated cultural encounters.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Template sequence analysis²²⁴

Sequence 1: 00:00 – 00:00

Filmic/cinematographic

Narrative

Symbolic/ideological

²²⁴ All databases (that is, the comparative film analyses, the transcribed expert interviews, as well as the transcribed focus group sessions) can be requested by contacting this dissertation's author.

Appendix 2: Template mail invitation (expert interviews)

Geachte **heer/mevrouw familienaam**,

Beste **voornaam**,

Mijn excuses voor het storen, maar ik ben Eduard Cuelenaere, doctoraal onderzoeker en verbonden aan de vakgroep Communicatiewetenschappen van de Universiteit Gent (onderzoeksgroep CIMS, Centre for Cinema and Media Studies). Meer specifiek ben ik onderzoeker binnen een vierjarig project dat de Vlaams-Nederlandse filmremakepraktijk in kaart tracht te brengen. Zoals u waarschijnlijk wel al wist worden sinds 2000 meerdere Vlaamse film remakes gemaakt van Nederlandse films, en vice versa. Een belangrijk onderdeel van dit onderzoek gaat in op de productiecontext waarbinnen deze film remakes worden gemaakt. Precies hierom plan ik om in de komende maanden een aantal diepte-interviews te doen met de belangrijkste betrokken personen en kernspelers.

Aangezien u als **functie(s)** betrokken was bij **project(en)** zou het voor ons onderzoek erg relevant zijn om een interview met u af te nemen. In principe hoeft u zich hiervoor niet voor te bereiden, aangezien mijn vragen vooral zullen peilen naar uw persoonlijke ervaringen met **project(en)** en hoe u algemeen kijkt naar het remakefenomeen.

Indien u bereid bent om hier aan mee te werken, alvast van harte bedankt! Het interview zelf zou ongeveer één uur duren. Ikzelf woon in Gent, maar de locatie van het interview bepaalt u uiteraard zelf (liefst bereikbaar via openbaar vervoer en rustig genoeg om het interview op te nemen). Ik had gepland om deze interviews af te nemen in de komende maanden januari, februari en maart. Indien u dit interview later wenst te laten doorgaan zou dit kunnen vanaf 1 juli 2019.

De resultaten van dit interview zullen uiteraard hoofdzakelijk worden gebruikt voor wetenschappelijke doeleinden en zullen met andere woorden niet “breed verschijnen” in de pers. Indien gewenst, kan het interview uiteraard ook geanonimiseerd worden.

Voor meer informatie over het onderzoek kan u [hier](#) terecht.

Ik kijk alvast uit naar uw antwoord! Indien nodig kan u me steeds bereiken op 09 264 91 79.

Alvast bedankt om dit in overweging te nemen en met vriendelijke groeten,

Eduard Cuelenaere

Appendix 3: Informed consent (expert interviews)

Beste **heer/mevrouw** **familienaam**,

Beste **voornaam**,

Zoals beloofd, bezorg ik u bij deze de transcripties van het interview in het kader van mijn proefschrift. Uiteraard mag u geheel zelf bepalen wat u ermee aanvangt. Mochten er delen tussen zitten waarvan u nu denkt “dit moet eruit”, “dit is off the record”, “dit is verkeerd verwoord”, of gelijk wat, mag u me dat altijd laten weten – dan pas ik dat aan. Mocht u eventueel zaken hebben gezegd die mijn assistente (die alle transcripties maakte) aanvoelde als “off the record”, of mocht u dit in het gesprek zelf hebben aangegeven, dan zou dit normaal gezien in de transcriptie zelf tussen haakjes moeten staan: “(off the record) en (einde off the record)”. Uiteraard kan het natuurlijk dat hier foutjes zijn tegen gemaakt, en in dat geval mag u ons uiteraard op de hoogte brengen. Het kan ook dat je af en toe “(???)” tegenkomt in de transcriptie. Dit zegt niets over de inhoud van het gesprek, maar betekent dat de assistente niet helemaal begreep wat er werd gezegd. Van zodra ik door alle interviews ben gegaan zullen deze worden opgelost.

Aangezien de analyse zelf nog moet beginnen, kan ik nog geen inhoudelijke bijvragen stellen, maar het kan dus dat ik in de toekomst nog eens contact met u opneem om eventueel om verduidelijkingen te vragen.

Van zodra de analyses klaar zijn – dat zal ergens dit jaar gebeuren – en de resultaten staan op papier, krijgt u uiteraard ook het geheel doorgestuurd. En mocht u toevallig geïnteresseerd zijn in het audiobestand zelf, kan ik je dat uiteraard ook opsturen.

Indien nodig kan je me nog steeds bereiken op 0032 4977 49 197.

Graag wil ik u nogmaals heel erg bedanken voor uw medewerking en het fijne interview.

Met vriendelijke groet,

Eduard Cuelenaere

Appendix 4: Informed consent (expert interviews)

Onderzoeker: [Eduard Cuelenaere](#)

E-mail: Eduard.Cuelenaere@UGent.be

Naam & voornaam

Geboortedatum

Contactgegevens (e-mailadres/telefoonnummer/adres)

Huidige tewerkstelling

Deze vertrouwelijkheidsovereenkomst wordt gesloten in het kader van het onderzoeksproject “*Lost in Translation: Een multi-methodologisch onderzoeksproject over monolingüistische film remakes in de Lage Landen*”, uitgevoerd aan het Centre for Cinema and Media Studies (CIMS) aan de Universiteit Gent. Dit project wordt gefinancierd door het Vlaamse Fonds voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (FWO), en heeft als doel te onderzoeken welke verschillende socio-culturele en economische dynamieken en dimensies betrokken zijn in het Vlaams-Nederlandse remake fenomeen.

Deze overeenkomst heeft als doel de deelnemer te informeren over zowel het onderzoek als de rechten van de respondenten.

Art. 1:

De gegevens uit dit interview hebben als doel inzicht te geven in de Vlaams-Nederlandse remake praktijk en de omringende industriële en culturele context enerzijds, en de meer individuele overtuigingen, verklaringen, motivaties en drijfveren achterliggend aan de productie van dergelijke films anderzijds.

Deze informatie zal (**niet**) geanonimiseerd worden. (*schrappen indien nodig*)

Art. 2:

De respondent stemt in met de opname van het gesprek. Deze opname zal in de analysefase van het onderzoek getranscribeerd worden in het Nederlands en Engels. Deze transcripties kunnen als bijlage toegevoegd worden aan het onderzoek. De opnames zullen niet aan derden beschikbaar gesteld worden.

Art. 3:

Deze overeenkomst wordt in twee exemplaren opgemaakt.

Datum

Naam & handtekening respondent

Naam & handtekening onderzoeker

Appendix 5: Topic list (expert interviews)

Introductie

Inleidende vragen die de toon van het interview zetten.

- Wat maakt een film Vlaams/Nederlands, volgens u?
- Zou u uw films omschrijven als typisch Vlaams/Nederlands?

Definiëring, oordeel & discours film remake (algemeen)

Deze vragen zetten de expert ertoe aan om het begrip “film remake” eerst te omschrijven, vervolgens zelf te beoordelen om finaal te kijken naar het kritische/publieke discours.

- Hoe zou u een film remake omschrijven?
- Hoe staat u tegenover het gegeven om films opnieuw te maken?
- Hoe staat u tegenover het gegeven van originaliteit, en vooral met betrekking tot het maken van film remakes?
- Hoe staat het publiek volgens u tegenover film remakes?
- Hoe staat de kritische receptie (recensenten e.d.) volgens u tegenover film remakes?
- Hoe staan uw collega's uit de industrie tegenover film remakes?
- Wat vindt u ervan dat VAF sinds 2010 (na *Zot Van A.*) heeft beslist om geen film remakes meer structureel te ondersteunen?
- Het Nederlands Film Fonds steunde in het verleden alle Nederlandse filmremakes van Vlaamse films via het semi-automatische suppletiesysteem en via het film production incentive (het cash rebate systeem), maar nooit selectief. In het algemeen reglement wordt wel gezegd dat er “kan worden gelet op de originaliteit, authenticiteit en urgentie” van het project.
→ Wat vindt u daarvan?

Verklaring praktijk (specifiek) & bredere culturele context

Dit onderdeel tracht inzicht te geven in hoe de expert het fenomeen van de Vlaams-Nederlandse film remakes historisch, socio-cultureel, politiek en economisch/industriële verklaart/kadert.

- Tussen het jaar 2000 en 2017 werden in totaal 11 film remakes gemaakt in Vlaanderen (7) en Nederland (4). Hoe verklaart u dat Vlaanderen en Nederland elkaars films systematisch opnieuw maken?
- Waarom worden Vlaamse films zo weinig bezocht in Nederland en omgekeerd?
- Waarom is het steeds Nederland waar Vlaanderen naar kijkt en vice versa om elkaars films opnieuw te maken?
- Kan u verklaren waarom Vlaanderen meer remakes maakt van Nederland dan omgekeerd?
- Kan u verklaren waarom Vlaamse remakes het de laatste jaren minder goed doen (bv. *Verborgen Verlangen*, *Bad Trip* en *Allemaal Familie*)?
→ Denkt u dat het remake fenomeen van blijvende aard zal zijn?
- Acht u dit remake fenomeen, globaal gezien, een uniek gegeven?
- In hoeverre zijn er volgens u culturele verschillen tussen Vlaanderen en Nederland?
- Zijn er nog andere verschillen waarop Vlaanderen en Nederland kunnen worden onderscheiden?

Oorsprong, positionering & betrokkenheid project (individueel)

Hier wordt gepeild naar de aanzet, positionering (in de markt plaatsen) en betrokkenheid bij het project. Deze vragen worden gespecificeerd per geïnterviewde (cf. transcriptie interview).

- Van wie kwam de aanzet om **film(s)** opnieuw te maken?
- Kan u het remake proces kort beschrijven, beginnend bij een script en eindigend bij de film?
→ wordt er vertrokken van het script?
→ wordt er (steeds) gekeken naar de bronfilm?
- Waarom werd specifiek gekozen om **film(s)** opnieuw te maken?
- Wat was de motivatie om specifiek een remake te produceren?

- Had u het gevoel veel bewegingsvrijheid te hebben in de productie van de film?
- Waarom worden voornamelijk romantische komedies opnieuw gemaakt in VL/NL?

Verschillen & gelijkenissen (individueel)

Hier wordt de expert geconfronteerd met specifieke verschillen en gelijkenissen tussen de brontekst en de remake die hij/zij produceerde. Er wordt vooral gepeild naar verklaringen en motivaties. Hier worden per individu vragen bedacht (afhankelijk van hun functie, rol, en zelf geproduceerde films).

- Zijn er veel verschillen tussen **film(s)** en **remake(s)**?
- Acht u dit kleine of grote verschillen?
- Waar zitten voor u de (belangrijkste) verschillen en gelijkenissen tussen **twee filmversies**?
- Waarom acht u deze belangrijk?
- Zijn er ook zaken die worden aangepast die niet vertrekken vanuit het idee van een verschil in cultuur? Zo ja, welke? Waarom?

Lokalisering, herkenbaarheid en nationale identiteit (algemeen)

Dit onderdeel zoomt in op de specifieke lokaliseringstechnieken/strategieën, waarbij vooral wordt gekeken naar de werking ervan, alsook naar de achterliggende rationales.

- Hoe gaat het in zijn werk om een film te **vervlaamsen/-nederlandsen**?
- Zit er een specifieke systematiek achter deze adaptatie, of gebeurt dit ad hoc?
- Welke actoren worden ingeschakeld om deze vertaalslag tot een goed einde te brengen?
- Welke elementen worden het belangrijkste geacht om te “vertalen”?
- Zijn er specifieke elementen die moeilijker zijn om over te zetten naar een andere culturele context? Zo ja, welke? Waarom precies?
- Waartoe dient deze omzet/transformatie vooral?

- Is [remake] een typisch Vlaamse/Nederlandse film? Waarom?
- Vindt u ook universele dimensies terug in **remake**? Welke?

Extra

Extra/overige vragen.

- Heeft u nog weet van eventuele toekomstige projecten?

Appendix 6: Advert participants (focus groups, BE)



Beste meneer, mevrouw,

In het kader van een doctoraatsonderzoek aan de Universiteit Gent zijn we op zoek naar personen die willen deelnemen aan een groepsgesprek over film. Dit gesprek zal ongeveer anderhalf uur duren en zal maximum uit zeven deelnemers bestaan. Het maakt helemaal niet uit of je veel of weinig filmkennis hebt, en je hoeft al zeker niet een passie voor cinema te hebben (al mag dit uiteraard well). Tijdens het groepsgesprek tonen we ook enkele filmfragmenten waarbij we vooral benieuwd zijn naar jouw mening. Uiteraard zullen we altijd je privacy respecteren.

Ben je geïnteresseerd om aan dit onderzoek mee te werken, vul dan het formulier in op: <https://tinyurl.com/groepsgesprek>. Vervolgens bezorgen wij je verdere informatie over het tijdstip en de locatie van het groepsgesprek. Na deelname aan het groepsgesprek krijgt iedere participant de keuze tussen een fnac of bol.com bon t.w.v. €20.

Heb je eventuele bijkomstige vragen over de werking van zo'n groepsgesprek, dan kan je uiteraard steeds contact opnemen met ons via onderstaande contactgegevens.

Alvast hartelijk bedankt!
Eduard Cuelenaere



Eduard.Cuelenaere@UGent.be
Korte Meer 7 (2^{de} verdiep) - 9000 Gent
+32 9 264 91 79

Appendix 7: Advert participants (focus groups, NL)



Beste meneer, mevrouw,

In het kader van een promotieonderzoek aan de Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam en de Universiteit Gent zijn we op zoek naar personen die willen deelnemen aan een groepsgesprek over film. Dit gesprek zal ongeveer anderhalf uur duren en zal maximum uit zeven deelnemers bestaan. Het maakt helemaal niet uit of je veel of weinig filmkennis hebt, en je hoeft al zeker niet een passie voor cinema te hebben (al mag dit uiteraard well). Tijdens het groepsgesprek tonen we ook enkele filmfragmenten waarbij we vooral benieuwd zijn naar jouw mening. Uiteraard zullen we altijd je privacy respecteren.

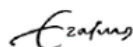
Ben je geïnteresseerd om aan dit onderzoek mee te werken, vul dan het formulier in op: <http://tinyurl.com/filmgesprek> (zie ook QR-code). Vervolgens bezorgen wij je verdere informatie over het tijdstip en de locatie (in Rotterdam) van het groepsgesprek. Na deelname aan het groepsgesprek krijgt iedere participant de keuze tussen een Bijenkorf of bol.com bon t.w.v. €20.

Heb je eventuele bijkomstige vragen over de werking van zo'n groepsgesprek, dan kan je uiteraard steeds contact opnemen met ons via onderstaande contactgegevens.

Alvast hartelijk bedankt!
Eduard Cuelenaere



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Appendix 7: Drop-off (focus groups)

Fijn dat je geïnteresseerd bent om mee te werken aan ons onderzoek!

Gelieve onderstaande vragenlijst zo correct mogelijk in te vullen.

Hoe vaak kijk je naar films? (algemeen)

▼ Dagelijks (1) Meerder keren per week (2) 1 keer per week (3) Meerdere keren per maand (4) 1 keer per maand (5) Meerdere keren per jaar (6) 1 keer per jaar (7) Nooit (8)

Hoe vaak kijk je naar Vlaamse/Nederlandse films?

▼ Dagelijks (1) Meerder keren per week (2) 1 keer per week (3) Meerdere keren per maand (4) 1 keer per maand (5) Meerdere keren per jaar (6) 1 keer per jaar (7) Nooit (8)

Hoe vaak kijk je naar Hollywood films?

▼ Dagelijks (1) Meerder keren per week (2) 1 keer per week (3) Meerdere keren per maand (4) 1 keer per maand (5) Meerdere keren per jaar (6) 1 keer per jaar (7) Nooit (8)

Hoe vaak kijk je naar niet-Vlaamse/niet-Nederlandse en niet-Hollywood films?

▼ Dagelijks (1) Meerder keren per week (2) 1 keer per week (3) Meerdere keren per maand (4) 1 keer per maand (5) Meerdere keren per jaar (6) 1 keer per jaar (7) Nooit (8)

Bedankt om de vorige vragen te beantwoorden!

Indien je wenst deel te nemen aan een groepsgesprek, gelieve dan onderstaand formulier in te vullen.

Naam & voornaam

Pseudoniem (optioneel)

Vul een pseudoniem indien je anoniem wenst te blijven. Je kan er eventueel ook voor opteren om enkel met voor- of achternaam te worden geïdentificeerd.

E-mailadres

Telefoonnummer (optioneel)

Gender

- Man (1)
- Vrouw (2)
-

X (niet-gespecificeerd) (3)

Nationaliteit

Etnische achtergrond

Huidige woonplaats

Hoogst behaalde diploma

Geen (1)

[redacted] Lager onderwijs/Basisonderwijs (2)

[redacted] Secundair onderwijs/Voortgezet onderwijs (3)

[redacted] Hogeschool/Hoger beroepsonderwijs (professionele bachelor) (4)

Universiteit (academische bachelor) (5)

Universiteit (academische master) (6)

Universiteit (doctor) (7)

Andere: (8) _____

Appendix 8: Template mail invitation (focus groups)

Beste **naam/voornaam**,

Eerst en vooral wil ik je enorm bedanken om je in te schrijven voor het **groepsgeprek over film!** Ondertussen heb ik de verschillende inschrijvingen overlopen, en kan ik je alvast meedelen dat ik goed nieuws heb want **je hebt de selectie gehaald!**

Dit wil zeggen dat ik je bij deze graag officieel uitnodig om deel te nemen aan een groepsgeprek met zes andere geselecteerden. Hieronder vind je kort wat belangrijke informatie. Neem deze a.j.b. zo goed mogelijk door.

Wanneer?

Ik heb zelf nog geen datum vastgelegd aangezien het gekozen moment uiteraard moet passen voor alle participanten van het gesprek. Om dit zo vlot mogelijk te laten verlopen heb ik een **Doodle** opgesteld waarin je mag aanduiden op welke momenten je allemaal aanwezig kan zijn. Zoals je zal zien zal dit moment sowieso in **maand** vallen, en kan je opteren voor **zowel week- als weekenddagen**. Tijdens de weekdagen zal het gesprek plaatsvinden van 18:00 tot maximum 20:00, en tijdens weekenddagen van 13:00 tot maximum 15:00.

Waar?

Over de locatie zal nog worden gecommuniceerd, maar het gesprek zal normaal gezien plaatsvinden in een lokaal van de **Universiteit Gent/Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam** zelf, meer specifiek in **campus (locatie)**, dat perfect bereikbaar is met openbaar vervoer en fiets. Ook is er een (betalende) **parking** beschikbaar voor zij die met de auto wensen te komen.

Wat?

Een groepsgesprek over film zegt het eigenlijk zelf: de bedoeling is dat jullie samen, in een groep van zeven mensen, een gesprekje voeren over film van ongeveer **anderhalf uur**. Iedereen krijgt eerst de kans om zichzelf kort voor te stellen. Hierna zal ik een aantal algemene vragen lanceren in de groep waarna een **discussie** kan ontstaan. Ook zullen heel wat **fragmenten** worden getoond die jullie kunnen bespreken. Het fijne hieraan is dat er **geen juiste of foute antwoorden** zijn! Er zal bovendien een hapje en drankje worden voorzien en het is de bedoeling dat het wat gezellig wordt ☺ Na het gesprek krijgt iedereen een **bon van de bol.com of Bijenkorf t.w.v. €20**.

En nu?

De link naar de Doodle van het groepsgesprek is: <https://doodle.com/poll/LINK>

Gelieve **zo snel mogelijk** deze Doodle kunnen invullen. Van zodra iedereen deze heeft ingevuld kan ik beslissen welk moment het beste is en breng ik je meteen op de hoogte.

Mocht je nog verdere vragen hebben over de planning of de inhoud van het groepsgesprek zelf mag je mij uiteraard mailen of contacteren op het volgende telefoonnummer: 0032 49 77 49 197

Alvast erg bedankt!

Vele groeten,

Eduard Cuelenaere

Appendix 9: Informed consent (focus groups)

INFORMED CONSENT / GEÏNFORMEERDE TOESTEMMING

Ik, ondergetekende,, verklaar hierbij dat ik, als deelnemer van het onderzoeksproject "Lost in Translation? Een multi-methodologisch onderzoek naar film in de Lage Landen",

1. Voldoende en duidelijke informatie heb gekregen over het onderzoek;
2. Totaal uit vrije wil deelneem aan dit onderzoek;
3. De toestemming geef om de resultaten van het onderzoek op anonieme wijze te bewaren, te verwerken en te rapporteren;
4. Op de hoogte ben dat ik op ieder moment vragen kan stellen over het onderzoek aan Eduard.Cuelenaere@UGent.be (+32 9/264.91.79);
5. Op de hoogte ben van de mogelijkheid om mijn deelname aan het onderzoek op ieder moment stop te zetten en dit zonder opgave van reden;
6. Op de hoogte ben dat ik op aanvraag een samenvatting van de onderzoeksresultaten kan krijgen.

Gelezen en goedgekeurd op (datum),

Handtekening

Appendix 10: Topic list (focus groups)

Introductie

(Laagdrempelige) introductie van project en inleiding tot focusgroep.

- Uitleg over het project (we doen een onderzoek naar film, FWO aan de **Universiteit Gent/Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam**)
- Uitleg/advies geven over werking:
 - “Aan de hand van dit gesprek willen wij graag te weten komen hoe jullie kijken naar bepaalde films, deze interpreteren en hier een mening over vormen”
 - “Op een gegeven moment gaan we jullie naar een aantal fragmenten laten kijken. Uiteraard is het absoluut niet erg als jullie niet weten om welke film dit gaat, en maakt het helemaal niets uit dat jullie deze nog niet hebben gezien”
 - Iedereen ongeveer even veel aan het woord
 - Niet vraag-antwoord maar discussie
 - Niet door elkaar praten
 - Geen foute of juiste antwoorden
 - Duur van de focusgroep (max. 1,5u): wij houden dit in de gaten
 - Gsm op stil zetten
 - Naamlijst met contactgegevens afvinken
- Uitleg opname van focusgroep & toestemmingsformulieren overlopen & laten invullen
- Introductie moderator & deelnemers focusgroep

- Ijsbreker: welke **Vlaamse/Nederlandse** films hebben jullie afgelopen jaar gezien?
→ waarom?

Definiëring & oordeel nationale cinema & film remake (10 min)

Deze vragen trachten inzicht te geven in hoe een **Vlaams/Nederlands** publiek de film remake en een typisch Vlaamse/Nederlandse film omschrijft/definieert en beoordeelt.

- Wat typeert een **Vlaamse/Nederlandse** film volgens jullie?
 - Specifieke thema's, onderwerpen, verhalen
 - De taal
 - De acteurs
 - Gebruik van herkenbare locaties
 - Hoe de films eruit zien (de vorm/stijl)
 - Een typerende sfeer
 - Het gedrag van de personages
 - Humor
 - ...
- Wat typeert een **Vlaamse/Nederlandse** film volgens jullie?
 - Specifieke thema's, onderwerpen, verhalen
 - De taal
 - De acteurs
 - Gebruik van herkenbare locaties
 - Hoe de films eruit zien (de vorm/stijl)
 - Een typerende sfeer
 - Het gedrag van de personages
 - Humor
- Wat is een film remake voor jullie? Hoe zouden jullie dat omschrijven?
- Wat vinden jullie van film remakes?
- Is een film remake sowieso minder origineel dan een “gewone” film?

Bekijken, vergelijken, interpreteren en uitleggen van fragmenten van filmversies

In dit onderdeel bekijken de participanten fragmenten & trailers van verschillende films (zowel bronfilms als remakes) en bespreken ze deze. Na ieder fragment worden een aantal (hieronder opgelijste) vragen gesteld die betrekking hebben op de ervaring en interpretatie van deze fragmenten.

Volgorde fragmenten (totale duur **24'35"**):

(EXTRA) Fragmenten (1, BE): *Loft & Loft* (dinerscène) – 04:42 & 06:33 = **11'19"**

→ mix: zowel “expliciete” als “impliciete” culturele codes

Fragmenten (2, BE): *Hasta La Vista & Adios Amigos* (2 trailers) – 01:22 & 02:07 = **3'29"**

→ “impliciete” culturele codes

Fragmenten (3, NL): *Buitenspel & In Oranje* (4 trailers) – 00:51, 01:59 & 01:23, 01:01 = **5'14"**

→ “expliciete” culturele codes

Fragmenten (4, NL): *Zot Van A. & Alles is Liefde* (aankomst boot sint) – 02:25 & 02:02 = **4'27"**

→ lijken sterk lokaal verankerd (topical), maar blijken eigenlijk “inwisselbaar” (perennial, banaal ingevuld)

Fragmenten (4: volgorde)

→ Alles is Liefde (NL)

- Zijn er specifieke zaken die jullie opvielen?
 - De taal/accent(en)
 - De acteurs
 - Ruimte/locaties
 - Esthetisch/vormelijk/stilistisch
 - Qua sfeer
 - Gedragingen personages
 - evt. “en in hoeverre beïnvloeden die zaken wat jullie van de film vinden?”
- Vonden jullie dit een fijn fragment?
 - Waarom wel/niet?
 - Zouden jullie deze film nu in zijn geheel willen bekijken?
- In welk land of welke regio vindt dit fragment plaats, volgens jullie?
 - Hoe weten jullie dat?
 - Bevestigt dit fragment, of is dit fragment net in strijd met jullie percepties van die regio/dat land?

- Zouden jullie dit fragment omschrijven als “typisch Nederlands”?
 - Waarom wel/niet?
 - Specifieke thema’s, onderwerpen, verhalen
 - De taal
 - De acteurs
 - Gebruik van herkenbare locaties
 - Hoe de films eruit zien (de vorm/stijl)
 - Een typerende sfeer
 - Het gedrag van de personages
 - Hadden jullie het gevoel dat dit fragment herkenbaar was? Voelt het vertrouwd aan?
 - Waarom?
- Zot Van A. (BE)
- Zijn er specifieke zaken (verschillen/gelijkenissen) die jullie opvielen?
 - De taal/accent(en)
 - De acteurs
 - Ruimte/locaties
 - Esthetisch/vormelijk/stilistisch
 - Qua sfeer
 - Gedragingen personages
 - Hoe interpreteren jullie deze?
 - Vonden jullie dit een fijn fragment?
 - Waarom?
 - Naar welk van de fragmenten gaat jullie voorkeur uit? Waarom?
 - Zouden jullie deze film nu willen zien?
 - Zouden jullie dit fragment omschrijven als “typisch Vlaams/Belgisch”?
 - Waarom wel/niet?
 - Specifieke thema’s, onderwerpen, verhalen
 - De taal
 - De acteurs
 - Gebruik van herkenbare locaties
 - Hoe de films eruit zien (de vorm/stijl)
 - Een typerende sfeer
 - Het gedrag van de personages

- Hadden jullie het gevoel dat dit fragment herkenbaar was?
→ Waarom?
- Nu jullie weten dat het tweede fragment eigenlijk een remake is van het eerste fragment, verandert dat iets aan:
 1. Hoe “typisch Nederlands” jullie het eerste fragment vinden?
 2. Hoe herkenbaar jullie het eerste fragment vinden?
 3. Hoe goed jullie het eerste fragment vinden?
- Hebben jullie weet van andere **Nederlandse/Vlaamse** films die opnieuw in **Vlaanderen/Nederland** werden gemaakt?
→ Welke?
- Hebben jullie weet van **Vlaamse/Nederlandse** films die opnieuw in **Nederland/Vlaanderen** werden gemaakt?

Fragmenten (2: volgorde)

→ Adios Amigos (NL)

- Zijn er specifieke zaken die jullie opvielen?
 - De taal/accent(en)
 - De acteurs
 - Ruimte/locaties
 - Esthetisch/vormelijk/stilistisch
 - Qua sfeer
 - Gedragingen personages
- Zouden jullie deze trailer omschrijven als “typisch Nederlands”?
→ Waarom wel/niet?
 - Specifieke thema’s, onderwerpen, verhalen
 - De taal
 - De acteurs
 - Gebruik van herkenbare locaties
 - Hoe de films eruit zien (de vorm/stijl)
 - Een typerende sfeer
 - Het gedrag van de personages

- Hadden jullie het gevoel dat deze trailer herkenbaar was? Voelde dit vertrouwd aan?
 - Waarom?
- Vonden jullie dit een fijne trailer?
 - Waarom?

→ Hasta La Vista (BE)

- Zijn er specifieke zaken (verschillen/gelijkenissen) die jullie opvielen?
 - De taal/accent(en)
 - De acteurs
 - Ruimte/locaties
 - Esthetisch/vormelijk/stilistisch
 - Qua sfeer
 - Gedragingen personages
- hoe interpreteren jullie deze?
- Zouden jullie deze trailer omschrijven als “typisch Vlaams/Belgisch”?
 - Waarom wel/niet?
 - Specifieke thema’s, onderwerpen, verhalen
 - De taal
 - De acteurs
 - Gebruik van herkenbare locaties
 - Hoe de films eruit zien (de vorm/stijl)
 - Een typerende sfeer
 - Het gedrag van de personages
- Hadden jullie het gevoel dat deze trailer minder/even/meer herkenbaar was?
 - Waarom?
- Vonden jullie dit een fijne trailer (voor zij die film zagen, fijne film)?
 - Waarom?
 - Naar welk van de trailers gaat jullie voorkeur uit? Waarom?

Fragmenten (3: volgorde)

→ In Oranje (NL)

- Wie kent deze film?
→ Van waar?
- Wie zou na het zien van deze trailers deze film willen zien?
→ Waarom?
- Weten jullie in welke regio of welk land deze film zou plaatsvinden?
→ Hoe weten jullie dat?
- Zouden jullie deze trailers omschrijven als “typisch Nederlands”?
→ Waarom wel/niet?
 - Specifieke thema’s, onderwerpen, verhalen
 - De taal
 - De acteurs
 - Gebruik van herkenbare locaties
 - Hoe de films eruit zien (de vorm/stijl)
 - Een typerende sfeer
 - Het gedrag van de personages
- Hadden jullie het gevoel dat deze trailers herkenbaar waren?
→ Waarom?
- Zijn er nog (andere) zaken die jullie opvielen bij het bekijken van deze trailers?

→ Buitenspel (BE)

- In vergelijking met de vorige Nederlandse trailers, naar welke van de trailers gaat jullie voorkeur dan uit?
→ Waarom?
- Wie wist dat deze film eigenlijk een remake is van de vorige film?
→ Hoe?
- Zouden jullie deze trailers omschrijven als “typisch Vlaams of Belgisch”?
→ Waarom wel/niet?
 - Specifieke thema’s, onderwerpen, verhalen
 - De taal
 - De acteurs
 - Gebruik van herkenbare locaties
 - Hoe de films eruit zien (de vorm/stijl)
 - Een typerende sfeer
 - Het gedrag van de personages

- Hadden jullie het gevoel dat deze trailers minder/even/meer herkenbaar waren?
→ Waarom?
- Zijn er nog (andere) zaken die jullie opvielen bij het bekijken van deze trailers?

Extra

- Wat vinden jullie van het fenomeen van Vlaams-Nederlands film remakes?
- Hebben jullie nog toevoegingen of willen jullie nog iets zeggen?
- Einde: bedanken, indien gewenst transcripties delen & resultaten onderzoek delen

SUMMARIES

English summary

Between 2000 and 2017, various Flemish remakes were made of Dutch films and vice versa. This is quite a peculiar phenomenon, mainly because both regions share a mutual language as well as a partially common history. With this dissertation, I aim to capture the textual, cultural, and industrial dimensions of the Flemish-Dutch film remake practice. Special attention is paid to the cultural proximity between the two regions and how the existence of different cultural identities (despite a shared cultural and historical background) may play a role in this phenomenon. As such, this dissertation situates itself within the research field that specifically studies films that are based on already existing films, also known as film remakes. By employing a multi-methodological approach, whilst also moving away from an almost undivided focus on Hollywood within the field, I aim to provide an essential contribution to the existing research. The dissertation's theoretical framework demonstrates that scholars in the field of remake studies were able to take a critical look at this particular type of recycling by building on insights from other, closely related but older disciplines. Indeed, by relying on some of the key insights from intertextuality, adaptation, and translation studies, researchers no longer understand remakes as being secondary, inherently unoriginal, or purely commercial products. Instead of adopting a normative approach, this dissertation deliberately looks at what film remakes can teach us about the filmic medium itself, as well as about the surrounding cultural and industrial context. Given that films can be understood as important disseminators of cultural representations, they provide people with important fundamentals on which national identities can be built. Generally, representations of national identities in films do not happen in an explicit (e.g., propagandistic) way – rather on the contrary, they often occur latently. As film remakes keep the balance between similarity and difference, they offer us a unique insight into the ways in which national identities are (re-)constructed by their filmmakers. Eventually, I consider the film remake as a discursive construct and practice, which implies that if we want to grasp remakes, we must investigate how remakes are constructed and understood. To find out exactly how these Flemish-Dutch film remakes differ from their source films, a systematic comparative textual analysis was made. Next, after conducting expert interviews with various agents who are part of the production process of these Flemish-Dutch remakes, I discovered why they opt for such projects, as well as how they approach these more concretely. Finally, four focus groups were organized in both Flanders and the Netherlands to find out how

Flemish and Dutch spectators experience and interpret (the existence of) such remakes. Combining the results of the reception study with those of the production research show that there is no unanimity in how remakes are understood by researchers in the field, the Flemish-Dutch spectators, and the people who are part of the production process of Flemish-Dutch remakes. Generally, both the spectators and the filmmakers themselves have a negative attitude toward film remakes, mainly because of the remakes' so-called "unoriginal character" and "purely commercial" basis. The textual analysis shows that Flemish-Dutch remakes are characterized by a shared (quasi-universal) framework (e.g., in terms of story, theme, characters, or space) on the one hand, and by a local interpretation of that framework (e.g., in terms of humor, language, cultural references, locations, or even the representation of nudity) on the other. Rather than claiming that this local interpretation is the direct result of clearly delineated or fixed cultural differences, I assert that it is the result of a generally conscious localization process in which filmmakers pursue a sense of closeness and recognition. Even though such endeavor is usually commercially driven (aiming to reach wider audiences), this process has possible ideological implications: since the analysis shows that the (conscious) (re-)creation of national identities is usually done by building on the same cultural stereotypes, this may lead to a very homogeneous conception of those national identities, possibly reinforcing an essentialist interpretation of (national) identities. Indeed, the results of this dissertation indicate that both the interviewed filmmakers and analyzed spectators have an essentialist view of national identities. Moreover, the spectators interpret the differences they see between the different local film versions almost entirely in terms of strongly delineated and fixed national identities, based on those same cultural stereotypes. In fact, when comparing the local film versions, the spectators mainly indicate differences (instead of similarities) and categorize the local film versions as "typically Flemish" or "typically Dutch". Furthermore, spectators usually prefer their local film versions, except when they know that their local film version is not "the original". Finally, it appears that the interpersonal connections between Flemish and Dutch producers and distributors (and, to a lesser extent, directors) are essential for the Flemish-Dutch remake phenomenon. The remake practice in the Low Countries could thus arise from a combination of industrial proximity, a similar market and language, as well as the aforementioned interpersonal connections.

Nederlandstalige samenvatting

Tussen het jaar 2000 en 2017 werden verschillende Vlaams remakes gemaakt van Nederlandse films en andersom. Dit fenomeen is op zijn minst bijzonder te noemen, voornamelijk omdat beide regio's een gemeenschappelijke taal alsook deels gezamenlijke geschiedenis delen. Deze verhandeling stelt dan ook tot doel om zowel de tekstuele, culturele als industriële dimensies van het Vlaams-Nederlandse remakefenomeen te vatten. Daarbij wordt extra aandacht besteed aan de culturele nabijheid tussen beide regio's en de manier waarop het bestaan van verschillende culturele identiteiten mogelijk een rol speelt. Zodoende plaatst deze verhandeling zich binnen het onderzoeksdomein dat specifiek onderzoek verricht naar films die gebaseerd zijn op reeds bestaande films, ook wel filmremakes genoemd. Door enerzijds in te zetten op een multimethodologisch opzet en anderzijds af te stappen van een bijna onverdeelde focus op Hollywood tracht het voorliggende proefschrift een wezenlijke aanvulling te bieden op het reeds bestaande onderzoek. Het theoretische kader van dit proefschrift toont aan dat het veld dat onderzoek doet naar filmremakes tot een kritische blik kon komen op deze specifieke vorm van recyclage door verder te bouwen op inzichten uit andere, meer genestelde onderzoekstradities. Door te steunen op een aantal van de belangrijkste inzichten uit intertekstualiteit-, adaptatie-, en vertalingsstudies zien onderzoekers remakes niet langer als louter secundaire, inherent onoriginale, of puur commerciële producten. In plaats van een normatieve aanpak te hanteren, kiest dit proefschrift er resoluut voor om te kijken naar wat filmremakes ons kunnen leren over het medium film zelf, alsook over de omringende culturele en industriële context. Aangezien we films kunnen zien als belangrijke verspreiders van specifieke culturele representaties, bieden zij belangrijke ankerpunten waarop mensen nationale identiteiten enten. Doorgaans gebeuren dergelijke representaties van nationale identiteiten in films niet op expliciete (soms propagandistische) wijze, maar zijn deze veeleer latent. Net omdat filmremakes de balans bewaren tussen gelijkenis en verschil, bieden zij een uniek inzicht in de manier waarop nationale identiteiten vandaag worden ge(re)construeerd door hun makers. Finaal wordt de filmremake binnen dit proefschrift beschouwd als een discursieve constructie en praktijk, hetgeen impliceert dat indien we remakes willen vatten, we onderzoek moeten doen naar de manier waarop remakes worden geconstrueerd en begrepen. Om te achterhalen waar deze Vlaams-Nederlandse filmremakes nu precies verschillen van hun bronfilms werd een systematische comparatieve tekstuele analyse

gemaakt. Vervolgens werd via expertinterviews met verschillende mensen die deel uitmaken van het productieproces van deze Vlaams-Nederlandse remakes achterhaald waarom zij opteren voor dergelijke projecten, alsook hoe zij dit dan concreet aanpakken. Finaal werden er vier focusgroepen georganiseerd in zowel Vlaanderen als Nederland. Dit om te achterhalen hoe Vlaamse en Nederlandse toeschouwers (het bestaan van) dergelijke remakes ervaren en interpreteren. De resultaten van het onderzoek tonen aan dat er geen eensgezindheid bestaat over de manier waarop remakes worden begrepen door zowel onderzoekers binnen het veld, de Vlaams-Nederlandse toeschouwers, als de mensen die deel uitmaken van het productieproces van Vlaams-Nederlandse remakes. Zowel de toeschouwers als de filmmakers zelf staan in de regel overwegend negatief tegenover filmremakes, voornamelijk vanwege hun zogenaamd “onoriginele karakter” en puur commerciële grondslag. Uit de tekstuele analyse blijkt dat Vlaams-Nederlandse remakes enerzijds worden gekarakteriseerd door een gedeeld (quasi-universeel) raamwerk (bijv. op vlak van verhaal, thematiek, personages, of ruimte) en anderzijds door een lokale invulling van dat geraamte (bijv. op vlak van humor, taalgebruik, culturele referenties, locaties, of zelfs de uitbeelding van naaktheid). In plaats van te claimen dat deze lokale invulling het rechtstreekse resultaat is van duidelijk afgebakende of standvastige culturele verschillen, claimt deze verhandeling dat ze het gevolg is van een doorgaans (doch niet altijd) bewust lokalisingsproces waarbij filmmakers een gevoel van nabijheid en herkenning nastreven. Hoewel dit streven meestal commercieel gedreven is (met het oog op het bereiken van een groter publiek), heeft dit proces mogelijke ideologische implicaties: aangezien uit de analyse blijkt dat het (bewust) (re)creëren van nationale identiteiten doorgaans gebeurt op basis van telkens dezelfde culturele stereotypen, kan dit leiden tot een erg homogene opvatting van diezelfde nationale identiteiten en versterkt dit mogelijk de essentialistische visie op (nationale) identiteiten. De resultaten van deze verhandeling wijzen er inderdaad op dat zowel de onderzochte filmmakers als toeschouwers er een essentialistische visie op nationale identiteit op nahouden. Daarenboven interpreteren de toeschouwers de verschillen die zij zien tussen de verschillende lokale filmversies bijna volledig in termen van sterk afgebakende en standvastige nationale identiteiten, zich daarbij baserend op diezelfde culturele stereotypen. Sterker nog, bij de vergelijking van de lokale filmversies duiden de toeschouwers voornamelijk verschillen (in plaats van gelijkenissen) aan, en categoriseren zij de lokale filmversies telkens als ‘typisch Vlaams’ of ‘typisch Nederlands’. Voorts prefereren de toeschouwers hun lokale filmversies, behalve

wanneer ze weten dat die lokale filmversie niet “het origineel” betreft. Tot slot blijkt dat de interpersoonlijke connecties tussen Vlaamse en Nederlandse producenten en distributeurs (en in mindere mate regisseurs) van essentieel belang zijn voor het Vlaams-Nederlandse remakefenomeen. De remakepraktijk kon zodoende ontstaan door een combinatie van productionele nabijheid, een gelijkaardige markt, een gelijkaardige taal, en deze interpersoonlijke connecties.

