

The Remake Industry: The Practice of Remaking Films from the Perspective of Industrial Actors

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Abstract Though current research on the film remake phenomenon acknowledges an underlying industrial process, it rarely analyses it. Therefore, building on expert interviews with people working in the remake industries of the Low Countries, this article 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, authenticity and is, moreover, highly commercially driven. These 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. Finally, distributors appear to be crucial figures in the emergence of film remakes in small geo-linguistic film markets.

Keywords *Film remakes, production research, expert interviews, cultural mediators, adaptation studies, remake studies*

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’ (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’ (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 focuses,¹ 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

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these remakes are produced and finally find their way to the outside world. Therefore, this article wishes to initiate a strand of research that specifically looks into the production or industrial aspects of the film remake (process)²—being in line with the increasing interest of media industries studies with the managerial and production aspects of media (see, for instance, Havens, Lotz, and Tinic). While most of the research conducted in remake studies acknowledges the relevance of analysing the surrounding production context, actual empirical analyses that scrutinize the industrial aspects still barely exist (Labayen and Morán). This article, therefore, argues for a more holistic approach towards the study of film remakes, pointing out that a juxtaposition of textual insights with extratextual 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, 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' (107).

Next to the abovementioned methodological and methodical myopia, one could also point to the field's limited geographical focus. Though the study of remakes 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 and Verevis). 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, we 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, studies two cases which enables an analysis that surpasses possible cultural-specific or nationally defined discourses and which also seeks for possibly concealed similarities.

Consequently, this article 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 artefact) as highly discursive. Given this social constructive nature, it proves useful to employ Pierre Bourdieu's 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 artefacts as the linear outcome of their (economic) context on the other—that is, excluding human agency. As suggested by Murray, 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' (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, for instance, Smith), 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 among other

things personal preferences, genre conventions, particular cultural or socio-political engagements, historical circumstances, and others.³ According to Cuelenaere (“Towards an Integrative Methodological Approach”), ‘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’ (6). Furthermore, these inherently extratextual 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 107), 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 among others producers, scriptwriters (and adaptors), directors, distributors, who all take part in the remake industry, it is difficult to, for example, define the different phases of the remake process, making it even tougher to ‘establish agreed, standard concepts in this field’ (Delgado and Avis 3). Therefore, for this study, a more general categorization of the production cycle of cultural artefacts will be employed, informed by Susanne Janssen and Marc Verboord 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 artefact and practice? (2) How do cultural mediators experience and perceive the production process of remaking films? (3) How do these experiences, perceptions, and evaluations impact the remake process and resulting films?

RESEARCH CONTEXTS AND METHOD

Christopher Meir’s (“European Cinema”; Mass Producing) recent work on pan-European studios and Miguel Fernández Labayen and Ana Martín Morán’s analysis of remake rights representatives provide some crucial insights into the remake strategies of larger (pan-)European film companies. However, 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 article 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 11 released film remakes⁴ 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, and Willems “Local flavors”, 263). Finally, the films that are part of this phenomenon are (almost) all high concept,⁵ mainstream genre films targeted at (mainly) domestic audiences.

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, minor differences in vocabulary and accent) and partly 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) 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 nonautonomous 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, that is, the idealist pursuit of one encompassing Dutch culture (Willems).

Despite the noteworthy commonalities, both regions suffer from the European stalemate where most films seem to be unable to cross national borders (Higson). Besides this, the apparent mutual indifference towards 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 artefacts (such as newspapers, magazines, radio, literature, television, and films) (Cajot). With the rather disappointing numbers of both national and non-national European films in mind (Jones), 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 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).

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 (that is 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 (Cuelenaere, Joye, and Willems "Local flavors"). Combining textual and industrial research enabled me to confront many of the intentions-claims⁶ 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 (being key figures in the film remake practice of the Low Countries) was made possible (Ritchie and Ormston). More specifically, in the period 2018–19 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) (Table 1). The 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.

Table 1. Expert Interviews

Name (Nationality)	Remake Project Role(s)	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</i> (<i>Buitenspel</i> , 2003, BE) <i>Hidden Desire</i> (<i>Verborgen Verlangen</i> , 2017, BE)
Doreen Boonekamp (NL)	Director Netherlands Film Fund (NFF)	N/A
Dries Vos (BE)	Director/screenwriter/adaptor	<i>The Family Way</i> (<i>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</i> (<i>Smoorverliefd</i> , 2010, NL)
Jan Verheyen (BE)	Director/screenwriter	<i>Team Spirit</i> (2000, BE) <i>Gilles</i> (<i>Buitenspel</i> , 2005, BE) <i>Crazy About Ya</i> (<i>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</i> (<i>Zot van A.</i> , 2010, BE)
Rachel Van Bommel (NL)	Producer	<i>Loft</i> (2010, NL)
Sjef Scholte (NL)	Producer	<i>Madly in Love</i> (<i>Smoorverliefd</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)

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, for instance, Jensen) 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.

THE DUTCH-FLEMISH REMAKE PHENOMENON FROM A PRODUCTION PERSPECTIVE

In line with the '[a]daptation studies' habitual checking of its own academic pulse' (Murray 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 and Krämer 7): it is stated that remakes are (unfairly) negatively treated, and, partly 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 (see, for instance, Forrest and Koos; Mazdon; Verevis, *Film Remakes*), 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, sociocultural, 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–80s and confront these with my own findings.

Describing and defining the film remake (label)

Constantine Verevis (*Film Remakes*) 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"' (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, for instance, Altman) 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 double categorization of adaptation as a formal identity or product—an 'announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works' (7)—, and adaptation as a process of creation—that is, 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 and Krämer) was also echoed in the experts' discourses. Though both these categorizations were (indirectly) reflected, they were equally criticized—some experts assigned the practice of 'remaking' solely to the cinematic category and used different terminologies for other media—which points towards 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'.⁷ 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, for instance, Meir, "European Cinema"; Verevis, "New Millennial"). 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.

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, *Film Remakes* 22), including those film remakes that are uncredited, based on a common source text (such as '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)—for example, 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, 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, *Film Remakes* 28), it is vital to inquire into the existing discourses that surround the film remake. As Leo Braudy 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 artefacts are *interpreted or conceived* as film remakes (Moine).

When asking the Dutch-Flemish industry to describe the film remake, some of the most frequently recurring aspects or defining elements were, next to the above-mentioned 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 and Krämer)—, 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 (namely 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 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: ‘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 ahistorically 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 analysing 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 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 artefact 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 and Look 131), that is, what this article calls for and attempts to inquire (for the first time) in the following.

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 towards 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 twenty or thirty years between both films, when there’s a different mentality or spirit of time. *Smoorverliefd* [*Madly in Love* 2010, that is 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 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 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 and Palmer 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). What is more, many of the widespread assumptions and prejudices towards the practice of remaking films—for example, the typical hierarchies between high/low culture, and the well-known fallacy that 'source texts are more original than adaptations' (Leitch, "Twelve Fallacies" 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, that is, 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 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 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—probably unintentionally—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.

Selecting and motivating film remakes

Verevis (*Film Remakes*) 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: firstly, the source films (upon which the remakes are based) have (generally) been tested in another context and proved themselves to be commercially viable, and secondly 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’ (3). According to Michael Druxman, the incentive to opt for a film remake is mainly voluntary, in the sense that the people involved 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, for example, 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 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, *Film Remakes* 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 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’ (139). In order to complement these commercially driven motivations, Robert Eberwein asserts that directors with sufficient funds may also want to remake films because of personal reasons, for example, with the aim of improving (for example technologically, culturally, or historically) or modifying the source film (for instance 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 (for instance 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, for example 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’ (see Verevis, *Film Remakes*) 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 (see 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 [that is the remake project] was, as it were, market-driven’, according to Impens.

An important nuance to the above-mentioned 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 (see Eberwein). 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 *Smoorverliefd* 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 universal themes, was a great vehicle to star a celebrity (see Ross), or contained a good story that was not worked out well in the source film. This reminds us of what Marijke De Valck once described as the ‘mix and match [of] art for art’s sake values with the new ideal of cultural entrepreneurship’ (40): that is, 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’ (40).

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, that is, the connecting or networking aspect of these projects. As the concept of ‘small nations’ (Hjort and Petrie) dictates, cinemas of such small nations should not be analysed 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 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’ (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’ 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’ (124–25), 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.

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 “A ‘Double Take’”), 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, and so forth. 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, behaviour, and names), locations, humour, decors, costumes, soundtracks, cultural references, and so forth.⁸ 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 audiences,⁹ 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, “Twice-Told Tales”). 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 towards 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). 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’.¹⁰ 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 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 produce.¹¹ 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’.¹² 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 nonsystematic, ad hoc manner. There is no such thing as a remake bible¹³ 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 to be localized in every place where it stops’ (Chalaby 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 (see 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, mentioned that she received little freedom while directing the remake¹⁴ 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.

Marketing and distributing film remakes

Labayen and Moràn argue that 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, 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’ (12).

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 (*Mannenharten* [*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, *Mannenharten*. 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 (being 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 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' (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 stage.¹⁵ Creative involvement appeared to be part of the deal, whereby 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 [namely Dutch distribution companies] work with partners in Belgium [and vice versa] to acquire films for the Benelux countries' (Smits 129). Indeed, nine out of eleven 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, that is, 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).¹⁶ 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, 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 circulation¹⁷ 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. 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 (see above), thereby indirectly complicating ‘the creation of a shared and strong pan-European (cinema) culture’ (Cuelenaere ‘A “Double Take”’). 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. 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 above-mentioned 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 of the current precarious state of the film industry (see De Valck)—with its particular challenges and market requirements in order to keep it alive.

NOTES

¹ In a previous article, I argued (building on Verevis’ [*Film Remakes*] 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-celuloid media culture’ (Cuelenaere “Towards an Integrative Methodological Approach”, 3). Hence, I think the findings in this work also provide insights for other closely affiliated fields (such as adaptation studies).

² 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 “Towards an Integrative Methodological Approach”, 3). The present article, therefore, seeks to demonstrate which insights we might get from analysing the production side of film remakes, without claiming that a combination of production, textual, and reception analysis is not the final goal.

³ These aspects (on which decisions are based in the remake process) align with Stam’s so-called ‘filters of transformation’, that is, ‘studio style, ideological fashion, political constraints, auteurist predilections, charismatic stars, economic advantage or disadvantage, and evolving technology’ (69).

⁴ Given the difficulty to define the film remake (see below), for the scope of this study, these 11 Dutch-Flemish film remake tandems were determined by employing the following criteria: (1) they share many textual aspects (Cuelenaere, Joye, and Willems “Local flavors”), (2) are recognized or defined as film remakes by the interviewed mediators themselves (which is reflected in the contracts that negotiate the remake rights), (3) are paratextually connected in the film credits, and finally (4) are dubbed film remakes in different Flemish and Dutch news outlets.

⁵ 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 (*Mass Producing* 185), “[...] reboots/remakes [...] are familiar variations on the production and marketing formula popularly and academically known as “high concept” film and television production”.

⁶ 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) analyse actual audiences and look at how they deal with these artefacts (Cuelenaere “Towards an Integrative Methodological Approach”). 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 intersubjective realm), embedded in all sorts of discourses, one should investigate not only the creators’ intentions and the actual texts, but also the audiences’ interpretations.

⁷ All quotes from the self-conducted interviews were translated from Dutch to English by the author himself.

⁸ 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, and Willems “Local flavors”, 269).

⁹ Which taps into the concept of ‘cultural proximity’, referring to the idea that audiences generally favour cultural artefacts that are as proximate as possible to their local ‘[...] language, ethnic appearance, dress, style, humor, historical reference, and shared topical knowledge’ (Straubhaar 26).

¹⁰ 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, and Willems “Local flavors”, 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, and Willems “Local flavors”, 271).

¹¹ 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, and Joye “Remaking identities” 14).

¹² In another study (Cuelenaere, Willems, and Joye “Same same same”) 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, for example, the representation of nudity and sexuality in comparison to the Flemish version.

¹³ 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 12) and that licensees of television formats receive.

¹⁴ The fact that Van Mieghem’s remake is actually an auto-remake (that is she directed both the source film and the film remake) makes this lack of freedom even more striking.

¹⁵ 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 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).

¹⁶ 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, and Redvall 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.

¹⁷ Hjort asserted that ‘there is nothing inherently virtuous about transnationalism’ (15), and that we should be resistant to ‘globalization as cultural homogenization’ (Hjort). It could be argued that the same goes for this new tendency of transnational cooperation, in this case in the form of film remakes.

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