

PETER VERSTRATEN

DUTCH POST-WAR FICTION FILM THROUGH A LENS OF PSYCHOANALYSIS



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Preface

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| 9

ABSTRACT

In the preface I explain why this study, a sequel to the *Humour and Irony* book, should not be taken as a scholarly survey of ‘national cinema’ issues. Owing to the many influences from foreign pictures, Dutch fiction films are best read against the background of an international cinematic context. It is an oft-voiced claim that Dutch cinema is rooted in realism, but I employ a version of psychoanalysis ‘lite’ in order to explore the imaginative potential of Dutch cinema. Moreover, the advantage of reading the films through the prism of psychoanalysis is that it enables me to structure this study as a ‘database’: surprising associations between films are favoured over chronological accounts.

KEYWORDS

Psychoanalysis ‘lite’ – imaginative potential – database structure – surprising associations



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Hopefully, this study is to my previous book *Humour and Irony in Dutch Post-war Fiction Film* what *MAD MAX: THE ROAD WARRIOR* (George Miller, 1981) is to Miller's *MAD MAX* (1979): the sequel is even better than the original. The study from 2016 covered a great many titles, but still some of the very best Dutch films were missing: the theatrical *DE DANS VAN DE REIGER* (Fons Rademakers, 1966), the adventurous *SOLDAAT VAN ORANJE* (Paul Verhoeven, 1977), the nail-biting *SPOORLOOS* (George Sluizer, 1988), the painfully intimate *LEEDVERMAAK* (Frans Weisz, 1989), the merciless *VAN GOD LOS* (Pieter Kuijpers, 2003), to name just a few. This study is intended to make up for this lack, but despite the term 'Dutch' as the first word of the title, the reader should not take this as a scholarly survey of 'national cinema' issues nor as a study of new directions in national cinema. This book contains hardly any discussions of production histories, of industrial forces, or reception by critics and/or audiences (but I cordially invite scholars to use this book to contribute to such discussions). This study does not even address Dutch cinema as a national cultural practice. I could have selected only those films that have a common style or have similar dramatic themes in order to agree on some national specificities or cultural curiosities. But to be frank, after watching many Dutch films, my notion of 'oer-Hollands' (typically Dutch) is hardly more profound than the comic observations made in such popular books you find at newsstands in airports and stations. I hesitate to qualify 'Dutchness', since I simply have no real answer to the question what is identifiably Dutch about such films as *AMNESIA* (Martin Koolhoven, 2001), *BLUEBIRD* (Mijke de Jong, 2003), *CHARLOTTE* (Frans Weisz, 1981), et cetera.

In my previous study *Humour and Irony*, I note that Dutch culture is rooted in a Calvinist tradition of austerity, which is at odds with the exuberance and vivid imagination of Catholicism, exemplified by the cinema of Federico Fellini. Calvinism aims to remove the possible ambiguity of images or text by boiling it down to only one preferably rational meaning. According to Calvinists, one can be pretty accurate about one's intentions with words, but visual representations are by definition too indeterminate. Given the Calvinist distrust of cinema, several Dutch filmmakers like to quote Wim Verstappen's dictum that 'film is a Catholic medium' (Verstraten *Humour and Irony*, 233) to argue that the Netherlands does not really have a cinematic culture. Paradoxically, however, I would suggest that insofar as a certain 'Dutchness' in

Dutch cinema can be articulated at all, this might be discerned in the kinds of (black) humour and irony that satirizes the puritanism of Calvinism. Against that background, I discussed in my previous study such films as *DE MANTEL DER LIEFDE* (Adriaan Ditvoorst, 1978), *DE VIERDE MAN* (Paul Verhoeven, 1983), *SCHATJES!* (Ruud van Hemert, 1984), *FLODDER* (Dick Maas, 1986), *DE WISSELWACHTER* (Jos Stelling, 1986), *DE NOORDERLINGEN* (Alex van Warmerdam, 1992), *SIMON* (Eddy Terstall, 2004), whose comic and ironic sensibility one also sees in several critically acclaimed satirical television programmes—*VAN KOOTEN EN DE BIE* (working as a duo from 1974-1998), *KREATIEF MET KURK* (1993-1994), *JISKEFET* (1990-2005)—and successful comedians such as Freek de Jonge, Theo Maassen, Hans Teeuwen. Their jokes (sometimes crude) and satirical irony are meant to put prevailing opinions into perspective, aiming to underscore the idea of the Netherlands as a country with a ‘live and let live’ mentality to oppose the supposed strictness of the Calvinist tradition. It could be wishful thinking on my part, tinged with a degree of nostalgia, but I have the hunch that a certain tendency of self-relativism characterized the Dutch in the second half of the twentieth century in the less politically charged times preceding the murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh in November 2004. Since then, humour and irony have not lost their impact, but they have too often been misused as a stopgap to legitimize narrow-minded ideas.

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There is, however, one particular hypothesis about the Dutch that is at the heart of my entire project. The Dutch are ‘not lacking in self-esteem’ (White and Boucke, 4), for they have their pride, but this pride is restricted to domains that are outside the scope (and sound) of their language. When it comes to sports (ice skating, hockey, cycling, the national soccer team), the Dutch usually tend to think they are ‘naturally’ world class. The building of the Delta Works to protect the flat country from the sea is officially acknowledged as one of the greatest civil engineering achievements of the twentieth century. The artists the Netherlands are most famous for date from an era without audio: think of Rembrandt van Rijn, Johannes Vermeer, Vincent van Gogh, and other painters from previous centuries. In current times, the Netherlands has a number of pre-eminent DJs (Martin Garrix, Armin van Buuren, Hardwell, Tiësto), but it is striking that their music evades the discomfort of language—and the same could be said of the architectural projects of Rem Koolhaas, the photography of Anton Corbijn and of Rineke Dijkstra, and the fashion designs by Viktor and Rolf. Moreover, every foreigner who has visited the Netherlands knows that as soon as the Dutch note that you are not a native speaker, they immediately switch to English. For foreigners, it is difficult to ‘master’ the language, for they rarely get the chance to put the command of Dutch into practice. Or in the words of Colin White and Laurie Boucke in their *The Undutchables*: ‘The more you try to learn Dutch, the more the Dutch refuse



to speak Dutch to you and the more they complain that you haven't learned it' (193). The Dutch language has easily adopted loanwords, from the English in particular, and in this era of digitization, worldwide communication, and the gradual decline of academic studies taught in Dutch, this development has only accelerated. If you want to make a Dutch person happy, all you have to do is tell that person: 'Your proficiency in English is above average.'

12 | If the Dutch are slightly embarrassed by the acoustics of their language, it should not surprise us that they are indifferent to their cinema. The three times a Dutch picture actually won an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film—*DE AANSLAG* (Fons Rademakers, 1986); *ANTONIA* (Marleen Gorris, 1995), and *KARAKTER* (Mike van Diem, 1997)—it caught the Dutch by surprise. The awards were considered chance occurrences rather than indications that the overall quality of Dutch cinema is on a par with that of other small nations in Europe. If Dutch films are that good, critics wondered, how come they have been so rarely selected for the main competitions of prestigious film festivals in the last 40 years? These critics have a point here, and Dutch sceptics have used this poor statistic to wallow in a Calimero complex (based on the Italian cartoon figure with an egghead who is always complaining 'They are big and I am little, but it is an injustice, it is!'). To all the Dutch film lovers who suffer from such an inferiority complex, I offer this book as a cure.

In the introduction to this book, I will address several prejudices against Dutch cinema, but the most seminal one for a start is the idea that Dutch cinema is rooted in realism. According to film director Martin Koolhoven, 'we Dutch are so Calvinist that we can only bear realist acting'. If a scene is too dramatic or too compelling, the Dutch tend to disqualify it as exaggerated, for they live by an adage that promotes sobriety: 'Just act normal, that's already crazy enough.' The assumption that the Dutch prefer films with a likeness to the 'real world' over fancy and/or overtly dramatic stuff is regarded by some filmmakers and critics as an unwanted limitation. In 1999, the so-called *Fantasts* wrote a manifesto—signed by Dutch directors, screenwriters, directors of photography, editors, and actors—that made a plea for the 'power of imagination', claiming that a fantasy film or a sci-fi thriller can be serious, too. Probably propelled by 'our great documentary tradition', they argued, it has become habitual—and therefore 'so average'—to reproduce reality, but imagination has the advantage that it increases the opportunity to create 'new realities' and to entice 'philosophical problems'. Even when I acknowledge that there is much truth in Koolhoven's claim and in the complaint by the *Fantasts*, my main rhetorical move is to read against the grain. I will put forward that, on closer examination, many of these films have more imaginative potential than has been attributed to them. In order to disclose this potential, I will use textual analysis as a method in combination with theories of psychoanalysis,

owing to the latter's focus on imaginary scenarios. A caveat is in order here, for I employ a 'lite' version of psychoanalysis, meaning that the theory is subservient to the films and will function as a stepping stone to a textual analysis. Ideally, my recourse to psychoanalysis will help to explain why there is reason to derive more pleasure from the selected films than we might have realized so far.

One advantage of reading the films through the prism of psychoanalysis is that it enables me to structure this study according to a method I already tried in *Humour and Irony*: deliberate anachronism can lead to surprising associations. One could try to figure out analogies among Dutch films made in 2016, but I think a picture such as Martin Koolhoven's *BRIMSTONE* has much more in common with Paul Verhoeven's *FLESH + BLOOD* (1985) than with any other title in this book, let alone with any other title from 2016, such as Boudewijn Koole's *BEYOND SLEEP* or Mijke de Jong's *LAYLA M.*, to mention some of the better ones. In a slight variant upon a phrase from the preface of my previous study, I want to state that I am much more interested in detecting affinities between films on the basis of shared preoccupations than in sticking to chronological accounts or in reconstructions of historical contexts.

Additionally, by exploring an imaginative potential, I intend to put the notion of Dutch fiction cinema as such into perspective. Rather than responding to developments in Dutch society, the Film Academy generation of the 1960s (Adriaan Ditvoorst, Nikolai van der Heyde, Frans Weisz, Pim de la Parra) had an eye for cinematic tendencies in France and Italy. The most intriguing directors of later generations also clearly drew on foreign sources of inspiration who either favour fantasy over reality or take an askance look at reality: Alex van Warmerdam was inspired by Luis Buñuel and Roy Andersson (see my previous study); Marleen Gorris by Chantal Akerman and the Taviani brothers; Orlow Seunke by David Lean and Buster Keaton; Nanouk Leopold by Michelangelo Antonioni and Bruno Dumont; Martin Koolhoven by Sergio Leone and John Carpenter; Boudewijn Koole by Gus van Sant and Ingmar Bergman; and Jim Taihuttu by Martin Scorsese and Mathieu Kassovitz.

This quite random list is meant to suggest, first, that Dutch post-war fiction film is too heterogeneous to draw reductive conclusions about national cinema or cultural identity. This study does not amount to an overall argument, and I have decided to order the chapters according to the logic of a database, offering the reader a sampling of case studies. Second, the list of foreign influences also begs the question whether we can speak of 'Dutch cinema' at all. On the one hand, it is a fairly arbitrary term, since I use it in a broad sense. It covers not only homegrown pictures but can also include Flemish-Dutch co-productions, even when the director is Flemish (in the case of Harry Kümel and Hugo Claus); international co-productions (such as the English-

spoken films *SHOCK HEAD SOUL* and *BRIMSTONE*); and films that Paul Verhoeven made abroad (such as *ROBOCOP* and *ELLE*). On the other hand, as I will address in both the introduction and the epilogue, is it not the best option to read films from a small nation like the Netherlands against the background of an international cinematic context?

The great majority of films discussed here is Dutch-spoken, obviously. This means, as I also mentioned in my previous study, that ‘when I use quotation marks to indicate the words of a character, the quotation is not exact. The translation is either provided by me or it comes from the English-language subtitles from the DVD. In situations where characters use English terms, as they do occasionally, I have italicized the quotation or part of the statement.’

This study was made possible with the generous financial support of Het Nederlands Filmfonds, the N.S.C. (Netherlands Society of Cinematography), and LUCAS (Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society). I am grateful for the confidence they had in this project. Abundant thanks for my proofreaders: Ernst van Alphen, professor of Literary Studies at Leiden University, who has a keen eye, as ever, for the fine-tuning of theory and textual analysis; Yasco Horsman, Assistant Professor of Film and Literary Studies, whose broad interest in culture not only covers cinema, comic books, and cycling races but psychoanalysis as well. Film and media scholar Gertjan Willems alerted me to the remarkable dynamic of Flemish-Dutch co-productions, such as the films made by Hugo Claus, Harry Kümel, and Fons Rademakers’ *MIRA*. Ernest Mathijs, a respected cinephilic professor of Film Studies at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, pointed out some pitfalls which I hope I have been able to avoid (and if not, the mistakes are mine). Rommy Albers and Leo van Hee, both from Eye Filmmuseum, were always helpful in sharing their knowledge of Dutch cinema as well as cinema in general.

If this were a movie, the ‘special thanks’ in the end credits would include: my mother Lenie, my late father Theo, my brother Marcel, Marjon, Julia, Mika, my sister Sandra, Obinze, River, Hero, my colleagues at Leiden University, the film students in Leiden (special mention of Vincent, Jop, Michel, Constantijn), Maryse, Chantal, Mike, and Gioia. Even though a film lover likes to sit in a darkened auditorium, I would not be able to function without some lights of my life. I restrict myself to mentioning only the three brightest ones: Fatma as well as my daughters Febe and Bodil.

Parts of this book have been previously published as excerpts (sometimes very brief) in these articles:

In chapter two: ‘Theatrical Films and Cinematic Novels: *DE DANS VAN DE REIGER* and *L’ANNÉE DERNIÈRE À MARIENBAD*’, *Image [&] Narrative* 17, 2 (2016), 61-73.

In chapter nine: 'A French Connection: Paul Verhoeven's ELLE in Tandem with Jean Renoir's THE RULES OF THE GAME', *Senses of Cinema* 81 (2016).

In chapters two and nine: 'Fortunate Sinners: Martin Koolhoven's BRIMSTONE as an "Edam" Western', *Senses of Cinema* 83 (2017).

In the introduction and chapter three: "My Very Own CITIZEN KANE," Inspired by Godard and Fellini: Frans Weisz's Adaptation of Remco Campert's *Het gangstermeisje*', *Journal of Dutch Literature* 8, 1 (2017), 60-74.

A few paragraphs in chapter seven correspond to passages from 'The Freedom to Make Racial Jokes: Satires on Nationalism and Multicultural Comedies in Dutch Cinema', ed. by James Harvey, *Nationalism in Contemporary Western European Cinema* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 125-143.

NOTES

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- 1 In those books, 'Dutchness' is pinpointed according to the most general assumptions, such as the Dutch have a tendency to be 'moralizing', and are 'bursting with dikes, liberalism, independence, equality and global beliefs' (White and Boucke, 4) or the Dutch 'always ask for a receipt & double-check if everything is correct', for they are 'thrifty' (Geske, 45).
- 2 The Oscar-winning directors did not prosper after receiving the awards. Rade-makers made only one more picture, and he himself did not count it among his best work. Gorris had the opportunity to make some feature films in English, but adaptations such as *MRS. DALLOWAY* (1997) and *THE LUZHIN DEFENCE* (2000) did not become as famous as the novels they were based upon, by Virginia Woolf and Vladimir Nabokov respectively. When working on a project in 2015, Gorris suffered from a burnout, and Mike van Diem took over, which resulted in *TULIPANI: LIEFDE, EER EN EEN FIETS* (2017). Almost 20 years after his Academy Award, this was only Van Diem's second feature since *KARAKTER. DE SURPRISE* (2015) was his first feature after a time gap of 18 years.
- 3 Koolhoven said in an interview on the extras of the 3-Disc Special Edition of *OORLOGSWINTER*: 'Wij zijn zo calvinistisch, dat we qua acteren alleen maar realistisch spel verdragen.'
- 4 In *Humour and Irony*, I discussed *DE MINDER GELUKKIGE TERUGKEER VAN JOSZEF KATÚS NAAR HET LAND VAN REMBRANDT* (Wim Verstappen, 1966), which is an early example of a Dutch 'nouvelle vague' film but one that also reacts to contemporary developments in society, best proven by the dominant presence in Amsterdam of the so-called Provos, a pacifist countercultural movement.

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Introduction

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| 17

ABSTRACT

The introduction addresses why the unfortunate history of the war picture *ALS TWEE DRUPPELS WATER* (Rademakers, 1963) was a bad omen for attempts to establish an ‘art cinema’ in the late 1960s. Whereas pictures with artistic and international ambitions failed to attract viewers, Dutch cinema began to enjoy increasing popular success at home in the early 1970s largely due to a ‘hyper-realistic’ depiction of sex scenes. Rather than confirm the assumption that Dutch cinema has a realist orientation, I propose—inspired by the work of Slavoj Žižek—to explore the domain of desire and fantasy. By adopting the perspective of a cinephile, I aim to highlight on what grounds we can learn to reconsider—or even to appreciate—the many underrated Dutch films.

KEYWORDS

Repressed key film – ‘failure’ of Dutch art cinema in the 1960s – The Imaginary, the Symbolic, the Real – three cameos by Rademakers – cinephilia



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When Fons Rademakers decided to adapt *De donkere kamer van Damokles* [*The Darkroom of Damocles*], the critically acclaimed novel by Willem Frederik Hermans published in 1958, for the screen, the signs were favourable. Within the span of only a few years—between 1958 and 1961—Rademakers had directed three little gems, each quite unlike the other,¹ and an adaptation of Hermans' book set in World War II about a mysterious secret agent and his doppelgänger promised to be something else again. In fact, by 1962, when he started preparing the shooting of this film, he was the one-eyed man in the country of the blind who is king in the domain of Dutch fiction feature films, for that other household name, Bert Haanstra, had returned to making documentary films. Haanstra was disappointed that his film *DE ZAAK M.P.* [*THE MANNEKEN PIS CASE*] (1960) did not come close to the success of his comic debut fiction film *FANFARE* (1958). The press had been less positive about *DE ZAAK M.P.*, and it attracted 'only' 746,302 viewers versus the more than 2.6 million for its predecessor.

Initially, Hermans had been very supportive of Rademakers' project, and they agreed that a few changes were required for the screen version, such as a different ending. Moreover, they thought it was a safe bet to alter the title and the name of the protagonist, for Hermans had had a quarrel with his publisher. During a stay in Norway in the summer of 1961, however, Hermans turned his own book into a complete first draft of the screenplay and did not accept any of the critical remarks that Rademakers made. The two exchanged a number of letters and had several arguments by telephone, but the net result was that Hermans wanted to end the collaboration. He insisted on breaking the contract because, according to unsubstantiated rumours, someone else—probably an American—was interested in adapting the book but only on the condition that no other film version was already in pre-production (Bernink, 51).²

When Rademakers went on to make his adaptation of *De donkere kamer van Damokles*, which he gave the title *ALS TWEE DRUPPELS WATER* [*LIKE TWO DROPS OF WATER*] (1963), Hermans criticized it a few months after its premiere in an article for the magazine *Podium*. His main critique was that the film had what he called 'witte paters' [white priests], the term he used to qualify Dutch cinema as amateurish. Hermans felt strongly that all details in a book or film had to be functional and relevant. In Rademakers' previous film *HET MES* [*THE KNIFE*] (1961), however, Hermans had observed that there was a white

missionary who was talking about Congo in Africa while standing next to a map of Indonesia. Referring to this error, Hermans pointed out some ‘white priests’ in *ALS TWEE DRUPPELS WATER* as well. While the book emphasizes the fact that Osewoudt could not grow a beard, which Hermans explains was used as a recurring motif to indicate Osewoudt’s lack of manliness, in the film the protagonist mentions his own beardless chin only once,³ and for no particular reason. On top of that, Hermans noticed some stubbles on the actor’s face in a close-up (41).⁴ The remark about his beardlessness was isolated and hence non-functional, he concluded, and the close-up illustrated the director’s inattention to details.

Apart from Hermans’ disdain, the fact that former resistance fighters were angered by *ALS TWEE DRUPPELS WATER* did put a dent in the film’s reception. One of them, Jef Last, wrote letters to journals to complain that the collaborators were represented by prettier girls than the ones in the resistance, and he considered it an insult that the protagonist was ruthlessly shot in the back by the Dutch police (Bernink, 55). At the time the movie came out, hardly any war pictures had been produced in the Netherlands. A few were made in the immediate post-war years,⁵ but there was a remarkable hiatus in the 1950s, as Wendy Burke notes (53), until the release of *DE OVERVAL* [*THE SILENT RAID*] (Paul Rotha, 1962). Rotha’s film had been a well-attended resistance thriller with a clear distinction between good and evil, and Last had expected a similar film.⁶ But Rademakers’ film was, to quote Burke, ‘something of an “art” film, with its modern-looking monochrome cinematography and jazz-influenced soundtrack’. Because of its blurred lines between hero and traitor, *ALS TWEE DRUPPELS WATER* appeared ‘slightly out of place for the time it was made’ (87). Although the presentation of moral ambiguity in a war picture was deemed too delicate by the resistance in the early 1960s, most critics were enthusiastic about the film. Moreover, *ALS TWEE DRUPPELS WATER* attracted 473,162 paying viewers. This is a considerable achievement for a controversial picture, even when the uncontroversial *DE OVERVAL* which had premiered two months earlier, had more than three times this number (1,474,000 viewers, still number fourteen on the list of best attended Dutch movies of all times).

The selection of *ALS TWEE DRUPPELS WATER* as the Dutch entry for the competition of the Cannes Film Festival in 1963 was the icing on the cake, and the beer tycoon Freddy Heineken organized a big party in the South of France to celebrate its nomination. Back when Rademakers had been searching for backers of his new production company Cineurope to raise money for the film, Heineken had made him a generous offer. Little did Rademakers know that it would turn out to be a poisoned chalice. Heineken had stipulated that he would guarantee a sufficient budget for the film on the condition that Rademakers cancelled the other donors. Rademakers complied, for believed

he had a true patron of culture on his side. After the screening at the Cannes Film Festival, the foreign press was most generous, so Rademakers seemed to have more than consolidated his reputation, despite the negative comments by Hermans and Last. To his disappointment, however, when Rademakers then asked Heineken to finance another film, the latter replied that he makes much more money with beer (Bernink, 56).

Their one-time collaboration took a turn for the worse when Heineken, who held the rights to *ALS TWEE DRUPPELS WATER*, soon thereafter obstructed any further screening of the film except for rare and special events.⁷ An official reason was not given, but a persistent rumour has it that Heineken took revenge for the fact that his mistress Nan Los, who played the female lead, had ended their affair. When Dutch television wanted to broadcast the film in 1983, Heineken refused permission because, as his lawyer wrote, he feared that people would make video copies of it. When the Nederlandse Filmdagen—an annual festival established in 1981 to celebrate Dutch cinema—organized a retrospective of Dutch war pictures in 1984, Heineken's answer was 'no' yet again. Moreover, his lawyer wrote a letter to the Filmmuseum, the Dutch film archive and museum, demanding that it hand over the one existing copy of the film. Rademakers started an arbitration case to acquire the rights to the film himself, but the Bioscoopbond (the Dutch association of movie theatres, producers and distributors) postponed a judgement time and again. The story making the rounds was that the Bioscoopbond feared that a decision on the case would push up prices for beer (Bernink, 58). When Heineken died in 2002, his family lifted the ban, allowing *ALS TWEE DRUPPELS WATER* to be seen again almost 40 years after its release. It soon appeared on DVD, first as part of a Rademakers box, and then also in the 'Quality Film Collection'. Moreover, it was one of only five post-war narrative fiction features selected for the official Dutch film canon (in 2007).

This thumbnail sketch of these disputes is presented here for two reasons. First, the critiques by both Hermans and Last were in fact improper arguments that only indirectly relate to the quality of Rademakers' film. Hermans' comments were unduly hair-splitting and were probably made out of a certain degree of annoyance: it could be because his screenplay had been criticized or because he had wanted to make a different deal. Jef Last was irritated by the ambiguity of the film: he had wanted a heroic depiction of the resistance and a clear condemnation of those who sympathized with the German cause. Second, and what was more damaging, the film was withheld from view due to Heineken's caprices for about four decades, and thus only a contemporary audience had been able to appreciate *ALS TWEE DRUPPELS WATER* for the admirable achievement it was. One such enthusiast was Adriaan Ditvoorst, who sent Rademakers a friendly note to congratulate him on a magnificent

film. Young film students like Ditvoorst were particularly impressed by the film's exquisite cinematography. The black-and-white film was shot in Francscope widescreen format, which Rademakers had seen in *LOLA* (Jacques Demy, 1961) and in *JULES ET JIM* (François Truffaut, 1962). Thanks to his friend Truffaut, Rademakers was able to hire the director of photography of these films, Raoul Coutard, who had also shot some Jean-Luc Godard pictures—*À BOUT DE SOUFFLE* [BREATHLESS] (1960), *UNE FEMME EST UNE FEMME* [A WOMAN IS A WOMAN] (1961), *VIVRE SA VIE* [MY LIFE TO LIVE] (1962). Since he had worked with Godard, Coutard was acquainted with improvised shooting conditions. In addition to the superb lighting, his camerawork brought a great dynamism to the usually fairly static approach in Rademakers' previous films, which had often relied heavily on the acting performances.

Ditvoorst wrote in his letter: 'GREAT FONSI! ... a Dutchman who walks the high road ... at last'.⁸ In the same vein, I will entertain the claim that *ALS TWEE DRUPPELS WATER* is the repressed key film of Dutch cinema. By 'repressed', I am not merely referring to the fact that the film had been hidden from sight for such a long time. As Sigmund Freud argued, one of the main characteristics of the repressed is that it always returns, albeit in a different guise. With hindsight, as Lili Rademakers remarks in an episode of the television programme *Andere tijden* broadcast on 3 November 2012, we can say that the enigmatic ban was also to the benefit of the film's reputation, for *ALS TWEE DRUPPELS WATER* is still talked about because of its curious history. But it is also talked about because a ban is usually instituted against films that are provocative, morally repellent, and/or aesthetically poor, but in this case the prohibition was targeted against 'perhaps the best Dutch film from the previous century' according to the narrator of *Andere tijden*.⁹ And indeed, precisely because one is aware of the many years of neglect, one is inclined to eulogize the film. But there is a more serious point to be made, for as I will try to suggest, *ALS TWEE DRUPPELS WATER* initiated a tendency in Dutch cinema that was only too short-lived. In retrospect, one can say that the repression of Rademakers' war picture was a bad omen for cautious attempts to establish an 'art cinema' in the Netherlands in the second half of the 1960s. And this failed attempt, I hope to explain in this introduction, was to have its repercussions for both the development and the perception of Dutch fiction films.¹⁰

THE UNREALIZED POTENTIAL OF DUTCH 'ART' CINEMA

The idea that cinema could be artistic was firmly embedded in countries like Italy and above all France, but it was rather alien in the 1960s to a Dutch audience in terms of fiction features. For viewers in the Netherlands, cinema was

first and foremost entertainment, confirmed by the all-time box-office records for *THE SOUND OF MUSIC* (Robert Wise, 1965) and *IRMA LA DOUCE* (Billy Wilder, 1963), respectively number one and number two with 3.99 million and 3.62 million cinemagoers. Dutch audiences were used to the idea that avant-garde and experimental films were artistic, as this had been enthusiastically acclaimed by De Nederlandsche Filmliga whose ideas had been influential for a much longer period than the actual lifespan of this collective of filmmakers and cinephiles (1927-1933). In the Netherlands, documentaries were traditionally linked to visual art rather than cinema, and this connection ensured that documentaries were held in high critical esteem (Hofstede, 75). Herman van der Horst, Joris Ivens, and Johan van der Keuken built themselves a more than respectable reputation, whereas the documentaries that Haanstra made in the mid-sixties, such as *ALLEMAN [EVERYMAN]* (1964) and *DE STEM VAN HET WATER [THE VOICE OF THE WATER]* (1966), were immensely popular.¹¹ These titles confirmed Haanstra's reputation as the filmmaker laureate (Schoots *Bert Haanstra*, 150).

Dutch drama, Rademakers himself realized, was best regarded as an oxymoron. When he had requested Jan Blokker to write an essay on the occasion of the release of his fifth feature film *DE DANS VAN DE REIGER [THE DANCE OF THE HERON]* (1966), Blokker commented with gusto that the Dutch landscape is so 'undramatically flat' that it should not surprise us that 'no great conflict can arise from such flatness'. The Dutch may fear God, but they consider themselves 'sober, tolerant, cautious and confident—and these features do not quickly trigger conflicts' (Blokker, qtd. in Bernink, 142, my translation).¹² Since the Dutch are more inclined towards 'observation than towards exploration' (*ibid.*), there is a tendency to favour a documentary school of 'wheat waving in the wind' over a depiction of human tragedies, Rademakers noted.¹³ He wondered how it was possible to create drama with a language that is 'sharp and empty', for the 'monotonous' Dutch pales in comparison to the 'masculine Swedish', the 'wonderful French', the 'fast and fluent Italian', and the 'tough American' languages (qtd. in Bernink, 142, my translation).¹⁴

It is no coincidence that Rademakers liked to cooperate with the Flemish writer-poet Hugo Claus, who had written the screenplays of five of his first seven features (out of a total of 11).¹⁵ Claus used the Dutch-Flemish language in an unconventional and rhythmic fashion. As an experimental poet, he was interested in the acoustic quality of language. The partnership between Claus and Rademakers that started with the latter's debut feature *DORP AAN DE RIVIER [VILLAGE BY THE RIVER]* (1958) foreshadows what I described in my earlier book (referring to Hans Schoots' study *Van Fanfare to Spetters*) as the key tendency of Dutch cinema in the 1960s: the rebellious stance taken by some Dutch filmmakers in this decade is in fact a belated aping of the men-

tality of an artistic avant-garde from the 1950s (Verstraten *Humour and Irony*, 262). A cross-fertilization between this avant-garde and cinema started in the early 1960s with documentaries on the Cobra painter Karel Appel (by Jan Vrijman) and on the Vijftiger poet-painter Lucebert (by Johan van der Keuken) who were both, like Claus, interested in primitive painting styles and associative linguistic expressions. In the aftermath of the release of *ALS TWEE DRUPPELS WATER* with its superb cinematography, Dutch fiction film underwent an unprecedented sea change in the second half of the 1960s.

Ditvoorst received accolades from Godard and Bernardo Bertolucci at international film festivals for his *nouvelle vague*-inspired short film *IK KOM WAT LATER NAAR MADRA* [THAT WAY TO MADRA] (1965). The soundtrack, celebrated by Godard, contains few spoken words but mostly asynchronous background noise and even total silence. Ditvoorst's first feature was the bleak but aesthetically pleasing *PARANOIA* (1967) based upon a story by the same Hermans who had written *De donkere kamer van Damokles*. In the playful short film *AAH ... TAMARA* (1965), made by former film student Pim de la Parra who later teamed up with Wim Verstappen for some fifteen years, there were cameo appearances by three generations of directors: Joris Ivens (b. 1898), Rademakers (b. 1920), and Frans Weisz (b. 1938). Weisz, who was the very first student at the Nederlandse Filmacademie (the Dutch Film Academy) when it was founded in 1958, continued his studies in Rome at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, and his graduation silent comic short, *PING PONG E POI* (1962) was clearly a tribute to Agnès Varda's *CLÉO, DE 5 À 7* [CLÉO FROM 5 TO 7] (1962). He then made, as part of an Italian omnibus film,¹⁶ the 30-minute-long *HELDEN IN EEN SCHOMMELSTOEL* [HEROES IN A ROCKING CHAIR] (1963), which can best be described as 'JOHNNY GUITAR (Nicholas Ray, 1954) in Rome' and was an unwitting prelude to the spaghetti western craze that was to dominate Italian cinema for some ten years after the release of *PER UN PUGNO DI DOLLARI* [A FISTFUL OF DOLLARS] (Sergio Leone, 1964).

Back in the Netherlands, Weisz made the short commissioned film *EEN ZONDAG OP HET EILAND VAN DE GRANDE JATTE* [A SUNDAY ON THE ISLAND OF THE GRANDE JATTE] for a special occasion: the so-called Boekenbal [Book Ball] on 13 May 1965. It has a playful tone and rhythmic editing, and it is littered with a variety of highbrow references. An establishing shot in the beginning is an imitation of the painting *Un dimanche après-midi à l'Île de la Grande Jatte* (1886) by French post-Impressionist Georges Seurat: it shows shiny, happy people in a park, until heavy rain makes them take shelter in a castle. In the film, writers clad in black are passive onlookers who see how the people in the castle misuse books as material objects: books are used for some sort of hopscotch, jumping from one to the other, or as a wedge to keep a sash window open; children even throw books at each other for fun in a reference to a slow-

motion pillow fight in ZÉRO DE CONDUITE [ZERO FOR CONDUCT] (Jean Vigo, 1933). There is a transition to the writers in a library, where they start to write feverishly on typewriters. The sound of their typing changes into a melody, and as the rhythm increases, the editing accelerates, showing us pictures of a great number of writers. In some subsequent scenes, we see how people are reading books in the most unlikely of situations, such as a window cleaner on a stepladder and a woman jumping from a diving board. Towards the end of EEN ZONDAG OP HET EILAND VAN DE GRANDE JATTE, there is a return to the very same set-up of Seurat's painting.

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In a longer analysis of this 20-minute short (Verstraten, 'My Very Own', 62-64), I have pointed out the playful irony of this film, which has neither voice-over nor dialogues even though it is about writers and had writers as its primary audience. The only way the authors can make contact with the readers is not by starting a conversation with them but simply through the melodic sounds of their typewriters. The actual content of their texts seems irrelevant; they are only capable of mesmerizing people through the rhythmic but apparently meaningless playing of typewriter keys. Most important to my aim here is that Weisz's short is the best example of how filmmakers were starting to explore the connections between cinema and an artistic undercurrent in art and literature, underscored by the cameo appearances of a great number of prominent Dutch authors in the vanguard such as Gerard van 't Reve, Cees Nootboom, Ed Hoornik, Adriaan Morriën, Jan Cremer, Belcampo, and Remco Campert.

Weisz's next film project, his ambitious debut feature HET GANGSTERMEISJE [ILLUSION IS A GANGSTER GIRL] (1966), is an even better case of the cross-fertilization between cinema and literature. Campert had written the screenplay for HELDEN IN EEN SCHOMMELSTOEL, and Weisz wanted to adapt Campert's 1961 novel *Het leven is vurrukkulluk* [*Life is Wonderful*].¹⁷ The production was aborted, but then Weisz read the first fourteen pages of an as yet unfinished manuscript by Campert, intrigued by the title *Het gangstermeisje*. They decided to embark on a dialogic co-creation, which meant that they held a number of meetings to discuss the characters and the narrative developments. Weisz already started shooting his adaptation of the still incomplete book, while Campert worked on both the novel and the scenario. Since dialogues were often not perfectly lip-synched in Italian cinema, Weisz did not bother to do so in his Dutch film either. The film first had to be dubbed in Dutch anyway, since two of his main actors—Paolo Graziosi and Gian Maria Volontè—were Italian and did not speak the language. Second, Campert kept on sending new lines during filming, even of scenes that had already been shot, so lip synchronicity was an illusion anyway.

In my article on Weisz's debut feature, I have pointed out that HET GANG-

STERMEISJE has parallels with both Godard's *LE MÉPRIS* [CONTEMPT] (1963) and Federico Fellini's *OTTO E MEZZO* [8½] (1963) in terms of narrative, for all three films are about the problems in writing a screenplay. Stylistically, the film comes close to Godard's *À BOUT DE SOUFFLE* with its frontally staged shots, brief inserts, unorthodox framing, relatively fast zooms, out-of-focus shots, and swish pans. Godard had tried to transgress cinematic rules in 1960, and Weisz had aimed to do this with his grandiose ambitious undertaking in 1966. Initially, *HET GANGSTERMEISJE* did well at the box office, but after six fairly successful weeks in Amsterdam, the movie theatres were practically empty. Weisz concluded from this decline in movie attendance that while a considerable number of cinephiles had come to see the film, there had been no word-of-mouth advertising for his film. This kind of 'art cinema' was apparently doomed to fall flat in a country with an as yet immature fiction film tradition.

Like Weisz, Rademakers made a feature film in 1966 in the Dutch language, with an international orientation. For Weisz, Godard and Fellini had been key references, whereas for Rademakers' new film the work of French director Alain Resnais was a prominent source of inspiration.¹⁸ Based upon a 1962 theatre play by Claus, Rademakers' adaptation *DE DANS VAN DE REIGER* bears comparison to Resnais's *L'ANNÉE DERNIÈRE À MARIENBAD* [LAST YEAR IN MARIENBAD] (1961): there are suspicions of female adultery; the acting is quite inexpressive; the continuity of space is unexpectedly disrupted, creating jarring jump cuts; the present can be suddenly interrupted with scenes from a past, but we are never sure whether this past is hallucinated. To underscore this indebtedness to *L'ANNÉE DERNIÈRE À MARIENBAD*, Rademakers hired Sacha Vierny, who had been the director of photography on four films by Resnais.

It would have made sense for Rademakers to cast the original actors from *De Nederlandse Comedie*—a prominent theatre company between 1950 and 1971. Apart from the fact that Ellen Vogel and Paul Cammermans had performed Claus's play on stage, Rademakers had already worked with these two actors for his third movie *HET MES*.¹⁹ Instead, Rademakers recruited three main actors with significant reputations among cinephiles: Jean Desailly had already starred in Jean-Pierre Melville's *LE DOULOS* [THE FINGER MAN] (1962) and in Truffaut's *LA PEAU DOUCE* [THE SOFT SKIN] (1964); Gunnel Lindblom in a few Ingmar Bergman films; and Van Doude in Billy Wilder's *LOVE IN THE AFTERNOON* (1957) and Eric Rohmer's *LE SIGNE DU LION* [SIGN OF THE LION] (1962) in addition to having a brief part in *À BOUT DE SOUFFLE*.²⁰ Art cinema was particularly versatile in the 1960s, given the critical acclaim for films by Bergman, Godard, Truffaut, Fellini, Varda, Luis Buñuel, and others. And with his 'mimicry' of Resnais's film, one of the quintessential titles of European art cinema, Rademakers was apparently betting on an international break-

through. The stars seemed to be properly aligned for him, since *DE DANS VAN DE REIGER* was selected for competition in the Cannes Film Festival 1966. According to the existing regulations, the film could count as a Dutch submission only if the film's dialogue was spoken in Dutch. Since his own company was co-producing the film, Rademakers spent considerable money to have the voices of his three main actors dubbed in Dutch, and he himself spoke Jean Desailly's lines. While a screening of the film at Cannes was being prepared, festival director Robert Favre le Bret blocked its showing, arguing that the largely French public would not accept Desailly speaking not in his native tongue but in a peculiar language that sounded like he had a throat ailment (Bernink, 75).

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If the quite successful *ALS TWEE DRUPPELS WATER* had seemed to announce the advent of 'Dutch quality film' or rather 'Dutch art cinema', then its sudden disappearance from the public arena was symptomatic of the fate of the films that followed in its aftermath. A film like *DE DANS VAN DE REIGER* was too austere and cerebral to attract more than a handful of Dutch cinephiles. At the same time, the lack of airplay at Cannes obviously crippled Rademakers' hopes of achieving international recognition with this picture. 1966 and 1967 were perhaps the golden years of 'Dutch art cinema' that saw the release of not only the aforementioned titles (*PARANOIA*; *HET GANGSTERMEISJE*; *DE DANS VAN DE REIGER*) but also Nikolai van der Heyde's enjoyable *EEN OCHTEND VAN ZES WEKEN* [*A MORNING OF SIX WEEKS*] (1966), which had a similar plot as a French film that had been released a few months later, Claude Lelouch's *UN HOMME ET UNE FEMME* [*A MAN AND A WOMAN*]. In both films, a racing driver embarks on a romantic liaison with a woman. Chapter three discusses several resemblances between the two films, but there is a crucial difference to be noted here as well: whereas the French picture was thrust into the limelight when it won a Golden Palm at Cannes and an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Picture, the Dutch version remained under the radar.

Films like *HET GANGSTERMEISJE*, *EEN OCHTEND VAN ZES WEKEN*, *PARANOIA*, the playful low-budget *DE MINDER GELUKKIGE TERUGKEER VAN JOSZEF KATÚS NAAR HET LAND VAN REMBRANDT* [*THE NOT SO FORTUNATE RETURN OF JOSZEF KATÚS TO THE COUNTRY OF REMBRANDT*] (Wim Verstappen, 1966),²¹ and the equally *nouvelle vague*-inspired *LIEFDESBEKENTENISSEN* [*CONFESSIONS OF LOVING COUPLES*] (Verstappen, 1967) were not flawless, but they were nonetheless highly interesting first or second attempts at feature filmmaking. While the audience of Dutch lovers for art cinema was quite small, acknowledgement abroad for Dutch films was quite problematic, for the bar of quality had been lifted to unprecedented heights. In his study *Screening Modernism*, András Bálint Kovács dedicated an entire chapter to the year 1966 because he considers it the most memorable year in European art cinema, as

illustrated by the release of three phenomenal feature films: *ANDREI RUBLEV* by Andrei Tarkovski, *PERSONA* by Ingmar Bergman, and *BLOW-UP* by Michelangelo Antonioni. Given that art cinema had reached its peak in quality in 1966, it was no surprise that the Dutch features failed to raise sufficient interest abroad. Praise from foreign critics seemed to be a prerequisite for visibility in one's own country, as the case of the Flemish surrealist film *DE MAN DIE ZIJN HAAR KORT LIET KNIPPEN* [*THE MAN WHO HAD HIS HAIR CUT SHORT*] (1965), the debut feature by André Delvaux, had shown. It received a lukewarm response in Belgium at its original release, but thanks to appreciative reviews from mainly French critics, it was rereleased in 1967 in Belgium and grew into a preeminent Flemish art film classic (Mosley, 79). None of the Dutch art films in the second half of the 1960s, despite their international orientation, had the luck of receiving a step up in the form of such a positive reception abroad that would have convinced a national public to embrace it as one of 'their' fine pictures.

THE GARGLING SOUNDS OF DUTCH

In the preface to this book, I mentioned that the Dutch feel uncomfortable about their national cinema because they have a slight aversion to the language they speak. To recall the words of Rademakers: Dutch is 'empty' and 'monotonous'. To foreigners, it sounds as if the Dutch are gargling all the time. Some of the 'art' films from the 1960s, especially the shorter ones, have few spoken words if any: take for example *IK KOM WAT LATER NAAR MADRA*; *PING PONG E POI*; *EEN ZONDAG OP HET EILAND VAN DE GRANDE JATTE*; or the astonishing 20-minute short *BIG CITY BLUES* (Charles Huguenot van der Linden, 1962).²² Some films were shot in English such as the voice-over texts in René Daalder's magnificent short *BODY AND SOUL* (1967) or the dialogue in *OBSESSIONS* (1969), De la Parra's debut feature as director. Some films use a mixture of languages, as in *EEN OCHTEND VAN ZES WEKEN*, or a protagonist will speak Dutch with a thick German accent, almost to comic effect, as in *DE BLANKE SLAVIN* [*THE WHITE SLAVE*] (René Daalder, 1969). One of the very few Dutch 'art films' in the early 1970s is George Sluizer's debut fiction feature *JOÃO EN HET MES* [*JOÃO AND THE KNIFE*] (1972), and it is spoken entirely in Portuguese, shot in Brazil with Brazilian actors and a largely Dutch crew. Its poor box-office showing in Holland contrasted with the fact that it was the Brazilian submission for the Academy Awards. If the unfortunate invisibility of *ALS TWEE DRUPPELS WATER* was a foreshadowing of the fact that no true film culture would blossom in the Netherlands, then the poor box-office results in Holland for the amazing *JOÃO EN HET MES* proved the point.

Most striking, however, is the nonchalance that comes with the practice of dubbing: *DE DANS VAN DE REIGER* was in Dutch because the rules and regulations of Cannes required it to be. In *HET GANGSTERMEISJE*, the apparent indifference to the matter of lip synchronization makes it seem as though the film could have been screened in any language. It was as though the director had said, 'If the public wants a version in French or one in Italian, let's give it to them.' All these titles, which I have categorized for the sake of convenience under the umbrella term of 'Dutch art cinema', treat spoken Dutch as if it is a necessary evil. It is strictly hypothetical, but this attitude of insouciance towards the Dutch language could be born from the fact that the words in Dutch films, among others in *ALS TWEE DRUPPELS WATER*, voiced by non-experienced film actors (Lex Schoorel and Nan Los) in the main roles, are sort of a tin-eared tune. To film viewers of today, accustomed as they are to hyper-modern audio design, the dialogues and the dubbing sound tinny. That can also have its charm, especially when the idea is that it is meant to be that way. But *ALS TWEE DRUPPELS WATER* is not such a film because it does not aim to violate the conventions of psychological realism. Maybe Rademakers had his own film in mind when in 1966 he compared the Dutch language unfavourably to Swedish, Italian, and English. The fact is that for *MIRA* (1971), the film he made after the disappointing experience that *DE DANS VAN DE REIGER* turned out to be, the dialogue written by Claus was couched in an invented dialect. Hence, the stylized language contrasted with the presumed naturalism of the small rural community depicted in *MIRA*.

By 1971, the year *MIRA* was released, most of the fiction feature directors from the 1960s began to change course, since their films had resonated more poorly than they had expected. In the early 1970s, they sacrificed their artistic ambitions for 'national cinema' as a model. According to Bart Hofstede in his study *Nederlandse cinema wereldwijd*, this category of 'national cinema' includes humorous pictures and genre films, which proved to be a profitable strategy, as I indicated in my previous study on humour and irony in which many of these popular films were examined. In this period, Dutch filmmakers introduced the profitability of sex as a theme, implying that protagonists could benefit from a licentious lifestyle. Moreover, the sexual display in Dutch films was also profitable in another respect, for it resulted in astonishing box-office results.

The downside of the enormous commercial successes at home was that these films were conspicuously absent at international film festivals, as Hofstede notes.²³ Thanks to its sexually tantalising trailer, Rademakers' *MIRA* attracted large audiences in the Netherlands (and Belgium). It was the same with Verstappen and the erotic display in *BLUE MOVIE* (1971), Weisz with the crime action in *DE INBREKER* [*THE BURGLAR*] (1972), and Van der Heyde with

the humour and sexual innuendo in *HELP! DE DOKTER VERZUIPT* [*HELP! THE DOCTOR IS DROWNING*] (1974). And the shift in focus from the international to the national market not only implied that the promise of Dutch art cinema was squandered in the early 1970s;²⁴ it also meant that the language was no longer considered an obstacle or a nuisance, since these films were only meant for the Dutch. Hence Dutch expressions were used bluntly, including profanities being shouted out, with ‘godverdomme’ [Goddamn it] as a favourite curse word.²⁵

This national orientation went hand in hand with the advent of a ‘sex wave’ in Dutch cinema, which was a blessing in the 1970s from a commercial perspective but which became quite a burden thereafter from a more artistic angle, for Dutch cinema became too often associated with nude actors. This shift from blessing to burden, I will claim, had to do with a changed context for sexual display in cinema. In the 1970s, sex scenes were embedded in an often playful atmosphere of tolerance and liberation, mindful of the hippie slogan ‘make love, not war’. From the more cynical decade of the 1980s onwards, however, sex was increasingly deployed in a context of manipulation and cunning strategies.

SEX SELLS, TO SOME EXTENT

The films Paul Verhoeven made in the early 1970s are helpful in understanding the dominant approach towards the representation of sex as liberating and proudly provocative. His debut feature *WAT ZIEN IK!?* (1971) helped to create the image of the ‘happy hooker’. Greet’s male clients are pathetic types, and all of them are weird in comparison to the ‘normal’ Greet, our point of identification throughout the film. She joyfully participates in the sorts of theatre play that the odd whoremongers have invented for her, except when the man who wants her to walk and chuck like a chicken transgresses a limit for her. ‘Business is business’, according to one of the English titles in use for the film, but a comic tone towards sex prevails.

Verhoeven’s *TURKS FRUIT* (1973) became a landmark film about an *amour fou*. Inspired by Jan Wolkers’ eponymous novel, *TURKS FRUIT* depicts the impassionate liaison between the bohemian artist Erik and the red-haired Olga. In an episodic sequence at the beginning of the film, we see that Erik has some quick sexual adventures with several anonymous girls. These first ten minutes may give the impression that *TURKS FRUIT* is a licentious picture, but this obfuscates the fact that these flings do not satisfy Erik. He suffers from such lovesickness that he can only enjoy sex with Olga, the one woman who had left him and had soon thereafter contracted an incurable disease, as

a lengthy flashback will reveal. The merit of *TURKS FRUIT* resides in its ability to keep a balance between ever-changing moods: it was free-spirited and funny, romantic and macabre. This ‘porn-chic’ production exceeded all box-office expectations and became the all-time number one in the Netherlands with over 3.3 million viewers. The frank depiction of sex is obviously a provocative gesture, for in this period preceding the popular soft eroticism of the *EMMANUELLE* films, sex was associated with liberal and open minds rather than with commercialism, and the notorious case of *BLUE MOVIE*, two years earlier, clearly undergirds this argument. With its sex-addicted housewives who help a former jailbird to reintegrate into society, the film was initiated by the director—Wim Verstappen—as a challenge to the film censorship board in the Netherlands. It was thanks to Verstappen’s enthusiastic reply to the board’s critique that an uncut version of the film was released in theatres.²⁶

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Verhoeven’s next film *KEETJE TIPPEL* [*KATIE TIPPEL*] (1975) offers a slightly bleaker depiction of sex, even though the film ends with a favourable prospect for the title heroine, much like Mira in Rademakers’ film. By seducing the engineer Maurice Rondeau, Mira can turn her back on the small community of Waterhoek, although she considers him only a ‘dopey kind of a lover’. Keetje Tippel is a young, working-class woman whose first sexual experience is disconcerting: she loses her virginity when her employer rapes her. Initially naïve, she comes to realize, encouraged by her mother, that prostitution can be an escape from hunger and misery. It was better to use the laws of capitalism—sell your body as a scarce commodity—and rise above poverty. While her first client—a cameo by Fons Rademakers (!)—thinks she is an amateur, another client named George picks her up from the street but pays her to be a model. Thanks to her good looks, she climbs up the social ladder and finds herself among the upper echelon of society. George and two of his friends take her to dinner, and while André obviously fancies her, she starts an affair with Hugo. She distances herself from her family, but the banker Hugo also lives according to the laws of capitalism: when he has the opportunity to marry a woman from an affluent background, Keetje leaves him. ‘Money turns people into bastards’, she concludes. She joins a socialist demonstration where she meets André again. When the police intervene, André gets injured and she sees to it that he is brought home. His mother dismissively remarks that her son has taken her out of the gutter, but her meeting with the filthy rich André means she can finally enjoy the ‘*heady delights of high society*’, as the final text before the end credits tells us.²⁷

The main reason why Verhoeven’s *SPETTERS*, released in 1980, had such a hostile reception from both the press and a group called the Nederlandse Anti Spetters Aktie (NASA, the Dutch anti-Spetters movement) consisting of feminists and homosexuals is that the film’s detractors were not prepared

for a cynical depiction of sex.²⁸ The film was such an affront to them, I would suggest, because SPETTERS presents sex scenes that are joylessly at odds with any notion of 'free love'. Whereas the sex in the 1970s still had an odour of progressive rebellion, this aura was increasingly shattered in SPETTERS and in many Dutch films thereafter. One could argue that some of the most annoying pictures in Dutch cinema are those post-1980 titles that ignored this shift and seemed to aspire to become a new TURKS FRUIT (without coming close, I might add). To name just a few, BRANDENDE LIEFDE [BURNING LOVE] (Ate de Jong, 1983); DE GULLE MINNAAR [THE GENEROUS LOVER] (Mady Saks, 1990); and ZOMERHITTE [SUMMER HEAT] (Monique van de Ven, 2008) all rightfully received a poor reception. Reinout Oerlemans's KOMT EEN VROUW BIJ DE DOKTER [STRICKEN] (2009) was an exception in terms of box-office results with its 1.1 million viewers, but the way the sex has been embedded has given the sceptics of Dutch cinema an opportunity to make their case.

The advertising executive Stijn van Diepen introduces himself in KOMT EEN VROUW BIJ DE DOKTER as a 'major-league hedonist'. He marries the 'most beautiful woman in the Western hemisphere', he says in one of his many voice-overs, but this Carmen has to 'tolerate his cheating as a bad habit'. When she gets cancer, he accompanies her on her hospital visits, but he also goes out to meet other women, as crosscutting scenes in discos and nightclubs show us. He starts a serious affair with the visual artist Roos, 'my surrogate queen', who gives Stijn a renewed 'lust for life'. When Carmen is cured from her disease, he promises to be faithful, but when her recovery is only temporary, he breaks the promise, for 'love has its own rules in times of cancer'. The combination of sex and decay that worked so well in TURKS FRUIT is here presented as an annoying split: whereas his wife is deadly sick, he has sex with his mistress to whom he is 'even more addicted' than in their previous period together. Since he has to divide his time between two women—or actually three, for Stijn is also the father of a young daughter—he complains: 'My diary suffered from inhuman time management.' Sex functions here as an escape from sorrow, and he gets seriously hooked to Roos; in TURKS FRUIT, sex is an outlet for Erik's lovesickness, and it reminds him that there is no one like Olga. Verhoeven's film can be regarded as an ode to love, which makes it all the more ironic that the subtitle EEN ODE AAN DE LIEFDE (an ode to love) was added to the film title KOMT EEN VROUW BIJ DE DOKTER whereas, as some critics have noted, 'an ode to adultery' would have been more fitting. Oerlemans' film only deserves its actual subtitle on the basis of the last twenty-five minutes when Stijn ultimately returns to Carmen's deathbed. But once she is dead, he phones Roos to invite her to the funeral. In contrast to the rebellious potential of the representation of sex in the early 1970s, sex and nudity have been gradually turned into a commodity or, as in KOMT EEN VROUW BIJ DE DOKTER, a hedonistic practice. Its

suggestion that sleeping around has the odour of freedom and independence is one thing, but the all too decent style of the film makes it worse. Either Oerlemans' film should have been shot in a deliberately sleazy style to indicate its objection to the protagonist's behaviour, or it should have exaggerated its slickness to the point of ridicule of Stijn's adultery. But instead, *KOMT EEN VROUW BIJ DE DOKTER* is just a 'slick' movie in both content and form, having missed the opportunity to give a provocative edge to the display of sex.

32 | Unlike *KOMT EEN VROUW BIJ DE DOKTER*, *THE PARADISE SUITE* (Joost van Ginkel, 2015) acknowledges that its modern-day characters practice sex in times of cynicism. The two films are opposites not only in terms of their attitude towards sex but also in terms of their box-office success. Van Ginkel's arthouse film received only about one per cent of the 1.1 million viewers for Oerlemans' movie. Moreover, *KOMT EEN VROUW BIJ DE DOKTER* won a number of Rembrandt Awards, which are awarded on the basis of public votes, and one Golden Calf for main actor Barry Atsma; *THE PARADISE SUITE* won three Golden Calves, including a well-deserved one for Best Picture, and was the Dutch entry for the Academy Awards. *THE PARADISE SUITE* is a so-called mosaic film, depicting six immigrant residents in Amsterdam whose jarring lives intersect, sometimes only for a fleeting moment. Seka, a woman from former Yugoslavia, is keen on exacting revenge on Ivica who has committed war crimes against her relatives. Ivica has started a family in Holland and is proud of his baby Mateja. He has built himself a fortune in the red light district: he asks women from abroad to come over for a visit to do a photo shoot, but once in Amsterdam, they are brutally raped by his minions and forced to prostitute themselves. A key character is the young Jenya from Bulgaria who, like her two girlfriends, does not want to participate in Ivica's scheme but has no choice but to do so. She turns out to be very popular among whoremongers, so Ivica proposes that she do a show in a night club: Ivica promises her that she will have sex with only one guy a day, in front of paying customers. During her first show, this man is the African Yaya. He is new in the business, for he is in such desperate need of money that he accepts the job, though it embarrasses him greatly. Earlier we are shown how Yaya sends a young girl away who offered him sexual favours. Moreover, he is trying, unselfishly, to help a black family with young kids to pay their rent arrears.

Yaya's ultimate act of altruism will be fatal to him. When Jenya is forced to please a customer in the so-called Paradise Suite, she objects, pointing out that Ivica is breaking his promise. But eventually she gives in, fearing that further resistance would cost her dearly. This customer is the sixth of the immigrant protagonists in the film, the famous Swedish conductor Stig Lindh, whose face is on a huge banner next to Mozart's. His encounter with Jenya is a gift given out of gratitude after Stig's orchestra had given a magnificent per-

formance. Stig leaves after only three minutes, however, because he receives news that his son Lukas is not at home. Lukas is being bullied at school, and while his mother is on a concert tour in Japan, his father has been harsh on him. The boy cannot take it anymore and is drifting around Amsterdam on his mountain bike. This builds up to the film's most memorable scene, for Seka has stolen baby Mateja in one of Ivica's off-guard moments. She wants to abandon the baby by stowing him in a baby car seat behind bin bags near a canal at night. At that moment, Lukas passes by and stops his bike. There is an intense exchange of looks between the boy and Seka. Whatever it is that she reads in Lukas' eyes—his unhappiness, his helplessness—it prompts her to take Mateja with her and to make sure the baby is reunited with his parents after all. Meanwhile, Ivica presumes that Jenya is to blame for Stig's instant departure from the Paradise Suite, and he orders Milijan, one of his minions, to make her pay. Then, out of nowhere, Yaya intervenes and hits Milijan to the ground. He steals a huge amount of money Milijan was carrying with him and also takes his car. Through this act, Yaya is able to pay the black family's debts. After Jenya has recovered, he encourages her to drive back with the pimp's car to her mother in Bulgaria. But Milijan tracks down Yaya, and instead of betraying Jenya's whereabouts, the African man only says in French: 'Father, forgive him.' He is shot instantly.

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THE PARADISE SUITE is such a sombre picture because it identifies sex exclusively with exploitation and violence, both of a physical and mental nature. When Yaya asks Jenya how she feels, the only thing that comes to her mind is 'dirty'. And from Yaya's body language, we can conclude that he feels humiliated as well, which is possibly the main reason he helps her out. In Van Ginkel's mosaic film, sex is no fun and it only offers gain to those who force others to practice it. When journalist Henk Bovekerk went to see this 'cocktail of misery and woe',²⁹ he noted that viewers were complaining after the screening about the choice they had made, for the nasty scenes had spoiled their evening. It was no surprise that there was no word of mouth on this film, which explains the limited attendance for this award-winning picture.

Here we arrive at what I would hypothesize is the ambiguous split regarding the persistent prejudices of Dutch cinema. Watching scenes of sexual excitement and nudity in a context of humour and/or liberation usually produces mixed feelings: it is easy to be attracted by such scenes, but it is more problematic to admit that they give one visual pleasure. The way out of this slight embarrassment caused by the enjoyment is to sneer at the display of sex and nudity: the typical reaction is to laugh furtively while calling it 'functional'. The problem with the representation of graphic sex in a film is that it threatens to derail the story. Inserting a steaming love scene of only a few minutes in *OUT OF AFRICA* (Sidney Pollack, 1985), Slavoj Žižek has postulated,

would bring the entire romantic drama out of balance (*Looking Awry*, 111). The sentimental or lyrical tone of a film can only be guaranteed by turning sex into a narrative ellipsis, but Dutch films have too often violated this. The prejudice is that it is used for sensational purposes and not on narrative grounds. At the risk of superfluity, this means that those critical viewers who categorize the sexual display 'functional' do so ironically.³⁰ The resulting bias is only perpetuated when films such as *KOMT EEN VROUW BIJ DE DOKTER* – with its cleanly cut camerawork, nothing gritty about it – become box-office successes. And in case a Dutch film such as *THE PARADISE SUITE* undermines the prejudice from within by linking sex with unpleasant subjects – trafficking in women, humiliation, rape – it brings together the words 'Dutch' and 'art film', and this combination, albeit critically acclaimed, seems a misnomer in the public eye.

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In an interview with Gerhard Busch for *cinema.nl*, Martin Koolhoven argued that the Netherlands does not really have a 'true film culture' and never has. A self-declared aficionado of genre cinema, Koolhoven regrets that Dutch cinema has always been ruled by 'realism as a guiding principle', and it is always a risk for a filmmaker in the Netherlands to deviate from this principle.³¹ Koolhoven appreciates films such as *ANGEL HEART* (Alan Parker, 1987) and *MILLER'S CROSSING* (Joel Coen, 1990) tremendously, but if their dialogues were translated to Dutch, he argues, many viewers would unjustly consider them ludicrous because they are too unrealistic. With this tradition in the back of his mind, Mike van Diem made *KARAKTER [CHARACTER]* in 1997 (discussed in chapter two) as a deliberately theatrical film in which the characters speak a very formal and archaic Dutch. The film is, so to speak, 'Catholic' rather than 'Calvinist', and especially Victor Löw's over-the-top performance as the lawyer De Gankelaar is much appreciated by Koolhoven as an 'un-Dutch' exception to the rule of 'realism'.

Throughout his career, Rademakers also regularly complained that the Dutch have a fear of coming across as affected and anti-naturalistic (Bernink, 42). A Dutch actor is required to perform his role as naturally as possible to avoid the charge of theatricality. Rademakers himself was fond of stylized dialogues, but to his dismay, many Dutch are uncomfortable when introduced to a different reality than they are acquainted with (see Bernink, 42). This suggests that Dutch film viewers prefer to see on screen what they know from daily life. In fact, popular films such as *BLUE MOVIE* and *TURKS FRUIT* could be called hyper-realistic: their frank depiction of sexual acts was much more 'true to nature' than American box-office hits with their vague hints of sensuality.

To stress his point of 'realistic' and 'un-cinematic' tendencies in the Netherlands, Koolhoven mentions that the only tradition that can be found in Dutch cinema is not one of the classical genres such as horror, science fiction, or action thriller but instead an atypical category: World War II films.³²

Since these war pictures are usually embedded in ‘realist’ narrative dramas, this underscores Koolhoven’s argument that a preference for lifelikeness is prioritized over cinematic considerations.

Even though Dutch cinema is not entirely steeped in exaggerated adherence to realism, I would agree with Koolhoven that Dutch cinema may in general be more oriented towards realism in comparison to other national cinemas. That being said, this book tries to answer the question whether Dutch cinema is perhaps not more imaginative than our initial assumptions imply. To examine this question, I take psychoanalysis as an approach, for it offers a set of theories related to the unconscious and desire, to fantasy and imagination. Even though desire and fantasy can be well-embedded in a realist depiction of diegetic worlds, I hope that my angle de-emphasizes any concerns about realism.

SCENES FROM A MARRIAGE: PSYCHOANALYSIS AND CINEMA

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Neither Sigmund Freud nor Jacques Lacan were known as film aficionados, but both psychiatrists’ work has been employed for many a film analysis. In the 1970s in particular, when film scholars were going to great lengths to legitimize film as an object of academic study, psychoanalysis was a source of inspiration for Jean-Louis Baudry and his apparatus theory, for Laura Mulvey and her concept of the male gaze, for Christian Metz and his ‘imaginary signifier’, for Raymond Bellour and his writings on ‘symbolic blockage’ (including more than 100 pages on one film alone—Hitchcock’s *NORTH BY NORTHWEST*). The idea was to use theoretical tools to expose gender inequalities, Oedipal scenarios, and/or ideological mechanisms. The most serious backlash against this approach, which suspicious minds pejoratively termed ‘theoretical excess’, was perhaps the volume *Post-Theory* (1996), edited by David Bordwell and Noël Carroll, which made a claim for empirical and cognitive research instead.

However, as Žižek has argued, once the theory of the unconscious is ‘invented’, it cannot be negated anymore, despite post-theoretical efforts to discard it in the false hope of a magical return to some kind of naiveté before Freud’s insights (*The Fright*, 14). Ever since the late 1980s, with the publication of his *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Žižek has consistently attempted to claim the relevance of Lacan’s thinking for mass culture in general and cinema in particular. The attraction of Žižek’s output rests in his relentless efforts to explain difficult theory via well-known examples (Alfred Hitchcock, film noir, the *ALIEN* franchise). If there is no popular example at hand to support the theoretical ideas, we can only come to the conclusion that these ideas happen to be built upon quicksand. Moreover, as Žižek adds in brackets, if his book *Looking Awry*



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INTRODUCTION

now and then mentions ‘great’ names like Shakespeare and Kafka, ‘the reader need not be uneasy: they are read strictly as kitsch authors’ on the same level as Stephen King or Patricia Highsmith (vii). Over the years, psychoanalysis has run the risk of becoming marginalized both in and outside of film studies, but thanks to a prominent scholar like Žižek, one can say—in a nod to his fascination with horror—that the ‘living dead’ has returned after all.

Even though I pay tribute to Žižek’s illuminating approach, the reader must understand that there is a slight difference that separates us. His main concern, especially in his early studies, was to acquaint the reader with Lacan—who is interpreted through the philosophical tradition of German idealism—by using film examples as illustration for theory, for cinema, as Žižek asserts frequently, ‘teaches us how to desire’. To be honest, I have to say to his credit that several of his film analyses are so subtle and smart that ‘illustration’ is too modest a term for his accurate eyes and sharp-witted comments. Further, over the years his interests have extended into various fields that can be subsumed under his ambition to be a guide to ideology in an attempt to reload Marxism. This does not, however, alter the fact that, originally, one of his major goals was to introduce Lacan through popular culture by using cinema (or literature or opera) as a means to explicate psychoanalytic concepts. My approach slightly diverges from Žižek, for I will be reading Dutch films through the prism of psychoanalytic concepts to shed a light on a great number of the very best titles in Dutch cinema.

In *Looking Awry*, Žižek points to specific motifs, such as the ‘empty place’ or the ‘maternal superego’, in a series of films by Hitchcock in order to argue that they illustrate the Lacanian triad of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. In the Imaginary, a child lives in a symbiosis with the mother and derives a sense of identity from seeing itself in the mirror. It may think, ‘That’s me’, but that would be incorrect, for the mirror is only an external image. Deceptive appearances are at stake in Hitchcock’s *VERTIGO* (1958) because the main protagonist, Scottie, is obsessed with Madeleine who turns out to be a false creation, designed to take the place of a dead woman. In the Symbolic, signifiers and names determine a subject’s place in a social circuit. In *NORTH BY NORTHWEST* (1959), Roger O. Thornhill desperately searches for the secret agent ‘Kaplan’ only to find out that he is a decoy, for the name is no more than an ‘empty signifier’ to lead the Russians astray. The Real concerns that which resists symbolization and refers to a realm beyond that is ‘evidence of a psychotic state’ (Žižek, 99). In his mad moments, Norman Bates in *PSYCHO* (1960) identifies with his already dead mother, and in taking her place, he dresses in his mother’s clothes and acts on behalf of her.

As regards the ‘maternal superego’, Žižek notes that the male protagonists in the three successive films *NORTH BY NORTHWEST*, *PSYCHO*, and *THE BIRDS*

(1963) are fatherless, and the mothers are so possessive that there is hardly any room for a woman in these men's lives. The mother in *NORTH BY NORTHWEST* is constantly mocking her 40-something son Roger. When he is running away from the men whom he has called his kidnappers, his mother shouts after him: '*Roger, will you be home for dinner?*' to the delight of the crowd. With a mother like that, whom Roger sees on a regular basis, it is no wonder that he has been divorced twice, since he is still 'mama's boy' who has never developed a proper distance from his own scornful mother (the Imaginary). Norman attacks Marion in *PSYCHO* as a result of his identification with his dead mother whom he imagines would be torn apart by jealousy: he keeps on hearing her commanding voice in his head and acts according to 'her' instructions (the Symbolic). The seagulls in *THE BIRDS* fill the vacuum left by the father's absence and terrorize Melanie on behalf of a mother who wants to block any interest a woman might have in her son of nubile age (Žižek *Looking Awry*, 99). The most logical answer to the question 'Why do the birds attack?' is that they materialize to prevent Melanie from 'snatching' the son away from his mother (the Real).³³ I refer to this Hitchcockian triad because I cannot resist the hypothesis that the three highly remarkable minor roles that Rademakers played in feature films between 1968 and 1971, following upon the financial disaster of his film *DE DANS VAN DE REIGER*, conform to the triad of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real, albeit in reverse chronology.

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THE IMAGINARY, THE SYMBOLIC, THE REAL: THREE CAMEOS BY FONS RADEMAKERS

Rademakers' most noteworthy cameo is unequivocally his role as the mother in the Belgian-French-Italian-German-American co-production *LES LÈVRES ROUGES* [*DAUGHTERS OF DARKNESS*] (Harry Kümel, 1971), advertised as a stylish adult vampire movie.³⁴ Despite the fact that he is only in one scene that lasts no more than two-and-a-half minutes, the performance, exactly halfway into the film, is memorable. Due to a delay by train, a newly-wed couple misses the boat to England. In a series of close-ups and two-shots, they discuss their options: Valerie considers the 3 o'clock boat a good idea, but Stefan wants to spend the night in a hotel in Ostend. It turns out that they have been married only a couple of hours ago in secret, but Stefan's mother, who has a 'heart condition' does not know about it yet. Valerie insists that her husband inform his mother. She is already aware that the lady will not approve of her type of girl, but she adds: '*She can't be that aristocratic.*' Stefan laughs and says: '*For years she has been telling me: Stefan, we are different, that's God's gift to us. We must never debase it.*' If Stefan then denies that he is '*ashamed*' of his wife, as Valerie

supposes, she asks him about his mother: *'You're not afraid of her, are you?'* He keeps silent, and after scrutinizing his face, Valerie says: *'Stefan, you are afraid!'* *'Me afraid?'* he replies calmly. *'When we arrive in Ostend, I will phone her.'*

After checking in, Valerie encourages Stefan to ask the hotel porter to call his mother in England. Unnoticed by his wife, Stefan gives him some money and a small letter, which reads: *'Say there is no reply.'* It is clear that Stefan is trying to find reasons to postpone any contact with his mother, and the arrival of an enigmatic Hungarian countess and her female secretary is much to his advantage. The porter tells them that the ravishing countess still looks exactly the same as she did 40 years ago. Stefan comes under her spell once he realizes that drinking human blood is the elixir of her youth. Valerie is deeply worried by Stefan's strange attraction to this Countess Bathory.

38 | Because his wife does not tire of asking Stefan to contact his mother, there is finally a telephone call after a brief dissolve in which the audience sees an entirely red screen. The butler of the manor picks up the phone and brings it to a sort of greenhouse where the mother is having her breakfast. The butler says: *'It's master Stefan'* and kneels down. We do not see the mother, only a hand that touches the butler's balding head. When we see her after some time, the mother turns out to be a decadent figure with a whitened face. Speaking with his characteristic bass voice at a slow pace, Rademakers/mother asks whether Stefan has not been doing foolish things. When Stefan has difficulty expressing himself, the mother immediately guesses: *'You did do foolish things.'* When he says he cannot explain, Valerie grabs him and he pushes her away, whereupon the mother guesses correctly: *'You are not alone. There is someone with you.'* Stefan's reply is inaudible, for we still see mother in close-up and then, in an apparent repeat of what Stefan says, mother says the name *'Valerie'*. Stefan then tells that they were married three days ago in Switzerland, and when we see mother again, she keeps silent for a while and then replies: *'What a nice surprise.'* But then she continues to say that this was not foolish but merely *'unrealistic'*. What shall we do with that *'poor, little uh, Valerie'*, she wonders. *'The day she hears about us, I hate to think of that.'* After she has disqualified her son's action as an *'ungrateful thing'*, we see a purple orchid in close-up as mother says: *'I can't wait for you to see our newest laeliocattleya Valencia'* (she smells the flower which she is now holding in her hand). *And by the way, Stefan, be sure to tell the young woman that mother sends regards.'*

Watching Rademakers in this small part, which he plays 'with visible pleasure' (103), as Ernest Mathijs observes, it is obvious why Stefan hesitated to contact his mother. She still treats him as 'mama's boy', and he has not sufficiently liberated himself from her influence. For that reason, he could only marry Valerie in utmost secrecy, for his domineering mother would have prevented him from doing such a *'foolish thing'*.

Elements of a suffocating mother-son relationship are not only condensed in the interaction between the mother and Stefan in *LES LÈVRES ROUGES*—the mockery, the hostile attitude towards the blonde Valerie—but are also exaggerated. ‘*The day she hears about us, I hate to think of that*’ has an undeniable ring of a perverse relationship between mother and son, and this possible perversion is even reinforced by the image of a male actor playing the mother. His clothing, gestures, and red lips may recall femininity, but the character is recognizably male given his voice, the absence of a wig, and his facial features. If the paternal function in the Hitchcock films is suspended, as Žižek mentions, here we have a mother with fatherly characteristics, which puts further emphasis on her/his possessive qualities over the son. Moreover, for a Flemish director like Kümel, twenty years younger than Rademakers, the Dutch filmmaker could indeed be regarded as a representative of ‘Daddy’s cinema’, in a positive sense of the term.

The suggestion of extravagance was also stylistically underscored. As Mathijs explains, it was a deliberate strategy on Kümel’s part to disrupt the clear split in Belgian cinema between state-funded artistic/auteurist films and non-subsidized commercial pulp. In the 1960s, Kümel had a reputation of belonging to a cultural elite, and his output until then had earned him the honorary label of ‘auteur’. He had made some promising shorts, one of them based on a play by Franz Kafka; and he also wrote for film magazines and made television portraits of people such as John Huston, Roman Polanski and Vincente Minnelli for the public broadcast service in Belgium. Due to the troubled reception of his first feature-length production, *MONSIEUR HAWARDEN* (1968), however, Kümel was so angered that he decided to do ‘something nasty’ (quoted in Mathijs, 100). He did not apply for state support, for his second feature had to become ‘undignified trash’ (quoted in Mathijs, 101). In terms of genre, *LES LÈVRES ROUGES* is a lesbian vampire film and thus a so-called exploitation picture, but at the same time, Kümel’s movie is littered with highbrow references. Apart from the mother played by Rademakers, the role of the countess was performed by none other than Delphine Seyrig, who had starred as the female protagonist in *L’ANNÉE DERNIÈRE À MARIENBAD*. According to Mathijs, the surreal settings and the superb cinematography by Eduard van der Enden—who had been director of photography of four films by Rademakers³⁵—turned the shots into ‘postcards of paintings, inviting not only evident comparisons with René Magritte and Paul Delvaux, but also with James Ensor and Léon Spilliaert, both resident artists in Ostend’ (Mathijs, 103). Thus, *LES LÈVRES ROUGES* was remarkable for radically cutting through the categories of lowbrow and highbrow.

Rademakers’ *DE DANS VAN DE REIGER* and Kümel’s *LES LÈVRES ROUGES* can be regarded as two sides of the same coin: the first was a mild parody of

psychoanalysis couched in the format of an art film (see chapter two); the second incorporated highbrow references into the format of an exploitation genre, exploring the combination of sexual desire and gruesome violence. The first was a box-office failure, but the second was quite a commercial success, also internationally. And the fact that *LES LÈVRES ROUGES* was considered 'too raunchy to be art, too chic to be exploitation' ultimately assured its status as an 'underground cult hit' (Mathijs, 104).

40 | Nowadays, De la Parra's *OBSESSIONS* can be regarded as the Dutch equivalent of *LES LÈVRES ROUGES*. This 'artsploitation' has become one of the Dutch 'cult epics', to quote from the label of the DVD/Blu-ray release of this film in 2017. Rademakers had a cameo in the film as the rich and biggest 'skirt-chaser' Raoul Orlov who near the end of the film organizes a fancy party in Bloemendaal. The two protagonists, the doctoral student of medicine Nils Janssen and his girlfriend, the journalist Marina, come to the party, for they got a call that the model Stella Olsen would be attending. For days, Marina had been trying to contact this old girlfriend of hers, for she is investigating the death of the American soldier Joseph Petrucci. Marina knows that Stella used to date a guy by that name, but that was before Stella became hooked to drugs and served six months in prison. At the party, Marina learns that Raoul keeps Stella in hiding, and, as it turns out, he does so to protect her: Petrucci had made it look like he was the dead soldier, but since Stella knew that Petrucci was actually the man's killer, she was now being pursued by Petrucci. Marina also finds out Petrucci's address: he is the mysterious man living next door to Nils. She calls a colleague to alarm the police and she goes back with Nils to his apartment.

The couple does not know, however, that while they were away, Petrucci has discovered the small hole in the wall, which was caused when a painting that was too heavy—a reproduction of a Van Gogh—had fallen from the wall in Nils' room. From the very beginning of the film, Nils had been secretly spying on the 'strange' activities of his neighbour whose name he did not know then: there are always attractive women around and the neighbour regularly makes love to them, shown to us via peephole shots. Marina is irritated by Nils 'playing peeping Tom all day'. Nils is amazed that the girls at his neighbour's place are often sound asleep, and he occasionally enters the room with a false key when Petrucci is absent. Twice he finds a drugged woman tied to the bathtub. Moreover, he lifts another drugged woman from the bed and when she regains consciousness, she goes away without saying a word. Nils follows her into her house and they start kissing, still not exchanging a word. He meets her again at the party at Raoul's place, where they kiss once more and remain silent. After her conversation with Stella, Marina returns with Nils to his apartment. And as the proverb goes, curiosity kills the cat: Nils is about to close the hole in

the wall, but he decides to peep through it one last time. At that very moment, Petrucci fires his gun and kills the protagonist. Petrucci runs away, but outside the police arrest him.

When De la Parra was preparing to make *OBSESSIONS*, he received some support from unexpected sources. Kümel had taken Truffaut in 1967 to Amsterdam to see the Dutch film *LIEFDESBEKENTENISSEN*, directed by Verstappen and produced by De la Parra. Truffaut wrote three pages of critical notes, but he was sufficiently impressed to help De la Parra and Verstappen (known as Pim & Wim), who had their own production company Scorpio Films since 1965. Thanks to Truffaut, they became acquainted with Bernard Herrmann who had made a great number of musical scores, including for some key films by Hitchcock. Herrmann gave De la Parra permission to work with an unused score, and thus *OBSESSIONS* had an immediately recognisable ‘Hitchcock sound’. The role of Marina was performed by French-Canadian actress Alexandra Stewart, who had played in *LE FEU FOLLET* [*THE FIRE WITHIN*] (Louis Malle, 1963), *MICKEY ONE* (Arthur Penn, 1965), and in Truffaut’s *LA MARIÉE ÉTAIT EN NOIR* [*THE BRIDE WORE BLACK*] (1968). With hindsight, the film’s biggest claim to fame was that a young Martin Scorsese had worked on the script. De la Parra had met him after the two of them had each presented a short film at the Knokke Experimental Film Festival in Belgium. Since De la Parra’s command of English was not that good, Scorsese was prepared to help him with the scenario for his feature film.

The fact that the story of *OBSESSIONS* was explicitly inspired by Hitchcock’s *REAR WINDOW* (1954) was impossible to miss, but there are many more references to American movies, in particular to films by the master of suspense. For example, Nils visits a shop that is reminiscent of Pop Leibel’s bookshop in *VERTIGO*; Nils sees a stuffed owl in there, which could have been part of Norman’s collection in *PSYCHO*. There is a narratively redundant scene in which Marina takes a shower and Nils makes her scream by approaching her from behind—not to kill her as Norman did, dressed as mother, but for fun. Moreover, the peeping hole in *OBSESSIONS* is a copy of the hole covered by the reproduction of a Willem van Mieris painting in the Bates motel from *PSYCHO*. Frequently, Nils puts on a cowboy hat, a gift from his mother, and says ironically that it makes him look like ‘*John Wayne*’. Finally, the credits mention that *OBSESSIONS* is ‘*dedicated to and in memory of Republic Pictures*’, the studio of many B-movies that had ended its activities in 1959 after producing such films as *THE QUIET MAN* (John Ford, 1952) featuring John Wayne and the western *JOHNNY GUITAR* (Nicholas Ray, 1954). De la Parra called his film a ‘sex psycho suspense murder mystery’, and the sheer number of terms he uses to describe his feature already indicates that he is more interested in showing off his influences than presenting an original angle. Because of the nudity in

the film, *OBSESSIONS* can be called a sensational variant of a suspense thriller, with the male protagonist posing as a tougher guy than the typical male lead in a Hitchcock film. In the end, the Dutch-German co-production *OBSESSIONS* did relatively well in the Netherlands (184,000 viewers), but it was a much bigger success in Germany. Moreover, it was distributed to about 65 countries, so it did not go unnoticed.

Whereas *LES LÈVRES ROUGES* put its emphasis on an imaginary level with a 'mother' who wants to keep her boy under her wings, *OBSESSIONS* is embedded in a symbolic circuit. Lacan explains that the close bond between mother and child is disrupted by the intrusion of language upon the subject: once we learn to speak, our name pins down our position in a social network. We are dictated by signifiers: 'who we are' is determined by calling ourselves by our name. Recall that in *OBSESSIONS*, Marina is investigating what has happened to the dead 'Petrucci', but then she learns that the name of the victim is not right. The victim was an anonymous blackmailer, whereas the neighbour-with-no-name turns out to be Petrucci.

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Moreover, as the symbolic order is built upon lack-in-being, desire is set in motion; and *OBSESSIONS* makes it adamantly clear that desire is triggered by obsessive looking. Halfway through De la Parra's movie, we suddenly see a sequence of brief shots, presented in disarray. After the fast sequence ends, we see Nils, eyes closed, on his bed, so the brusqueness of the series is apparently the result of a dream. We recognize a great many shots from the first half, and most striking is the big close-up of Nils's right eye, peeping at the spectacle in the room of his neighbour. Nils is irresistibly drawn to this hole because the presence of naked women is on the one hand an enigma to him but on the other hand offers him visual pleasure. His desire also induces anxiety, but this anxiety also fuels his desire. His fear of what might happen is also included in the series of brief shots. Most poignant is the frontally staged shot, shown twice, of the gun the neighbour holds very close to the camera, pointed right at Nils himself and the spectator.

While the hole was caused by the Van Gogh reproduction having fallen from the wall, this painting was, significantly, a gift to Nils by his mother. Hence, one can say that the mother in De la Parra's film inadvertently introduces the son to the domain of sexual desire, to the annoyance of his steady girlfriend. This is in striking contrast to *LES LÈVRES ROUGES*, for 'Rademakers as mother' in Kümel's film had tried to usurp the place of her son's desire, leaving no room for competitors. But the son's attempt to escape the mother's influence had made him stay in the hotel in Ostend, with lethal consequences.

In comparison to his cameos in the films by Kümel and De la Parra, Rademakers had a much more substantial role as the bulky Kraut Willy in the darkly humorous black-and-white picture *DE VIJANDEN* [THE ENEMIES] (Hugo Claus,

1968). During World War II, Richard, an eighteen-year-old guy from Antwerp, is drifting around in snow-frost Belgium when he meets the American GI Mike who is searching for his squad. When they shoot a German truck driver, they chase down the victim's co-driver, but instead of killing him, this Willy becomes their travelling companion.³⁶ The German soldier is not a brute but a sad and forlorn man. At one point, the American and the Belgian tie Willy to a tree with a rope, for he is slowing their pace. Many hours later they release him from his unfortunate position, but Willy suffers from cold feet, no matter how much the American and the Belgian encourage him to keep on walking. We follow them on their survival trip in the frosty landscape until at the end of Claus's debut feature, this unlikely bunch of comrades become enmeshed in a firefight and they are all killed by the American troops they had been searching for all the time.

Visually, *DE VIJANDEN* is a schizophrenic movie. Claus had wanted to convey the grim banality and the arbitrariness of life and death in times of war, and 16mm images would have been good enough for that purpose. However, the director of photography, Herman Wuyts, insisted on shooting on 35mm film so he could create 'poetic' shots. In the end, in Claus's opinion the beauty of the cinematography clashed with the sloppy aesthetics of newsreel journalism that he originally had in mind (Willems 'Hugo Claus', 80). Especially due to its morbid ending, *DE VIJANDEN* is closest to the level of the Real: according to the rules of war, the three are supposed to act as enemies, but in the lawless landscape in which hierarchies and authorities are sidelined, pragmatics reign over any rule. No organization is as hierarchically structured as the army, but the one scene with a general in *DE VIJANDEN* is a hilarious one. He arrives in a jeep, gives both Richard and Mike a Cuban cigar and poses with them for a photograph before moving on. This general behaves like a clown rather than a commander-in-chief.

Since death lurks around the corner or behind every tree, the three protagonists have created an inconceivable friendship that lasts till death strikes them after all. Claus's film seems to depict a universe with orphaned souls in which symbolically articulated desires have given way to basic instincts and random violence. Moreover, the film stands out for its mismatch of languages. Richard meets a group of soldiers in German uniforms, and because he is hungry he asks them in German whether they have food. They reply in Ukrainian and then force him to run. The characters predominantly speak English, French, and German, whereas the Flemish in this Belgian-Dutch co-production is restricted to a silly children's song and terms of abuse. The most tragic-comic scene is Richard's death. He walks towards two American soldiers and says that he is their buddy, for he is an American. The one then asks him: 'What's the capital of Nevada?' The other joins in: 'Who's the girl-

friend of Popeye?' In desperation, Richard replies: 'I am not a German. Okay? Okay?' whereupon a third soldier shoots him instantly. This final scene illustrates once again that the chaotic universe depicted in *DE VIJANDEN* is rooted in a confusion of tongues, as if language is short-circuited.

As Žižek did with Hitchcock films, I have chosen a series of three films in which Rademakers played a minor role to examine whether they complied with Lacan's triad of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. For Žižek, Hitchcock functions as a director who has unwittingly put Lacan's theory in practice. An early volume in English edited by Žižek happened to be called *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lacan (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock)*. This could sound like a pretentious title if one failed to see the punning reference to Woody Allen's hilarious comedy *EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT SEX * BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK* (1972). Along the same lines, one can read this current book as 'Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Imaginative Dutch Post-war Films (But Were Afraid to Ask Psychoanalysis)'.

CINEPHILIA TIES THE BOOK TOGETHER

The careful reader may already have noted that most of the interesting Dutch titles mentioned so far draw influences from international cinema: *DE DANS VAN DE REIGER* and Resnais; *HET GANGSTERMEISJE* and Fellini; *PING PONG E POI* and Varda; *EEN OCHTEND VAN ZES WEKEN* and Lelouch; *JOSZEF KATÚS* and Godard; *OBSESSIONS* and Hitchcock; *HELDEN IN EEN SCHOMMELSTOEL* and Ray. In addition, *JOÃO EN HET MES* bears strong resemblances to the German film *AGUIRRE, DER ZORN GOTTES* [*AGUIRRE, WRATH OF GOD*] (Werner Herzog, 1971), also thanks to its setting in the Brazilian jungle (*AGUIRRE* was shot in the Peruvian jungle). In short, the more ambitious films gain their contours in relation to a huge variety of examples from international (art) cinema, and even Haanstra's *FANFARE*—popular in Holland but not abroad—was greatly indebted to the humour of the British Ealing Studios.³⁷ Favouring documentaries in the 1960s, Haanstra only returned to fiction features when the French director Jacques Tati, whom Haanstra greatly admired ever since he had seen *LES VACANCES DE MR. HULOT* [*MR. HULOT'S HOLIDAY*] (1953), suggested that they co-direct a movie. The collaboration did not really work out as expected, and Haanstra's contribution to Tati's *TRAFIC* [*TRAFFIC*] (1971) was reduced to a line in the credits—'with the participation of'. But my point here is that if even this director—considered 'more Dutch' than any other Dutch filmmaker—has such an international orientation, can we then properly speak of a 'Dutch cinema' at all in terms of characteristics and conventions? If there

is not really a common denominator in Dutch film history, however—already illustrated by Koolhoven’s claim that World War II films were the only significant genre in the Netherlands—then it is futile to attempt to determine a certain ‘Dutchness’ in cinema, implying that ‘Dutchness’ is an impure concept that is already tainted with an international flavour.³⁸

This international orientation means that, in general, the context of national cinema will not be an overriding concern in this book and that, as already indicated in *Humour and Irony* (18-19), I will use elastic criteria for regarding a film as ‘Dutch’. Thus this study can potentially include discussions of international films if they are directed by a Dutchman (such as Verhoeven’s *ROBOCOP* and *ELLE*) and international co-productions (especially Dutch-Belgian collaborations, such as *MIRA* and *DE VIJANDEN*).³⁹ Apart from the cameo appearance by Rademakers, the only substantial ‘Dutch’ contribution to *LES LÈVRES ROUGES* was the cinematography by Eduard van der Enden. Following the example of the Nederlands Film Festival,⁴⁰ which applies flexible criteria to decide whether a film can be a contender for best ‘Dutch’ achievements—including several films by Welshman Peter Greenaway or Argentinean Alejandro Agresti—my criteria are at least as flexible.

Given the sheer diversity, I opt for the fairly loose structure of a database rather than trying to write a coherent narrative of developments. Each chapter revolves around a psychoanalytic concept—such as the mirror (stage), father figures, desire, paranoia, (historical) trauma, aphanisis, and perversion—and the selected films are categorized according to the relevance of one of these concepts. Why are *DE DANS VAN DE REIGER* (1966), *KARAKTER* (1997), and *GLUCKAUF* (2015)—apparently so unlike each other—analysed in chapter two? All three titles address the difficult relationship a son/man has to his father. This means that the order of the films is determined by association. On the one hand, this choice is born out of pragmatism, making explicit that it is hardly expedient to write a history of Dutch film, whether chronological or alternative. On the other hand, this method of association illustrates that this study is written by someone who likes to profile himself as a cinephile, even preferring this self-declared title over his professional identity as a scholar.

A cinephile can love big and critically acclaimed pictures, but his particular fondness also concerns those film titles that have been floating beneath the radar of canonical lists.⁴¹ A cinephile will seriously defend underestimated movies, category B or C even against all odds, talking about them as unduly underrated gems. In a cinephile’s eyes, such films can reveal privileged moments that are beyond scripting and explanation.⁴² A film lover can find pleasure in obscure details or an uneven narrative structure and can hold a fascination for supporting actors rather than the stars (as a cinephile might say: ‘When I talk about Brad, I mean Brad Dourif rather than Brad Pitt’).⁴³

Cinephilia is ruled by a certain atemporality: a gangster picture from the early 1960s—say, *KERMIS IN DE REGEN* [FAIR IN THE RAIN] (Kees Brusse, 1962)—can be compared to a B gangster film from the mid-1980s—for example, *MOORD IN EXTASE* (Hans Scheepmaker, 1984) or *WILDSCHUT* (Bobby Eerhart, 1985). The films are juxtaposed indiscriminately, as if their quality is a matter of fact, to ensure that the love for them will not extinguish. For the cinephile, cinema has an ‘undead nature’, as Thomas Elsaesser has suggested (197). The memory of a cinephile works analogous to Freud’s notion of the unconscious, which consists of an endless and achronological reservoir of impressions. Psychoanalysis does not stick to a calendar-based temporality; on the contrary, the concept of *Nachträglichkeit* was introduced to indicate that an event is not experienced directly, but its impact can only be understood belatedly if it can be understood at all. Bearing the notion of retroactive temporality in mind, the unconscious is indifferent to historical logic and causality. The choice for ‘deliberate anachronism’ as a structuring principle for this study has to be understood against this background.

A cinephile usually does not appreciate a film for its realism. Whether something is historically accurate or could have possibly happened is not something a cinephile cares about. One of the reasons for a cinephile’s fondness for genres is that they have their own conventions, regardless of the probability of situations. A cinephile tends to value a filmmaker’s dedicated effort more than polished perfection: a film’s flaws can also be part of its charm. And when we are watching a movie from some decades ago, the process of aging provides a ‘necessary detachment’, to quote Susan Sontag, from the outmoded film, but for the cinephile, it can also arouse ‘a necessary sympathy’ (‘Notes’, 285). What initially seemed a run-of-the-mill picture can, with the passage of time, become a special delight. On this condition, there is sufficient ground for a retroactive ‘celebration’ of Dutch fiction films, as I hope this study will illustrate. Cinephilia, then, functions as an antidote to the perspective of the scornful sceptics. Cinephilia enables us to ‘look away’ at Dutch fiction features and invites us to consider their limitations as well as their sometimes charming failures from a benevolent attitude.

Some years ago, I started examining Dutch fiction features for the simple reason that these films are ‘orphans’ in an academic context. Apart from a study by Peter Cowie from the late 1970s, a volume edited by Ernest Mathijs in 2004 that included analyses of twelve Dutch films, and a few other books, mainly monographs on single filmmakers, there have been precious few studies exclusively focused on Dutch films. My research on Dutch cinema was meant to enter uncharted territory. This may read like I was sacrificing myself: if no one is doing it, I will do the job of sitting through these many hours of Dutch films. But the more I saw of them, the more they became an unexpected joy.

In my previous study, I already mentioned the tendency of Dutch film lovers to view a fine Dutch picture as an unexpected oddity. Their reaction goes like this: I am not generally a fan of Dutch cinema, but I would make an exception for this particular film. One of the aims in this book is to prove that a great number of exceptions add up to a norm. Needless to say, *ALS TWEE DRUPPELS WATER* is one of these early exceptions, and I became greatly enamoured by the ‘art’ films of the 1960s, which followed in the wake of Rademakers’ war film that I earlier labelled as the repressed key film of Dutch cinema. The unfortunate fate of these films made me dedicate a book to them, and several directors have taken up the 1960s legacy to some degree—from Orlow Seunke to Alex van Warmerdam, from Marleen Gorris to Mijke de Jong, from Nanouk Leopold to David Verbeek, and from Jim Taihuttu to Michiel ten Horn.⁴⁴ I was not always immediately impressed by many of the titles I investigated, but in the process of taking a closer look which was required for writing of this book, several films started to grow on me. I was spellbound by overtly ambitious or idiosyncratic if not madcap enterprises such as the aforementioned *BIG CITY BLUES*, *HET GANGSTERMEISJE*, *EEN OCHTEND VAN ZES WEKEN*, *DE DANS VAN DE REIGER*, *PARANOIA*, and *JOÃO EN HET MES* but also *ANGELA – LOVE COMES QUIETLY* (Nikolai van der Heyde, 1973), *MAX HAVELAAR* (Fons Rademakers, 1976), *SOLDAAT VAN ORANJE* [*SOLDIER OF ORANGE*] (Paul Verhoeven, 1977), *MYSTERIES* (Paul de Lussanet, 1978), *RIGOR MORTIS* (Dick Maas, 1981),⁴⁵ *VAN DE KOELE MEREN DES DOODS* [*HEDWIG: THE QUIET LAKES*] (Nouchka van Brakel, 1982), *DE SCHORPIOEN* [*THE SCORPION*] (Ben Verbong, 1984), *KRACHT* [*VIGOUR*] (Frouke Fokkema, 1990), *DE JOHNSONS* (Rudolf van den Berg, 1992), *DE VLIEGENDE HOLLANDER* [*THE FLYING DUTCHMAN*] (Jos Stelling, 1995), *VAN GOD LOS* [*GODFORSAKEN*] (Pieter Kuijpers, 2003), the short *WERELD VAN STILSTAND* [*STILL WORLD*] (Elbert van Strien, 2005), *GUERNSEY* (Nanouk Leopold, 2005), *LENA* (Christophe Van Rompaey, 2011), *GLUCKAUF* [*SON OF MINE*] (Remy van Heugten, 2015), and *BRIMSTONE* (Martin Koolhoven, 2016).⁴⁶ If one of my concerns with Dutch cinema—in both this and the previous study—is to make unexpected and deliberately anachronistic cross-connections, here is one for you: this heterogeneous list of titles above can be taken as the offspring of Rademakers’ attempts at cinema. Because of the sheer variety of his oeuvre, which comprises only 11 feature films—from ‘art’ to cult; from genre film to historical epics—every chapter will start with one of his titles⁴⁷ and introduce us to a key concept from psychoanalysis which will function as a leitmotif for the chapter.

NOTES

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- 1 Rademakers had received an Academy Award nomination for Best Foreign Language Picture for his debut feature, the ‘Ingmar Bergman Light’ film *DORP AAN DE RIVIER* [VILLAGE BY THE RIVER] (1958). It was followed by the comic-tragic mosaic film *MAKKERS, STAAKT UW WILD GERAAS* [THAT JOYOUS EVE] (1960), while the coming-of-age drama *HET MES* consolidated his reputation as Holland’s most promising director of fiction features.
- 2 Although Hermans was no longer involved, he showed his face on the set a few times, a fact that he himself, incidentally, later denied. On one of these occasions, he had dressed himself as a Nazi for fun, and the photograph was used for a brief moment in Rademakers’ film.
- 3 Apparently, Hermans did not catch a second remark Ducker makes about his hairless chin. When his uncle, Frans, is angered that Ducker is in hiding while his mother and wife are arrested and then sees that his nephew has painted his hair black ‘like an old lady’, he calls Ducker a ‘degenerate’. Ducker then replies: ‘Is this because I have no beard?’
- 4 Hermans wrote in ‘Blokker en Bommel’: ‘In het boek is voortdurend sprake van het feit dat Osewoudt geen baard heeft. In de film is dat allemaal geschrapt, op één enkele plaats na, waar hij zonder enige functionele reden gaat vertellen: ik heb geen baard. Tot overmaat van ramp zie je even later, in een grote close-up, dat de acteur die de rol speelt, wel degelijk een baard heeft.’
- 5 To mention three titles that were over an hour long: *NIET TEVERGEEFS* (Edmond T. Gréville, 1948), *LO/LKP* (Max de Haas, 1949), and *DE DIJK IS DICHT* (Anton Koolhaas, 1950).
- 6 In its ‘unquestioned positivity in the portrayal of the resistance’, *DE OVERVAL* did not set an example for future Dutch war pictures but instead was the ‘last gasp of unrestrained patriotism’ (Burke, 188)—that is, until the release of *DE BANKIER VAN HET VERZET* [THE RESISTANCE BANKER] (Joram Lürsen, 2018).
- 7 The film was broadcast on Dutch television only one time, in 1966, and, as Claudy Op den Kamp mentions, it was screened a few times on special occasions, but only after Heineken’s express permission (55). One such screening was during *De Nederlandse Filmdagen* in Utrecht in 1987. The British critic Neil Roddick, in particular, was highly enthusiastic and considered *ALS TWEE DRUPPELS WATER* one of the best films he had seen that year (see Beerekamp). The English title Roddick used was *THE SPITTING IMAGE*.
- 8 ‘GROTE FONSI! [...] Het grote pad bewandelt [...] een Nederlander.... eindelijk.....!’ (qtd. in Bernink, 55).
- 9 ‘de misschien beste Nederlandse film van de vorige eeuw.’
- 10 To illustrate the scepticism towards Dutch cinema, let me cite a cartoon by Gumbah, one of my favourite absurdists. A man asks what present he should

give to a ‘horrible asshole’ [‘vreselijke klootzak’]. The salesman suggests a Dutch movie. The man replies: ‘Is that not all too cruel?’ {‘Is dat niet wat erg wreed?’} (Published in *de Volkskrant*, 16-09-2019).

- 11 ALLEMAN, in particular, was a great success, with 1.6 million viewers. Haanstra had registered daily life in the Netherlands, almost half of the recordings shot with candid cameras: children learning to skate on ice, people chastely putting on their bathing suits near the beach, and the birth of the daughter of the director’s assistant is filmed as well. The juxtaposition of scenes often created a humorous effect. *DE STEM VAN HET WATER* [THE VOICE OF THE WATER] (1966), with its widescreen images and longer takes, documented how the ever-present water influenced the Dutch.
- 12 ‘Het Hollandse landschap is een ondramatisch landschap [...] dat is niet een verschil waaruit grote spanning kan ontstaan. [De Hollandse mens] heet nuchter, tolerant, behoedzaam en zelfverzekerd – en dat zijn geen eigenschappen die snel conflicten uitlokken.’
- 13 ‘Hij [de Nederlander] is eerder geneigd tot observatie tot onderzoek [...]. Wij tonen geen mensen, maar wuivend graan.’
- 14 Een taal die ‘scherp en leeg, eentonig’ is. ‘Luister naar het mannelijk Zweeds. [...] En Frans. Geweldig. [...] De rapheid en nuance in het Italiaans’ [...] Het Amerikaans. ‘Die taal is stoer [...]’.
- 15 The great majority of Flemish words are similar to their corresponding Dutch words, and the pronunciation is only slightly different.
- 16 The omnibus film was called *GLI EROI DI IERI... OGGI... DOMANI* [THE HEROES OF YESTERDAY ... TODAY ... TOMORROW]. Apart from Weisz, the other three directors were Enzo Dell’Aquila, Fernando Di Leo, and Sergio Tau.
- 17 More than 50 years later, Weisz eventually did make *HET LEVEN IS VURRUKKULLUK* (2018). Unfortunately, not everyone noted that the film is built on a historical tension: while it is set in present-day Amsterdam, its three protagonists display a 1960s carefree, ‘love is in the air’ mentality. This mixture of contemporary drama—the story of a cheating housewife, for example—and the frivolity of a Jacques Demy musical, including tap dances in the park, was appreciated too little.
- 18 See Verstraten, ‘Theatrical Films and Cinematic Novels’.
- 19 Moreover, the actress Ellen Vogel, Rademakers’ wife from 1953 to 1957, had also appeared in his second film, *MAKKERS STAAKT UW WILD GERAAS*. Only Mien Duymaer van Twist both acted in the play and repeated the same role as the protagonist’s mother for the film.
- 20 Van Doude was born in Haarlem as Doude van Herwijnen. He had also played in Rademakers’ previous film *ALS TWEE DRUPPELS WATER*.
- 21 Jozsef Katús is a fictional character who participates in some public events taking place between 29 April and 5 May 1966, including a demonstration organized by so-called Provos, a pacifist countercultural movement.

- 22 BIG CITY BLUES is briefly discussed in chapter 6, note 3.
- 23 Verstappen's BLUE MOVIE, Verhoeven's WAT ZIEN IK!? and TURKS FRUIT, Van der Heyde's HELP! DE DOKTER VERZUIPT each had more than one million moviegoers, but none of them was selected for any important film festival, unlike marginal movies such as ZWARTZIEK (Jacob Bijl, 1973) and STRAF (Olga Madsen, 1973) (Hofstede, 123). MARIKEN VAN NIEUMEGHEN (Jos Stelling, 1974) had the honour of being selected for the main competition in Cannes.
- 24 Ditvoorst was the one exception who refused to compromise, unless one considers his gangster film FLANAGAN (1975) as an attempt to attain an audience. Yet FLANAGAN was too idiosyncratic a genre film to become successful. In the words of Ditvoorst himself, he was the only filmmaker who did not make bourgeois films but rather films about the bourgeois (qtd. in Van Scheers, 183).
- 25 In 2014, Tom Ook made the compilation 'Canon der godverdommes', consisting of fragments from Dutch films in which characters use the infamous curse word <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWR9HzDGIt0> [12 May 2020].
- 26 For a longer version of this argument, see Verstraten *Humour and Irony*, 179-182.
- 27 Scriptwriter Gerard Soeteman wanted a different ending for KEETJE TIPPEL. To hammer home the point that money turns people into bastards, he wanted a final scene in which Keetje goes outside in a beautiful dress and refuses to give money to a beggar. Keetje holds her hands to her ears in an attempt not to hear the screaming beggar, but she realizes all too well, to her shame, that she has forgotten her humble beginnings (qtd. in Van Scheers, 193).
- 28 See Verstraten *Humour and Irony*, 203-210 for a longer version of this hostile reception.
- 29 '[C]ocktail van leed en ellende' (Bovekerk).
- 30 The very best sex scenes, as Koolhoven explains in the first season of his *De kijk van Koolhoven* (episode six, broadcast 9 November 2018), are those scenes that indicate how the relationship between characters is about to develop. He gives the example of A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE (David Cronenberg, 2005) in which the first love scene illustrates their harmony and the second one reveals their growing tension.
- 31 Koolhoven argues this in the clip called 'Theatraal acteren', one of four brief interviews with Gerhard Busch, <https://www.vpro.nl/cinema/nff/artikelen/Koolhoven-Busch.html> [Accessed 13 April 2020].
- 32 Koolhoven, qtd. in Beekman 'Met Koolhoven', V5. Though less prominent than the World War II pictures, films that highlight the personal struggle with a strict religious upbringing can be called another genre (or perhaps mini genre) in Dutch cinema. Like the WWII movies, these films are 'realist' rather than 'cinematic'.
- 33 Similarly, the plane in NORTH BY NORTHWEST that is spraying pesticides over barren land looks like a 'steel bird' (Imaginary); Norman in PSYCHO has a collection of stuffed birds (Symbolic); and in THE BIRDS, we have actual seagulls mercilessly attacking people in Bodega Bay but as an 'instrument' of the rage of Midge's mother (the Real).

- 34 Mathijs writes that Kümel ‘produced three different language versions (English, French and Dutch) and found himself in conflict over the final cut of the film, resulting in two different versions (one English-language version of 87 minutes, and a French-language version of 96 minutes)’ (101). I have only seen the English-language version.
- 35 These four films are: DORP AAN DE RIVIER; MAKKERS, STAAKT UW WILD GERAAS; HET MES; and MIRA.
- 36 The working title of the film DE DRIE SOLDATEN [THE THREE SOLDIERS] was changed to DE VIJANDEN to emphasize their enmity.
- 37 Alexander Mackendrick, director of such Ealing productions as WHISKY GALORE! (1949) and THE LADYKILLERS (1955), had been an advisor to Haanstra’s debut fiction feature.
- 38 Exemplary of this orientation beyond Holland itself is the British critic Peter Cowie who in his 1979 study on Dutch cinema frequently compares Dutch films to the work of international directors: a sequence from MIRA underlines Rademakers’ ‘admiration for Kurosawa’ (78); the ingrown pattern of village life in Haanstra’s DOKTER PULDER ZAAIT PAPAVERS ‘is recorded with a gravity and precision worthy of Dreyer’ (45); in MARIKEN VAN NIEUMEGHEN, Jos Stelling is ‘obviously aspiring to the achievement of THE SEVENTH SEAL’ (107); some moments in Ditvoorst’s DE BLINDE FOTOGRAAF are ‘worthy of Polanski at his best’, whereas the guiding spirit in DE MANTEL DER LIEFDE is ‘not Polanski, but Buñuel’ (101).
- 39 Both DE VIJANDEN and MIRA were subsidized equally by Dutch and Belgian funds. For the Flemish, MIRA was primarily a Belgian production because of the setting, the scenario by Claus based upon a novel by the Flemish author Stijn Streuvels, and the role of the actor Jan Declair. For the Dutch, MIRA was primarily a Dutch production because Rademakers had directed it and Willeke van Ammelrooy was the female lead actress. After MIRA, such co-productions had a majority share by either Belgium or the Netherlands (see Willems *Subsidie*, 93).
- 40 Het Nederlands Film Festival (NFF) is since 1993 the new name for De Nederlandse Filmdagen, established in 1981.
- 41 Preferably, the films are shown on 35mm, for most cinephiles are slightly suspicious of the ‘cold’ perfection of a digital projection.
- 42 Let me admit right away that I am a bit too idealistic here. I will reveal less ‘privileged details’ than I would have wished to. The lens of this study requires me to focus more on plot developments than a strict cinephilic project would have enabled me. ‘When the cinephile selects a fragment’, Paul Willemsen argues, ‘it has to be an aspect of cinema that is not strictly programmable in terms of aesthetic strategies’. Such a fragment ‘reveals an aspect or dimension of a person, whether it’s the actor or the director, which is not choreographed for you to see. It is produced *en plus*, in excess or in addition, almost involuntarily’ (237).

- 43 I owe this pun on the name Brad to Jurgen Heinsman, who used to own the Dvd shop *All About Movies* in Nijmegen. The shop was specialized in old classics, art-house, and cult films.
- 44 I could also have mentioned the films by the Flemish Eric de Kuyper, but his work is very little noted, albeit highly recommended for cinephiles. De Kuyper worked as a film lecturer at the University of Nijmegen from 1977 to 1986. He made several art films with his colleagues and students, and they are littered with references to opera, theatre, and cinema. He also made genre movies such as the 'sad musical' *NAUGHTY BOYS* (1984) as well as silent films such as the short *PIERROT LUNAIRE* (1988), which was an homage to German Expressionist cinema and to Georges Méliès. With their aesthetic focus on the male body, his films clearly display a gay sensibility. *PINK ULYSSES* (1990), a retelling of Homer's novel in the German and Italian languages as well as English intertitles, has many naked torsos of 'Greek' heroes, and it has also excerpts from other films, such as Eisenstein's *BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN* (1925) with bare male bodies.
- 45 *RIGOR MORTIS* should have been part of my previous study, but I had not seen Maas's mid-length black comedy at the time. It is about a man, Karel Hemelrijk, who has buried himself alive in order to set a new world record by remaining under the ground for 248 days. Karel, whom we never actually see, receives food through a pipe in the garden. People can pay to visit him, but since there is hardly any publicity, his wife Truus makes very little money: only a German family with a dog named Adolf comes to see the 'attraction'. Truus, who used to have a sing-and-dance routine under the name of 'Annabella', runs a bar that has only one regular guest: a trigger-happy policeman who since the death of his colleague drinks double the amount of alcohol he used to. On Day 124, however, a television team arrives to shoot an item. The cameraman persuades Truus to leave Karel and to restart her singing career. Realizing that his wife has left him, Karel commits suicide, not knowing that Truus is about to return, an illusion poorer. In the final shot, two buses filled with tourists make a stop at the place.
- 46 Given the fact that Dutch cinema is not generally held in high esteem, it may seem that I am trying to compensate for this disregard by what the sceptics may consider an overestimation on my part. Well yes, maybe I happen to have a weak spot for cinematic wallflowers, but at the same time I can be unimpressed by some Dutch fiction features that receive too benevolent a reception or even win prestigious awards. Bear in mind that in the case of these latter films, I have decided not to include them in this study or have only mentioned them briefly in a footnote, for why spend energy on so-so pictures? The reader can take my scathing critique of *KOMT EEN VROUW BIJ DE DOKTER* in this introduction as an exception to this principle, but the analysis of this film served the purpose of making a specific argument regarding the use of sex in Dutch cinema.

- 47 Because of several comic scenes included in them, Rademakers' DORP AAN DE RIVIER and MAKKERS STAAKT UW WILD GERAAS were already discussed at length in my previous study.

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